

Nature Notes

Junior Ranger

SNOTTY GOBBLES

Mistletoes are parasitic plants that grow on the branches of other trees and shrubs. Their berries, called snotty gobbles, are good to eat.

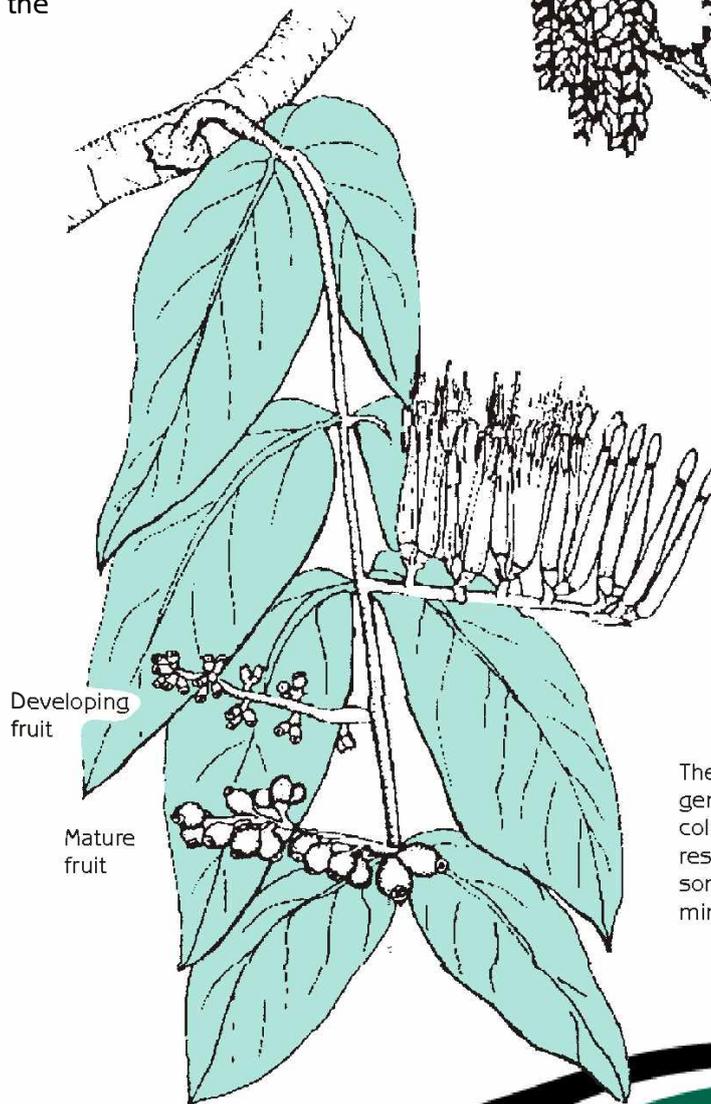
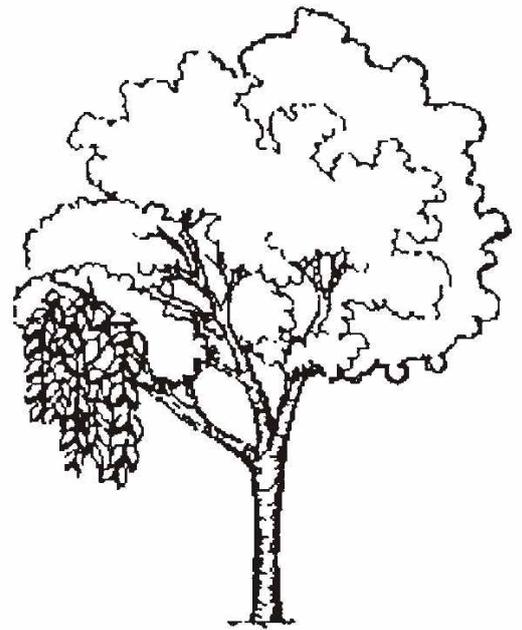
Next time you are walking through the tropical woodland or along a creek bed in the Centre, look out for mistletoe.

Mistletoe often grows on the branches of eucalypt trees. The leaves are a different colour to those on the rest of the tree.

Mistletoes are parasitic plants. They suck water and minerals from their host tree. But they make their own food in their leaves using sunlight.

The Australian mistletoes belong to the Family LORANTHACEAE. There are at least 33 recognised species in the NT, and many other subspecies and varieties.

In the Centre, mistletoe is very common on mulga and wattle trees. The tasty berries are called snotty gobbles because that is what they look like. Each berry contains a large sticky seed.



Those flowers that have not yet opened look like matchsticks.

The leaves are generally a different colour to those on the rest of the tree. But some kinds actually mimic their host.



Northern Territory Government



THE AMAZING MISTLETOEBIRD

Sticky mistletoe seeds are spread from tree to tree by an amazing little bird.

The Mistletoebird

Dicaeum hirundinaceum picks the tasty berries off a tree and swallows them. They quickly pass through the bird's gullet. The seeds are still sticky when they come out the other end and they will usually stick to the birds feathers.

The bird wipes its bottom on the branch of a tree or shrub. The seed sticks to the branch and grows into a new clump of parasitic mistletoe.

Use the numbers to colour this male Mistletoebird so that you can recognise him in the bush.

1 = blue / black

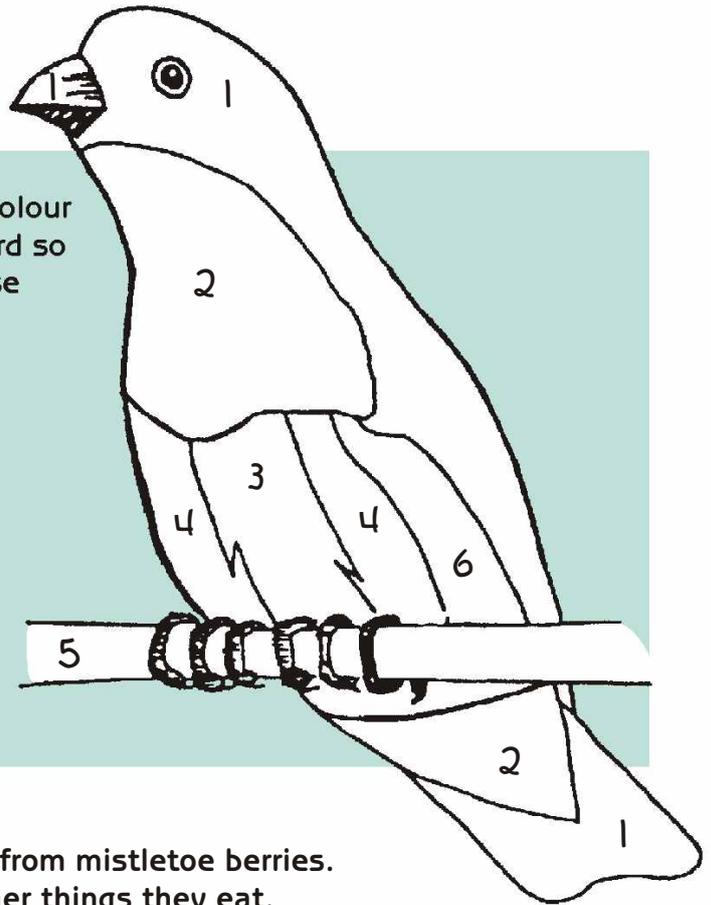
2 = red

3 = black

4 = white

5 = brown

6 = grey



The Mistletoebird's diet includes other fruits apart from mistletoe berries. Solve the following puzzle to find out what other things they eat.

Only one letter is shared by all four words on each line. Work out which letter and write it in the box.

1.	trick	kite	milk	action	<input type="text"/>
2.	accident	ranger	branch	net	
3.	wasp	inside	smell	vase	
4.	have	edible	tucker	geese	
5.	clump	candle	effect	sticky	
6.	mistletoe	parasitic	bottom	lookout	
7.	Wipes	hose	side	bush	

Want to learn more about Mistletoe?

Check out this web page

www.abc.net.au/science/scribblygum/march2004/default.htm