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L *Victorian* **andcare** & CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT



Garden thugs revealed!

**Dense Waterweed
threatens rivers**

Degorseing Corindhap

Fighting the curse – weed feature issue

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Paterson's Curse in the Euroa hills
by Paul Crock

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From the editors

Weeds are a constant source of concern for landholders. Controlling weeds requires vigilance and good co-ordination with neighbouring land managers.

In this issue of *Landcare and Catchment Management* we chart the progress of groups and individuals tackling some of our common weeds and look at the threats posed by new and emerging weeds.

Regional Weed Action Plans

Victoria's Regional Catchment Management Authorities are planning for big advances in weed control by preparing Regional Weed Action Plans through substantial community consultation.

The action plans cover a five to ten year period and aim to minimise the economic, environmental and social impacts of declared and potential pests for community benefit. The priority species and locations are identified.

Particular emphasis is placed on dealing with new weeds, on the importance of cooperative arrangements and on strict enforcement where an individual's inaction places community effort at risk.

All of the Regional Weed Action Plans include an analysis of the current situation, a discussion of the research and investigation required, priority species, cost sharing guidelines, management options, an outline of roles and responsibilities, targets and timelines and a monitoring and evaluation component.

We encourage all landholders to get a copy of the Weed Action Plan for their region as soon as it is available.

Farewell Gabrielle Sheehan

One of our editors, Gabrielle Sheehan from NRE, has left us to move on to a new position at Melbourne Water.

Gabrielle has been keenly involved in the magazine for several years and was one of the instigators of our broader 'catchment management perspective'.

We wish her well in her new endeavours – no doubt we'll be seeing an increase in water stories in coming issues!

Please keep your stories and letters coming. We are always interested in hearing from our readers.

Lyall Grey, Jo Safstrom, Carrie Tiffany



The small bulbils on the flowering stems of Bulbil Watsonia are easily carried along roadsides by slashers and other machinery.



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Junior Landcare

School mites grow gorse mites in the classroom!

By Raelene Kwong

Weed Awareness is a school education program being run by Agriculture Victoria's Keith Turnbull Research Institute. Students team up with scientists to help control weeds by breeding and releasing natural enemies of the weed, called biological control agents.

Many of the weeds present in Australia were brought in without their natural enemies, such as insects, mites and fungi. These natural enemies help to keep the weeds under control in their countries of origin. Biological control works by restoring the ecological balance between a weed and its natural enemies.

The Weed Awareness program is currently targeting gorse (furze) – one of Australia's worst weeds. Twelve schools have been breeding and releasing thousands of gorse spider mites.

The tiny red mites, which feed only on gorse, suck out the contents of the plant cells weakening the gorse bushes and causing them to produce less seed.

The students reared the gorse spider mites in their classrooms. They were provided with a cage, overhead lights, containers and the mites. The students propagated or collected gorse plants to feed the mites. When the mites had run out of food, the students transferred them to new gorse foliage. The old food wasn't thrown out as it contained hundreds of eggs laid into the silken web covering the branches. The branches were placed into nursery containers to allow the eggs to hatch and increase the number of mites in the colony.

Using this technique, the students reared thousands of mites over a six-week period.



John Stoner from KTRI talking to students about gorse.

They worked with local Landcare and community groups, Parks Victoria rangers and NRE officers to release their mites at local gorse infestation. All of the schools involved got together at the release site so they could discuss the program and compare their efforts in rearing the mites.

Darraweit Guim, Lancefield, Langley, Hastings, Hastings West Park, Bittern, Somers, Crib Point and Balnarring primary schools were involved, as well as Bellarine Peninsula Secondary College.

The benefits of this program have been enormous. The students' knowledge of biological control and weed management has increased significantly. It has also provided them with the opportunity to be involved with other members of the community on trying to solve a local weed problem.

The program was a group effort with Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, Shire of Mount Alexander, BHP, Upper Maribyrnong Landcare Group, Swan Bay Catchment Group, friends of local koala and wildlife groups and Parks Victoria all involved.

For further information contact Raelene Kwong on (03) 9785 0171.

Mites are released under shelters to protect them from the rain.





Mitchell Shire Council



Stockpiles of gorse are burnt off along the Kilmore Creek.

As you drive up the Hume Highway away from Melbourne the first rural shire you enter is the Shire of Mitchell. Mitchell Shire Council covers 2858 square kilometres of rural Victoria and includes the major towns of Wallan, Kilmore, Broadford, Seymour and Pyalong.

Mitchell Shire Council is becoming increasingly involved in environment management – its broad aims are to protect and enhance the natural environment. The Environmental Management Unit and the Landuse Planning Department amalgamated at the start of the 1999/2000 year – this partnership was a step towards Council improving the quality of the environmental advice given on planning permit applications and on other planning issues.

Weed inspection linked to planning permits

The Council is proactive in weed control in the Mitchell Shire and is taking steps to eradicate and control all noxious weeds within the Shire. Appropriate planning permit applications are referred to the Shire's Environment Officer who undertakes an inspection of the property. This inspection includes taking note of any noxious weeds, pest animals, erosion or other land degradation problems.

The Environment Officer then makes a recommendation, which appears on the planning permit. Typical conditions include that the landholders must take reasonable steps to eradicate and/or control the spread of gorse on the property, as per the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

This process is still being refined, but appears to be working well.

The Environmental Unit works in cooperation, where appropriate, with the relevant Catchment Management Authorities and NRE, to create an integrated regional approach to land management across the Shire and related catchments.

The planning permit process is an important part of an overall approach by the Mitchell Shire to target pest plants, in particular gorse and blackberries.

The Council is committed to an integrated raft of environmental management programs.

gets tough on weeds

By Elyse Garmston

Land Management Rebate Scheme

The Land Management Rebate Scheme, is a financial incentive available to landholders with properties four hectares and over to undertake and/or maintain works that address land degradation on their property.

The rebate scheme is an important facet of the Environmental Unit at the Shire and provides an incentive for environmental works on privately owned land. It also acts as a good first point of contact for environmental education and awareness. In the 2000/2001 year 62% (1820) of the eligible landholders applied for the rebate, this equates to 78% of the eligible land area. The scheme is in its third year of operation and still generates a lot of interest.

Mitchell Shire Environment Committee

The Mitchell Shire Environment Committee includes representatives of NRE, Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and local Landcare, environment and community groups.

The main purpose of the committee is to provide advice and make formal recommendations to Council on matters concerning the management of the natural environment.

Each member provides an important link to their relevant agency, community group and own networks within the Shire and is encouraged to take a proactive role in promoting the Shire's environmental programs and in receiving feedback from the wider Mitchell community.

Weed control – Council-owned land

Mitchell Shire Council allocated \$60,000 over two years (1999-2000) for weed control on Council-owned land and is working towards the ambitious aim of creating a gorse and blackberry free shire in ten years time.

Mitchell Shire Council sees this program as an integral part of the overall environment program – it sets a good example, complies with the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and illustrates that we are practising what we preach.

Education

The education component of the environmental management program includes:

- a land management calendar/poster currently being developed with the Macedon Ranges and Mount Alexander Shires;



Elyse Garmston inspects Whiteheads Creek west of Seymour.

- a display at the Seymour Alternative Farming Expo in February 2001;
- new landholder kits, containing information about natural resource management will continue to be distributed to all new landholders over four hectares, on a six-monthly basis; and
- a 2000 edition of the Land Management Information Directory, which lists local farm, environmental and land management services and is an important local environmental education material.

Building Bridges Project

Mitchell Shire Council continues to support local land management through its commitment to the Building Bridges Sugarloaf to Darebin Project. This project involves bringing city students to the Mitchell Shire to assist in salinity control works.

For further information contact Elyse Garmston at Mitchell Shire Council on (03) 5734 6200.



Works on the Wallan Creek.

Herbicide advice for environmental weeds

By Nigel Ainsworth

Whenever people involved in the control of environmental weeds get together they begin discussing herbicides. The impression I get is that there's a lot of knowledge out there from years of practical experience, but at the same time many people frustrated by being unable to get relevant and reliable information for their particular problems.

A few environmental weeds are covered by publications like *Best Bet Management Guides* produced by the Weeds CRC, *Landcare Notes* or management handbooks, and have registered herbicides. Advice for many other weeds is harder to come by, especially new weeds.

Good advice is crucial

Most people would agree that even when information exists it is often hard to find. This matters because without appropriate advice users can damage valued native species or neighbouring crops or simply achieve poor weed control. Weed control may even be neglected because after chasing around different sources and assessing conflicting advice the whole thing just seems too difficult.

Why is it like this? Unlike weeds of pastures or crops the herbicide market for most environmental weeds is very small, so companies are understandably uninterested in developing such uses. Unfortunately NRE is not always aware of what information is needed. For example, if no questions about *Watsonia* are received does this mean that *Watsonia* is not important,

or that everyone has already got all the information they need? If there was only one inquiry about *Watsonia* would that indicate low demand or has that person passed information (possibly with distortions) to dozens of other people?



It is important to keep track of what the issues are so we can assemble the relevant advice and also direct the small budget for experiments to where it will do most good.

I recently carried out a survey on herbicides for environmental weeds. Results so far show off-target herbicide effects on native plants was what most people wanted information on, with advice for weeds not on labels and on general environmental effects of herbicides also popular.

Field experience slow to influence

Practical experiences with herbicides are not always widely communicated.

There may be a feeling that trials were not done properly – with formal experimental designs and statistics, or that observations are only of local interest. Another reason may be fears that doing the trials contravened legislation, although most of the informal trials I have heard of in Victoria were legal off-label use. The end result is often that experience in the field is slow to influence publications or herbicide labels.

NRE policy quite rightly stops staff giving advice based on rumours or guesswork, or on matters outside their area of competence. Sometimes there just isn't any reliable information available. On other occasions there may be specialist advice available within NRE but delays while local staff refer the inquiry to the right person and details are checked.

Wherever you get herbicide advice from make sure it is current, applicable to your area and from a reliable source; a good indication is willingness to issue written advice.

For further information contact Nigel Ainsworth at the CRC for Weed Management Systems on (03) 9785 0184.

WEED WARRIORS? –

meet the Trewins from Barcoo Ridge



By Irene Grant

To fully realise the productive potential of their farm Michael and Shirley Trewin believed their first major task was to get rid of the weeds, in particular Paterson's Curse.

The Trewins came to their Barcoo Ridge property overlooking Lake Hume at Granya in north-east Victoria eight years ago, and they describe the land as being in a "dreadful state". In less than five years the Trewins have significantly reduced their weed problem and effectively increased the productivity of the farm by up to 50%.

According to Les Broadhurst, NRE Catchment Management Officer at Walwa, the Trewin's property had been a weed disaster zone.

"They have done a remarkable job, making improvements in two years that would normally take five," Les said.

According to Michael, Barcoo Ridge had received little or no weed maintenance over the years and the soil fertility levels were at an all time low.

Years of neglect

"There had been an attitude that, at worst, nothing could be done about the problem of weeds, and at best, weeds were good early stock feed," Michael said.

"However, I very quickly realised that everything that is green isn't necessarily good grass and to stay in business we had to focus on increasing the overall productivity of the farm. The immediate effect we had on weeds went way beyond the cost of the spray; we did it in achievable steps, but we were committed right from the beginning."

Michael believes chemicals are not a running cost but a capital improvement and had every farm vehicle fitted with a spray unit to opportunistically spray weeds over the whole of the 800 hectare property.

"With weeds you have to be very disciplined, be prepared to get off your backside and progressively attack the problem, and not just at certain times of the year, it is something we do all year round.

However, don't get neurotic about it either, because they do come back and you just have to keep at it."

Barcoo Park was covered with a variety of broadleaved weeds including Paterson's Curse, capeweed, blackberry, briar and thistles.

Achieving productive potential

"We broke up the farm into manageable sections so the problem does not seem as great and the results are much more obvious."

Paddocks were reduced in size and the Trewins took advantage of rotational grazing principles to improve the overall quality of the pasture while reducing the impact of weeds.

A tree planting and gully improvement program, with some 4100 trees planted this season alone, has also been implemented throughout the farm with dramatic results.

"To achieve the productive potential of the farm we incorporate sustainable practices wherever possible. It is important for us to leave the farm and the environment in a better physical state than when we came here. It is great to be able to see the improvements we have made and that the work we have done has made a real difference."

For more information contact Irene Grant at NRE North East on (03) 5720 1759.

Michael Trewin:
"What others see
as a waste I see
as a capital
improvement."



Green, weed-free grass of home – the Trewin's property at Granya.

Degorseing

Marie Curtis hopes other groups will learn from the Corindhap experience.

Ever since the introduction of gorse (or furze) to the Ballarat region, landholders have either loved it or hated it. Over 150 years later, a dedicated Neighbourhood Group within the Woady Yaloak Catchment Project has tackled the weed head-on in a concerted effort to rid it from their area.

According to Marie and Tony Curtis, with dedication and peer support, the landscape can be cleared and productivity returned.

“Since we moved into the district nine years ago, we have reclaimed at least 35 acres of land on our property, using various means – proving that with positive effort we can keep the land clear of the weed and increase our productivity.

“The tremendous support from the Woady Yaloak Catchment Project helped us to achieve our personal goals, however when the Neighbourhood Group initiative was developed, it gave us the opportunity to work with our neighbours to achieve much more at a local level.”

Marie explained that with the support of the Woady Project, the Corindhap Gorse Group has been able to trial different methods of gorse control, finding some better than others.

Excavators in the creeks and gullies proved successful in removing established gorse stands.

Mechanical removal

“When we first started on our property, we needed to identify our boundaries because the gorse was terribly thick,” Marie said.

“We used a bulldozer to clear our fence line and, in the process, pushed up large heaps of the gorse. The dozer was useful in compacting the plants and reducing the volume. These heaps were burnt and the areas cleared were subsequently sprayed with Grazon,” she said.

Burning

Tony said that once they had some clear space around the boundary, burning remaining stands of gorse proved to be a convenient way to reduce large volumes quite cheaply.

“The heat of the fire obviously destroyed some of the seed in the soil, but what was not destroyed has since germinated prolifically.

“When these new seedlings appeared, it was quite easy to spray them with Grazon – an effective way of killing thousands of immature plants,” he said.



Corindhap

By Paul Crock



Tony made the point that if the seedlings were not sprayed, the problem would be back thick and fast. He also stressed the importance of informing the local CFA of your intentions to carry out a burn to ensure the conditions are right and that there is no chance of it getting out of control.

Mulching

Members of the gorse group had also trialled the use of a large mulcher on a big stand of mature plants. The area was mulched, worked up and sown down with a turnip crop. After the turnips, it was sown down with an annual hay crop and then down to perennial pasture in the autumn of the third year.

Marie said that the cropping phases were important after mulching but within two to three years a carpet of gorse seedlings still appeared and had to be sprayed.

Control timetable

"The timeframe for realistic control of gorse is at least three years," Marie said.

"In the first year, burning in late spring, slashing and clearing the debris, is a good start. The area should be worked up and sown down with a summer crop – such as turnips. This helps germinate more of the seed left in the soil, which is in turn killed by cultivating in the autumn and establishing perennial pasture," Marie said.

"Once the pasture is down, small gorse seedlings will still appear, some may be out-competed by pasture growth and some grazed by sheep.

"For the stronger seedlings, maintenance and vigilant spot spraying over the next two years are the key to attaining a gorse-free status," she said.

Marie and Tony now budget for at least five litres of Grazon herbicide each year for follow-up spot spraying activities.

Spraying

Chemical control of larger areas of gorse is very expensive, but is in some cases necessary where mechanical removal by bulldozer or burning is not an option.



Earthmoving equipment has been used to pile up the gorse and burn it off.

Tony explained that creek frontages with a mixed population of native vegetation is an example where burning is difficult and careful spraying is a solution.

"The Golden Plains Shire helped the group by organising the spraying of some of the worst roadside infestations in the area," Tony said.

"The Woody Yaloak Project has also helped by providing incentive funding to help people have a go."

Bio-control

In their quest to eradicate gorse from hard to reach areas, the Corindhap Group, with the support of the Woody Project, and under guidance of researchers from the Keith Turnbull Research Institute, established a nursery site for the new gorse spider mite.

"This new biological control agent is a small mite that is attracted to the flowers of the gorse plant and attacks the seeds," Marie said.

She accepted that this new weapon would not be a quick fix, but that it would help bring more balance to the problem by helping check the spread of the weed.

"We have two nursery sites set aside to help the mites build up in numbers," she said.

"Hopefully, from this site we can start to build sustainable populations of the mite for release into other areas close-by."

Enforcement

Like many community issues dealing with pest plants and animals, there are always a few people who do not see the benefits of eradicating the problem. While the Corindhap community is getting motivated to attack the problem, some landholders and land managers are not sharing their enthusiasm.

As part of the Ballarat Gorse Task Force, NRE are providing technical support should the need arise.

"The department is working more closely with communities that are willing to try and eradicate gorse (and rabbits) from their area by providing facilitation support and technical assistance for landholders who become involved in what we are doing," Marie said.

"If people still do nothing, then NRE have advised us that they will be issuing Land Management Notices to those who have had every opportunity to undertake works but have refused to do so."

Marie said that this change in policy also applied to crown land managers and that action was now being started in areas that were previously not considered a priority.

Marie hopes that the Corindhap Neighbourhood Project will provide a model for other areas in the catchment and elsewhere to help similar communities control their gorse.

For more information contact Marie and Tony Curtis on (03) 5346 1476.

Our gardens are growing

Victorian farmers may be distressed to hear that their home gardens are the source of many weeds. In Australia, over 700 garden plants have been recognised as invasive weeds. These garden thugs are the garden plants grown for their beauty and hardiness that then jump the back fence and invade farm and bushland.

Paterson's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*) is a classic example. Grown for its beautiful purple flowers back in the 1800s, it escaped from gardens and now occurs in every State and Territory costing Australian agriculture over \$35 million each year.

St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), Blackberry (*Rubus* species), Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera* ssp. *monilifera*) and Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) are a few more examples of plants that cause great economic and environmental damage. The natural homes of many of our much-loved indigenous plants and animals are under threat.

How do they spread?

Many garden thugs have berries and seeds that are carried by birds and animals from gardens into surrounding bushland and farming areas. Those living in the Mallee and other areas infested with Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*) will be familiar with this weed along roadsides. Birds have carried berries from gardens and now spread it along the roadsides.

It can also be found growing under prominent perch trees in the middle of paddocks or bushland where birds have stopped and dropped seed-filled faeces.

Blackberry (*Rubus* species) and Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera* ssp. *monilifera*) are other plants readily spread by birds and foxes.

Wind is another carrier of weed seeds. Pampas Grass (*Cortaderia* species) has huge fluffy plumes, each of which can contain 100,000 seeds that can be carried by the wind 30 kilometres or more. Willow (*Salix* species) and a number of grasses are other plants spread by wind. Water can wash seeds and plant parts down slopes, watercourses and drains.

In east Gippsland, 40 kilometres of the Tambo River below Omeo is infested with Periwinkle (*Vinca major*), a popular garden ground cover with mauve flowers. Every time the river floods, plant parts are washed further downstream where they root and grow into new infestations.

Then of course there are many weeds spread in hay, soil and on farm and roadside maintenance equipment.

Along many Victorian roadsides, plants such as Spanish Heath (*Erica lusitanica*), Bulbil Watsonia (*Watsonia meriana* var. *bulbillifera*), Sparaxis (*Sparaxis* species) and broom (*Cytisus scoparius*, *Genista monspessulana*, *Genista linifolia*, *Chamaecytisus palmensis*, etc.) are spreading rapidly.

Hygiene is very important on and between farms. Checking and quarantining stock is a good idea to remove weed seeds before entering a new area. Ensure weeds such as Chilean Needle Grass (*Nassella neesiana*) or Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) are not harvested with hay and moved to new areas. Cleaning soil and plant material from machinery and vehicles before being moved to a new farm or paddock also makes good sense. Many weeds such as Ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) and Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*) can be carried in soil on vehicles and equipment. Weed seeds also collect in tyre treads, grilles and gutters of vehicles.

Getting stuck into the garden

If you have a garden, check to see if plants are spreading into nearby bush. Dispose of garden prunings and waste carefully to minimise spread. Avoid dumping piles of garden waste in bushland, over the back fence, in paddocks or along roadsides. Compost it, dispose of it through local council collection services or take it to the tip.



The magnificent flowers of Morning Glory distract gardeners while the plant strangles other garden plants. It also strangles the bush when it escapes.

thugs!

By Kate Blood



Ensure trailers and utes are covered so seeds and plant cuttings do not fall off and infest roadsides.

It is hard for gardeners to understand that some of these plants are weeds when many are still legally available for sale at nurseries and garden centres. The Nursery Industry Association of Australia (NIAA) recognises this problem and is working towards a solution.

NIAA in association with various government agencies including the Weeds Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), have come up with a draft national strategy on invasive garden plants called *Garden plants under the spotlight*. The strategy recommends the education of gardeners and the nursery industry about garden thugs.

During Weedbuster Week this year, a poster and brochure on the safe disposal of garden waste and a few other tips about garden thugs, was circulated.

Keen gardeners and nursery people are increasingly ordering seeds and plants through mail order or over the Internet from overseas. This is extremely dangerous as plants not cleared by quarantine when coming into the country can become serious weeds or carry plant diseases.

If wanting to order plants or seeds from overseas, clear it with quarantine before placing orders. Check with the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (see 'Quarantine' in the White Pages or the AQIS website at: www.aqis.gov.au).

Finally, consider replacing garden thugs in your garden with safer alternatives. They may be non-invasive exotics or local indigenous plants that require less water and fertilisers. They also do a good job of attracting local wildlife. If you see garden thugs invading local bushland, natural areas or farms report the weeds to your local weed officer or Catchment Management Officer.

Some of Victoria's garden thugs

Trees

- Some Maples (e.g. *Acer negundo*, *A. pseudoplatanus*).
- Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*).
- Willow (some invasive *Salix* species).
- Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*).

Shrubs

- Broom (mainly yellow and white flowering introduced broom including *Cytisus scoparius*, *Cytisus multiflorus*, *Genista monspessulana*, *Genista linifolia*, *Chamaecytisus palmensis*, *Spartium junceum*).
- Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera* ssp. *monilifera*).
- Heath (e.g. *Erica lusitanica*, *E. arborea*, *E. baccans*).
- Some Cotoneaster (e.g. *Cotoneaster glaucophyllus*, *C. franchetii*, *C. horizontalis*, *C. lacteus*, *C. microphyllus*, *C. pannosus*, *C. simonsii*).

Climbers and creepers

- Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*).
- English Ivy (*Hedera helix*).
- Madeira Vine (*Anredera cordifolia*).

- Morning Glory (e.g. *Ipomoea indica*, *I. cairica*, *I. purpurea*).
- Periwinkle (*Vinca major*).
- Tradescantia (*Tradescantia fluminensis*).

Herbs and succulents

- Paterson's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*).
- Watsonia (e.g. *Watsonia meriana* var. *bulbillifera*, *W. borbonica*, *W. marginata*, *W. versfeldii*).
- Horsetail (*Equisetum* species).
- Arum Lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*).
- Crassula (*Crassula multicava*).

Grasses

- Pampas Grass (*Cortaderia* species).
- Mexican Feathergrass (*Nassella tenuissima*).
- Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*).
- Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*).

Aquatics

- Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*).
- Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*).
- Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*).



English Broom has spread over 20,000 hectares of Australia and is still found in gardens.



The bird lillies of Cotoneaster can be carried several kilometres from gardens to bushland.



Arum Lily invades creeklines and damp areas out-competing the local indigenous plants.



The fruit of Blackberry are carried by birds and foxes.



Each plume of Pampas Grass can produce 100,000 seeds which can be carried over 30 kilometres by the wind.

For more information contact Kate Blood at the Weeds Cooperative Research Centre at KTRI on (03) 9785 0111.

DENSE WATERWEED – *a new threat to our waterways*



By Lalith Gunasekera

Australia is one of the world's driest continents, so our limited water resources and wetlands are important not only to our vegetation and wildlife but also to our human inhabitants. Native aquatic plants play an important role in our wetlands and waterways.

Several alien aquatic plants that have become established in Australia now cost the community millions of dollars to control each year. Four aquatic weeds (Alligator Weed, Salvinia, Water Hyacinth and Lagarosiphon) have been declared as prohibited in Victoria.

Dense Waterweed is one of the emerging aquatic weeds recently found around Melbourne. It was probably introduced by someone dumping an aquarium into a waterway. Recent investigations found Dense Waterweed infestations at Lilydale Lake, Merri Creek at Fitzroy, Dandenong Creek at Heathmont and Dandenong and the Langwarrin Reservoir.

Dense Waterweed is a fast growing South American (Argentina, Brazil) aquatic plant. As a result of the aquarium trade it is now found in Chile, Mexico, the United States, England, New Zealand and Australia.

Dense Waterweed is a declared noxious weed in Tasmania, Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. It is still available as an aquarium plant in Victoria.

Because Dense Waterweed grows completely submerged, it is difficult to eradicate with herbicides. The weed retards water flow, interferes with irrigation,

disrupts native habitats, displaces native plants and effects hydroelectric output, urban water supplies and recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing.

The soft, slender, green stems of Dense Waterweed may grow to 180 centimetres or longer and may be highly branched. Leaves are strap-like, about 2.5 centimetres long and usually occur in whorls of four at a node. Occasionally three to six may be present. Very fine serrations may be seen on the leaf margins with a hand lens.

The plant spreads in Australia solely by vegetative reproduction. The stem breaks into segments in the autumn. New plants grow from small buds on these stem pieces the following spring. The white flowers are the only part of the plant that reaches the water surface. Flowering occurs in summer and early autumn. Dense Waterweed (*Egeria*) can be confused with Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) and Elodea or Canadian Pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*) but is distinguished by its larger leaves and distinctive flowers. Dense Waterweed is also known as Brazilian Elodea, Leafy Elodea, Oxygen Plant and Anacharis.

Established nurseries are equipped to grow aquatic plants in an environmentally acceptable manner using tanks which are specially built for the purpose. Freelance growers often use natural streams as their nursery – artificially seeding aquatic plants into those streams to which they return later to harvest their crop. This is totally unacceptable. The aquarium and horticultural industries are well placed to play a significant role in ensuring that Australia is not burdened further with unwanted aquatic weed problems. It is essential to eradicate all isolated patches of Dense Waterweed and prevent it becoming established in other parts of the State.

For further information contact Lalith Gunasekera at Keith Turnbull Research Institute on (03) 9785 0111.

Lalith Gunasekera with Dense Waterweed (Egeria) infesting the Merri Creek.



Worse than Serrated Tussock? – meet Mexican Feathergrass



The Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems (Weeds CRC) is offering \$100 reward for information leading to the arrest and recapture of escaped Mexican Feathergrass plants. The plants have been inadvertently offered for sale by nurseries in New South Wales and Victoria and over the Internet.

Mexican Feathergrass, known as *Nassella tenuissima*, is closely related to Serrated Tussock, widely regarded as the worst pasture weed in Australia. Serrated Tussock costs more than \$50 million a year in losses to agricultural production and is causing major damage to sensitive native grasslands. Mexican Feathergrass has the potential to invade a greater range of land and, if left unchecked, could spread through eastern Australia into southern Queensland and to Western Australia.

The two grasses are difficult to identify. According to David McLaren from NRE, Mexican Feathergrass is almost identical to Serrated Tussock, to which it is closely related. Both plants have no nutritional value for stock.

“Livestock have been known to starve to death with a full stomach when grazing Serrated Tussock. Mexican Feathergrass is believed to be even less nutritious.”

Mexican Feathergrass has been sold at several locations in Victoria with the incorrect label – *Stipa tenuissima*-Ponytails.

David McLaren said by the time the authorities became aware of the situation at least 23 of the 116 plants available had been sold.

“The wholesaler voluntarily destroyed another 400 plants in their possession. But the others have got out and are placing Australia at risk. We are attempting to alert people to the dangers of their purchases.”

Weeds CRC Director, Rick Roush, is extremely concerned about the potential of Mexican Feathergrass in Australia.

“We are alarmed at what might result if these plants are not found and destroyed. The plants produce large numbers of seeds that readily attach to clothing and the coats of animals, so could be dispersed widely before we realise it,” he said.

Suspected Mexican Feathergrass plants should be reported to local NRE offices. Specimens with flowering heads or seeds should be collected to enable correct identification of the plant. The Weeds CRC, based in Adelaide, will be contacted when the species, identity is confirmed and will send out the \$100 along with a letter of gratitude.

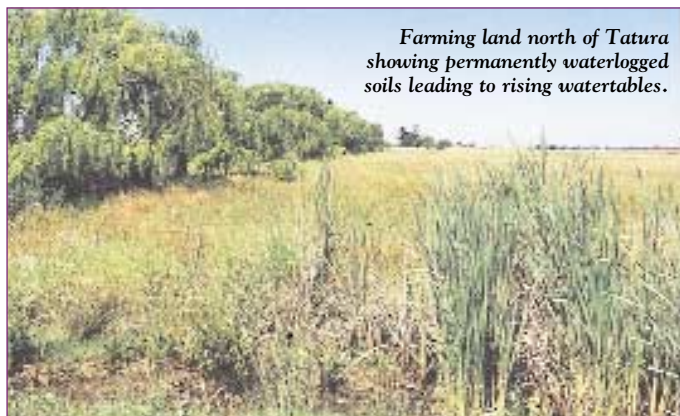


Mexican Feathergrass, Nassella tenuissima – a potential disaster for Australia.

Why Mexican Feathergrass is potentially a worse weed than Serrated Tussock:

- It is less palatable than Serrated Tussock in its countries of origin.
- Mexican Feathergrass grows in a much broader climate range in its countries of origin than Serrated Tussock.
- Mexican Feathergrass is a very attractive groundcover plant that is very easy to propagate. Its popularity with the nursery trade has led to it being advertised extensively overseas in gardening books, magazines and on the web.
- The CRC for Weed Management Systems has initiated a biological control program on Serrated Tussock and Chilean Needle Grass and has made considerable progress with a rust fungus and a smut. However these agents will not be effective against Mexican Feathergrass.

Ten years of community catchment manag



Farming land north of Tatura showing permanently waterlogged soils leading to rising watertables.



The same land after a community surface drain has been constructed showing its return to productive use and protection of vegetation.

The Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Management Plan (SIRLWMP) is recognised throughout Australia for the successful implementation of best management practices in catchment management.

The plan has been developed and refined with wide community input and involvement at all stages and is now in its 11th year of implementation.

The plan has been extremely successful in achieving works on the ground, changing behaviour of land managers and increasing community understanding of environmental issues. Targets set by the community for on-ground works such as whole farm planning, groundwater pump installation, surface drainage construction, wetland protection, fencing of remnant vegetation, waterways rehabilitation and revegetation, have all been met or exceeded to date.

Victorian Landcare and Catchment Management asked Allen Canobie, Chairman of the Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation Committee, Ken Sampson, the committee's Executive Officer and Chris Norman, NRE Tatura, how the implementation committee has maintained its energy and commitment to the task.

Q. How was the implementation committee set up? Has its structure and membership changed over the ten years?

The SIRLWMP has been in the implementation phase since June 1990.

Until July 1995 this was under the direction of the community-based Salinity Program Advisory Council (SPAC) and its irrigation committee. SPAC was responsible for overseeing the Goulburn Broken Dryland Salinity Management Plan in addition to the SIRLWMP.

The responsibility for implementing the SIRLWMP and the other components of a Regional Catchment Strategy in the Shepparton Irrigation Region now lies with the SIR implementation committee of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

The SIR implementation committee meets on a six-week cycle throughout the year, and is made up of eight community representatives and a representative from each of the key agencies.

The SIR implementation committee maintains a constant rotation of members on a two to three year election process. This is to ensure that fresh ideas are constantly brought into the committee's deliberations. However, whilst a rotation of a couple of members has occurred over the life of the committee, there has been a core membership that has been retained.

The committee is skills-based with a wide range of industry and community representation, including the water industry, various commodity groups, environmental groups and farmer bodies. Whilst the focus is on skills, there is also a deliberate attempt to achieve geographic spread in membership.

Q. What are the greatest challenges for groups working to implement land and water management plans?

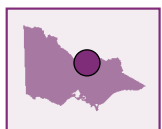
The need to capture and maintain funding to achieve on-ground works and change is absolutely critical to success. Government commitment to supporting the implementation of the 30-year SIRLWMP has been very strong, and ongoing, despite changes in leadership. It is essential that government investment be targeted in a consistent manner using formal budgetary and cost-sharing principles.

Obtaining and retaining real community empowerment and ownership is an ongoing challenge. The effort must be put in from the start to get true community ownership and involvement in plan development and subsequent implementation.

Ownership of the Land and Water Management Plan by the community is critical for its success. The SIR implementation committee has been able to maintain this ownership by controlling the policy and funding directions over the bureaucratic processes. This in turn has been achievable as a result of the accountability and transparency processes the committee has in place.

Managing increasing workloads for all involved – both committee members and agency staff, is a real challenge, as is the security of tenure and turnover of agency staff. Recruitment is a lengthy process and there is also the time required to become acquainted with implementation processes and gain the trust of the community.

ement in the Shepparton Irrigation Region



By Allen Canobie,
Chris Norman and
Ken Sampson

Changing commodity prices continue to place pressure on the ability of the farming community to meet their component of the cost-sharing for on-ground works. Farmers must be in a financially stable (or growing) situation to contribute to the cost-sharing established in the plan.

Implementing long-term strategies within short-term political timeframes is very difficult. The SIRLWMP has a 30-year life, but each political transformation requires it to be repackaged to address the new government's focus. This always proves difficult when you are trying to implement a successful long-term formula.

Ensuring that all natural resource issues continue to be dealt with in an integrated fashion is a further challenge. The development of a new local area planning approach will play an important role in ensuring this happens at a sub-catchment scale.

Q. What are the keys to a successful committee?

There are a number of challenges facing the SIRLWSMP as it prepares for the next 20 years of implementation in a constantly changing environment.

A successful committee will overcome these challenges by:

- Clear and open communication between all members of the committee and its various stakeholders.
- Leadership being provided by all of the members, not just the chair. All members are expected to show leadership and direction within their local communities and the other bodies/committees they represent in implementing the SIRLWMP.
- Ongoing technical and administrative support from agency staff is critical to allow informed decision-making to occur and to provide the committee with the required information.
- Having a community-based committee that truly reflects community views will result in greater community acceptance of policy and implementation strategies. Many of the policies in the SIR have been very difficult to reach as some require a reduction in allocations and farmer rights to ensure that the hydrological systems in the region are sustainable (and not just service us for the next 20 to 50 years). No doubt one of the most important elements for the successful implementation of the SIRLWMP has been its community ownership and involvement from the very start through to the stage where they approve all activities, policies and budgets prior to any agency action.

Allen Canobie with Ken Sampson.



The presentation of a grant for the first drainage nutrient removal scheme constructed in the Shepparton Irrigation Region in April 1999.

- Also critical to the success of the implementation committee has been its policy to ensure that significant high amounts of funds are dedicated to getting works on the ground. Approximately 70% of the total budget for the SIRLWMP is dedicated to activities resulting in a direct change on the ground.

Q. Allen, you are a busy landholder – what keeps you involved?

I worked hard in my younger days under the direction of my father to establish our farm. Once I felt that the farm was operating in an effective manner my interest turned to community activities. I have had a long involvement in my community, from Apex and Rotary to being a past Shire President.

I enjoy my off-farm interests. They keep me stimulated and I am continually learning from all of the different people I am involved with. I think I learn more from others than I contribute, and for this, I consider that I am very lucky.

I hope to contribute something for the betterment of the greater community. Personally, I want to leave my farm to the next generation in a better condition than when I took it over. I guess my involvement in the SIR implementation committee allows me to try and achieve this aim for the whole region, not just for my own property.

Tranceplant –

a rage for young tree planters

Over the past eight years many Victorian youths have come together in the bush to hold outdoor parties. Out of this culture a new group was spawned – Tranceplant – a group that combines revegetation work with great parties.

Tranceplant is a non-profit association made up of members who care about the environment and want to help in the best way they can. Tranceplant organises events for between 100-500 people. When a good day's work has been done, then the celebrations commence. Central to all this is the golden rule of Tranceplant – minimum impact – which means that conscious efforts are made to have as little impact on the property/site as possible.

Because of the nature of the events and the limited resources of the group, Tranceplant involves the local community around the event site. Mark Feltrin, a Tranceplant member says getting locals involved is integral to the success of event.

"Tranceplant is very much aware of the rural/urban divide and in our own small way, this is our response.



Through organising and staging these events we are bringing together two groups of people who might not normally interact."

Tranceplant have staged seven events. They have ranged from farmers' properties in the Strathbogie Ranges, Kilcunda and nearby at Archies Creek, Nagambie. The next event will be staged on a property at Romsey.

More tree planting projects wanted

The group has also worked on Boneseed removal at the You Yangs Regional Park near Geelong. Mark says that while the group is happy to participate in all activities that aid the land and promote local habitat to survive and prosper, their main activity is tree planting.

The group has now planted 50,000 trees. Mark says the group now has such a level of expertise they can easily plant 10,000 trees a day.



"We are looking for more good projects that we can help out on. We do quality work which can be seen from the good success rate of our past events.

"Thinking about how we treat this country can be quite depressing, but facing the facts and getting involved in positive action is part of the mind shift this country needs. When we get old, we will be standing in forests that we had all sown – these are the experiences that make present volunteer efforts more than worthwhile."

Tranceplant are looking for potential sites for next year and sponsors that can help make the group's life a bit easier. For more information contact Mark Feltrin on (03) 9489 3655.

The morning after: Tranceplanters recover from a day's planting and a night's raging on the riverbank at Nagambie.



IN BRIEF

Are donations to your Landcare group tax deductible?

Most people have seen the words 'donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible' on a receipt when donating to a charity. It may be possible to obtain this same tax deductible status for your Landcare group so that all money and goods donated to the group can be deducted from the donor's taxable income.

A few Landcare groups have already successfully applied and many more may be eligible.

To be able to receive tax deductible gifts, an organisation must register as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR). To qualify as a DGR, an organisation must either be listed by name in the income tax law, or fall within one of the 13 categories set out in the law. The most likely category for a Landcare group would be Environment.

Applications are made on a form provided by staff from Environment Australia (EA). For more information on applying for DGR status, you can contact Environment Australia on (02) 6274 1467, email reo@ea.gov.au or look at their website at <http://www.environment.gov.au/epcg/cru/reo.html>

A more detailed article on the process of applying for DGR is also available on NRE's website at www.nre.vic.gov.au

New Salt and Wine Tour

A new and innovative travel group, called Taste Australia Tours, is introducing Melbourne residents to salinity in rural Victoria with some fine local wines thrown in for good measure.

The one-day Salt and Wine Tour offers city-slickers the chance to experience some of the new rural industries, learn a little of the environmental changes affecting rural landscapes and enjoy the hospitality of rural Victoria.

The first tour was run in August this year. Departing from Melbourne it included a visit to the Creswick Landcare Centre and to several salinity and revegetation sites including Moonambel and Lexton.

The tour highlighted the impact of gold mining on the landscape around Clunes, Talbot and Avoca. After lunch and wine tasting at the Warrenmang Vineyard Resort participants met with Ann and Tony Briody from the Lexton Landcare Group and planted some trees along the Creswick Creek.

The Salt and Wine Tour has been put together by natural resources consultant, Mal Brown, and actor, producer and writer, John Walker. The tour is designed for corporate groups looking for a unique tourism experience.

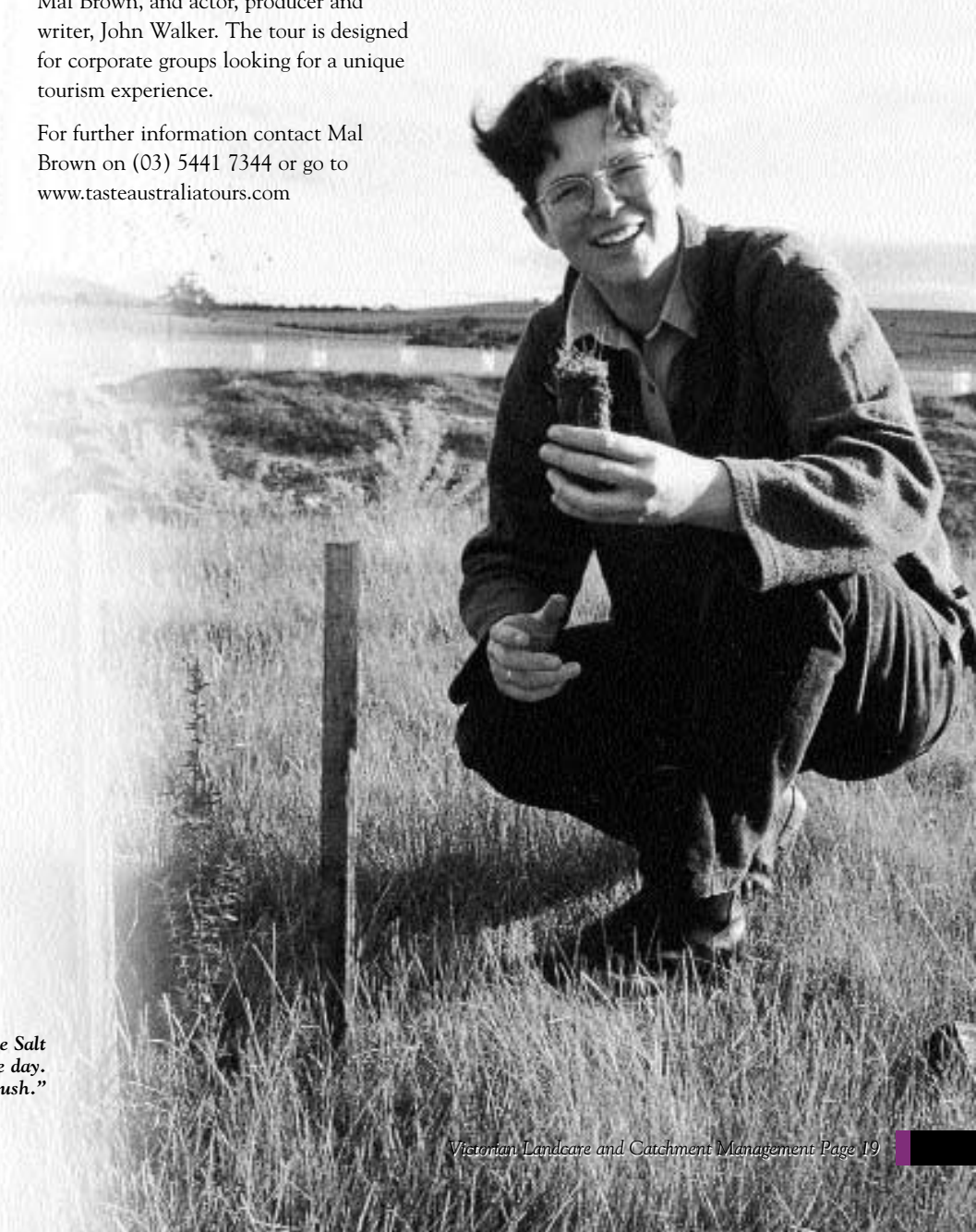
For further information contact Mal Brown on (03) 5441 7344 or go to www.tasteaustraliatours.com

Landcare Taskforce

The Second Generation Landcare Taskforce is running a workshop for community Landcarers in Bendigo during early March 2001.

The workshop aim is to develop a vision for Landcare in the 21st century. The Landcare Taskforce is currently holding informal meetings with Landcarers to develop a discussion paper which will form the basis for the workshop.

Details about the workshop will be available in January from the NRE customer service centre on 136 186.



Vera Carey from Box Hill said the Salt and Wine Tour was a very worthwhile day. "It's great to get out of the city and into the bush."

ON THE SHELF – weed info

Under Control – Pest Plant and Animal Management News

This interesting quarterly newsletter is full of accurate, up-to-date information on pest management programs and issues in Victoria, with the main emphasis on weeds.

In simple, non-technical language *Under Control* covers a wide range of research and development areas. Work undertaken by the NRE Pest Plants and Animals Program and the Cooperative Research Centre for Weed Management Systems is a particular focus.

The newsletter provides detailed coverage of biological control and includes a regular section on new weeds, notices of recent publications and Internet sites of interest.

Under Control is distributed free of charge to Landcare and friends groups, farmers, local government authorities, pest researchers and others. It is available in paper form, by email as a PDF file and on the NRE website at www.nre.vic.gov.au

Further details and sample copies are available from Ian Faithfull at KTRI on (03) 9785 0105.

Weed management guides

The Weeds CRC have recently published best practice management guides for Bridal Creeper, Boneseed, Bitou Bush, Broom, Blackberry, St John's Wort and Horehound.

Produced as glossy six-page brochures, the guides are based on the latest research findings but written in an easy to read format. The first ten copies of the guides are available free from (08) 8303 6590 or crcweeds@waite.adelaide.edu.au

Weed Navigator

The *Weed Navigator* is a directory of contacts and references to help with weed management. The first book, *Contact Directory*, lists the contact details of weed agencies and interested groups around Australia and New Zealand.

The second book, *Resource Guide*, lists and describes thousands of weed and related books, brochures, posters, web sites, journals, strategies, training courses, etc.

Weed Navigator is available from (08) 8303 6590 for \$33 including postage and handling.

Email news services

The Enviroweeds email discussion group is a free, easy way of getting in touch with over 600 people interested in environmental weeds in Australia and overseas. Subscribers receive regular news bulletins and share information on environmental weed management. There are also discussion groups for pasture and crop weeds.

For more information email Kate.Blood@nre.vic.gov.au

Weeds on the web

NRE have a series of Landcare Notes and Agnotes available on the web. The notes have clear and useful information on: General Weeds; Regionally Prohibited and Regionally Controlled Weeds; State Prohibited Weeds, Other Weeds; Biological Control of Weeds; Pest Animals; Plants and Animals; Agricultural Chemical User; and Weeds, Pests and Diseases.

The notes are easy to download and print. Go to www.nre.vic.gov.au

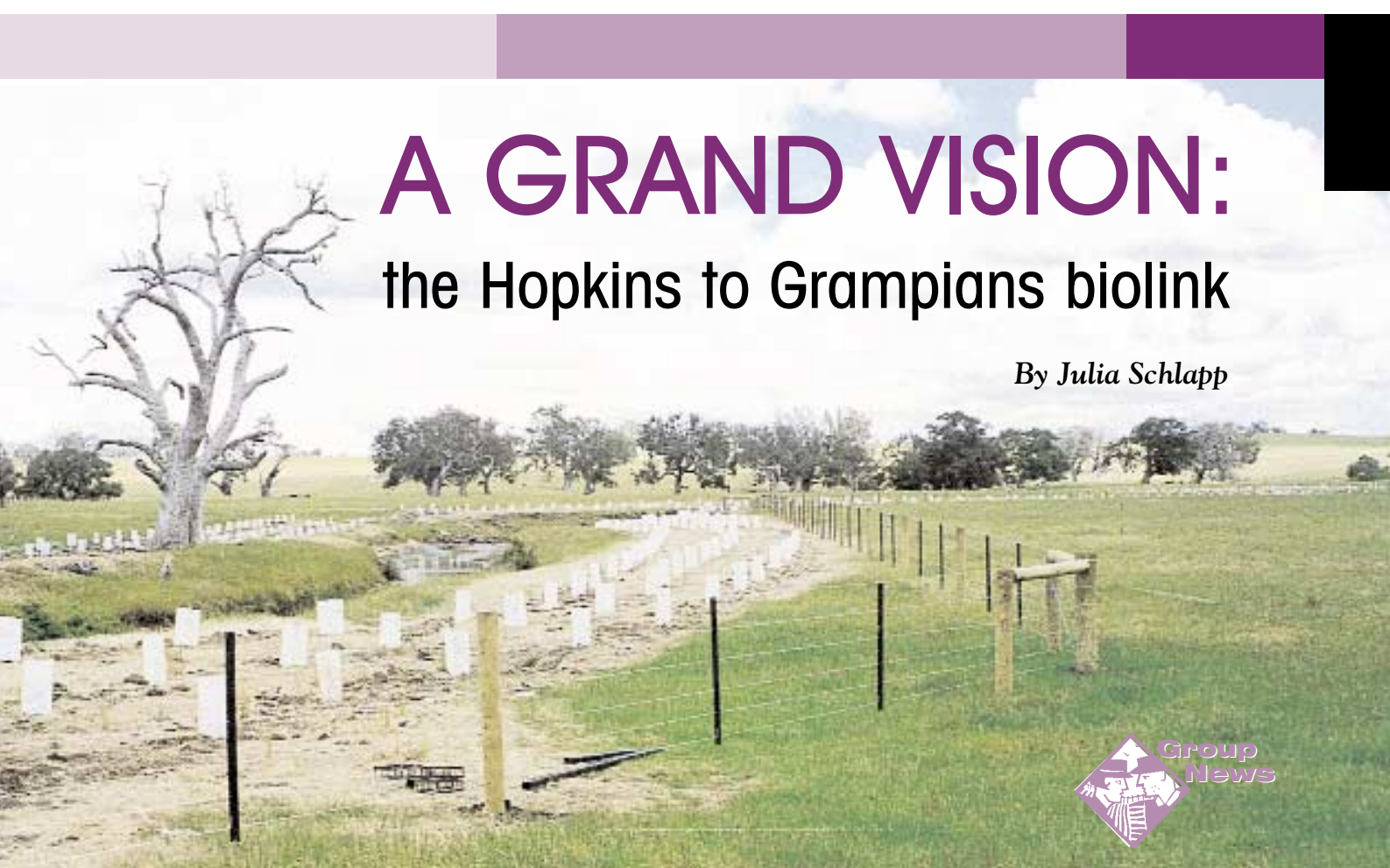
Landcare Notes are available on many weed species, including Bridal Creeper which smothers bushland and is listed as a Weed of National Significance.



A GRAND VISION:

the Hopkins to Grampians biolink

By Julia Schlapp



The biolink will fill in gaps and link up with existing areas of remnant vegetation.

Who would have guessed 12 years ago that so much could be achieved by a small band of persistent individual farmers who joined together under the Landcare banner?

With deep gully erosion, salinity and an obvious wind erosion problem, the farmers in the Glenthompson district decided to start planting trees and fencing vulnerable areas to exclude stock. As in many places, the small groups grew and they joined together in a regional catchment group of 80 farmers in 1993.

The group had a grand vision: plantations of native vegetation linking remnant vegetation to form a biolink between the Hopkins River and the Grampians.

Meanwhile other Landcare groups had formed to the south and were working on similar projects with equal persistence,

so the even greater vision of a biolink from the Otways to the Grampians was born.

The first of three years of NHT funding came through for the project in 1999. This year has seen the group erect 79.5 kilometres of fencing and protect 121 hectares of revegetation (including 57 hectares of riparian revegetation). Over 40,000 tree seedlings were planted and 130 kilometres of direct seeding put in with good success rates in spite of the dry conditions.

Fortunately many of the landholders along the link were far sighted and had protected a large percentage of private remnant vegetation. There are also some roadside areas with good grassland and woodland stands for the corridors to link to. The work plan for the rest of 2000 includes erecting a further 81 kilometres of fencing, planting 55,000 seedlings and 39 kilograms of seed.

Such a big project needs a big cast. Fifty landholders are involved in the plantings as well as local schools, the Mulleratarong Centre – an adult training support service for adults with disabilities and the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

Such large areas of planting require some considerable planning and organisation. Greening Australia's Portland Seed Bank, local nurseries and seed collectors provided advice and collected seed from local remnant vegetation. Only a few species used were not indigenous to the area but will add diversification of food source for native birds and animals.

Trust for Nature and students from RMIT are assisting in several flora and fauna surveys in the region, including looking for the Striped Legless Lizard and an experiment on the use of mycorrhizal fungi to enhance direct seeding success rates. The involvement of outsiders greatly enhances the knowledge and enjoyment of the local landholders.

The vision of three corridors running from the Hopkins to the Grampians has expanded into a network of corridors that will link remnant vegetation along the way.

For further information contact Julia Schlapp on (03) 5577 8265.



Taking a break: Tree planters from the Mulleratarong Centre are working on the biolink.



Natural
Heritage
Trust

Helping Communities
Helping Australia

A Federal Government Initiative

War on our worst weeds

Eight of Australia's worst weeds will be targeted as part of a Federal Government initiated plan to combat 20 of the country's most damaging weed pests.

"The Weeds of National Significance strategies have been released in an effort to move one step closer to a win against significant weeds that contribute to billion-dollar costs for primary producers and impact heavily on conservation values," Federal Minister for Forestry and Conservation, Wilson Tuckey said.

The Federal Government has committed \$28.5 million to the National Weeds Program of the Natural Heritage Trust over a six-year period to help manage nationally significant weed problems.

The national strategies for blackberry, Chilean needlegrass, Parkinsonia, Parthenium, Prickly Acacia, Mesquite, Rubber Vine and Serrated Tussock form a major component of the National Weeds Strategy and focus on minimising the current and future impact on all Australians.

"The strategies are a proactive attempt to manage priority weeds already present in Australia, weeds that pose future threats to primary industries, land management, human or animal welfare, biodiversity and conservation values," Mr Tuckey said.

NATIONAL ACTION

Weeds of National Significance

Alien species, which include weeds, are the second biggest threat to the world's biodiversity behind habitat removal. Most of the plants that cause weed problems in Australia have originated in other countries and account for about 15% of our flora. Weeds are conservatively estimated to cost Australian primary industries alone in excess of \$3.3 billion each year by increasing production costs and reducing productivity.

While State and Territory governments are responsible for land use matters, including weed control,

the Federal Government is taking a leadership role in weed issues through: preventing weeds entering the country through border control and quarantine; supporting community weed management activities; supporting weeds research and development; and managing weeds responsibly on Commonwealth land.

Last year, as part of the National Weeds Strategy, 20 Weeds of National Significance were agreed to by the Federal Government and the States/Territories. These were chosen on the grounds of their invasiveness, impacts, potential for spread and socio-economic and environmental values.

The 20 Weeds of National Significance are:

- Alligator Weed (*Alternanthera philoxeroides*)
- Athel Pine (*Tamarix aphylla*)
- Bitou bush/Boneseed (*Chrysanthemoides monilifera*)
- Blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* agg)
- Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus aparagoides*)
- Cabomba (*Cabomba caroliniana*)
- Chilean Needle Grass (*Nassella neesiana*)
- Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*)
- Hymenachne (*Hymenachne amplexicaulis*)
- Lantana (*Lantana camara*)
- Mesquite (*Prosopis* spp.)
- Mimosa (*Mimosa pigra*)
- Parkinsonia (*Parkinsonia aculeata*)
- Parthenium Weed (*Parthenium hysterophorus*)
- Pond Apple (*Annona glabra*)
- Prickly Acacia (*Acacia nilotica* subsp. *indica*)
- Rubbervine (*Cryptostegia grandiflora*)
- Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*)
- Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*)
- Willows (*Salix* spp. except *S. babylonica*, *S. X calodendron* and *S. X reichardtii*)

Mimosa pigra



Information about the National Weeds Strategy or the draft Weeds of National Significance strategies is available from the National Weeds Strategy website www.weeds.org.au

AGAINST WEEDS

Communities put weeds in the firing line

Blackberry, willows and broom are on the hit list for local communities on the eastern fringe of Melbourne.

Funded under the Natural Heritage Trust's Bushcare Program, the North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare Group aims to protect remnant vegetation and revegetate a continuous strategic link from Warrandyte State Park to Kinglake National Park along Watsons Creek.

They are also working to enhance the biodiversity of the existing remnant vegetation and habitats link through fencing, weed removal, a stream frontage program, planting and development of a seed orchard.

Once the weeds are cleared, including hand weeding where necessary, they will commence planting native species such as wattles, tree fern and Mountain Tea-tree.

By the end of the project's first year, with the support of a diverse range of community groups including indigenous groups, schools, friends groups and landholders, more than half the original targets had been achieved.

"Sites have actually increased in number and private landowner response has been very positive. Several groupings within the corridor should result in new friends or Landcare groups being established," said Project Coordinator Margaret Burke.

"The local Aboriginal reconciliation committee has also decided to join us and two important sites which had no community overseeing the area will be managed by them," she said.

The Trust-funded project has also generated extensive in-kind support from a range of bodies including the Nillumbik Shire Council, Melbourne Water and Greening Australia.



Members of the North Warrandyte Osborne Peninsula Landcare Group participating in on-ground works as part of their project to enhance the Watsons Creek Habitat Corridor.

Federal Funding in the fight against weeds

The Federal Government has allocated \$28.5 million from the Natural Heritage Trust to the National Weeds Program.

In addition, under the Trust's 'one-stop-shop' arrangements, support may be provided for projects that address the underlying causes of weed problems as part of broader natural resource management issues in a region.

(Funding is generally not provided for the control of weeds. This is because most projects of this address the symptoms and not the underlying causes of weed problems, resulting in short-term outcomes.) It is estimated that more than \$46 million has been allocated to more than 760 'one-stop-shop' projects with a weed component in the first four years of the Trust.

Applications for the next round of Natural Heritage Trust funding for community environmental and natural resource management projects close on 23 February 2001. To obtain an application form please contact your local Federal Member of Parliament.

Beetle Breeding beating Parkinsonia

The spread of Parkinsonia has been dramatically reduced in the Northern Territory's Roper River catchment thanks to an innovative beetle breeding project funded by the Natural Heritage Trust.

Now in its fourth year of Trust funding, the Roper River Landcare Group Bio-Control Breeding and Release Program has been producing thousands of *Pentabrotus maini* which is particularly partial to the seeds of *Parkinsonia aculeata*. The beetle eats the Parkinsonia seeds, thus preventing the weed from germinating and spreading.

In the early 1990s, the uncontrolled establishment and spread of this woody weed was the primary land management issue in the Roper River area. In 1997, the Roper River Landcare Group successfully applied for Natural Heritage Trust funding to trial the use of mechanical, chemical and biological control agents in the Roper catchment.

The beetle breeding program has been such a success that 30,000 beetles have been exported to other areas of the Territory and Western Australia.

Over the life of the project the Natural Heritage Trust has contributed funding of \$38,400 mainly for the maintenance of a beetle breeding centre.

Coordinator for the Roper River Landcare Group, Liz Brown, believes this a small price for such effective weed control.

"A unique feature of this is that it shows that a Landcare group can successfully set up and run a biological control breeding program," she said.