



MOUNT LOFTY RANGES GRASSY WOODLAND NETWORK



m l r g w n **NEWSLETTER 5**

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Editorial

I have applied for an Envirofund grant to continue funding for the Network and as evaluation has been delayed, I am without funding. I will continue to produce newsletters and reply to queries but workshops will need to be scaled down until funding recommences. So I apologise to those who were looking forward to attending your first workshop or additional ones this year.

Workshop on bird identification and bird banding



Tom Bradley demonstrating how to band birds to an attentive audience (photo: P Paton)

The workshop planned for 28th March was cancelled due to wet conditions but we eventually ran the workshop on bird identification and banding at Happy Valley Reservoir on 14 June. A lovely day weather-wise and a group of 12 participants brushed up their skills on the theory and practice of bird id. SA blue gum was flowering at our field site and we caught over 100 birds of about 12 species as well as enjoying the diversity of native plants.

A group also learnt how to score eucalypt flowering phenology on the blue gums (*see below*). This technique can be used at any site where there are at least 50 individual eucalypt trees and is best carried out when at least some of the trees are flowering. Collecting information on the percentage of buds, flowers and spent flowers as well as tree condition will provide important baseline data for, amongst other things, tracking the affects of climate change. Thanks to Tom Bradley for help on the day and to SA Water for providing their conference room and reservoir site.



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Bushcarer Musings

For the past three and a half years, I've been a Bush For Lifer, caring for a lovely patch of mall box *Eucalyptus porosa* grassy woodland on a roadside reserve near Morialta Conservation Park. The reserve is on a fairly steep south-facing slope and is bounded by residential properties, road and paddocks full of wild olives.

Prior to commencing work, BFL had conducted some Bush Action Team days to eliminate the big olives from the site and I derived enormous satisfaction last autumn from seeing huge dinner plate size fungi erupting from the old olive stumps. Although most of the olives and woody weeds have been removed, the weed burden is still heavy. There are many different weed grasses present – oats, brome, phalaris, cocksfoot, briza, dogstail. Then there are the perennial weeds such as plantain, sheep's burnet, salsify, scabiosa, guildford grass and the ubiquitous soursob.

As a trained horticulturalist who has become a bushcarer, I've had to essentially unlearn many things that I've been previously taught. In bush regeneration, there's no cultivation, just minimum disturbance; no planting out, just natural regeneration; no pest control, just careful weeding. My first inclination when beginning work as a bushcarer (**despite** knowing that I must work from good areas out) was to get stuck willy-nilly into whatever weeds looked most noticeable and annoying. I now know from bitter experience that this is essentially a useless exercise, and just means much more follow-up work. I now know that scabiosa and plantain seedlings can still be coming up three years after you've removed the old plants; and that selecting just one type of weed for removal means that the other weeds return with a vengeance next season having been freed from competition and that in areas where there are few or no natives, my nicely weeded areas are pretty likely to be colonized by the same weeds again.

These days, I work only in my slowly expanding good areas, going back over them on a regular basis, mopping up whatever weeds appear as the seasons come and go, and slowly getting rid of the weed seed bank. I've watched the natives flourish in these areas and sometimes, joy of joys, have seen a new species appear as if out of nowhere.

Now whenever I feel tempted to stray further out to attack a patch of particularly annoying weeds, I get

out my copy of Joan Bradley's "Bringing back the bush" to restore me to my senses. I do still, however, roam over the site on some visits, on the lookout for any particularly nasty weeds that might have blown in and need to be dealt with summarily – weeds such as African daisy, broom, Monadenia and olives. This summer in particular I've had to remove a lot of young African daisy seedlings from throughout the site.

What I have found really useful, in charting the progress of the site and of my progress as a bushcarer, is writing down a few lines after each visit, in addition to filling in the BFL progress form. As soon as I arrive home, I document what the weather was like, what areas I worked in, what weeds were dealt with and anything particularly noteworthy, including any interactions with adjacent landowners. It becomes quite a valuable record and it's interesting to look back and see how much you've done.

After three and a half years, I find that I am more committed to the bushcare cause than ever. I'm finally seeing some results from all the hours of weeding. Especially pleasing is seeing the native grasses and Lomandras flowering and busily multiplying where formerly there was just a sea of weeds. I also enjoy seeing the orchids reasserting themselves after being freed from the tyranny of Oxalis; and unearthing little treasures like sundews and native fern from under a thick thatch of annual weed grasses.

It is from these things that I derive a real sense of achievement and all the reward and incentive I need to 'keep on weeding'.

Ann Baird



Drosera whittakeri a sundew (photo: L Paton)

Friends of Cromer Catchment

As flagged in Newsletter 4 the Friends of Cromer Conservation Park is up and running. We held our first weeding day there on Sunday 9th July – a rather chilly start to the day but we enjoyed the sunshine and company as well as tackling some gorse and guarding about 20 additional *Banksia marginata* seedlings so that they can grow into mature trees to replace the existing trees, many of which are showing signs of senescence. Kangaroos are either eating or crushing any unguarded seedlings. Contact Penny for details if you would like to help on 27th August and/or 24th September. As well as volunteer effort, boundary fencing will be occurring and weed contractors will be working in the Park.

Western Cape Bridal Creeper alert

An alert has been issued regarding the recent discovery of a new form of bridal creeper in the Adelaide Hills, the Western Cape form. This has been known to be naturalised in the SE of SA for at least a decade but has not previously been reported in the Adelaide Hills. It is largely unaffected by the bridal creeper rust and has now been identified in Angove and Anstey Hill parks. It is not easy to identify; generally its leaves are larger, darker and duller than the usual bridal creeper. The easiest way to identify it is to dig up some tubers which are larger and have a different orientation. More information can be found at the website:

<http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/bridalcreeper/> . If you think you know of an infestation of Western Cape bridal creeper, please contact Dennis Gannaway (National Project Coordinator) on (08) 8303 9748, or Helen Vonow at the Adelaide Herbarium on (08) 8222 9392. It will be helpful to bring in a specimen to be identified for you; remember to record the location as accurately as possible, eg via GPS coordinates.

Mundulla Yellows Research

This interesting paper by researchers Joanne E. Luck, Rosa Crnov, Barbara Czerniakowski, Ian W. Smith and Jane R. Moran reports on their investigation of the presence of biotic agents associated with Mundulla Yellows and the role of biotic agents. Although no pathogenic fungi, bacteria, phytoplasmas or insect pests or vectors were found to be associated with the disease during this study, nematode analysis identified *Merlinius* spp. to be associated with soil (but not roots) from

symptomatic trees. A copy of this article from "Plant Disease" (Volume 90 No 4, April 2006) is available for viewing at the Conservation Centre.

Grassy Woodland block for sale

Vale Rd (off Wellington Rd), Wistow. First house on RHS after crossing Archer Hill Rd, Grid no. 108072 (on gate). Ring to inspect - Tim Pitcher 85375237. 11.37 ha of remnant (and regenerating) Grassy Woodland, including 6.4 hectares under Heritage Agreement (in progress, not yet signed). 3 bedroom timber-clad 1960s house in need of some renovation (also potential alternative house sites), shed, store room, stable (useable but old), 5 tanks total 46000 gallons rain water including header tank of 32000 gallon capacity, garden irrigation system, power supply. Very scenic property located along quiet no-through road. Low \$300 000s negotiable.

"Turning Plantings into Habitat"

The Land Management Program & Bungala Restoration Steering Committee will be presenting this field day at Yankalilla on Saturday **26 August 2006** from 9.30am to 12.30pm. The topic details include visiting pink gum-blue gum woodland and a revegetation site, management options to turn a paddock into woodland, site preparation for direct seeding and tube stock plantings, selecting the right species for the site, and looking into whether conservation plantings are achieving your goals and whether birds are using the conservation plantings. Registration is essential as numbers will be strictly limited. For further details and to register please phone Mary Crawford on Mobile 04188 48702 or email macrawford@westnet.com.au.

Leaving Erica for Dead – the wack-and-stack method

By Amelia Hurren (8336 0954) and Ann Prescott (8391 7511), *Bush Management Advisers, MLR*. Several Erica species are serious weeds in areas of bushland - particularly in high rainfall areas such as stringybark habitat. Spraying is often not effective. Here is a **Handy Weeding Hint** about how to leave them for dead once and for all. Erica has a large root swelling a bit like a mallee root (or lignotuber) where the stem becomes the root. However the junction between the stem and the root - just under the swelling - is very fragile. For almost all

sizes of Erica up to about head high, there are two techniques which are effective:

Sway and Snap - For single trunked plants, hold the trunk and sway it from side to side. With minimal effort, the tap roots will break and the whole plant, lignotuber and all, will pull out of the ground easily with very little soil disturbance.

Wack and Stack - For more stubborn or multi-stemmed plants, hitting the side of the lignotuber sharply with a mallet or sledgehammer (or your boot) while applying a bit of upward tension on the branches with your other hand (or an assistant does this) will break the top and the lignotuber away from the root. As long as the swelling breaks away with the stem, it is Instant Death.

For big Ericas - If the Erica plants are too big for the 'sway-and-snap' or 'wack-and-stack' methods, frill-and-swab and drill-and-fill are both effective options. The frill-and-swab method involves cutting through the stem about 20 cm above the ground, frilling lots of little slots into the stem and filling them with herbicide. Scraping off the outer layer of the lignotuber and swabbing is also effective. Drill-and-fill is drilling holes every 2cm at an angle into the top of the lignotuber and filling them with herbicide.

See the book Stop Bushland Weeds published by the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia for identification and further details.

Butterfly Conservation SA News

BCSA is planning an awareness campaign to bring butterflies back to Adelaide's urban gardens. During 2006 and 2007 they will be promoting the growing of butterfly food plants to local councils and conservation agencies and in July 2007 during National Tree Day, will launch the campaign to the general public.

The campaign will be promoted during an exhibition at the SA Museum (October and November 2007) and at displays in the community, including local council offices and shopping centres. At these displays there may be opportunities to promote the work various groups are doing in the Adelaide Mt. Lofty Ranges NRM region.

While butterflies are attracted to many plants, including exotics, BCSA has chosen to promote indigenous plants and has compiled a database of nectar plants and larval (caterpillar) host plants. The lists are too long to provide here but can be given on application to Penny. A website is being planned, to

include a list of 'butterfly plants' specific to each Adelaide area and soil type. A 'Butterfly Watch' program will be undertaken as a lead up to the SA Museum exhibition.

A reminder of the great butterfly websites

<http://www.chariot.net.au/~bcsa/index.htm> (BCSA) or

<http://www.chariot.net.au/~rgrund/index.htm> (SA Butterflies).

New Books on SA Plants

Congratulations to Phil Bagust, Lynda Tout-Smith and the Urban Forest Biodiversity Program for 'The Native Plants of Adelaide'. This handy guide, illustrated with quality photographs, details over 100 of the more common indigenous plants/plant groups arranged by habitat. Available for \$19.95 from all good book stores.

Another new book - 'Grasses of South Australia' - is hot off the press. Written by John Jessop & illustrated by Dashorst & James, all native and introduced grasses in SA are covered. Price is \$49.95 plus postage, but discounts are available for orders of 10 or more or for members of the Native Grass Resources Group. Enquiries to Wakefield Press, 8362 8800 or sales@wakefieldpress.com.au.

Native Orchid Talk

The Sturt Upper Reaches Landcare Group presents Bob Bates talking about the Native Orchids of the Mt Lofty Ranges on Tuesday 15th August at 7.30pm at the Upper Sturt Primary School, Upper Sturt Rd. A gold coin donation.

Phytophthora Newsletter

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/plantsand.html#dieback>

This Newsletter contains information on:

- a newly published report "Threatened plant species at risk from Phytophthora in South Australia"
- minimising the spread of Phytophthora from revegetation activities
- reports newly identified Phytophthora infestations.

Weeds CRC Newsletter

You can view the latest instalment of the Weeds CRS's newsletter, Weed Watch at:

<http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/publications/index.html>

A quick scan of items did not elicit anything that looked very relevant to MLR woodlands.