



# MOUNT LOFTY RANGES GRASSY WOODLAND NETWORK



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## Editorial

Thanks to a successful Envirofund grant and funding from the NHT via Nature Conservation Society, the Network lives on in 2007. I'm not planning any workshops for the summer of 2006-07, but there will be more workshops when the cooler (and hopefully wetter!) weather returns. If there are topics that you would like covered in workshops or field trips, or if you have any other queries, please contact me.

I wish you a safe and happy Christmas and New Year period and look forward to catching up in 2007.

## A few grassy ecosystem plant cousins

Some common or widespread plant species seem to have a 'grassy ecosystem cousin' that is found only in grassy ecosystems. Sometimes, you can find both the common and the grassy ecosystem specialist next to each other in a grassy ecosystem, but only the 'common cousin' in other habitats.

The grassy ecosystem plants also seem to flower later in the season, often in early summer. You might think to yourself "That Vanilla Lily is flowering very late..." but on closer inspection it will be the grassy ecosystem specialist Nodding Chocolate-lily instead. Here are a few other examples.

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## The more common or widespread species

*Acacia myrtifolia* Myrtle Wattle  
*Acaena echinata* Sheeps Burr or Bidgee-widgee  
*Arthropodium strictum* Vanilla-lily  
*Chrysocephalum apiculatum* Common Everlasting  
*Dianella revoluta* Black-anther Flax-lily  
*Diuris comyrosa* Bulldogs  
*Pultenaea daphnoides* Large-leaved Bush Pea  
*Wahlenbergia stricta* Tall Bluebell  
*Wurmbea dioica* Early Nancy

## The grassy ecosystem species

*Acacia acinacea* Gold Dust Wattle  
*Acaena novae-zelandiae* Bidgee-widgee  
*Arthropodium fimbriatum* Nodding Chocolate-lily  
*Chrysocephalum semipapposum* Clustered Everlasting  
*Dianella longifolia* Pale Flax-lily  
*Diuris behrii* Cowslip  
*Pultenaea largiflorens* Twiggy Bush Pea  
*Wahlenbergia luteola* Bluebell  
*Wurmbea uniflora* (Not-So) Early Nancy / Single-flower Early Nancy

Thanks to Bush Management Advisers Ann Prescott (8336 0903) and Amelia Hurren for permission to reproduce this article.

## How to tell the Nodding Chocolate-lily

As indicated in the above article, *Arthropodium fimbriatum* (the nodding chocolate lily) flowers later (usually November-December) than the more common *A. strictum*. The other difference is that the flowers of the former species grow in small groups not singly along the stems.



*Arthropodium strictum*, Millbrook Reservoir (Photo: L. Paton)

## Plantings to attract butterflies

To celebrate the Butterfly Conservation Society's launch "Bring the Butterflies Back to Adelaide Campaign" in 2007, indigenous grower Karen Lane is putting together butterfly host and nectar plant gardening kits. Plants will be sourced from locally indigenous native plants of Adelaide and there will be a variety of kits suitable for large and small gardens and pots across the coastal and Adelaide metropolitan area.

If you are interested please email or write to Karen and she will get some order forms out if there is enough interest. Email- [growingbush@adam.com.au](mailto:growingbush@adam.com.au) or write to- Karen Lane, 31 Gum Grove, Belair 5052.

## Big Bad Native Plants!

Have you ever planted an Australian native plant, only to be told that it's a serious weed and should be removed? How can a native plant become a weed?

Plants native to one part of Australia are not necessarily native to other parts of this vast continent. Here are some examples of plants that are Australian natives that are now serious weeds in parts of the Mount Lofty Ranges.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Native to....
Cootamundra Wattle	<i>Acacia baileyana</i>	Southwest NSW
Sydney Golden Wattle	<i>Acacia longifolia</i> var <i>longifolia</i>	NSW and Vic
Silver Wattle	<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	NSW, Vic, Tas
Black Wattle	<i>Acacia decurrens</i>	NSW
Golden Wreath Wattle	<i>Acacia saligna</i>	WA
Flinders Ranges Wattle	<i>Acacia iteaphylla</i>	Flinders Ranges
Pincushion Hakea	<i>Hakea laurina</i>	WA
Rosemary Grevillea	<i>Grevillea rosmarinifolia</i>	NSW
Coastal Tea-tree	<i>Leptospermum laevigatum</i>	NSW, Vic, Tas
Sweet Pittosporum	<i>Pittosporum undulatum</i>	NSW, Qld, Vic
Bracelet Honey-myrtle	<i>Melaleuca armillaris</i>	NSW, Vic
Tasmanian Blue Gum	<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>	Tas, Vic
Sugar Gum	<i>Eucalyptus cladocalyx</i>	KI, Eyre Peninsula, Flinders Ranges
Sollya	<i>Billardiera heterophylla</i>	WA

## What is the problem?

Planting species outside of their local or indigenous range means that the conditions (such as climate, rainfall, insect predators) are different and often there is nothing to keep these species in check. These non-local species can spread uncontrolled and in some cases can also hybridise with local native species. Like any weed, these non-local natives can take over and the result is that native habitats are no longer suitable for local plants and animals.

## What you can do:

- ✓ Collect seed for native plantings from your own property, or within 5km.
- ✓ Get professional advice about what plants are native to your local area.
- ✓ Purchase seed or plants from a reputable source.
- ✓ Know what you are buying. Check if you are getting a local variety (for example, *Acacia longifolia* var *sophorae* is the local variety and *Acacia longifolia* var *longifolia* is the weed from interstate).
- ✓ Remove all non-local native species at the first signs of spreading, and control seedlings as you would any weed.
- ✓ Remove all non-local native species on your property over time, and replace with indigenous species.

See also the book **Stop Bushland Weeds – A guide to successful weeding in South Australia's bushland** by Meg Robertson which is available from the Nature Conservation Society of South Australia for the price of \$27.50 GST inclusive.

Thanks to Bush Management Advisers Ann Prescott (8336 0903) and Amelia Hurren for permission to reprint this article.

## Round 9 Envirofund information now available

Round 9 will open in February 2007 – you can get more information from the Envirofund Hotline on 1800 303 863 or check out the website [www.nht.gov.au/envirofund/](http://www.nht.gov.au/envirofund/), where you can register to get the forms sent to you.

**The September edition of the Phytophthora Newsletter** is on the DEH website with information on new boot cleaning stations, remedial work and suspected new areas.

I was also recently sent a hard copy of the 2006 DEH publication "Phytophthora Management Guidelines – also available at <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/plantsand.html>.

### Weeds CRC application rejected

**Weedwatch 13** (November 2006) begins with some disappointing news – that the Invasive Plants CRC application has been rejected for its 3<sup>rd</sup> seven-year term, with the current Weeds CRC finishing mid-2008. This leaves Australia without a national organisation to coordinate weed research and extension, despite weeds being the largest cost for most agricultural enterprises in Australia and alien species being the second greatest cause of biodiversity decline (after habitat loss). Alternative funding is being investigated.

#### In other news:

- The proceedings of the 15th Australian Weeds Conference are available for \$90 (+ \$10 postage) from [www.weedinfo.com.au](http://www.weedinfo.com.au)
- Count your petals and help stop oleander spread – an oleander cultivar with single pink petals has established in the Flinders Ranges and it appears that this cultivar is the most likely to become a weed in the bush
- A new publication, 'Economic impact assessment of Australian weed biological control', states that over 104 years the annual return was \$95.3M for an average annual outlay of \$4.3M, involving 14 successful projects
- New environmental weed management guides are being prepared for an additional 8 species. NRM bodies were surveyed about their top 10 environmental weeds and 8 species were chosen on the basis that there is insufficient extension information available on their management in natural ecosystems. They are –
  - \**Lycium ferocissimum* (African boxthorn)
  - \**Hyparrhenia hirta* (Coolatai grass)
  - \**Cytisus scoparius*, *Genista monspessulana* & related brooms
  - \**Cenchrus ciliatus* (buffel grass)
  - \**Vinca major* (periwinkle)
  - \**Pennisetum* spp. (feather & mission grasses)
  - \**Erica lusitanica* & other *Erica* spp. (Spanish heath etc)
  - \**Mactadyena unguis-cati* (cat's claw creeper)

[NB The \* indicates that these or related species are covered in 'Stop Bushland Weeds']

For the newsletter itself, see [www.weeds.crc.org.au/documents/weed\\_watch\\_vol2\\_no13.pdf](http://www.weeds.crc.org.au/documents/weed_watch_vol2_no13.pdf)

### Weeds Fact Sheets available

Trees for Life have recently produced two new fact sheets, one on *Monadenia* (based on Peter Tucker's trials on different methods of control) and one on drill and fill treatment for olives/cut and swab technique for woody weeds. They are both available from TFL or from me – please send a stamped self-addressed envelope to Penny if you would like them posted.

### Friends of Cromer CP

A small group of local people and Adelaide residents have been visiting Cromer CP through the winter and spring guarding *Banksia marginata* seedlings (from kangaroo munching and crushing) and gradually removing gorse from a long-leaved box/banksia woodland area. The weeding began in 2003 and there are still little gorse seedlings coming up, so we know that we are there for the long haul. Watering of the seedling banksias began early due to the very dry winter/spring and will continue through the summer. Experience from other reserves in the Mt Crawford region tells us that very few or no seedlings will make it through the first summer without extra water.

Also a fence has been erected between the park and Forestry SA land planted to pines to prevent incursion of stock.



Jenny Hanna guarding banksias at Cromer (Photo: Tom Bradley)

## Weeds, Biodiversity and Butterflies

Environmental weeds threaten nearly all biological communities in Australia. Weeds are costing the taxpayer billions in lost production and degradation of natural ecosystems. Second only to land clearing, invasive species are the main cause of Australia's plants and animals disappearing from areas where they were once common.

Weeds and feral animals threaten the habitat of native fauna so they may in turn become rare, threatened, vulnerable, endangered and then extinct. But what happens when native animals adjust to the introduced or weedy plants and use the resources provided by them? Most ecologists would say that if the loss of their native food is the only threat which is causing the animal's decline, then plant more native food species.

What do you do when an endangered animal like the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo is counting on weeds for food? The Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo is a species which has adapted to the introduced pinecone seed for food when its natural food species, e.g. hakea, have been cleared or invaded. The pine trees in turn also affect the native habitat of other animals. So what do you do? Because these native shrubs may take 10 - 20 years before they start to provide enough seeds for food, the process of clearing pines needed to be done slowly. The process should start with removing the seedlings and pines that are not in the cockatoo's home range.

Now for a more difficult question.

What if the animal is introduced and depends solely on weeds for survival? Some who are aiming for pre-European ecological balance would remove both the weed and the animal. Some ecologists would ask if that introduced animal or plant is taking the niche of a native animal or whether it competes for food and resources with other native animals? After considering these factors, the decision then could be made whether to keep either of these species. You wouldn't think Wanderers were taking the niche of a native animal.

I often hear "What does it matter if we plant weeds in urban gardens where they do not affect native

vegetation? Besides, there are so many weeds in the reserves anyway, one more won't hurt!"

Weeds have the ability to spread far and wide by wind, water and birds – often degrade the last remnant of native vegetation in urban reserve areas. In the meantime there are volunteers who spend hours in the reserves and parks hand weeding and spot spraying weeds in order to restore native plant and animal habitat. Bushcarers are very passionate about conservation, like the people who are working to conserve butterflies, but when they meet a confrontation may arise.

The Wanderer butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is a self-introduced butterfly from North America and its larval food plant is *Gomphocarpus cancellatus* formerly *Asclepias rotundifolia* commonly known as broad leaf cottonbush or milkweed. This plant has been listed, as a noxious plant because the milk sap is an irritant to the skin and eyes as any bushcarer who has tackled this plant knows too well. *Gomphocarpus fruticosus* (swan plant) which has narrower leaves is also an environmental weed in Adelaide and the Mount Lofty Region. Cottonbush is usually a weed of disturbed soils and is not as invasive in intact bushland as bridal creeper or blackberry. However areas of bush where the soils are easily disturbed i.e. sandy soils can have large infestations of this environmental weed. The cottonbush seeds that look similar to dandelion seeds are easily spread by winds.

Would it be a fair compromise in the bushland situation to remove cottonbush plants except for the plants which have butterfly eggs or larval caterpillars? On these individual plants remove only the flowers and seeds leaving the leaves for the Wanderer larvae to munch and thrive? Or if you already have cottonbush in the urban garden remove the flowers before they produce seed. If you remove the cottonbush plant in your garden replace it with a larval food plant which will attract one of the indigenous butterflies maybe even one which is on the threatened or endangered list.

Thanks to Maria Johns for allowing me to reprint an edited version of her article from the Butterfly Conservation Society of SA Newsletter No. 25.