



# MOUNT LOFTY RANGES GRASSY WOODLAND NETWORK



m l r g w n **NEWSLETTER 3**

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## Grassy Woodlands Network – Where to from here?

Well it is hard to believe but the Network has been operating for about 9 months now and it is time to take stock – to decide where to from here and from whence the funding (always the perennial problem!). I would appreciate your honest feedback and have provided yet another questionnaire which I am hoping you will take the time over the holiday season to fill in and return. I will be taking a break from mid-December till the end of January, but will be attending to (e)mail after New Year. Wishing you all a relaxing and safe holiday period and forget about those weeds for a few days.

## 2005 Workshops

The Network has presented five workshops over the last three months – quite an achievement – and my thanks go to fellow organisers and presenters: Faye McGoldrick, Tom Bradley, Janet Pedler, Bob Myers, Ellen Bennett, David Paton and Lydia Paton. SA Water also generously provided office space and the freedom of Happy Valley reservoir for 2 workshops for which I am very grateful. Feedback from participants has been mainly positive, although I think that Workshop 4 tried to cover too much ground in the time available and we could expand on these themes next year: plant and bird identification and weed control techniques, with practical demonstrations.

I have notes from workshops 1-4 and am happy to make these available to anyone who is interested in receiving them – either email me to receive them this way or ring me/write to me and I will post them. Grassy News 2 detailed what was covered in each workshop.



Workshop participants 'measuring' a tree at Happy Valley Reservoir (photo: Monique Blason)

## Weed/Native Lookalikes

Copies of the 15 TFL Weed/Native Lookalike sheets are still available – please send a stamped (\$1) self-addressed A4 envelope to Penny at 47 Gilbert St Gilberton 5081.

## Another Weed/Native Lookalike that I have come across recently in my garden!!

Silver grass is another name for a group of introduced grasses also known as fescues, *Vulpia* spp. These plants are native to the Mediterranean and/or central and western Europe and at least one species *V. fasciculata* is a major weed of mallee farming areas in South Australia. Most species are widespread in this state and do spread into bushland and gardens, **where they can be confused easily with native wallaby grasses**. They are annuals which flower and set seed about the same time as wallaby grasses (late spring through early summer) and by the time you realise that this is not a wallaby grass, the damage may be done and the seed source for next year is already there. So watch any grasses that look like wallaby grass carefully as they flower and be ready to hand pull silver grass when you are sure that this is what it is.

Below are photos of both to help you with your identification. Many wallaby grasses have a purplish

tinge to the flower heads – silver grass can have this in a minor way but often lacks it. **Remember the golden rule of weeding though, if you are not sure, then don't pull or poison it.** If you are unsure, take a piece and get someone to help you identify it.



Wallaby grass *Danthonia* sp. (left) & silver grass *Vulpia* sp. (right) (photo: Lydia Paton)

### Progress of a Novice Bushcarer

About a year ago I started out as the official Bush For Life person on a small very disturbed council site of grey box grassy woodland about half way up Old Belair Rd. Management is influenced by the presence of well-used walking and bike tracks, a fire access road and fuel reduction strategies.

Fortified by a Trees For Life bushcare workshop, and experience with several Bush Action Teams, I set to work under the close eye of the site supervisor and some fairly simple initial instructions to cut and swab scabious and pull boneseed seedlings. However it was obvious that annual grass weeds were a big issue and that these species would need to be distinguished from various *Austrostipa*, *Themeda* and *Danthonia* species...so I felt a steep learning curve coming on. However I just loved being out on the site even with the various types of traffic rushing past. Fortunately this is often countered by the appearance of yellow-tailed black cockatoos, Adelaide rosellas, grey fantails, or even a koala.

Through summer and autumn things were fairly leisurely, beheading and then spraying the perennial phalaris and cocksfoot, targeting seedlings of olive, broom, hawthorn and boneseed, and using the weeding wand on the plantain. I learned to apply discipline and patience in the face of my lack of knowledge, particularly after being tempted to wipe out what proved to be a lovely patch of gonocarpus. In late winter and early spring, when suddenly everything became green with soursob and early annual grasses, I needed another workshop to remind me that it was so important to start from the good stuff, establish a weed front and remove only as much as

was likely to be recolonised with native vegetation in the following year.

In the meantime I was really excited to identify new patches of pink garland lily, watch the *Arthropodiums* and the *Thelymitras* emerge, and now to recognise *Austrostipas*, *Danthonias*, *Vittadinia* and *Convolvulus*, amongst others, in flower. Next, thanks to excellent workshops from Trees For Life and the Grassy Woodland Network, I'm looking forward to extending the managed area and setting up some formal monitoring.  
*Viv Muller*

### Handy Weeding Hints – Olives again

As explained in Grassy News 2, John Garnaut a very hard-working Bush For Lifer, has been experimenting with different solutions of glyphosate for the drill and fill method of olive control on a BFL site on Yorke Peninsula. John has now had an opportunity to revisit the site and can confidently assert that there is no difference between use of concentrations of 1:2, 1:5 and 1:10 in the olive kill rate. The weaker solutions (1:5 & 1:10) were just as effective as the strongest & seemed to be taken up more readily than the 1:2. John has given me extensive notes that I am happy to provide to anyone with a specific interest in this topic.

While on this subject, those amongst you who can't help but look at olives as you drive and/or walk around may have noticed some olive trees looking unwell last summer. The affected trees have brownish leaves, with some leaves dropping and, if you look carefully at the leaves, there are tiny black spots on the underside.

These symptoms are the work of **the olive lace bug** *Froggattia olivina* - heavy infestations can cause loss of vigour, severe defoliation and reduced fruit yield. The olive lace bug can have numerous generations per year depending on the climate. Eggs that have overwintered on the tree usually begin to hatch out in spring or late winter. Go to <http://www.australisplants.com.au> for more information.



Photo of olive lace bug courtesy of website above

## Grey Box Mapping

One of the aims of the Network is to work out the pre-European and current range of grey box *Eucalyptus microcarpa* and then try to establish which areas are being managed. My aim is to demonstrate how we are travelling with just one woodland type with regard to looking after representative samples of woodland (and show this as a percent of original and current extent). I have a lovely map courtesy of Felicity Smith of Environmental Information, DEH, and have made some preliminary investigations as to management. **You can help** by letting me know if you are working in grey box woodland and providing information on location, extent, condition of your remnant and the type of work you are doing, e.g. weed control, rabbit control.

If you do work in grey box areas or merely walk through some, check out the trees. It has recently been brought to my attention that there are grey box in Belair National Park that have been deteriorating over the past two years. This takes the form of canopy thinning, followed by the top of the tree dying then epicormic growth which also dies eventually. I have located several trees in the Park that match these symptoms and have put in a photo so that others can compare their observations. These trees were in the northern part of the Park (the only place that I visited) and there were plenty of trees that were not exhibiting these symptoms. The understorey beneath these trees was varied, sometimes with a diversity of native plants; at other times weedy. The only native plant that looked unwell in the vicinity was a twiggy bush-pea *Pultenaea largiflorens* that was dead. One of the symptomatic trees was close to a known *Phytophthora* area near The Pines oval.



Grey box *Eucalyptus microcarpa* with thinned crown, Belair National Park (photo: Penny Paton)

## Watiparinga Reserve Management Plan – a book review

In 1999 with little fanfare the National Trust published a ground-breaking report by Enid Robertson detailing 25 years of woodland restoration work at Watiparinga Reserve. This reserve, east of Shepherds Hill Recreation Park, is predominantly a grey box grassy woodland that showcases the use of natural regeneration as the major conservation strategy. It also shows the worth of detailed record keeping over a long period, to allow managers to learn from experience and to be able to pass these lessons on to others.

Restoration results have been outstanding-

- \* Woody weeds almost eradicated & contained with minimal on-going effort
- \* Naturally regenerated plants of different ages
- \* Fire hazard reduced
- \* Native plant species increased from 25 in 1961 to 162 in 1998 (only 22 of these were planted)
- \* Of the native species, 45 have a conservation rating
- \* More native plants have been discovered since 1998 so these numbers are now higher.

Copies of the Watiparinga Management Plan are available for \$16.50 from the Trust in Leigh St in the city, from State Flora at Belair NP or from the author.

## Root rot fungus – *Phytophthora cinnamomi*

The September '05 edition of the Pc newsletter is available now and contains information on

- recognising a *Phytophthora* infestation in the field
- a sampling procedure
- a display at Flinders Camping outdoor shop
- new infestations

The newsletter can be viewed at

<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/plantsand.html#dieback> or, if you don't have access to the internet, please contact Penny for a photocopy.

## Weed of the Trimester - Bridal Veil

Following on from the article about bridal creeper & the rust fungus by Susan Lawrie, I wanted to update you on progress of the Asparagus Weeds Working Group (AWWG) & also provide a little information on bridal veil for those who may not be familiar with it. My observation from sites where bridal creeper rust was sprayed in 2004 was that, after a slow start, the rust had affected the bridal creeper to the extent of reducing its vigour, as well as reducing fruit production. There were also infestations some distance from the spray sites – in one case I have heard of the rust moving nearly one

kilometre. The AWWG's report for 2004 details the work carried out on 25 priority sites in the Southern Hills for asparagus weeds, with biological and manual control being the predominant methods, in contrast to previous years. If you would like the full copy of the report, phone or email Penny.

Bridal veil is a menace as it is just as invasive as bridal creeper and the fruits are spread by birds and foxes. Moreover to date it appears **not** to respond to herbicide application so manual digging of tubers and hand pulling of tops are the only control methods. The AWWG is carrying out experiments with different herbicides so there may be more to report on this front next year. The photo below shows the foliage & fruits – so keep a look out for it on your travels around the bush and, if you see it, particularly north of Cherry Gardens, please contact Penny with details. Of course it will be dying off now but will return with autumn rains.



**Bridal veil with fruits (photo: Susan Lawrie)**

John Garnaut has reported on Monadenia/Disa control on his BFL site – they have hand-picked heads for 4 years and now have to search for heads where 4 years ago there were 1000s. John is quite sure that picking is affecting the viability of the bulbs. Please let me know of any other experiences with bridal creeper rust, bridal veil control efforts or Monadenia/Disa control in 2005.

### **Interested in knowing more about weeds?**

Many of us spend considerable time and effort in controlling weeds & there are groups providing more information on weeds, particularly from the research angle. One group is the **Cooperative Research Centre for Australian Weed Management**, based at our own Waite Campus. The CRC produces quarterly newsletters on the web and I'm sure they would make them available to you if you were to ring or write to them if you don't have web access (8303 6590; PMB 1, Waite Campus, Glen Osmond 5054). The most recent

Weedwatch (No. 10) contains several articles of interest to locals like us.

The first is about Bushland-friendly gardens, another is on biological control agents for gorse and 2 others on bridal creeper. A Tasmanian PhD student studied the impact on gorse growth and development of 3 control agents – the gorse seed weevil, the spider mite and the thrip. While all had an impact, he concluded that other agents were required if biological control is to be a long-term part of an integrated management scheme.

The first article on bridal creeper presents results from a PhD in south-west WA, where soils dominated by bridal creeper (bc) had higher levels of phosphorus compared to nearby weed-free areas. It is unclear whether bc invaded phosphorus-rich areas or if it is modifying the environment. Bc foliage does contain higher levels of phosphorus than native plant species. The take-home message is – even if biological control of bc is successful, will increased soil phosphorus favour other exotics over native species and will the dense bc tuber mass inhibit native seedlings from establishing and thriving? Research is continuing...

The second PhD project hails from Victoria where research into bird-dispersed flesh-fruited weeds has found that the spatial distribution of bridal creeper is not random. While we all know that bc seedlings are often found under trees where birds perch, this study found that density of bc reduces further away from tracks, regardless of track width. The article did not give any reasons for this but I can think of two – one is that vegetation is often less modified away from tracks so weed invasion may be limited by this and the second is that foxes spread bc fruit and they often travel on tracks.

Another snippet of information was that bc spread is greater than 191 metres/year in fenced-off farm remnants but again there was no commentary on this.

The second specialist weed organisation is the **Weed Management Society of SA Inc. (WMSSA)**. I have only recently joined the Society so am unsure as to how often the newsletter comes out or how frequent the meetings are but they do happen! The AGM a month ago included two presentations on climate change and what this might mean for biodiversity and weed issues in Australia and more specifically our state. The WMSSA is hosting the 15<sup>th</sup> National Australian Weeds Conference in Adelaide from 24<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2006 & the theme is 'Managing Weeds in a Changing Climate' and for more information visit: [www.plevin.com.au/15AWC2006](http://www.plevin.com.au/15AWC2006).

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