



HAMILTON FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

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Report on Weed Control Work at the Fulham Streamside Reserve in Sept.-Oct. 2015

On 12 Sept. 2015, 7 members of HFNC (RB & DL, JC & GC, KG & JS, RT) collectively spent 29.5 hours herbicide-wiping *Moraea flaccida* Cape Tulip (CT), *Sparaxis bulbifera* Harlequin Flower (SB), *Gladiolus undulatus* Wild Gladiolus (WG) and a few African Weed Orchid (AWO) on the western half of the Fulham SR. Bridal Creeper (BC) was spot-sprayed. The weather was fine. Despite 30 mm of rain at the previous weekend the area was generally dry and only a few of the native flora in flower.

The area treated on 12 Sept. was a strip 50-100 m wide south of the Glenelg River, from the western peninsula to the old track on the western side of the Melaleuca swamp, some 300 m east of the seasonal "road block" on the River Track. The area towards the Melaleuca Swamp was a priority because there were too few helpers to apply herbicide to the CT there in 2014, instead DL & RB pulled up plants in November, a process that removed the seeds but left most of the corms in the ground. Small SB were much in evidence along the margin of the River Track and near the Melaleuca Swamp. CT was prolific in patches, as was WG, a serious future threat to the heathland flora.

On 23 Sept., RB spent 7.5 hrs treating CT and some SB and AWO in the area up to 200 m south of the River Track, as far as the Melaleuca Swamp. Isolated plants and patches of heavy infestation were found. Only a few CT had flowers but there were many tiny plants present with the larger plants. A sample count of wiped plants indicated that approx. 2000 plants were wiped per L of fluid. The volume of fluid used was 3.2 L, therefore about 6,000 CT and 500 SB were herbicide-wiped.

On 26 Sept. 2015, only 2 members (RB & DL) attended the HFNC working bee and 15 hrs were employed in wiping CT and some SB and AWO in the following areas:

- About 20-40 m either side of the entry track from the entrance to the river.
- East of the southern river bend, as far as the top of the Melaleuca Swamp. This area extended about 300 m south from the river track. There were several dense patches of CT to wipe.

We used 6 L of wipe herbicide (glyphosate + metsulphuron methyl + wetter + red dye), therefore about 12,000 CT were herbicide-wiped on 26 Sept. (800 CT per hour).

On 19 Oct. 2015, RB & PH spent a total of 11 hrs (using 3.8 L of wipe mix) to wipe Bridal Creeper (on the Peninsula) and CT (areas south on both sides of Entry Tk and along Old Bridge Tk.). Most of the small CT had not flowered but the large plants had finished flowering. It was estimated that about 7,600 CT were treated. No SB were seen in the areas treated (tops of any there earlier may have died).

On 23 Oct. RB & PH spent 10 hrs wiping CT off the Old Bridge Tk and east of the old railway line, and further south well away from the Entry Tk on both sides (large patches of CT on the east side). About 3 L of herbicide solution was used to wipe about 6,000 CT and a dozen AWO. The small CT were alive but some of the larger plants had begun to dry off as a result of the lack of spring rain.

Allowing for a 50% lesser efficiency by volunteers on 12 Sept. (who spend less time on this task), and 30% of time spent on WG, SB & Bridal Creeper, we estimate that the total number of CT wiped on 12 Sept. was about 8,000 plants. For the 5 periods, the total CT wiped was about 39,000 plants.

The total hours of work done this year is 73 hrs, mostly by 3 people. That is not sufficient to achieve satisfactory control of CT, WG or AWO in the western area we have worked on in the last 10 years (the hatched area in the Work Map). We have too few members willing or able to take part. There is no offer from other organisations to assist, and morale is low when members see the result of PV's apparent inability to control off-road activities that spread weed into areas that we have treated.

The most recent cases illustrate the problem, also mentioned in earlier reports:

- Horses camped on native vegetation – on the Friday and weekend of 23-25 Oct. a Warrnambool club put their horses on native vegetation south of the River Tk, rather than on the degraded area adjacent to the river. There is adequate space east of the current camp and boat launch area.

They claim that no restrictions were placed on them. If that is so then it suggests that PV has not placed any significance on the native flora. It happens that the horses were on or near to the best stands of *Caladenia tentaculata* and *Pterostylis nutans* that exist in the reserve and we have been controlling weeds there for 10 years. Members now think we have wasted our time working on the reserve. Another horse group plans to jump logs and roam the reserve in Nov.

- Hoons with 4WDs – some time between 12 and 23 Sept., hoons had engaged in burnouts with their vehicles to tear up the heathland, particularly near the Melaleuca Swamp, and created deep ruts alongside the River Track. Our call for signs asking visitors to keep to the formed tracks has been ignored, yet that seems to us to be the only way this unsupervised area will get any protection. Weeds that we try and control are being distributed into the heathland by these vehicles. On 23 Sept. a small 4WD was seen driving across from the south across the heathland adjacent to the Melaleuca Swamp, a practice that has become all too common here.

There are 2 major issues that have prompted us to reconsider any further weed work at Fulham:

- An ageing membership and thus our future inability to do as much work on the project
- The perception that PV has little interest in the flora on the reserve, maybe because it is called a Streamside Reserve and not a Flora Reserve, with a reluctance to control horses and vehicles. Seeing our efforts to control weeds being offset by actions of others is most disheartening.

Another option for HFNC is to cover a smaller area (e.g. west of the Entry Tk from Old Bridge Tk to Edgewood Rd) that is less likely to be ruined by hoons and horses. Our work has been a holding strategy, hoping that work in WA on biological control of CT might provide a better means of control of CT here. If CT engulfs the heathland, and broad-scale spraying is again employed by PV, that will eventually obliterate most of the native flora without removing the CT, as happened in the past. Preventing that outcome has been our motivation to find a better way of controlling CT.

WORKS

The herbicide wipe mixture used to wipe SB and CT plants was a solution (*Metsulfuron methyl*, 1 g/L, *Glyphosate* 30 mL/L, surfactant 5 mL/L, dye 5 mL/L) using a tool (previously described).

The spray used on BC and Phalaris contained *Metsulfuron methyl* 3 g/10 L, *Glyphosate* (200 mL/10 L), surfactant 30 mL/10 L and a red vegetable dye 30 mL/10 L).

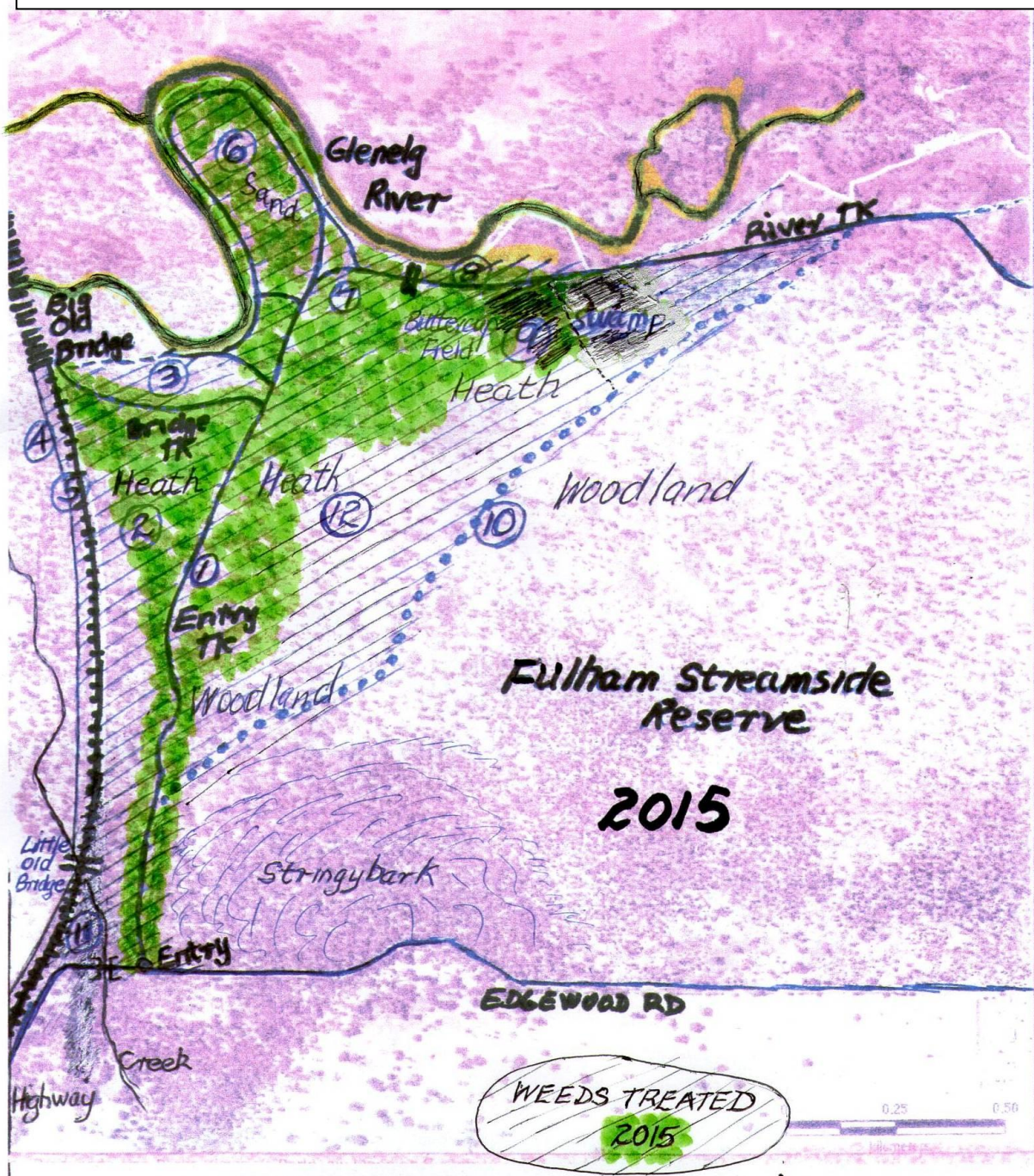
Defined areas of work (see Map)

- (1) **Along the Entry Track to the Glenelg River** – 20-70 m either side from entrance to the river.
- (2) **A wedge south of Old Bridge Tk** – to the creek and bridge; also a 20 m strip north of that track.
- (6) **The ‘peninsula’** – BC was sprayed on the strip adjacent to the river; the few CT found were wiped
- (7) **East side of the entry track near the junction with the River Tk** – this is a former hotspot of SB & WG along off-road vehicle tracks through the *Pterostylis nutans* site and *Caladenia tentaculata* site nearby. This area was treated for CT, SB, WG & AWO.
- (9) **River Track to Melaleuca Swamp** – east from the ‘Seasonal Closure sign’ to the disused track on the west side of Melaleuca Swamp and 10-20 m on the east side (8). The work extended about 300 m south of the River Track, from the top of the Melaleuca Swamp across to the Entry Track.
- (12) **Heath area east from Entry Tk** – middle section, extending about 300 m east

FLORA & FAUNA

Only 44 species of birds were noted but one ‘new’ bird was a Nankeen Night-heron. The total for Fulham is now 126 species. Eastern & Western Grey Kangaroos and Black & Red-necked Wallabies were seen. Shingle-back Lizards were also frequently seen, and one Common Bearded Dragon.

Orchids seen in flower were *Thelymitra rubra*, *T. antennifera*, *Caladenia tentaculata*, *C. carnea*, *Glossodia major*, *Microtis* sp., *Pterostylis nutans* and a few *Diuris pardina*. The land was quite dry and there were not many individuals of any species except *C. carnea*. There was, however, a good flowering of native Flax (*Linum marginale*) and Showy Podolepis (*Podolepis jaceoides*). The number of native species recorded for the reserve remains at 330.



Suggestions for an improved natural environment at Fulham

1. **Tracks and signs** – closing tracks does not work. The 4WD fraternity drive around the closure site, creating more mess. The official tracks should be made weather-proof (we note the good work done on the Old Bridge Tk) and signs installed asking drivers to remain on the tracks, to prevent damage to the flora and passage of weeds and disease into the heathland. There are no signs now to suggest that drivers should take care of that environment, or that it has any value! Old, disused tracks should be adequately blocked by logs, which may have to be carted in from other parts of the reserve. DELWYP has marked the old closed track (see 10 on map) as a fire unit boundary – hoons and other visitors would use it, with vandalism and weed incursions anew.
2. **Toilets** – there are none and the riverside area shows up that deficiency. This is a very popular camping place and the lack of a pit-toilet is a disgrace. It does not encourage a visitor to value the place. There are many reserves with smaller visitor presence that do have a toilet installed.
3. **Supervision of vehicle activities**– due to its relative isolation and staffing shortages we acknowledge that it is difficult to have any supervision by a ranger on weekends when most of the damage seems to be done. Is it not possible to have the police from Balmoral call occasionally to check the motoring activities in the area?
4. **Status** – ideally the creation of a **Flora Reserve** on areas south of the River Track is needed, to change the perception of the reserve as just a place of little importance that can be trashed.

Horses camped on the native vegetation south of the River track, near the road closure point.
(Fri 23 Oct 2015 – other horses were due to arrive there later for the weekend.)



Deep ruts created by hoon drivers in Sept. 2015



The lack of good spring rain has limited the show of wildflowers a Fulham in 2015. However, species such as **Showy Podolepis** were still prominent in the heathland and there were several orchids flowering in early September.

