

January 2018

Welcome to the January edition of the Friends of WESI update

Northern Plains Weed ID sessions In November 2017 the WESI team ran two weed identification sessions in Bendigo focussing on weeds at the early stage of invasion in the Northern Plains of Victoria.

We had a great turn out of 20 people from the community and a number of agencies including Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR), Trust for Nature, North Central Catchment Management Authority, V/Line and Coliban Water.

We had 46 weeds on display (Figure 1) for people to look at and all participants were provided with a training resource workbook for future reference.



Figure 1: WESI team delivering Northern Plains Weed ID sessions.

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

Weed in the spotlight....

Jumping Cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*)

This nasty pastie is a low growing (0.4 – 1 m) Opuntioidean cacti that comes from Mexico. Its common name originates from its ability to seemingly 'jump off' the parent plant and latch onto passers-by.

The first record of Jumping Cholla in Victoria has recently been spotted by keen-eyed Andy Steed (DEDJTR) along Eaglehawk Road in Long Gully (suburb of Bendigo) (Figure 2). Bec James collected a sample and sent it to the National Herbarium of Victoria for further ID confirmation. As the land manager, the City of Greater Bendigo were notified and swiftly followed best practice when removing the infestation (Figure 3). A big thanks to Mark Toohey and the team for their quick and thorough response.

For further information on Jumping Cholla and other Opuntioidean cacti check out the newly released 'Opuntioidean cacti best practice control manual'.

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/invasive-species/opuntioidean-cacti-best-practice-control-manual>



Figure 2: Jumping Cholla (*Cylindropuntia prolifera*), before removal, Long Gully.

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

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Figure 3: Jumping Cholla during removal, Long Gully.

Credit: Mark Toohey (City of Greater Bendigo).

Cardross-Koorlong State Forest WESI Pilot

Earlier in 2017, the WESI team commissioned Ogyris to conduct a rapid survey of high risk weeds at Cardross-Koorlong State Forest (Figure 4). The WESI team caught up with the DELWP Mallee District and discussed how the data could be used to prioritise weed control works within the State Forest. Together we decided to break up the State Forest into practical management areas and for each of these, identify eradication targets using their distribution and risk rating as described in the early invader tools.

A 'map pack' was produced for the District and this has been used by the field crew to coordinate control works. Early feedback has been positive and the WESI team are looking forward to learning more from the District about on-ground practicalities and gaining ideas on how to improve.



Figure 4: Rapid survey for high risk weeds at Cardross – Koorlong State Forest.

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

Updated environmental weed advisory list

In 2008-2009 five advisory lists of environmental weeds were published providing risk scores for about 680 species across the State. They have been a really useful tool for land managers to help prioritise weed management activities. WESI has commissioned DELWP's Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) to combine and update the lists. Matt White from ARI has been coordinating the update and has now incorporated potential and early invader weeds taking the species to about 1780. That's about a 260% increase in species!

The updated advisory list will be in one document and also available as a spreadsheet so people can search and manipulate the list for local use. We look forward to making it available soon.

Where does the WESI data go?

As the WESI team works around Victoria, we record various environmental early invader weeds (Figure 5). We also share and aggregate from others distribution records for species including Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) and Opuntioid cacti. Bec has recently been working hard to make sure all our data has been entered into the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA).

When in the field, Bec uses VBAGo, a mobile version of the VBA to record sites of early invaders. To enter a site for an early invader, the species has to already be loaded in VBA. The catch is that often early invaders are not yet recorded in VBA. So, WESI has been working with the VBA team to have various potential and early invader species added to VBA even if they haven't been recorded yet in Victoria. More will be added in time.



Figure 5: Bec James using VBAGO in the Mallee to record early invader weed White-spined Hudson Pear (*Cylindropuntia pallida*).

Credit: Kate Blood (DELWP).

WESI is loading more information onto Spatial Temporal Activity Recorder (STAR) so DELWP and Parks Victoria staff can access various project documents and early invader management material not

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available on DELWP's external website. STAR has recently been moved to a new operating platform so if you haven't used it for a while email star.project@delwp.vic.gov.au for login details.

Have our pilots been useful?

Since 2014, WESI has run over 16 pilot activities around the State testing various aspects of the early invader tools. WESI evaluated the pilots and made these findings:

- 52 individuals were involved including 13 agencies/groups
- Pilots were held in small reserves to large landscapes to statewide
- Seven of the 16 pilots were evaluated including interviews of participants
- 100% of participants interviewed thought the pilots were successful

The early invader pilots have been a valuable way of testing, refining and gaining adoption of the early invader process and tools. Thank you if you have been involved in the pilots.



Figure 6: Bec James (left) with some of the Central Highlands Eden team that have piloted the early invader tools. Sally Lambourne (centre) and Noel Lees (right).

Credit: Kate Blood (DELWP).

It takes a village...

The WESI project has been fortunate to have a very supportive steering group and we celebrated our twentieth meeting in 2017. We thank Assoc Professor Melodie McGeoch from Monash University for her contribution and welcome John Hick, Senior Biodiversity Officer with DELWP to the steering group.



Figure 7: WESI Steering Group at it's 20th meeting. L-R: Stefan Kaiser, Daniel Joubert, Bec James, Nigel Ainsworth, Lou Bracy, Kate McArthur, Kate Blood, Sally Lambourne.

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

WESI team changes

It is with great pleasure and sadness to let you know that Bec James is moving on from the WESI team to the Loddon Mallee Region of DELWP. Bec has been with the project from the start in 2011 and has made a significant contribution to early invader management in Victoria in that time.

Bec has been instrumental in establishing and supporting the pilots and has helped public land managers determine local eradication priorities. For example, Bec's GIS and mapping skills have been a valuable tool and used to create local map packs of early invader locations accompanied by treatment information.

Well done Bec on all you have achieved and it has been an absolute pleasure working with you. I wish you all the best in your continuing work in biodiversity, Kate.



Figure 8: One of the new weed records for Victoria found by Bec James. This is an unconfirmed *Opuntia* species in the Mallee.

Credit: Kate Blood (DELWP).

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Figure 9: Bec James in Murray Sunset National Park on a recent WESI field trip.

Credit: Kate Blood (DELWP).

Reminder to reduce weed spread

We work hard to reduce the risk of spreading weeds and pathogens in our field work and make use of depot wash down facilities (Figure 10) around Victoria. It would be great to hear how you are making a difference if you want to connect with us on social media.



Figure 10: Kate Blood using wash down facilities at Irymple.

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

Til next time!

Follow us on social media @weedyk8



Bec & Kate
The WESI Project Team

If you do not wish to receive these emails, please reply 'unsubscribe' and we will remove you from the list. We will not be sharing your details beyond our project.

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