Early Invader Weeds Update

Friends of WESI: Weeds at the Early Stage of Invasion Project

August 2020 Issue #20

Welcome to the Winter issue of the Early Invader Weeds Update

WESI working from home

It is hard to believe that like many others, for the last 6 months, the WESI team has been working from home.

Generally, we have adapted well to the working from home arrangement and have been lucky to be able to continue most aspects of the project.

There has been challenges and our moods haven't always been positive and uplifting, but we frequently remind ourselves that this is ok and quite a normal reaction for these times. We've learnt to recognise this feeling and ways to manage our work-life balance, now that work is always with us in our homes.

We are thankful for our DELWP colleagues and external partners that we have been interacting with virtually. They have been assisting with progress on project activities and lifting our spirits at the same time.

Living in rural areas, we are grateful for the open space and beautiful places we're able to visit locally. Places like the Wimmera River for Bianca and her dog, Boston. Although we acknowledge that isn't the case for everyone.

Figure 1: Wimmera River, Bianca's daily walking area.

Credit: Bianca Gold.

Working with weeds can be both physically and mentally challenging at the best of times, it can be costly, time consuming, labour intensive and difficult to see an end. It's understandable that these feelings may be enhanced now and some of you working in this field may be feeling those extra challenges.

We hope that you, the Friends of WESI, have been coping as best you can be and that you have plenty of support around you. Please reach out to your peers and colleagues for support if you do not feel like you are coping. It might just be an ear to listen or some advice on how they are managing.

Take a break to read this issue, we hope that you find it useful and enjoy the read.

Figure 2: Morning sunshine Wimmera River, Horsham

Credit: Bianca Gold.

GNP-WESI Project Update

The first round of the WESI Good Neighbour Program (GNP) funded projects came to a close at the end of June 2020.

Early invader weed works were delivered in the DELWP regions of Gippsland, Grampians and Port Phillip.

The project leads and participants have done an exceptional job delivering the work within the 2019/2020 timelines. They were able to complete all works despite nature throwing some challenges at them, including serious bushfires throughout Summer.

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The Round 1 (including 1 and 1b) WESI-GNP projects for 2019/2020 were:

- Gippsland: Ox-eye Daisy in Boulung-Deera/Dargo High Plains.
- Port Phillip: Delimiting surveys in Yellingbo Conservation Area.
- Grampians: Bluebell Creeper in Midlands District.
- Port Phillip: Foxglove and Wandering Trad in Pauls State Forest.
- Gippsland: Himalayan Honeysuckle in Snowy District.
- Grampians: Agapanthus at Mount Cole.
- Gippsland: English Broom in Macalister District.
- Grampians: English Ivy in Midlands District.

Figure 3: Agapanthus at Mt Cole – Grampians WESI-GNP project.

Credit: Adrian Balharrie (DELWP).

Using virtual communications (Skype/Microsoft Teams) we spoke with project leads and participants to gather feedback on the application process, use of WESI tools and support provided by our team. This was an important process for WESI to complete to provide us with an opportunity to get feedback to improve on delivering in future funding rounds and as a way of supporting each of the projects.

The results were very positive and encouraging with 100% of participants saying they would apply for future funding through WESI and 100% rating the support from WESI to be very good.

Figure 4: Foxglove, Pauls State Forest, Port Phillip WESI-GNP project

Credit: Brad Matthews (DELWP).

We thank the participants for their time and comments, including “this was the most well communicated funding [we have] been involved in. Lots of positive support and good to know that people are around [to help].”

Other participants said “the project was useful in testing the WESI [decision making] framework and [now] can be used across the wider area” and that it was “worthwhile taking time to do [delimiting] surveys prior to jumping in to treat [infestations].”

Round two funding has been confirmed and applications will be open soon. Funding is allocated based on meeting WESI criteria and is specifically for DELWP early invader weed projects only. DELWP staff on the subscriber list for this newsletter and those involved with round one will receive notification via email. To subscribe to the email distribution list see the “Subscribe to our newsletter” article in this issue.

Early invader weed WESI-GNP project

The DELWP Gippsland Region, used their WESI-GNP project funding for management of Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*) in the Snowy District.

With the assistance of Moogji Council East Gippsland Inc (Moogji) environmental team, treatment of Himalayan Honeysuckle occurred in early Winter.

Figure 5: Moogji crew member cutting Himalayan Honeysuckle

Credit: Chris Anderson (DELWP).

The plants were treated using cut and paste methods to directly target the Himalayan Honeysuckle and avoid local native species.

Smaller and juvenile plants were pulled out by hand, with material bagged and removed from the site for safe disposal.

Figure 6: Flagged Himalayan Honeysuckle plant ready for treatment.

Credit: Chris Anderson (DELWP).

In the Advisory list of environmental weeds in Victoria, Himalayan Honeysuckle is considered a very high risk highly invasive environmental weed.

It can be easily identified when in flower, forming drooping clusters of white to purplish flowers surrounded by burgundy bracts (modified leaf). Green berries turn to dark red or purplish-black as they mature and are very tasty to birds, deer and other fruit eating animals which eat and spread them.

Figure 7: Himalayan Honeysuckle in flower.

Credit: Chris Anderson (DELWP).

A multi-stemmed scrambling shrub growing two to four metres in height, plants usually become dormant during Winter, but interestingly the project team has observed plants continuing to grow through cooler months and even under snow.

Figure 8: Himalayan Honeysuckle growing in snow.

Credit: Chris Anderson (DELWP).

The Snowy District team will continue to monitor the effectiveness of their control techniques with the aim to eradicate this species from the area.

Weed Management after fire webinars

Over Winter the WESI team has been busy collaborating and partnering with various others,

including DELWP, Statewide Integrated Flora and Fauna Teams (SWIFFT), Parks Victoria, Catchment Management Authorities, Universities and community group leads and volunteers.

We plan to bring to you an online series of webinars to assist with weed management after fire, which will be particularly relevant to those living and working in areas impacted by the 2019/2020 bushfires.

The program is currently being developed with assistance from our collaborators (mentioned above) and we will be sharing the webinar events via our social media and Friends of WESI email list soon. To register your email please see “Subscribe to our newsletter” article in this issue.

Figure 9: English Ivy (*Hedera helix*) regenerating after fire against burnt tree.

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

These webinars will be free and available to watch from your computer or device via a link to Microsoft (MS) Teams. It is our hope that (with the permission of presenters) we will be able to record each webinar to watch later.

Our aim is to enable others to share information and learnings about weed management after previous fire events and for individuals to apply it to their own circumstances and weed management challenges.

WESI released a survey (in April), asking the potential audience for their preferences relating to an online event. We received a strong response favouring a series of short (1-3hrs) webinars over a number of weeks/months. There were also some great suggestions for topics, and we hope to include as many of them as we can.

Figure 10: Blackberry emerging amongst ferns post fire.

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

Keep an eye on our social media and your emails for more information to come soon.

Biological Control Workshop

The WESI project is proud to be supporting DELWP’s Natural Environment Program (NEP) Loddon Mallee, along with Connecting Country and the Weed Society of Victoria (WSV) in running a free online workshop about Biological Control for weeds.

On Tuesday 6 October 2020, Dr Raelene Kwong and Greg Lefoe, Senior Research Scientists from Agriculture Victoria’s Research Division will explain the ins and outs of establishing a Biocontrol agent and how you can get involved in your patch.

Special guest, Lee Mead, President of the Tarrangower Cactus Control Group will also join to share an exciting community case study on the use of biocontrol on a serious Wheel cactus (*Opuntia robusta*) infestation in north central Victoria.

Figure 11: Cochineal biocontrol release on Wheel Cactus (Opuntia *robusta*)

Credit: Bec James (DELWP).

The event is now sold out with 250 registered participants mainly from Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

To receive a copy of the recording please contact the organiser via Eventbrite at https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/biological-control-a-powerful-weed-management-tool-explained-tickets-118237913783

Figure 12: Biological Control Workshop flyer

Credit: DELWP

Following the Biological Control event (at 11:30am), you have the option to stay online to join in the WSV Annual General Meeting. You are encouraged to become a member but do not have to be a current member to attend this meeting.

Advanced Field Data Collection Tool

Bianca has recently taken the opportunity to complete modules one to four of the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) free BioCollect training sessions held throughout August and early September 2020.

The BioCollect course was organised by the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party (VSTWP) as an initiative funded by the Federal Government's Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper. The aim of the course was to provide practical and hands on training for participants that deliver invasive species projects, whilst simultaneously teaching them how to train others.

Figure 13: VSTWP website and vision

Credit: http://www.serratedtussock.com/

The intent is for facilitators, project staff and community leaders to share their new skills and knowledge of the BioCollect tool, to help others with an interest in weed mapping and data collection to get the best out of it.

The Atlas of Living Australia's (ALA) BioCollect is a data collection tool for biodiversity science. It was developed to assist users in submitting field collected data associated with a project. Data entered to BioCollect is harvested by ALA where it becomes available to others to use in making management decisions, research and developing policy.

BioCollect
ADVANCED FIELD DATA COLLECTION

Figure 14: BioCollect logo.

Credit: https://www.ala.org.au/biocollect/

It has been designed for natural resource managers, citizen scientists, ecologists and scientists to collect and manage biodiversity, ecological and natural resource management (NRM) data.

It can be used to capture assessments and monitoring activities such as ad-hoc surveys and method-based surveys; and project activities like weeds and pest projects.

There are three main types of project categories:

- Citizen Science: invites the public to participate by collecting and submitting records for assessment and monitoring projects.
- Ecoscience: Any assessment or monitoring project that the public is not invited to participate in.
- NRM works: can be used like a project management tool, where activities occur in a planned schedule of actions to effect a change in the state of its location/s. Usually environmental restoration, rehabilitation or revegetation projects.

Citizen Science projects can also use a mobile app. All projects can be accessed via the web on mobile or desktop devices.

The BioCollect tool is available to anyone and is most likely to be used by:

- NRM organisations
- Researchers, scientists and ecologists
- Community groups and individuals
- Universities
- Local Government Agencies (LGAs)
- State Government Agencies

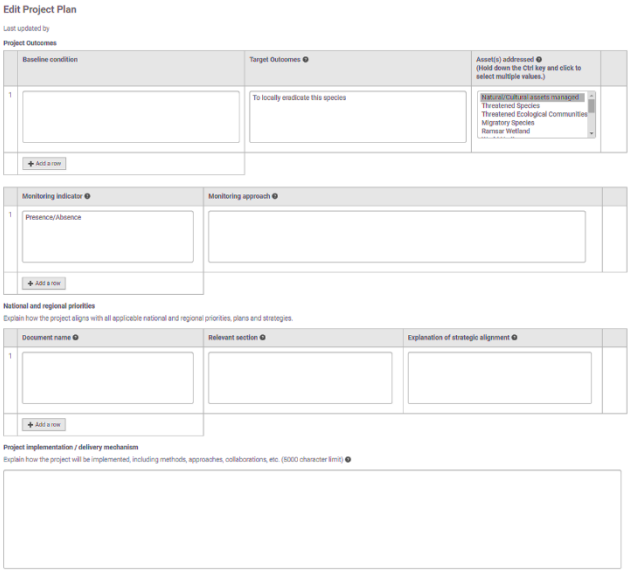

Figure 15: Example of BioCollect NRM project plan form template.

Credit: ALA

To find out more about BioCollect visit https://www.ala.org.au/biocollect/ or email the team at support@ala.org.au

Bianca is looking forward to sharing what she has learnt with others and testing out BioCollect with some early invader weed projects.

Working for Victoria crew discovers environmental weed

The Grampians Region (Midlands District) Working for Victoria (WFV) crew have discovered a new environmental weed at their latest work site, the Rokewood Recreation Reserve.

The six recruits started employment with DELWP on the 9 June 2020, based at the Sebastopol work-centre and are completing a variety of work from weed management to revegetation, fixing fences, rubbish removal and maintenance and repairs to community facilities. Most of this work will provide the many volunteer Committees of Management (CoM) in the Midlands District with the support that they need to achieve such activities, that otherwise may take quite some time to have completed.

Works proposed by the Rokewood Recreation Reserve CoM included weed removal from the road reserve surrounding the community facility. Upon assessing the weed removal activity, they discovered an unknown plant. By taking photos and using a weed ID app, then seeking confirmation from the WESI team, the plant was identified as Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecoma capensis*).

Figure 16: Cape Honeysuckle at Rokewood Recreation Reserve

Credit: Oliver Sim (DELWP).

Distribution records on the Atlas of Living Australia (ALA) show Cape Honeysuckle is known from a handful of sites around Melbourne and a single record near Lakes Entrance.

The WFV crew will submit a record for the Rokewood site, which appears to be the first for Western Victoria. This does not mean that it has not been observed or in occurrence in this part of the state, and highlights the importance of submitting records to publicly available databases such as ALA or the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.

Under the guidance of a DELWP crew leader the WFV crew will remove the Cape Honeysuckle and a number of other environmental weeds, including African Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) at the Rokewood site.

Cape Honeysuckle is a scrambling shrub that can be easily identified by bright orange tubular flowers. The leaves are oval, pointed at the tip with serrated edges and vary from green to dark green.

Figure 17: Flower of Cape Honeysuckle.

Credit: Oliver Sim (DELWP).

Whilst Cape Honeysuckle is considered to be “currently non-invasive” on the Advisory List of environmental weeds in Victoria as a precaution it will be treated and the surrounding area will be surveyed, including nearby bushland. DELWP and the Rokewood Recreation Reserve CoM will continue to monitor the area post treatment.

Figure 18: Leaves of Cape Honeysuckle at Rokewood Recreation Reserve.

Credit: Oliver Sim (DELWP).

The Woking for Victoria initiative has a number of different crews set up around the State completing environmental and maintenance activities on Crown Land and reserves under Committee of Management. In the Midlands District, the WFV crew are also assisting the Ballarat Environment Network (BEN) who are CoM for a whopping 52 reserves in the Ballarat area. Some of the work completed to date includes installing rabbit proof fencing to protect the critically endangered Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens* subspecies *spinescens*).

The crew undergo a thorough site induction at each work area to describe the identification of species (native and introduced) at the site, talk about safety and explain the importance and environmental value of the work that they will be undertaking.

Figure 19: WFV Crew Midlands District geared up for some weed removal.

Credit: Unknown (DELWP).

WESI appreciates the amazing work that the WFV crew have been undertaking and will keep in touch with crew leaders and program managers to assist with following the Rokewood Recreation Reserve project and future early invader weed works completed by the WFV crews.

Mistaken identity with good intentions

Rebecca (Bec) Korossy-Horwood of Naturelinks Landscape Management Pty Ltd, contacted WESI earlier in Winter about a possible new infestation of Bunch Grass (*Piptochaetium bicolor*), in Victoria, a highly invasive very-high risk environmental weed.

Fortunately, it was later confirmed by an Identification Botanist at the National Herbarium of Victoria at the Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria to be a native grass species, commonly known as Stipa (*Austrostipa setacea*).

Figure 20: Flagged plants during delimiting survey.

Credit: Rebecca Korossy-Horwood (Naturelinks Landscape Management Pty Ltd).

Bec, a botanist herself and self-confessed WESI fan, used her weed identification skills and followed the WESI decision making framework to identify the species.

Her identification skills were put to the test, initially feeling confident but concerned that the grass in question could be Bunch Grass or Piptochaetium. This case has shown how easily native grasses can be confused for introduced species and vice versa.

Bunch grass (*Piptochaetium bicolor*) is a tufted perennial grass with smooth leaf blades. Flowers appear purplish when young and darken to brown as they mature. It originates from Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

In comparison, Stipa (*Austrostipa setacea*) is a tufted perennial grass with smooth to slightly rough leaves. Flowers are purplish and fade to straw coloured as they mature. It is native to Australia and occurs in the eastern States.

Figure 21: Stipa grass tuft, with measuring tape for comparing to Bunch Grass.

Credit: Rebecca Korossy-Horwood (Naturelinks Landscape Management Pty Ltd).

At present, Bunch Grass (or Piptochaetium), has been recorded at a single location in Victoria, in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, near Altona North. Being in reasonably close proximity to this site there was a good chance that the grass found by Bec could have been the invasive species. Being a native grassland there was a high risk of it invading and threatening the local grassland community.

Understanding the threat and importance of checking identification before commencing treatment, Bec contacted the WESI team with some fantastic images she had captured to assist with confirming identification. See our Photo Tip #2 in this issue for information on how to get good photos for weed identification.

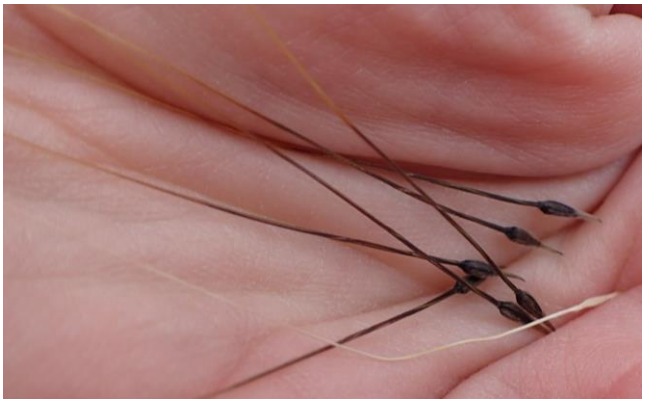

Figure 22: Seed of Stipa (*Austrostipa setacea*) looks very similar to seed of Bunch Grass (*Piptochaetium bicolor*). A microscope is needed to differentiate between the two.

Credit: Rebecca Korossy-Horwood (Naturelinks Landscape Management Pty Ltd).

The WESI team advised seeking additional help from the National Herbarium of Victoria where a sample was delivered, and it was confirmed to be the native Stipa.

Although the grass in question turned out to be 'just a Stipa' it is a rare species and a lucky find. Bec and the team at Naturelinks will continue to monitor and look after the site where other invasive grasses are present, including Chilean needle-grass (*Nassella neesiana*).

If you're unsure about the identification of a plant the WESI Early Invader Manual and 2 Looking for weeds: Name and notify guide provide information on where to start and what to look for.

Photo Tip #2

When taking photos of weeds that you'd like to later identify or have someone else help you identify, make sure to take a few extra seconds to ensure that your pictures are clear and focussed.

Take multiple photos from different perspectives to paint an overall picture of the plant. Taking photos of the whole plant is just as important as getting a few snaps closer in.

Figure 23: Images of Himalayan Honeysuckle parts for identification.

Credit: Trevor James (keyserver.lucidcentral.org/weeds/)

When taking close ups look for identifying features of the plant such as flowers; seeds and capsules; leaf shape and formation; bark texture and colour; spines coming from stems; and remember the base of grasses and bulbs.

Figure 24: A collage of Stipa grass photos taken for identification.

Credit: Rebecca Korossy-Horwood (Naturelinks Landscape Management Pty Ltd).

It's a good idea to check the ground around the plant where seed and their capsules may have fallen.

For some good examples of photos of plant parts have a look at The Weeds of Melbourne and Lucid Fact Sheets.

Subscribe to our newsletter

If you received this newsletter via a friend or colleague and would like to receive it directly next time, you can subscribe for free via this new Eventbrite link: https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/subscribe-free-to-early-invader-update-wesi-newsletter-tickets-111894349010

Figure 25: Early Invader Update newsletter covers.

Credit: Bianca Gold (DELWP).

By subscribing you'll receive a PDF copy of the newsletter approximately four times a year and the latest WESI updates on training, events, activities and early invader environmental weeds.

Social Media

Don't forget to follow and interact with us on social media. You can find us at Bianca Goldweeds on Facebook and **@weedyk8** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and also follow us on Yammer (for DELWP staff).

#WESIProj #EarlyInvaderWeeds #InvasiveSpecies

#EnvironmentalWeeds

If you do not wish to receive these updates, please reply 'unsubscribe' to bianca.gold@delwp.vic.gov.au and we will remove you from the list.

If you wish to receive these updates via email directly please visit https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/subscribe-free-to-early-invader-weeds-update-wesi-newsletter-tickets-111894349010

We will not be sharing your details beyond our project without your permission.

Til next time!

https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/invasive-plants-and-animals/early-invaders

Social media **@Goldieweeds** and **@weedyk8**

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Your friendly WESI Project Team,
Bianca (aka Goldie) and Kate

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