



## WORKING BEE REPORT February 1-3, 2019

### FRIDAY, February 1

Today we were pleased to welcome Rachel Godoy, our Volunteer Support Officer, with the Department of Environment and Water (DEW) on site for the morning. This was a great opportunity for us to show off how the site has progressed over the past year, and in particular, how well some of the plants have coped with the hot, very dry summer. Rachel has been instrumental in providing contractors to complement our weeding/slashing efforts, and one reason for this visit was to formulate plans for the next round of weeding support. So we toured just about the entire site, working out where the volunteers would be working over Saturday-Sunday, and where Rachel's team could follow on.



While on the lower loop, we checked out the alternative tree guards we experimented with over the last planting season. These are compostable, unlike the green ones, so we have been interested to see how they and the plants they are protecting, all perform. Here are our initial findings: the tubes are ageing fairly quickly, in that they are starting to sag and discolour.

The discoloration is not a problem, but one thought was the sagging might reduce air circulation and we were also a bit worried about increased shading. However, these factors do not seem to be problem so far: check out the performance of some of the plants in the photos below. Might be more space for the plants if we used bamboo stakes rather than rectangular wooden stakes – something to try next year.



Left: *Acacia paradoxa*, kangaroo thorn  
Below: *Pomaderris paniculosa*, coast pomaderris



Friday afternoon we stayed inside and had a planning session. Amazing how hard it is to find time for this. 2018 was a busy year and we never found time to meet. Now we just need to find the notes of what we agreed to do, and do it!!!

## SATURDAY, February 2

Just like at the December working bee, the weather wasn't very kind to us. At least we were spared the high winds, just had the heat. We do have a hot weather policy: if the forecast temperature is to be greater than 32 degrees at Cape Jervis, the working bee is cancelled. The forecast wasn't over 32, so the working bee went ahead. Best laid plans...etc! Sensibly, several people planning to make the trip down from Adelaide cancelled. Those who did participate "soldiered on" and achieved heaps. Preparation began earlier than normal, to get as much as possible done before the heat became too intense. Peter and Chris's car was loaded with containers of water and morning tea, while Carolyn's was packed with all the other equipment needed: brushcutters, loppers, gloves, fuel, PPE, noticeboard, .... We are getting to be really good at packing that Forester!!!

Another beaut thing about the Forester is its attached sunshade. With Carolyn parking the car next to the picnic table, it meant shade for work prep and morning tea.



One thing from our Friday meeting that we agreed to do on Saturday was to do a site inspect and record what plants were looking really good even without rain. We can then use these plant species to fill in the gaps, especially along the edges of the path and around the picnic table. Here's what we found; plants that were looking green (or grey) and healthy included *Hardenbergia violaceae* (happy wanderer), *Myoporum insulare* (boobialla), *Acacia sophorae*, *Hakea vitatta*, *Rhagodia candolleana* (seaberry saltbush), *Scaevola crassifolia* (cushion fanflower), *Melaleuca decussata* (cross-leaved honey-myrtle), *Goodenia amplexans* (claspig goodenia) and *Threlkeldia diffusa* (coast bonefruit). We also selected a potential site for the "log seats" that were in our grant proposal for 2019.



Weeding and watering were as ever high on the agenda. We began on the lower loop, brushcutting our perpetual enemy *Scabiosa*. By removing the flowering heads before they set too many seeds, we hope to "wear the weed out"... reducing its spread each year, by reducing its seed population.



Almost looks like a meadow of flowers, doesn't it, but all those flower heads at the front and in the background are Scabiosa!! We nearly filled 2 wool bales of seed heads / cut out seedling. Sadly we didn't have time to get them all, but with the help of our Volunteer Support Officer / Project Plan with Natural Resources AMLR, we were able to get more done in the following weeks, in readiness for winter planting.

Meanwhile, Peter carted 10 litre containers of water to the thirstiest plants. Remember, each of these containers weighs 12-13 kg when filled to the brim. Lugging them over the slopes, on uneven ground, is hard work. Is it any wonder Peter had had enough by lunchtime, and had to retire to the shade. We really do need to address the problems of a closer water source, and a good way of delivering the water to the plants! Of course, one solution is to just let the plants survive (or not) whatever nature throws at them. However, with summers such as the last two, that would mean a high death rate of the tube stock. Some plants are tough enough to survive this drought, but given our efforts to increase the biodiversity, not just plant the really tough plants, we water most plants for the first year and keep an eye on others that need help.

Yes, we plant seedlings grown from local seeds; yes, we provide guards as protection from the worst of the wind and sun; yes, we provide a "ditch" around each plant to catch what rain there is, and yes, we try to mulch with debris from weeding etc. But no, we can't make it rain! Anyone got any solution? How about a small motorized all-terrain bike with a built in trailer for the water (like a dutch bike with an engine!) and some system that the rider can use to pump out the water from a hose/nozzle without getting off all the time? C'mon, all the inventors out there!

Although our direct seeding area has not shown much sign of germination from the work in June, the successes we reported on previously are still hanging in there (look for the grey saltbushes / *Atriplex* spp). If you check out the photos below, you can spot the scabiosa seedlings also thriving there. So our seeds had plenty of competition despite our efforts to remove as much as possible.



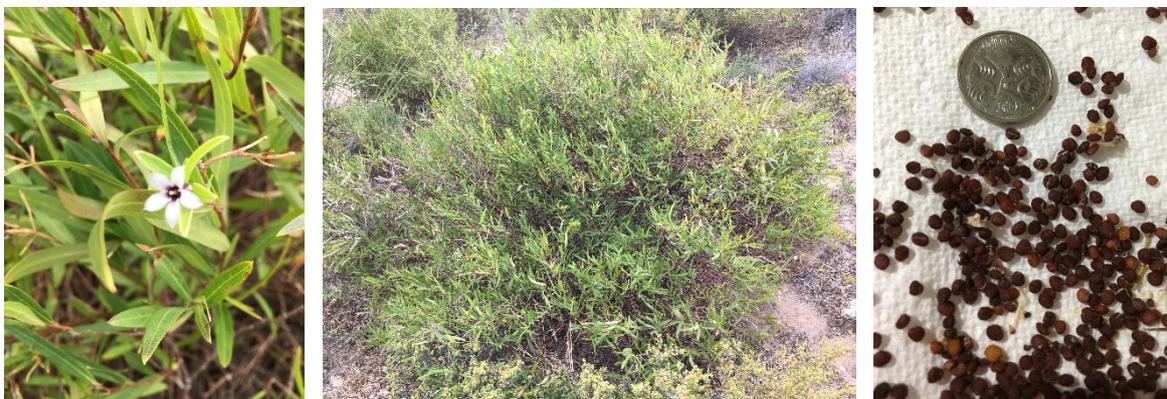
One pretty sight we unfortunately could not get a decent photo of, was of the saltbush blue butterflies, fluttering all over (of course) saltbushes on the lower loop. Amazing how many we saw, especially loving the *Atriplex semibaccata* and *Rhagodia candolleana*. These are similar to the bitterbush blue butterfly, which we have host plants for, but have only seen on the nearby COOTs site.



Two very tough plant species are looking good; flowering (*Goodenia amplexans*) and seeding (*Rhagodia candolleana*) providing colour to the site, and importantly food for the wildlife!

Claire and her daughter Maggie popped in for a quick visit late morning. We were pleased to hear from them that Jess was accepted at Urrbrae Agricultural High School this year. All three have volunteered with our group over the past two years, and Jess had always talked of going to Urrbrae for her secondary schooling, so congratulations from us all, Jess! Well done!!

Saturday afternoon's effort was short and hot. We started late as Carolyn and Liz elected to work till 2 pm to get just a bit more done on the scabiosa! We were fuelled on by another excellent CJCCG provided morning tea (did I hear you say Cake Jervis!) The afternoon was a gentle stroll to do some seed collecting. Target plant, sweet apple berry, *Billardiera cymosa*. Target location. Sorata Street. Usually very reliable, but very few plants had fruit. Thankfully we knew of a few plants in the shade of the *Eucalyptus* spp in the SE corner of the site, and these had fruit. Important to collect the fruits that has gone transparent and are almost mushy. Each fruit contains about 10–20 seed. Sweet apple berry is a lovely plant to have as it is a climber with a pretty flower, but it also can form a lovely "soft-looking" green mound, not what you expect of a tough coastal plant. The flower and plant below are from Carolyn's garden at Cape Jervis. Doing well, even though we have struggled to get them looking this good in the Coastal Display Garden. Not sure why? Another mystery to solve!



## SUNDAY, February 3

We had a new volunteer on Sunday morning: welcome Ann Nosworthy, and welcome back Neil Nosworthy, both from Friends of the Heysen Trail. We have shared activities with this group in the past, since both our groups have an “interest” in the start of the Heysen Trail. Neil is also on the Board of Directors of the Warren Bonython Heysen Trail Foundation (<https://wbheysentrailfoundation.org.au/about/>), and we look forward to strengthening our relationships with both groups in the future. It was good to have Neil and Ann along, and their efforts were greatly appreciated. After a quick lesson from Carolyn on *Acacia cyclops*, (a woody weed from WA) they were let loose with the loppers as we all moved across the upper site removing as many of these plants as we could. We reckon we removed several hundred between us. We also hand pulled small olives, and pinned bigger ones to assist future contractors. Julie Tetlow also arrived complete with her weeding kit, and she was set to work on small patch of “garden escapees”, the weedy Victorian tea-tree (*Leptospermum laevigatum*). Julie made short work of the 30 or so seedlings (cutting and swabbing), and then moved onto olives and other woody nasty that needed more than lopping.



“Cyclops” can set seed within two years, so we need to be continually removing the young ones, to prevent further spread of this woody weed. We haven’t been spending as much time as we would like in this part of the site, and the cyclops germinate with the slightest hint of moisture. Thankfully we only found a few plants that had set seed, and a few more that were flowering. So we were well pleased to fit this into our work schedule this weekend. Must get back here soon to get the rest, and remove that last of the tree guards.



As predicted, Sunday was another hot day, but with a pleasant breeze so we “worked” through our normal morning tea time and retired to Carolyn’s balcony at about 11.30 for morning tea in the shade. Much easier to get to know our new volunteers and catch up on what everyone has been doing.

Quite frankly, we were pooped! The heat was just too much. However, given the weather conditions, we felt we had still made great progress over the weekend. There is always more weeding to be done, but hopefully our slashing and handweeding will keep paying off over the years, as we strive to reduce seedbanks of our feral plant populations. Meanwhile, it was good to see successes among the plantings...*Xanthorrhoeas*, *Allocasaurinas*, ...

## **Other tidbits (December – March)**

### **Unsuccessful with our grant**

Sadly we did not get our grant this year. Our application, “Bitter-bush blue butterflies: habitat restoration and community education”, to Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board’s Community Environment Grants was not funded. They apparently had lots of entries. So for 2019 we are in consolidation mode. We will have more time for doing on ground work and attracting new volunteers, instead of being creative with activities like organising workshops and designing nature play activities. Our biggest fear is that our great work with weed control will be set backwards. Thankfully we still get some support from Natural Resources AMLR, so we will use extra wisely this year.

### **Direct seeding trial update**

Look what happens if you give water to the seeds that we used for our direct seeding trial in June 2018. Lots of germination!!! (see next page). Three “flats” were set up 25 November 2018, with daily watering, one placed under 50% shade cloth, and two in full sun. Mostly grasses (*Chloris*, *Rytidosperma* (wallaby grass), *Austrostipa* (spear grass), *Enneapogon* and *Setaria*), but also three different species of *Atriplex*, some *Maireana*, *Kennedia*, *Vittadinia*, *Kunzea* and *Hardenbergia*. These have now all been potted up (400+ seedlings – sorry Liz!), and will be planted out this year, so we get the benefits of fast growing plants that are good at self-seeding / natural recruitment.

I can also report that a few more germinations have happened on site, mostly *Atriplex* and *Maireana*, but without a good autumn rain we will not get the anticipated benefits of crowding out the oat and scabiosa. We have managed to keep the site relatively weed free, especially compared to what it was, so fingers crossed we will see some native action in the next month!



**Different view of the Coastal Display Garden** (also know as the lower loop!)



Views from the Ferry, taken by one of our supporters – thanks Karen Collins!

see more photos on the next 2 pages



