

# HFNC Report on Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve works 2024

Rod Bird

## Background

HFNC applied to VicTrack in 2004 to manage the Kanawalla section of the disused Hamilton-Cavendish rail reserve. Despite a history of grazing after the line closed in the late 1970s this reserve contained valuable remnants of the Basaltic Plains Grassy Woodlands, of which less than 0.2% remains on public land. HFNC has worked to restore indigenous flora and remove weeds from the reserve.

**Flora** – Details of the history of removal of pines and cypress (2004-08), the planting of local indigenous native species (2006-08 & 2018-20) may be seen in the 2020 Works Report

A list of native flora is available on our website.

**Tree planting** – A summary of species and numbers of trees, shrubs and grasses planted at Kanawalla from 2006-20 is given in the 2021 report.

**Weeds** – the work in controlling weeds (2004-20) may be seen in the 2020 Works Report.

Work on Cleavers *Galium aperine* (GA), *Fumaria capreolata* (FC), *Sparaxis bulbifera* (SB), *Oxalis purpuria* (OP), *Oxalis pes-caprae* (OC), *Rosa rubiginosa* (RR), *Gladiolus undulatus* (GU), *Phalaris aquatica* (PA) and *Dactylis glomerata* (DG) continues.

*Fumaria*, *Oxalis purpuria* and *Sparaxis* were initially the most troublesome weeds but control efforts have significantly reduced that problem. They need to be eliminated entirely.

St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum* (HP) and a yellow-flowered weed (YW) that may be Canola *Brassica napus* are current pressing problems at the northern area on and near the road reserve (X). A bush of Burgan *Kunzea ericoides* (KE) south from the Hensley Pk Rd gate (X) was cut out and poisoned in 2020 – a crop of seedlings then emerged in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

**Fauna** – a list of birds is available on our website. Mammals include Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Black Wallaby, Red-necked Wallaby (one recent sighting), Ring-tailed Possum, Common Brushtail Possum and European Hare.

## Activities in 2024

This year, as in 2023, HFNC had a major project at Wannan Flora Reserve and only had time for one organised working bee at Kanawalla. Diane and Rod carried out the routine work here, with 30 hrs contributed, weed control being the main activity. The worst of the weeds is Cleavers (GA), with a massive infestation just south of the power line for about 100 m on both sides (Y) and also near the NE corner. St John's Wort (HP) & Canola (YW) is a major problem in the NW corner and roadside.

04 Jan. 2024 – RB [2 hr]

- Spraying the yellow crop weed and St John's Wort in the H Pk gate area (X), much of it on the road reserve. Contacted the Shire about these weeds across the road
- A few GA seen and sprayed in the NE corner area

01 April 2024 – RB [2 hr], DL [1 hr]

- Watered Tea trees (7 L each) at McFarlanes Rd gate (V) – stressed after summer drought.
- Cut out yellow weeds in NW area (HP Rd gate area)
- Cut branches off the track near McFarlanes Rd and along Station Ground

16 April 2024 – RB [2 hr]

- Gave 16 Tea Tree about 8 L water each – 3 of 19 planted Jul 2022 died much earlier
- Reset guards on some trees

15 May 2024 – RB [4 hr]

- Hoed tiny Cleavers near powerline area (Y) and at NE corner, and tiny *Fumaria* at embankment
- Mob of Kangaroo & 2 Black Wallaby present; also White-winged Choughs still present

- Began removal of some tree guards

29 June 2024 – RB, DL, PH [12 hr]

- Removing wire guards from big trees (mostly sheoak) at N<sup>th</sup> end, S<sup>th</sup> of gate.
- Manna Gum in former cypress area flowering

05 July 2024 – RB, PH, WM, PM, JS [15 hr]

- Removing wire tree guards, and unclipping others, from tall trees at N<sup>th</sup> end, S<sup>th</sup> of gate

25 July 2024 – RB [3 hr]: Applied 15 L herbicide spot-spray to weeds (rain fell 4+ hrs later):

- Infestation of GA 20 m S<sup>th</sup> from dam on E side and a few OP down to S<sup>th</sup> end
- Lots of small FC under Cherry Ballart on the embankment (S) were hoed
- A new infestation of tiny GA, W side 100 m S<sup>th</sup> of powerline

27 Sept. 2024 – RB [5 hr]: Applied 10 L herbicide spot-spray to weeds

- Sprayed around small trees & clumps of phalaris at S<sup>th</sup> end
- Sprayed GA near the dam area S<sup>th</sup> of power line; a few SB & GA on drain N<sup>th</sup> on the ramp
- Re-set guards on 4 trees knocked over by kangaroos
- at the junction (Z) 1 banksia snapped off and a large bursaria blown over now propped up

23 Oct. 2024 – RB [2 hr]: applied 33 L spray:

- Sprayed the track through the reserve, using a 4-nozzle spray head and backpack sprayer

25 Oct. 2024 – RB [3.5 hr] – applied 6 L spray:

- GA outbreak (5m x 6 m) ~ 150 m S<sup>th</sup> of Powerline, W side
- GA outbreak (5m x 10 m) 20 m from the above
- Several dozen GA on both sides of track S<sup>th</sup> of powerline.
- A dozen or more GA & FC at ramp area under Cherry Ballart
- A few weeds near HP Rd gate

24 Nov. 2024: RB [2.5 hr].

- Hoed out 20 GA on E side & 24 on W side near powerline
- Hoed about 30 YW at the Hensley Park Rd gate area
- Hoed out a mass of GA with green fruiting bodies on NE fence area at one spot
- Hoed out a few GA under Cherry Ballart on the ramp
- Pulled up 5 Kunzea seedlings 50 m S<sup>th</sup> of HP Rd gate
- Cleared a fallen tree off the track
- Frilled 12 Black Wattle adjacent to ramp, to keep grassland open

10 Dec. 2024: RB [2.5 hr].

- Grubbed out about 30 Yellow Weeds in flower, mostly on road side near HP Rd gate
- Pulled out many dozen HP from road reserve on W and N<sup>th</sup> of Rail Res – most in flower but many smaller ones still to flower – need spraying in a couple of weeks time.
- Removed a mass of GA piled up at NE corner on last visit
- N<sup>th</sup> fence has fallen over, due to fallen branches along that line – needs to be stood up
- Frilled another 10 Black Wattle adjacent to ramp, to protect the grassland

19-20 Dec. 2024: DL, RB & RZ [7 hr]

- DL [3 hr] talking with adjacent landholder (Barbara Knight) and arranging for a VicTrack contractor (Tim from Warrnambool) to remove 2 fallen trees off the fence and branches from the crop margin – the latter was stated to be an urgent concern but it was of minor significance and the contractor would have dodged it and many other obstacles in this poor crop
- RB & RZ [4 hr] assisting Tim to remove cut timber from the paddock and distribute it along the reserve where it will drop any leaves and not constitute a fire hazard. We noted that there is crop on both sides of the reserve and that is the major danger. The Knights have cropped a native grassland/woodland that was of fairly low hazard status and will now have the problem of more flammable pasture/crop residues near their buildings.

## Map of Kanawalla Rail Reserve

- X = Hensley Park Rd gate area
- Y = Powerline crossing area
- Z = Boundary area between Station Ground and narrow S part of the reserve
- V = MacFarlane Rd gate area
- A-P = tree planting areas (see 2021 report)

