

HFNC Report on Kanawalla Rail Flora Reserve works 2022

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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 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 also be seen in the 2020 Works Report.

Work on Cleavers *Galium aperiens*, *Fumaria capreolata*, *Sparaxis bulbifera*, *Oxalis purpuria*, *Oxalis pes-caprae*, *Rosa rubiginosa*, *Gladiolus undulatus*, *Phalaris aquatica* and *Dactylis glomerata* continues. St John's Wort *Hypericum perforatum* and a yellow-flowered weed that may be Canola *Brassica napus* are problems at the northern area on and near the road reserve (X). A bush of Burgan *Kunzea ericoides* about 100 m S from the Hensley Pk Rd gate (X) was cut out and poisoned in 2020 – a crop of seedlings then emerged in 2021. A patch of Burgan occurs on the roadside 300 m Sth.

Activities in 2022

HFNC members volunteered a total of 58 hrs to the works in 2022, with weed control the main activity, there being an increasing incidence of garden and crop weeds at several places in the reserve. The worst of these is *Galium aperiens* (Cleavers), which has a massive infestation in the southern block, but *Sparaxis* and Wild Gladiolus has suddenly extended to sporadic individuals in places not previously occupied. Briar Rose continues to be spread around the reserve and *Oxalis purpurea*, and *Fumaria* refuse to give in, albeit their numbers are not high. Only a few St John's Wort were found this year.

Spot-spraying of pasture weeds (*Phalaris* and Cocksfoot) continues on the former station ground at the northern end of the reserve. The spillage of fertiliser there over many years makes this a problem area. Our planting of Sheoaks will, hopefully, diminish the problem when a carpet of 'needles' will suppress germination and growth of the grass. That has occurred with our first plantings midway along the reserve. A more worrying problem in grassland adjacent to the 'pool' is a large infestation of what may be Bent Grass. That issue needs to be examined.

Another issue is the spreading of *Acacia mearnsii* (Black Wattle) across the reserve. While this is an admirable tree it does need to be controlled because it is very shallow-rooted and drastically alters the composition of the ground flora when the stand is dense. It can convert a complex native grassland to moss. There is already far too many Black Wattles on the reserve – the suggestion now is that we do not allow any new regeneration of this species outside the present clumps. New wattles will replace the old in the areas that are already changed.

One task was the growing of seedlings of *Leptospermum continentale* (Prickly Tea-tree) from a solitary remnant near MacFarlanes Rd and planting 17 in the damp sites on the sides of the southern end of the reserve's track. We also grew and planted 12 Silver Banksia and 7 Drooping Sheoak to replace those planted in 2020 that had died.

We were able to remove many of the mesh guards used to protect sheoaks from wallaby and kangaroo browsing. Some were employed in the new planting and the remainder used to better-protect seedlings from 2020 planting, where adequate guards were in short supply.

27 May 2022 – RB [6 hr]

- checking trees planted in 2019-20 (20 need replacing, most near the Hensley Park Rd gate (X))
- removing guards from tall Drooping Sheoaks, re-pegging some guards, freeing some trees with branches through the mesh.
- chipping yellow-flowering weeds from the H Pk gate area (X), much of it on the road reserve.

- chipping dozens of *Fumaria* seedlings from the Cherry Ballart site on the embankment (S).
- Masses of small *Galium* seedlings in powerline area (Y), Sth block, need spraying.

White-winged Choughs present and Rainbow Lorikeets and bees feeding in flowering Swamp Gums.

03 June 2022 – RB [4 hr]

- Pulled out more yellow-flowered crop weeds from the reserve in Nth area (X).
- Put 23 tall, close-meshed guards on banksias on E fence (O, P).

07 June 2022 – RB [3 hr]

- More work pulling out yellow-flowered weed in Nth area (X) but more germinating.
- Put another 5 tall, close-meshed guards on banksias on E fence (P).

Stubble Quail seen in old Cypress area (M).

31 July 2022 – Working bee with RB, DL, PH, PM, RZ, WM [15 hr]

- Planted and guarded 17 Prickly Tea-tree near MacFarlane Rd gate (V).
- Planted and guarded 7 Silver Banksia (6 Pierrepoint, 1 Yatchaw), 1 Bursaria (Hensley Pk Rd) and 4 Sheoak (Old Res.) at Nth end, replacing dead trees from 2019 or 2020 (K, N).

04 Aug. 2022 – RB [2 hr]

- Planted 7 trees (4 Pierrepoint Banksia, 1 Yatchaw Banksia, 2 Sheoaks) on W fence (I, J) – trees grown for the reserve in excess of needs (30 Banksia, 36 Sheoak, 6 Bursaria) were given to Bill Weatherly for planting on ‘Forgotten Woodlands’ projects.

08 Aug. 2022 – RB [5.5 hr]. Applied 42 L herbicide around trees and on weeds:

- Sprayed around most planted trees (2019-20) on N end and up to the third lot of banksias from the HP gate (X) on W fence.
- Spot-sprayed weeds: Sorrel on a rubble heap; *Galium* and *Oxalis pes-caprae* on NE fence area (2 spots) and *Galium* on the stream area E of the ramp (2 dozen clumps); *Fumaria* on the ramp (S); Phalaris plants throughout N end.

09 Aug. 2022 – RB [6.5 hr]. Applied 20 L herbicide spot-spray around trees and on weeds:

- Replaced a dead eucalypt on the E fence near the HP gate (X) with a Sheoak.
- Sprayed around trees on W fence (H, G) and E fence (Q) adjacent to the pool.
- Spot-sprayed spots of *Oxalis purpurea* both sides of the track, S end of station ground (Z) and a large patch 50 m Nth of Q on E fence and about 20 spots on E fence below the junction (Z).
- Sprayed the large infestation of *Galium* just Sth of powerline (Y) – both sides of track and more at 2 sites Sth of dam on E side.
- Spot-sprayed Wild Gladiolus on an old patch on E fence adjacent to the bank and 2 new spots Sth of the power line (Y) and dam fence.

21 Aug. 2022 – RB [4 hr].

- Finished spraying around trees on Sth block plus weeds at the MacFarlanes Rd gate (V).
- Finished spraying a patch of *Galium* on Sth side (near Y) and ‘new’ spots of *Oxalis purpurea* and Wild Gladiolus halfway down the Sth block.

06 Sept. 2022 – RB [2 hr]

- Weed-wiped a dozen or so *Fumaria* and *Galium* seedlings on the embankment (S) and a dozen Sparaxis near the stream where previously treated.
- Cut out a dozen Black Wattle saplings from 3 sites in grassland areas on W side of Nth block.

18 Oct. 2022 – RB [5 hr]. Applied 11 L herbicide spray and wipe solution:

- Sprayed around a few trees near H Pk gate (X).
- Sprayed a small patch of *Sparaxis* on W side of track, 100 m Nth of the bank.
- Sprayed a few *Galium* & *Fumaria* on the bank.
- Sprayed 3-4 spots of *Galium* Sth of powerline (Y) on both sides of the track – the most southerly spot was on the E side about 100 m Sth of the corner of the dam.

- Spot-sprayed Wild Gladiolus near the fence on the E side of the bank (an old infestation).
- Wiped several *Oxalis purpurea* near E fence on Nth block.
- Wiped dozens of *Sparaxis* on both sides of the little stream, and one patch of about 150 plants in flower 70 m Nth of the stream where not seen previously. The heads were removed.

All the Black Wattles have been ‘browned off’ by fire-blight caterpillars. Austral Buttercup, *Hibbertia*, Bulbine Lily, *Veronica gracilis* and *Galium gaudichaudii* were flowering.

06 Nov, 2022 – RB [4.5 hr]. Applied 6 L spray plus herbicide wipe solution:

- Sprayed the first 100 m of track from HP Rd gate (X).
- Spot-sprayed *Galium* on the NE corner near the E fence, mopping up a few dozen plants left after previous efforts to eradicate the weed there.
- Checked the bank and little stream area for *Sparaxis* and found no new plants.
- Wiped a few dozen newly germinated Galium plants Sth from the powerline (Y) on both sides of the track.
- Two small patches of *Oxalis purpurea* wiped on the E fenceline from blue gums (Z) to powerline (Y).
- Wiped dozens of Wild Gladiolus on the E fence opposite the bank (S).
- Spot-sprayed several Briar Rose – a continuing problem
- Part of open grassland area on E side near pond (Q) may be infested with Bent Grass. If so, it may be too hard to control without destroying the native flora on those areas. That could also allow other pasture weeds to establish. Conversely, if no action is taken then this aggressive perennial weed may extend across the reserve, blanketing out the native flora.

Chocolate Lilies, Onion Orchids and Blue Sun-orchids were blooming. One sun-orchid had 5 flowers.

