

Wannon Flora Reserve *Acacia paradoxa* control report 2021

Hamilton Field Naturalists Club

Background to the project

From 1963 to 1969 HFNC had 11 working bees to remove tons of rubbish, to rabbit-proof fence the reserve and to remove thousands of *Acacia paradoxa* seedlings that had established on the disturbed areas. Removal of the spiny *A. paradoxa* (then classified as a 'noxious weed') continued annually until about 1980 and sporadically thereafter. Sallow Wattle (*A. longifolia*) emerged as a threat after 1980 emanating from plantings in the adjacent Wannon Falls Scenic Reserve in the 1960s.

A. paradoxa has spread from the west to invade the Damp Sands Herb-rich Woodland EVC in the eastern half of the reserve. Currently the western half is packed with thickets of the wattle. The consequence has been the disappearance of dozens of the ground flora species. Virtually nothing grows under the thickets of *A. paradoxa* and it is clear that what was a magnificent flora reserve is being trashed. Our aim is to remove the *A. paradoxa* shrubs to stop its further encroachment on the eastern area of heath and to allow the ground flora on the treated area to regenerate.

In Feb. 2018 HFNC applied to the SGSC (the official manager of the reserve) for a Planning Permit: (TP/3/2018): '*Removal of Invasive Acacia Shrubs from the Wannon Flora Reserve*'.

Three applications for funding have been made:

1. March 2018 – DELWP SmartyGrants Community and Volunteer Action Grant to control the pest plants ('*Restoration of native understory flora on the Wannon Flora Reserve*').
2. 2019 – Glenelg-Hopkins CMA Victorian Landcare Grants 2019-20 program
3. March 2021 – Community and Volunteer Action Grants – Biodiversity on-ground action and stewardship (application for \$3,900 for equipment for volunteers to do the work).



All applications have failed. The 2021 bid was not supported by DELWP; the selectors may not have regarded the problem with invasive weeds such as *Acacia paradoxa* as being significant. That issue does not get a mention in their Planning Focus Landscape criteria – the area in which we only scored 0.7 of 5.0 in the selection process. (We were presumably judged not to have addressed their criteria).

Work in 2020 (for details see the 2020 Report)

Our aim in 2020 was to cull the *A. paradoxa* in the NE corner, particularly the area of heath, as well as clearing a swathe along the Sth side, adjacent to (and including) the Glenelg Highway road reserve.

The Shire of Southern Grampians and the CFA (with Andy Govanstone co-ordinating) organised the removal of *A. paradoxa* from both sides of Powells Rd and both sides of the track on the Nth side of the reserve. Except for the strip on the N side of the track, where the chipped litter was spread on site, the material was removed from the reserve. The verges along the N boundary track have been disturbed by the heavy machinery, leaving scalped areas and little mounds of earth. Some of that was levelled off by HFNC. The potential was for the disturbance to lead to an influx of weeds but that does not appear to have been significant, with mainly native species recolonising the disturbed parts.

An inspection in winter 2020 of the experimental plots where freshly cut Hedge Wattle stumps were left untreated on 25 May 2019 showed that there was no sprouting of any cut shrubs provided that no twig was left below the cut or there was incomplete severing of the trunk.

Work objectives in 2021

In September 2020 a ‘hydro-axe’ was used to inject neat glyphosate into about 70 *A. paradoxa* (5-10 cuts per tree, applying a total of about 5-10 mL/tree). That technique proved to be successful and it may make the further removal of the large shrubs from the reserve easier. It might also be environmentally better, reducing the amount of foliage and wood lying on the ground.

The objectives in 2021 were as follows:

1. Complete the removal of the large *A. paradoxa* shrubs from the eastern half of the reserve.
2. Pull out/cut off emerging *A. paradoxa* seedlings in ALL areas treated in 2019 & 2020
3. Treat weeds, including Wild Gladiolus (*Gladiolus undulatus*), Harlequin Flower (*Sparaxis bulbifera*), Sour-sob (*Oxalis pes-caprae*), Cleavers (*Galium aperine*), Bridal Creeper (*Asparagus asparagoides*), Freesia (*Freesia* sp.) & Angled Onion (*Allium triquetrum*).
4. To have the Shire erect signs on the entrances to northern boundary track off Wannan-Nigretta Rd and Powells Rd warning about dumping of rubbish in the reserve.

Objective 1 & 2 have not been entirely achieved. We were inhibited by Covid-19 restrictions during the year (e.g. a scheduled activity in May had to be cancelled). However, some work was able to be done at other times by individuals or couples working alone. Failure to achieve funding to obtain more effective equipment did not affect much work in 2021 but may have an impact in 2022. Objective 4 was achieved in November when SGSC (per Marten Chin) arranged and erected 2 signs.

Activities in 2021:

02 May – Working Bee removing small seedlings and small shrubs from NE end (DL). Large shrubs in the NE area were either poisoned (RB & RZ) using hydro-axes with neat glyphosate (about 80 trees) or cut down with a saw (PH).

13 June – Working Bee pulling or cutting out small shrubs over much of the reserve (DL, JS, PM, RT) and cutting or poisoning large shrubs in the eastern half (RB & PH).

14 Sept. – pulling/cutting out small shrubs over the NE area of reserve (DL) and cutting or poisoning previously untreated large shrubs in NE sector, incl. road reserve opposite NE corner (RB, PH).

08 Oct. – herbicide-wiped *Sparaxis* (RB) near SE corner from road to 20 m into the reserve; 2 small spots N along the Wannan-Nigretta Rd; one larger spot with about 25 plants across the road near SE corner. Also wiped were several dozen Wild Gladiolus at several spots along the road reserve adjacent to the Flora Reserve.

24 Nov. – pulled 130 *A. paradoxa* (RT) on Powells Rd strip

29 Nov. – cutting out a few dozen *A. paradoxa* shrubs missed earlier in the NE sector, plus pulling another few dozen seedlings (RB).

Wannan Flora Reserve – control of *A. paradoxa* & other weeds in 2021

Date	HFNC volunteer and hours of work										∑ hours	Cumul. hours	
	RB	DL	PH	RZ	JS	RT	PM						
2021													
02 May	2.25	2.0	2.5	2.25								9.0	9.0
13 June	2.5	2.25	2.25		2.0		2.0					11.0	20.0
June						6.0						6.0	26.0
14 Sept.	7.0	7.0	7.0									21.0	47.0
08 Oct.	2.5											2.5	49.5
24 Nov.						2.0						2.0	51.5
29 Nov.	2.0											2.0	53.5

Activities proposed for 2022:

The main aim then (and thereafter) will be to rid the eastern half (and other strips that have been treated) of regenerating *A. paradoxa* plants. A secondary aim is to extend operations to the west.