

HFNC excursion to Wannan Flora Reserve to control environmental weeds, 6 June 2009

Rod Bird

As background, HFNC has had a keen interest in the reserve since its acquisition back in about 1959, when members obtained consent from the Dundas Shire's Wannan and Nigretta Management Committee to "develop the 18-acre reserve at the Wannan as a miniature national park and Wildflower reserve". HFNC provided and erected the rabbit-proof fence around the reserve (completed 1966) and removed tons of rubbish in the early 1960s. The gates were stolen in late 1990s and the fence had deteriorated.

Between 1963 and 1980 perhaps a hundred thousand *A. paradoxa* were pulled out – these had germinated prolifically following the use of the area in the 1950s as a tip and gravel extraction area. HFNC plant surveys of the area in the early 1960s revealed 167 native species. The current list is 173 but some orchid species, in particular, have not been seen in recent years. Incidentally, *A. longifolia*, *A. pycnantha* and *A. decurrens* were seen in 1964 when specimens were collected for the HFNC herbarium. However, we regard all 3 species as being alien to this area.

On 6 June 2009 several members visited the reserve and removed some environmental weeds. These included *A. longifolia* - several dozens of small seedlings from the reserve and adjacent Henty Highway road reserve, with 10-20 larger trees cut down or poisoned (these were missed in recent PV visit). The road reserve now appears to be clear of the wattle, although the roadside opposite is heavily contaminated. We noted a few large *A. decurrens* and *A. pycnantha* still present in the SW area.

Some *A. paradoxa* seedlings were removed from otherwise open areas in the reserve, to try and retain some open space for other native species. There is, currently, a very large cover of this species in the western and central areas. The reserve looks to be in reasonable condition, following good rains this year, although heavily grazed by kangaroos and wallabies, and becoming overstocked with Hedge Wattle (*A. paradoxa*).

Reto used a "hydro-axe" to poison some large *A. longifolia* and *A. decurrens*. There is a lot of dead wood along the road reserve, resulting from Parks Victoria's work there in cutting down *A. longifolia*.

On 11 June PRB spot-sprayed (Ally and Pulse in 3 L spray) the garden bulbs growing in about a dozen spots along the Glenelg Highway road reserve, adjacent to the 18-acre Reserve, plus some *Sparaxis bulbifera* further west towards the river. We will follow that up later in spring.

We noted a few rabbit burrows and think these could be fumigated rather than being ripped, preventing disturbance to the reserve. Some of our members with Chemical Users Permits could do that, if we had the materials to use. We wonder if that is a viable option.

A report was given to Brian McInnon of Parks Victoria and Brian replied:

- *Parks Vic is trying to control weeds and rabbits on this Reserve, thank you and HFNC for your help.*
- *I have been conserving efforts on Sallow and Early Black Wattle over the last couple of years.*
- *Some warrens have been marked and will be fumigated in the next few weeks.*
- *Two years ago Vic Roads gave me verbal permission to cut down sallow wattle alongside Wannan FR.*
- *Gates and fence removal has occurred for the movement of fauna to prevent entanglement and grazing.*

Addendum – 15 Sep09 – PRB sprayed about 50 *Sparaxis* plants on edge of Wannan-Nigretta Rd on the same side as the reserve, approx. 70 m from Glenelg Highway corner. Also, dozens of *Freesia* were seen in the SW area of the reserve (mainly on the areas disturbed by past rubbish tipping – centred in a circle of about 20 m around a very tall Manna Gum with Cherry Ballart nearby) and many of these were sprayed. There were few plants in flower and more effort is needed in 2010 to eliminate the menace.