HFNC weed control report for Nigretta Flora Reserve 2012

African Weed Orchid (AWO) were found on this 12-ha Flora Reserve in 2009 and efforts were immediately made in an effort to control the menace. That work has continued annually in Oct-Nov.

On 24 Oct RB herbicide-wiped 1660 AWO on the centre and west of the flora reserve (8 hrs). The river was too high to cross safely before this date and it did involve wading across one small channel on the 24th.

On 29 Oct RB & DL, JC & GC gained access to the site via Dr Ross Robson's property on the north side of the Wannon River. We wiped 3,640 AWO on same area as above (total of 16 hrs). Also, the eastern wing (area down northern fence east to the river) was covered by 1 person only (RB). Some *Phalaris* clumps and *Galium* (Bedstraw or Cleavers) in the NW corner were sprayed with Glyphosate but this small but serious infestation must be treated again next year.

On 10 Nov RB & DL, CC & AC, JH crossed the river and spent a total of 22 hrs in digging 1400 previously untreated AWO and pulling 100 in the entire western block (those pulled were by DL at the northern top). We did not get to the eastern wing. We had obviously missed at least those 1500 plants in the first 2 efforts on the western block and so there would be some untreated in the eastern wing. We ran out of time and energy late in the afternoon and so resorted to pulling the heads off the last AWO we could find. Perhaps we also missed other plants further to the NW but I was confident that this was our most comprehensive effort.

We noted on 10 Nov that plants wiped on 24 Oct were fast wilting but many of those treated on 29 Oct were yet to reach that darkened, slumped state. This might be due, in part, to some operators not applying sufficient solution to some plants, particularly the basal leaves.

Since *metsulfuron methyl* takes at least 3-4 weeks to take effect, glyphosate was added to the mixture to prevent plants setting viable seed before they die. This year, where no adjacent natives would be affected, the herbicide applicator was pushed down firmly to the ground in order to contact the leaves as well as leaving marker dye on the leaves and old material on the ground.

Volunteers	24Oct	29Oct	10Nov	**Total for 2012** Wiped	Dug	Pulled	Overall Total
RB	1660W(8hr)			1660			1660
RB&DL, JC&GC		3640W(16hr)		3640			3640
RB & DL, CC & AC, JH			1400D(22hr) 100P		1400	100	1500
Total	1,660	3,640	1,500	5,300	1400	100	6,800

The 2012 tally is higher than last year (perhaps due to a more comprehensive search this year) but much lower than the previous 2 years, so maybe there has been a worthwhile gain:

- 2012 – 6,800 plants wiped and dug (100 plants pulled) from entire area
- 2011 – 5,500 plants wiped or pulled from the entire area
- 2010 – 13,720 (10,320 wiped and 3,400 pulled) but far NW and far NE areas not covered
- 2009 – 22,500 (2150 dug and 20350 pulled) but far NW corner not covered

Since each plant can produce an enormous number of viable seeds that spread easily with the wind we must continue to do our best to remove all plants from the area. Whether it will be possible is the question. Clearly, we need to use the easiest and most efficient method – herbicide-wiping.

We need to start earlier – mid October at the latest – and have more members active in this work. Now that access is available to us from the north side that should be possible. This is too good an area of grassland/woodland to abandon without an effort.