

Landcare matters

Hotham-Williams sub-catchment update



PHCC
Peel-Harvey Catchment Council

Edition 74
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NRM is the management of natural resources such as land, water, soils, plants and animals. It brings together land use planning, water management, biodiversity conservation and sustainability of industries such as agriculture, mining, tourism, fisheries and forestry.



To weed or not to weed...That is the question!

This is often a difficult question, especially when restoring a large natural area with several weed species and a limited budget.

Symphytotrichum subulatum (previously *Aster subulatus*), or bushy starwort, is being targeted at a number of restoration sites in the upper catchment. This species looks a bit like fleabane but prefers to grow in wet, saline soils. It is dispersed by both wind and water and has the nasty habit of producing ongoing germinations throughout summer as water along creek lines recedes and drops seed. As it grows and sets seed throughout summer, it is often left to proliferate because of the more traditional weed control seasons of autumn and spring.

Bushy starwort has been prioritised in a number of restoration areas, including Tunbridge Gully and the Williams and Quindanning River Action Plan Sites. This is the case for a number of reasons, the foremost being its growth form and density interfering with restoration efforts. The tall, spindly nature of the plant means that several thousand individuals can grow side by side within a degraded area, easily taking up residence and spreading to the detriment of native species.

Its eradication will therefore likely result in some regeneration of native species, complimented by revegetation efforts.



Weed!
BUSHY STARWORT

Dryandra Woonta project results workshop

Recently 23 local landholders and community members attended the Dryandra Woonta Project Results Workshop where we shared the results of the Dryandra Felixer™ trial and feral cat DNA analysis. Dr Karen Bettink spoke about the non-toxic Felixer™ trial which involved 6 Felixer™ units set up in photo-only mode and trialled on farms surrounding Dryandra Woodland and within the National Park itself. Once the trial has finished and the report is finalised we will share the results of the trial with the community.

Dr Heather Crawford spoke about feral cat biology and the diseases that feral cats spread. Heather also spoke about the study she completed about the gut contents of feral cats culled around Dryandra.

Dr Kim Ottewell and Robyn Shaw, who are Research scientists from DBCA, shared the results of DNA analysis of feral cats culled in and around Dryandra. The findings from this study will help to guide management actions into the future.

Tamara Wilkes-Jones discussed the numbat dig survey where she quantified numbat digs on a number of Dryandra satellite blocks. Peter Lacey from DBCA was able to provide a fauna update including graphs of the mean daily camera data showing a steady increase of numbats.

Thank you to all of the guest speakers and to the landholders who attended the event.



Above: Dr Heather Crawford presenting at the Dryandra Woonta event

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Saltbush fodder ready to graze

On 16th March, PHCC's Greening Farms team ran a Saltbush Field Day on two farms in the Wandering/Pumphrey's Bridge district, looking to provide local farmers with the knowledge and experience to make the most of their saltbush fodder plantings.

The event couldn't have come at a better time, as food resources in some paddocks are dwindling, the saltbush is ready and waiting to be grazed.

With between 12 -24 months of establishment behind them, new plantings of deep-rooted saltbush fodder in the Hotham-Williams catchment are ready for grazing.

Guest speaker Dustin McCreery from Chatfields Tree Nursery explained the importance of grazing saltbush once they were big enough not to be pulled-out by animals feeding on the leaves, as well as the need to retain about 15-20% of the leaf-cover, so plants can recover quickly.

The Greening Farms project has been in operation since 2018, with the goal of increasing green cover on farms to provide food, fibre and shelter for livestock in the Hotham-Williams area. To date, more than 170,000 seedlings have been provided to landholders, over 120,000 of those are various forms of saltbush.

It's great to see that the species PHCC have supported to be planted in past years are now being used by farmers for grazing in the region, helping them fill the Autumn feed gap and contributing to improving their bottom line, as well as improving landscape function.

As well as providing food for stock, these plants also shade the ground, increasing soil health and provide habitat for many native species that benefit farms, like insects, fungi and birds.

Different species of saltbush can tolerate different levels of salinity, waterlogging and grazing, so it's important to understand where in the landscape each species is suited. This is where Dustin and his expert knowledge comes in. As the nation's only licensed supplier of Anameka saltbush, there were lots of questions for him in the paddock.



Above: Local landholders hearing about the value of grazing Anameka saltbush

Right: Dustin McCreery showcasing leaf-variability in Old Man Saltbush



Coming up...

Easter Holidays

The Boddington office will be closed Friday 7th April and re-opening Tuesday 11th April

Black Cockatoo Crisis

Local film screening at the Boddington Community Resource Centre

13 April 2023 at 7.30pm

Visit <https://www.facebook.com/boddingtonoldschool>

Williams Expo

15 April 2023 at 10am

Be sure to visit the PHCC stall on the day

Event News...

Boddington Youth Centre School Holiday Program

PHCC will be facilitating an interactive session on Thursday 13 April in celebration of Earth Day

Do you need assistance with feral animal control? Contact us regarding:

- 1080 training and assistance with baits
- Loaning cage traps

