

WEEDER'S DIGEST

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF HRCC

Welcome!

Welcome to Hawkesbury River County Council's quarterly newsletter, where we showcase our recent activity and share some of our favourite highlights with you. Our team has been on the ground supporting Landcare initiatives, connecting with the local community, and tackling prolific weed growth after a period of wild weather. We hope you enjoy this month's edition, and we welcome any feedback you might have!



Chris Dewhurst
General Manager

Established in 1948, HRCC is the Local Control Authority for priority and invasive weeds under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015.

In this issue:

- »»» Spotlight on Q3
- »»» Wiping Out Water Weeds
- »»» Landcare Update
- »»» Biosecurity Bulletin
- »»» Five Minutes with: Toby Walker
- »»» Weed Watch
- »»» Weed Wisdom

Join us on



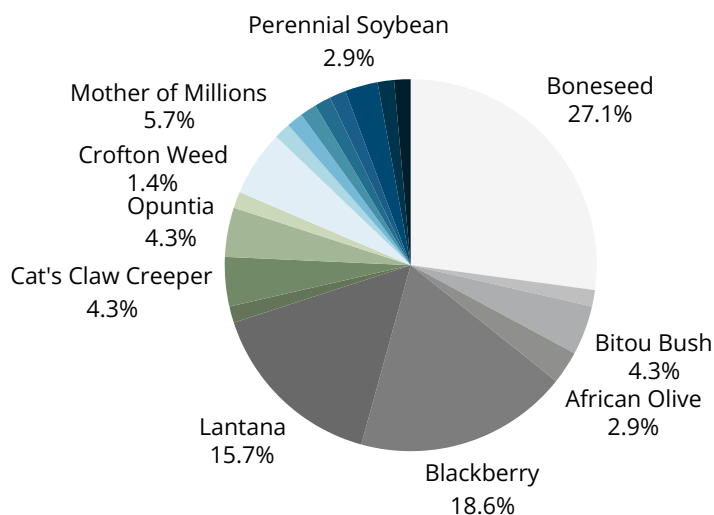
To subscribe to our newsletter or send us feedback, email us at council@hrcc.nsw.gov.au

SPOTLIGHT ON Q3

HRCC's team has worked hard to meet our weed management targets for Q3 of the 2023/24 financial year. Last quarter, we spent over 300 hours managing terrestrial and aquatic weeds!

By categorising weeds across four stages of prioritisation – Prevention, Eradication, Containment and Asset-based Protection – we systematically control hectares worth of invasive species.

From January to March alone, we removed more than 10 hectares and almost 20 different species of terrestrial weeds - including Lantana, Blackberry, African Olive and Bitou Bush.



Invasive Boneseed has been a particular focus for our team, as these dense flowering shrubs are listed for eradication in NSW. We removed more than eight hectares worth of Boneseed in recent months, meeting our quarterly target.

Control of terrestrial weeds January - March 2024	
Total Hectares Covered	10.9206
Total Hours	172.04

Control of aquatic weeds January - March 2024	
Total Hectares Covered	9
Total Hours	127.9464

“It has been a bumper growing season for some weeds thanks to the wet weather. Without intervention, these weeds can outcompete endemic plants and reduce habitat for native animals, making them a danger to our parklands and reserves.”

Chris Dewhurst, General Manager

WIPING OUT WATER WEEDS

HRCC has been monitoring the Hawkesbury River area under the NSW Government's Early Needs Weed Recovery Grant (ENWRG).

Our team and member Councils have been keeping a close eye on numerous species, including the intrusive Water Primrose, Sagittaria, Alligator weed, Salvinia and Water Hyacinth.

Wetter-than-average weather has left the banks of the Hawkesbury River muddy and has created prime conditions for these invasive aquatic plants to bloom. Despite the downpour last quarter, we treated nine hectares of Asset-listed water weeds using spray units and weed booms - exceeding our quarterly target by almost 30%.

"Weeds are highly influenced by the weather and can spread rapidly under rainy conditions. We mitigate weed growth in high-risk areas by shifting our focus and resources accordingly," said HRCC's Weed Control Coordinator, Natalie James.



A weed boom, which acts as a floating barrier for weeds like Water Hyacinth and Salvinia.



HRCC staff spraying Water Primrose on the banks of the Hawkesbury River.

WIPING OUT WATER WEEDS

➤➤➤ GETTING THE COMMUNITY ON BOARD



Thanks to Greater Sydney Local Land Services, with funding from the Early Needs Weed Recovery Grant, we held three Aquatic Weed and Native Plant Workshops at the LLS Demonstration Farm in Richmond this May. These were aimed at providing primary producers and the community with tools for weed control following flooding events.

The workshops addressed common weed management questions, gave attendees a crash course in plant identification, and acquainted them with the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015. Several people also brought in weed samples for our inspectors to identify and discuss.

"We hosted 42 guests, from local students and members of the public to visitors from our member councils, as well as neighbouring councils. It was great to connect with our community and educate them about which weeds to watch for."

Toby Walker, Biosecurity Team Leader



LANDCARE UPDATE

➤➤➤ YOUTH WILDLIFE CAMPOUT - MAY 25, 2024



Landcare has had a busy few months planning and implementing a diverse range of educational events, helping the local community engage with the environment.

Youth Wildlife Campout was a definite highlight, hosting around 15 young people on 25 May in Mitchell Park within Cattai National Park for an overnight experience complete with educational talks and even a nocturnal bushwalk.

Attendees learnt about the platypus in the local environment direct from Dr Michelle Ryan, Senior Lecturer in Ecology and Environmental Science at University of Western Sydney and Hawkesbury-Nepean Waterkeeper. Attendees also heard from Katherine Warwick, an aquatic ecologist and PhD candidate, and were treated to a guided night-time bushwalk to spot native nocturnal wildlife.



LANDCARE UPDATE

➤➤➤ YOUTH WILDLIFE CAMPOUT - MAY 25, 2024

Dr Michelle Ryan is passionate about waterway health and has a special interest in the iconic platypus. Renowned for her studies on human impacts on aquatic environments, her current research focuses on the health of platypus populations within Greater Sydney. Other interactive citizen science activities included water-testing and a weed control working bee, with all hands on deck to help wipe out weeds in the National Park.



"The campout was a huge success and everyone really enjoyed the chance to see nocturnal species like the ring-tailed possum and tawny frogmouth. Everyone's favourite experience, though, was the platypus talk with Dr Michelle Ryan - and the real stand-out was actually spotting a platypus in the wild."

Monique Bailey, Local Landcare Coordinator - Hawkesbury-Nepean Landcare Network

This event was made possible by the Connecting Outdoors program, which is supported by Cattai Hills Environment Network, hosted by Hawkesbury-Nepean Landcare Network, and made possible by funding from the Western Sydney Primary Health Network (WSPHN). WSPHN is operated by WentWest.

Stay tuned for more updates about Landcare's work with local youth – with several innovative school programs slated for June and July.

BIOSECURITY BULLETIN

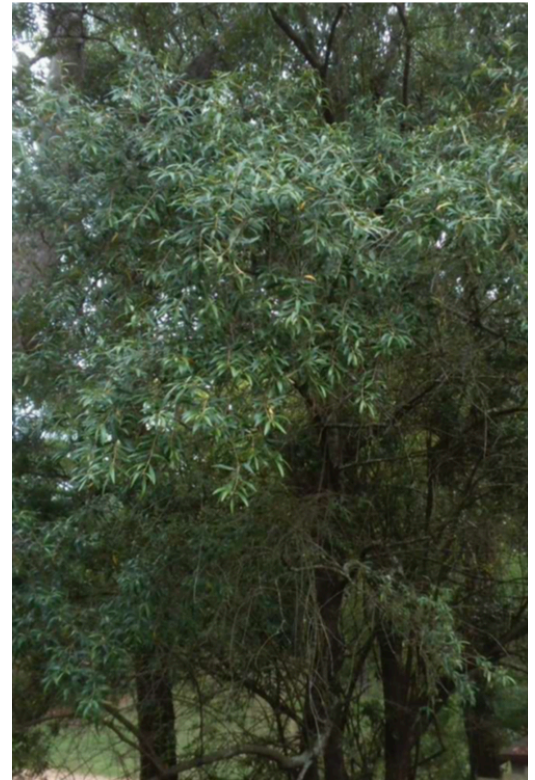
Our biosecurity inspection program led us to bushland at Leonay and Kemps Creek, where we surveyed for African Olive and Kei apple – two invasive species of dense, fruit-producing tree.

➤➤➤ AFRICAN OLIVE

HRCC surveyed Leonay for African Olive trees, finding them on private property. We advised the landowners of an unconventional way to manage African Olive plants – by giving them to the local zoo.

“Landholders can dispose of African Olive foliage by donating it to the staff at Sydney Zoo, where it’s used to feed animals like elephants and giraffes. This makes it easier to manage the plants and safely dispose of the green waste. It certainly benefits the animals too.”

Toby Walker, Biosecurity Team Leader



A mature African Olive tree.

➤➤➤ KEI APPLE

Kei apple plants, which are less common, were found at the Western Sydney Airport site in Kemps Creek. The land around the airport site is set to be cleared, with potential for the Kei apple plant to spread during development. Our team found a manageable crop of Kei apple, which has now been contained.

We also investigated a number of florists, nurseries and aquariums, intercepting the sale of an invasive *Opuntia* species – also known as Pricky Pear cacti. The sale of *Opuntia* is strictly prohibited in NSW, except for the Indian Fig (*Opuntia ficus-indica*) variety. All other species were swiftly seized by our Biosecurity team, who educated staff about this prohibited species.



Kei apple fruits.

FIVE MINUTES WITH: TOBY WALKER

As HRCC's Biosecurity Team Leader, Toby Walker leads staff in biosecurity inspections, weed surveillance, and strategic planning.

With a background in computers and a passion for gaming, Toby uses novel drone technology for weed surveillance and loves taking in the beauty of our native bushland.

1. WHAT BROUGHT YOU INTO WEED MANAGEMENT?

When I left school, I initially studied Computer Assembly and Repair – but then I discovered my current role, which is completely different to what I had studied! It really appealed to me and I liked the idea of working in nature. I quickly discovered that I had a real knack for the work and genuinely enjoy it.



2. WHAT DOES AN AVERAGE DAY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?

I'm usually looking at maps and weed reports, and analysing areas where weeds have emerged or are at risk of spreading. Otherwise, I'm leading our Biosecurity team in inspecting private properties, nurseries, aquariums and florists.

3. FAVOURITE ASPECT OF YOUR JOB?

Being out in nature is one of the biggest perks of my job. I get to visit some beautiful national parks and see rare plants, pretty flowers, and native animals.

4. WHAT'S SOMETHING YOU WISH THE PUBLIC KNEW ABOUT YOUR JOB?

That the environmental context and impact of weeds is often broader than what people expect. A weed isn't just a plant – they can negatively affect our environment, community, and primary industries - so it's important work that we're doing.

5. WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF WEED MANAGEMENT LOOK LIKE TO YOU?

I'm currently working with drones as part of our weed surveillance work, and I think we'll be using these kinds of emerging technologies more frequently in future. We're also working with the Department of Primary Industries to test for the presence of weeds using DNA sampling. I think that's another innovation that will become increasingly important.

WEED WATCH

>>> FROGBIT

There has been a new infestation of aquatic weed Frogbit (*Limnobium laevigatum*) in Agnes Banks, in the Penrith LGA. It is prohibited and if found, needs to be reported to us.

Frogbit is fast-growing - it forms large dense mats on top of water that inhibit native water plants and reduce light and food for fish and other marine life. Left unchecked, it can block waterways and even create dangerous conditions as it disguises the water surface as firm ground.



How to spot it

Frogbit has rounded bright green glossy leaves and floats on top of the water. It can also have flowers that are white, pale yellow or greenish in colour. Young leaves are spongy underneath and float on the surface of the water, while more mature leaves can extend up to 50cm above the water.

How it spreads

Unfortunately, the illegal dumping of aquarium or pond plants in our waterways has been the biggest cause of Frogbit infestations in NSW. Frogbit seeds can remain viable for at least three years and are moved by water flow and wind but can also attach to birds or watercraft.

What to do

If you see this plant, report it to HRCC as these plants must be eradicated.



FOUND IT? TELL US

(02) 4574 9600

WEED WISDOM

➤➤➤ CHINESE KNOTWEED

Following recent flooding, Chinese Knotweed (*Persicaria chinensis*) has been prevalent along the Hawkesbury River, favouring its sandy soils.

How to spot it

Chinese Knotweed is a sprawling groundcover that can grow into a 1-metre-tall shrub. It has small clusters of white or pale pink flowers, red stems, a red mid-vein on its leaves and a distinctive v-shape on the top of the leaf.

How it spreads

It spreads by both seeds and root fragment. While birds contribute to the spreading of the weed, sadly it is often spread by people dumping garden waste and by vehicles and machinery.



GET IN TOUCH

Call us

02 4574 9600

Email us

inspections@hrcc.nsw.gov.au
council@hrcc.nsw.gov.au

Write to us

PO Box 6021, South Windsor DC 2756

HRCC operates on the traditional lands of the Darug and Darkinjung peoples.

Be weed wise!
To easily identify weeds,
check the **NSW WeedWise**
directory.

