



## SUMMER 2008

### Welcome to the Summer Newsletter

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### The beginning of a new era

A new era of collaboration is underway with the jointly funded **Weed Spotters Queensland Network**. The Queensland Herbarium (EPA) and Biosecurity Queensland's, Invasive Plants and Animals Program have committed to supporting and funding the re-establishment of the community based Weed Spotters Network in Queensland.

Kathy Stephens (Principal Botanist) from the Queensland Herbarium has been appointed as the state project officer based at the Queensland Herbarium. Kathy comes to this position with a wealth of botanical knowledge on aquatic and terrestrial species, and years of experience as a field botanist. Kathy is very qualified to provide training in both weed collection techniques and weed recognition, including assisting Weed Spotters with their many queries on weeds.

First off the rank, is the new look newsletter, containing all the vital information you need to spot those new weeds in your region. A dedicated Weed Spotters web page will also be available on the EPA website from February 2009.

Training will begin in the New Year. If you have preferences for the type of training you would like in your region give Kathy a call (details back page) and have a chat. If you know of others who might like to become involved in Weed Spotters Queensland please forward the newsletter and suggest they get on board too.

The key message being - the more eyes we've got, the more weeds we can spot, and potentially stop!

### Weeds in the Wet Tropics

The battle against weeds in Far North Queensland is continuing through the dedicated efforts of Weed Watch volunteers and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

Weed Watch is a Blueprint for the Bush initiative developed by Conservation Volunteers Australia to recruit and train Community volunteers to support local priority pest management activities undertaken by Local Government and State Government Departments. Volunteers from communities within the Cairns, Cassowary and Tableland Regional Councils play an important role in the early detection of new and emerging weeds and help to record the spread of weeds throughout the Wet & Dry Tropics. Volunteers are trained in how to identify weeds and how to collect and dry specimens for inclusion in the Queensland Herbarium (Brisbane) and the Australian Tropical



Kathy Stephens - Weed Spotters Project Officer. Photo J.Morton

Herbarium (Cairns) collections. They also assist with mapping current weed infestations, which ultimately contributes to a Regional weed mapping database being developed by the Far North Queensland Regional Organisation of Councils (FNQROC).

Mark Stevens the Weed Watch Project Officer says “the development of a community based Weed Watch program is vital if we are to win the war against weeds. It is important that the community is made aware of the serious impact of weeds on both the environment and the economy and is actively engaged through such programs. Helping detect new and emerging weeds and mapping current infestations, helps Regional and State Government deliver real on-ground results”.



Weed Watch volunteer Gary Johnston inspects a large Cucumber Tree. Photo M.Stevens.

Recently Weed Watch volunteers have completed surveying over 800 ha of the Barron River and surrounding districts, looking for outbreaks of Cucumber Trees (*Parmentiera aculeata*), a local priority weed in the Far North. They have also assisted Biosecurity Queensland with Class 2 fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*) detection and control in the Tablelands Regional Council area.

Weed Watch volunteers have also been instrumental in the detection and mapping of several large infestations of *Thunbergia laurifolia* (Class 1) and *Thunbergia grandiflora* (Class 2) throughout the Region. Information provided to Regional Councils has resulted in several large outbreaks being totally eradicated.



Volunteers spotting *Thunbergia* (Class 1). Photo M.Stevens.

Linked closely to the National Weed Detection Project and with assistance provided by the Queensland Herbarium, Conservation Volunteers Australia has trained over 100 volunteers throughout the Far North and continues to support the activities of Weed Watch volunteers. With the continued support of the community, Weed Watch is making a real difference. We are always looking for new recruits and it is exciting to think that the efforts of Weed Watch volunteers are helping to protect Far North Queensland from potentially serious weed invasions.



Giant tropical Salvia (*Brillantaisia lamium*) was also recorded for the first time from the North Kennedy district, and Salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*) for the South Kennedy district.

In November, the waterweed called mud plantain (*Heteranthera reniformis*) was first discovered in Queensland, a new naturalisation occurring at a number of sites around Brisbane. The Mexican bean tree (*Cecropia peltata*) was first recorded from outside of cultivation in March, the third record for Queensland. In May, *Acacia karroo* was first recorded outside of cultivation in the Darling Downs district, the second record for Queensland.

Weed Watch project officer Mark Stevens and volunteer John Gielis recording a pond apple infestation. Photo M.Stevens.

If you would like to know more information about the Weed Watch program, please feel free to contact Conservation Volunteers Australia on (07) 4032 0844 or email [mstevens@conservationvolunteers.com.au](mailto:mstevens@conservationvolunteers.com.au)



Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*). Photo B.Phillips.

## The year in review: weed spotting in 07-08.

What a year it has been for weed spotting! Lots of weed specimens coming in, resulting in a total of 48 notifications to the email group. These were represented by twelve Class 1 weeds, nine Class 2 weeds (range extensions), one weed from the Environmental Alert List, one priority sleeper weed and two newly naturalised species. Although it is disappointing that there are so many new incursions happening, it is better to spot them early than late!

In July 2007, *Hygrophila costata* made its first appearance in north Queensland (previously only found south of Maryborough). In August 2007 *Harrisia cactus (Harrisia martini)* was found near Rockhampton, a new district record for the Port Curtis district. *Stevia ovata*, a new naturalisation for Australia was also confirmed in August, found at Ravenshoe.

Fireweed (*Senecio madagascariensis*) raises its ugly head again, this time appearing for the first time in north Queensland near Millaa Millaa, and at Roma in the west. This weed was previously confined to coastal districts south of Maryborough. *Praxelis clematidea* continues to spread during the year, with more records from the Burdekin, Bundaberg, and the Torres Strait. Finally, *Thunbergia* species continue to be a big problem in and around our suburbs.

Many thanks to the many spotters who took the trouble to collect specimens and send them in.

Ailsa Holland

## Mexican feather grass found in Queensland

Whilst walking home from a yummy meal at the local Mexican restaurant in Bulimba, I happened upon a landscape planting of a very unusual looking grass. Four plants growing in a garden bed, each in full seed and when I touched the seed head, the seeds fell away very softly like a feather. As a seasoned Weed Spotter I thought to myself – I had better get a specimen of this! So, much to my families frustration, I spent the evening super sleuthing on the internet and finally came to the conclusion that I might have the Class 1 weed, Mexican feather grass.



Mexican feather grass plants in the garden bed at Bulimba. Photo J.Morton

The Queensland Herbarium verified the find as *Nassella tenuissima*, Mexican feather grass. Biosecurity Queensland began initial investigations to reveal that 288 plants were mistakenly labelled as *Stipa capriccio* by an interstate supplier, who sold the stocks to a Queensland production nursery, resulting in sales through retail outlets across southern and central Queensland. Biosecurity Queensland then instigated an emergency response to track down and destroy all plants that had made their way into Queensland



Jane Morton holding the original Mexican feather grass specimen. Photo K.Stephens

Mexican feather grass is a weed with the potential to cause severe environmental damage to native grasslands. It is a tough wiry grass with no grazing value and so a threat to pastures in southern and central Queensland.

The emergency response team traced plants with the assistance of the wholesale and retail nurseries involved. Sales into Queensland of over 1000 *Stipa* plants were investigated but it appeared that only the batch of *Stipa capriccio* were Mexican feather grass. Of the 288 plants, about two thirds have been retrieved and destroyed or had died at the retail level.



Helen Haapakoski and Lyn Willsher bagging the seed heads of Mexican feather grass before removing the plants. Photo A.Terkowski

There are now 83 plants that remain to be found. These are in localities where Weed Spotters could assist Biosecurity Queensland to detect these plants. The localities are:

Longreach, Emerald, Goondiwindi, Aspley, Kenmore, Rochedale (Brisbane), Blacksoil, Mackay, Biloela, Gympie, Kingaroy and in the Northern suburbs of Brisbane. These plants are likely to be in new landscaping areas or in ornamental feature gardens.

All sites where seeding plants have been detected have been placed under Emergency Quarantine Notices. Sites where the risk of establishment is greatest are subject to full decontamination (such as the removal and replacement of mulch and loose topsoil) and then a structured monitoring program until the depletion of the seed bank has occurred. Joe Vitelli from the Alan Fletcher Research Station is providing the research capability through investigative work into seed viability and seed longevity.

We now need your assistance to try to detect the 83 plants that remain to be found. If you find a suspected Mexican feather grass plant, please do not attempt to remove it as you may spread the seed. Please email a photo of the suspect plant, along with your contact details, to [callweb@dpi.qld.gov.au](mailto:callweb@dpi.qld.gov.au), or call DPI&F on 13 25 23. Further information is available at the DPI&F website: [http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xsl/4790\\_8943\\_ENA\\_HTML.htm](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/cps/rde/dpi/hs.xsl/4790_8943_ENA_HTML.htm)

## **\**Gymnocroronis spilanthoides* (D. Don ex Hook. & Arn.) DC.**

### Class 1

#### Collection Details:

collector: Phillip Moran

date: 27/7/08

location: Gold and Moggill Creeks, Brookfield.

## **\**Nassella tenuissima* (Trin.) Barkworth**

### Class 1, first record for Queensland

#### Collection Details:

collector: Jane Morton

date: 25/10/08

location: Oxford St, Bulimba, cultivated

## **\**Ziziphus mauritiana* Lam.**

### Class 2 extension of range (previously known from Maryborough)

#### Collection Details:

collector: Bill Wilson

date: 31/10/2008

location: 12 km N of Biggenden.

## **\**Hygrophila polysperma* (Roxb.) T. Anderson**

Declared in NSW. Second record for Queensland

#### Collection Details:

collector: Juliet Musgrave

date: 10/11/2008

location: Maryborough Showgrounds.

## **\**Hygrophila costata* Nees**

### Class 1

#### Collection Details:

collector: Barry Whyte

date: 18 November 2008

location: Commander St, Deception Bay.

## **\**Brillantaisia lamium* (Nees) Benth.**

Class: Priority Sleeper Weed

#### Collection Details:

collector: Mark Stevens

date: Oct 2008

location: Freshwater Creek, Redlynch (5 km NW of Cairns).

## **\**Thunbergia fragrans* (Roxb. ex Rottler) Roxb.**

Class 1, National Environmental Alert List

#### Collection Details:

collector: Mark Stevens

date: Aug 2008

location: Bicentennial Park, Babinda.

## **\**Asystasia gangetica* subsp. *gangetica* (L.) T. Anderson**

Not listed, extension of range (previously confirmed from near Proserpine)

#### Collection Details:

collector: Leigh Scott

date: 8/10/08

location: Wilson's Beach, Whitsunday Shire

## **Some New Records — July-November 2008**

(supplied by the Queensland Herbarium)

### **\**Acacia nilotica* subsp. *indica* (Benth.) Brenan**

Class 2; WONS

#### Collection Details:

collector: Steve Elson

date: April 2008

location: Gert Island, off the coast of Yeppoon

### **\**Praxelis clematidea* R.M. King & H. Rob.**

National Environmentally Alert List

#### Collection Details:

collector: Maureen Schmitt

date: July 2008

location: several locations near Bundaberg

### **\**Heteranthera reniformis* Ruiz & Pav.**

Not yet listed. Family Pontederiaceae.

#### Collection Details:

collectors: Phillip Moran, John Thorogood, Michael O'Connor

dates: Aug 2008

locations: Brookfield, Nambour, Beaudesert.

## \**Barleria repens* Nees

Not listed, fifth confirmed record of naturalisation, northernmost occurrence

### Collection Details:

collector: Leigh Scott

date: 16/10/08

location: Airlie Crescent, Mackay.

## Weed Spotters Queensland Network Website

Yes! We now have our own website!

From February 2009 weed spotters information will be posted on this website, including the newsletter, training calendar and new weed information:

[www.epa.qld.gov.au/weedspotters](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/weedspotters)

A big thank you to Ailsa Holland, Queensland Herbarium, for the many hours she has spent making this a reality.

## Wandering Jew – how do you know if it's the weedy one?

### How to distinguish the weed from the native species.

Following the recent rains, there has been rapid growth of *Commelina* species, as they love the damp conditions.

Here are the key differences to check that you have the weedy one before you eradicate.

### \**Commelina benghalensis*:

Leaves 1–3 cm wide

Leaf apex blunt

Spathes small, 1–3 together on short thick stipe, almost enclosed in leaf sheath

Spathe closed at base like a cone

Leaf sheath with long obvious rusty hairs

Middle anther produces yellow pollen, while the lateral anthers have white pollen. No other *Commelina* species have this.

Petals 3–4 mm long



White lateral anthers. Photo R.Price.



Rust coloured hairs on sheath of *Commelina benghalensis*. Photo R.Price.

## New publications to help weed spotters

Two electronic products to aid in weed identification have recently been released.

**Suburban and Environmental Weed of South-East Queensland** Version 2 by Sheldon Navie is a Lucid3 key to over 600 garden and environmental weeds.

**The Environmental Weeds of Australia** by Sheldon Navie and Steve Adkins is a Lucid3 key to over 1000 major environmental weeds.

They are available for \$59.00 each plus GST and postage.

For more information visit:

[www.cbit.uq.edu.au/software](http://www.cbit.uq.edu.au/software)

## *Commelina diffusa*:

Leaves less than 1 cm wide

Leaf apex acute or acuminate

Spathes solitary on slender stipe up to 3 cm long

Spathe not closed at base, two sides folded together lengthwise but not joined

Leaf sheath usually glabrous

All anthers with yellow pollen

Petals 12 mm long



All anthers yellow, folded base of spathe. Photo K.Stephens

## Training

The last training under the CRC Weeds was conducted in Longreach by Wayne Harris in October. Many thanks to Wayne for the hard work he put in to finalising the Weeds CRC project.

New training sessions will start again next year. Email or phone Kathy Stephens with your training requirements and we'll draw up a calendar early in 2009.

With all the rain we have been having it will be a bumper year for weeds, so new ones are bound to pop up in your area. Keep your eyes peeled and send new occurrences in to be positively identified. Remember we need your specimens to verify records.

## Contacts

We need people to volunteer to be regional contacts for the Weed Spotters Queensland Network.

Regional Coordinators assist with the identification and filtering of Weed Spotter specimens and pass them on to the Queensland Herbarium. They also pass on information to individuals about new and emerging weeds in their region. They may assist with training, resources and accessing Government information.

If this sounds like something you would like to do, please contact Kathy.

## Contact Details of Regional Coordinators

### Weed Spotters Queensland Network coordinator

Kathy Stephens

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