

Issue 3
June 2005

National Blackberry Program

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At a glance:

- Blackberry identification CD-ROM available.
- Maatsuyker Island freed from blackberries.
- Goat Island unchained from the blackberry stranglehold.
- CSIRO's funding success is National Blackberry Program's gain.

Blackberry CD-ROM available

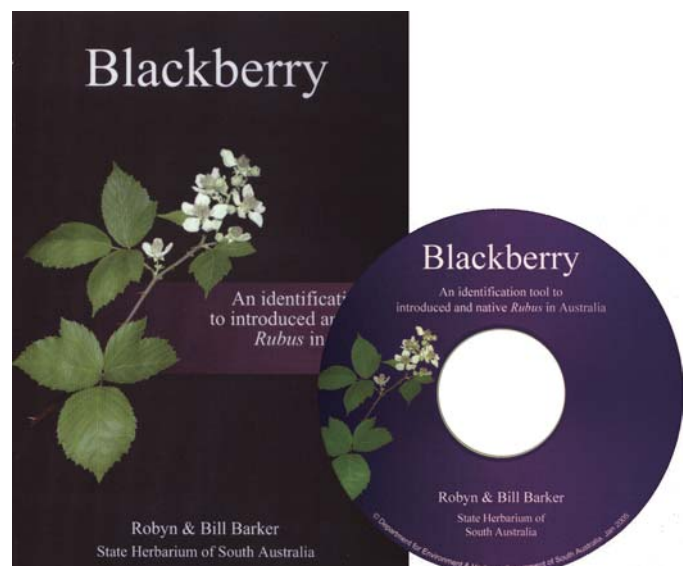
Botanists at the State Herbarium of South Australia, in partnership with colleagues from Australian Universities, have created an easy to use tool to identify the different blackberries across Australia. The LucID key is available as a CD-ROM. It is an interactive key that enables the user to identify all the known species of blackberries in Australia. The tool uses images of many features to help the user identify species from material that may, or may not, be flowering.

The authors have identified at least twenty-three 'weedy' blackberries that threaten our precious environment and six native blackberries. 'Weedy' blackberries in Australia originate from Europe, North America, and Asia.

The LucID key is now available to the public from the University of Queensland. It costs AU\$60 plus postage. The order form is available on-line at <http://www.cbit.uq.edu.au/software/blackberry>.

National Blackberry Taskforce Chairman, Mr Alex Arbuthnot AM, said, "At present our management programs are not tailored to species-specific infestations, but for blackberries as a whole. What works to control one species, may not help control another. It is hoped that over the next few years scientists and land managers will be able to accurately identify their blackberries, and then document species-specific control programs they have successfully used. These will then be shared to improve our 'best' management practices for all Australian blackberry species."

The Australian Government funded the creation of the LucID key, via the Natural Heritage Trust.



Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia

An Australian Government Initiative



Maatsuyker Island Emancipated

Maatsuyker Island is Australia's southernmost inhabited island (excluding Macquarie Island).

Other than Macquarie Island, Maatsuyker Island is Australia's southernmost inhabited island. Located 10km south of the heart of Tasmania's wild southern coastline, it comprises a mere 180 hectares, yet it is home to seals, 800,000 pairs of short tailed shearwaters, many other sea birds, and a lighthouse.

The Friends of Maatsuyker Island, in co-operation with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service commenced a major blackberry eradication program on the island in November, 2004. Nine volunteers joined the two island caretakers for the thirteen day working bee. The group had to contend with extensive rookeries that limited movement, although the timing coincided with the pre egg-laying exodus of the local mutton birds.

Blackberry work was confined to around the lighthouse facilities, and away from the major rookeries. GIS-based maps of the infestations were generated, and monitoring points were established to assess control efforts. Several different management methods were applied to the blackberries, depending on the nature of the infestation, the presence of native flora and fauna, water courses, and so on. Where a relatively small, isolated infestation was found, it was controlled by 'cut and paint' and grubbing. Extensive infestations under native canopies were slashed to improve access, and to allow for follow-up herbicide control. Re-treatment a few days later of 'cut and painted' areas proved useful in identifying canes that were unwilted to ensure complete treatment.

The group plans to undertake further blackberry mapping and management on the island, in the rookery areas that could not be accessed in November due to the bird nesting period. Meanwhile, follow-up treatment was undertaken in February 2005; good reports of acceptable levels of control in the treated areas have been forthcoming.

This project has been funded by the NHT's Envirofund, and the Tasmanian Wildcare Program. It has been undertaken in co-operation with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service.

Volunteers killed and removed many of the island's blackberries.

Right: Extremity of needles, looking back to Maatsuyker Island.
Photo' credit: Steve Cronin.





Goat Island Unchained

During routine river inspections in 1994, an island in the Murrumbidgee River system (NSW) was found to be inaccessible and completely overrun with blackberries. The island measured approximately twelve hectares. Difficulty in accessing the area meant traditional blackberry control measures had failed in the past. Investigations into alternative weed control methods found that goats may have been suitable for the island.

In 1995, after consultation with local land managers, 65 goats were released onto the island. The island is now referred to as 'Goat Island'.

Although control was slow (*i.e.* a ten-year program) results would be difficult to achieve through other control methods, given the terrain and access issues. Control may have been achieved quicker with an increased number of goats. The cost of the control program was insignificant compared to traditional control measures. Additionally, income was achieved through the sale of goat offspring, maintaining the initial number of goats. The impact on the local environment was far less than if chemical treatment had been used.

It was important to note that floods were not recorded during the program's

**Goats, not chemicals,
removed blackberries
from Goat Island.**



Above left: 1996 Goat-defoliated blackberry canes, note the height that the goats climbed to in order to graze.

Above right: Goat Island in January, 2005.

Photo credits: Mark Gardiner.

NB Use of goats to remove blackberries is not recommended for all infested areas.

National Blackberry Co-ordinator leaving

After several years working on the Weeds of National Significance team, the WoNS National Blackberry Co-ordinator, Sarah Keel, is leaving. The NBT Chair, Alex Arbuthnot AM, said, "We wish Sarah well in her future endeavours. She has been part of a new community-led approach to weed management in Australia, and when future successes are achieved with blackberry it will, in part, be due to Sarah and her networks that started this way forward. Thank you for all your hard work Sarah."

**"Thank you to all for
your support and
encouragement over
the past few years!"**

- Sarah Keel

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“Blackberry bites:”

- **NHT funding for Defeating the Weed Menace Round 1 announced.**
- **National Blackberry Co-ordinator leaving. “Thanks!” says NBT Chairman.**
- **The NBT met in Adelaide recently.**

Natural Heritage Trust Funds

Defeating the Weed Menace

Defeating the Weed Menace is a program to fund cross-regional projects focussed on strategic weed control actions that will obtain sustained benefits to the Australian environment.

Congratulations to CSIRO Entomology (WA) for their successful project recently funded by the ‘Defeating The Weed Menace – Round 1’ initiative. Proposals for Round 2 funding should be called for by the Australian Government early in the new financial year. Keep your eyes peeled!

For information on all NHT grants, application forms, selection criteria, and application guides go to the national NHT website (www.nht.gov.au).

National Landcare Program – Community Support Funding

Applications are invited from Landcare and primary industry groups for Community Support funding to undertake local and regional community Landcare activities, consistent with regional natural resource management planning priorities. ‘Guidelines For Eligibility’ can be obtained from the National Landcare Program website (www.landcare.gov.au). It is important that interested groups read these guidelines, AND discuss their proposals with the relevant Natural Resource Management regional organisation prior to submission.

These are highly subscribed, so please read the selection criteria carefully. Make sure your application is received on time, is complete and includes all signatures, maps and attachments.

Applications close Friday, 22 July, 2005.

If your group is planning to submit an application to the Natural Heritage Trust, or the National Landcare Program for blackberry management, please let the National Blackberry Taskforce know (that way we may be able to provide you with a Letter of Support).

Disclaimer: *This newsletter is for interest only. The National Blackberry Taskforce, and National Blackberry Co-ordinator disclaim all liability for any loss or damage as a result of depending on the information herein. Please check with your appropriate local officers before using any information.*

We’re on the Web!

You can access this newsletter (as well as the WoNS National Blackberry Strategic Plan, and information for all the other WoNS) on the Weeds Australia website:

www.weeds.org.au