

## HFNC weed control report for Nigretta Flora Reserve 2009

AWO arrived in Western Victoria in about 2005. The transmission from South Australia was probably via dust storms during drought years, although transport of seed on vehicles and in fodder could also have occurred. AWO have been dug from the Hamilton-Coleraine Rail Reserve near Bochara (S Reeds Rd) from 2007, 2008 and 2009, in numbers up to 2,000 plants. There was also an enormous infestation of the dry Rocklands Dam area from 2005, with many plants also being found at Fulham Streamside Reserve from 2005. Odd plants were found near Hamilton, including the Nigretta Scenic Reserve in 2008, but a nasty surprise awaited us when, on 26 Oct 2009 a vast population was found on the 12 ha Nigretta Flora Reserve. This area had not been visited by HFNC for at least 3 years and thus the problem had gone unnoticed. We are not aware of the official manager of this reserve, although Shire of Southern Grampians manages the adjacent Scenic Reserve for DSE. Parks Victoria may be responsible, since they manage the Wannon Falls Flora Reserve.

This reserve is most significant as a grassland/woodland reserve on the Dundas Tableland. It was proclaimed after HFNC submission to the LCC in the 1980s and following flora surveys from 1975-1978 by Cliff Beauglehole and Rod Bird - see "*Indigenous vascular Flora of the Wannon River Frontages (Wannon Falls Reserve to Red Rd Bridge)*" – PR Bird 2005. Some 202 native species occur on this reserve, with several species (including the vulnerable *Glycine latrobeana*) added this year. It has a flourishing population of *Brunonia australis*, together with *Stylidium graminifolium*, *Diuris* and *Thelymitra* orchids and various lilies and other colourful natives, amongst a wide range of native grasses and scattered *E. viminalis* on the high ground. *E. camaldulensis* grows along the river, with a fine stand of old *B. marginata* at the upstream end. Data from VEAC (Hamilton Workshop 27 Nov 2009) indicate that 7.8% of the original vegetation of the Dundas Tablelands remains on public land and only 0.6% is represented in Crown Reserves.

Nine members/supporters of HFNC visited the site at various of 6 days in Oct & Nov, in order to reduce the problem of AWO. It is difficult to cross the river until the waters subside and that imposes some problem for control works before mid-October, particularly for our (mainly) older members. Approximately 22,600 plants were pulled up or dug up (the latter comprising ~10% of the effort and confined to the lower half of the reserve). The plants were removed from the site in plastic bags and burned. In total about 68 hours were worked to achieve this result.

Volunteer	Date in 2009						Total Dug	Total Pull	Total D & P
	26 Oct	30 Oct	14 Nov	18 Nov	22 Nov	24 Nov			
Rod	1,850P	440D	250D+1,200P	1,630P	4,000P	3,700P	690	12,380	13,070
Diane				2,000P	1,700P		500	2,000	2,500
John & Glenys		500D					500	500	500
Jerry & Jane		500D					400	4,000	4,400
Reto & Yvonne		400D			4,000P		200	200	400
Julian		200D	200D						
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,850P</b>	<b>2040D</b>	<b>450D+1,200P</b>	<b>3,630P</b>	<b>9,700P</b>	<b>3,700P</b>	<b>2,290</b>	<b>20,280</b>	<b>22,570</b>
<b>Total hrs work</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>6</b>			<b>68</b>

Digging of plants and tubers was only feasible in the early stages. Two weeks of hot, dry weather in early November terminated that option. Thereafter the plants were pulled to remove seed heads (about 10% of the plants came out with at least one new tuber attached). This opportunity ended after 24 Nov when the AWO mostly dried off. However, at that stage most AWO had been removed from the reserve, except for the NW corner that was not well explored and may be infested to some degree. We found only 2 plants in adjacent paddocks grazed by sheep, compared with thousands alongside.

About 320 AWO (50 plants dug, 270 pulled) were also removed from the Scenic Reserve (south side of the Wannon River) by DL & RB on 30 Oct and 2 Nov.

The approach in 2010 must be to attack the plants with *Metsulfuron Methyl* at the early head stage. It is assumed that all plants that had tubers left in the soil may regenerate next year, leaving at least 20,000 plants to treat. That is too large a task for digging. Wiping herbicide onto the plants seems to be the only practicable solution but it remains to be seen whether AWO can be eliminated here.