

The Fort Bushland

May 2007 Notes - by John Lahey

Another well attended and successful working bee was held on Sunday 6 May. Although this was our fifth working bee, the bushcare group has now been operational for about 6 months so I thought it might be useful to review what we had achieved in this time.

The working bees have mainly focused on clearing the exotic plants from an area adjacent to the grassy area near Fort Road. This is open Eucalypt forest and the main weed plants are *Ochna serrulata* and *Jacaranda mimosifolia*. But there were also many other species such as Cat's claw creeper, Camphor laurel, Small and large leaved Privets, Duranta, Calicoma and Murraya. I estimate than an area of about 3000 m² has been cleared of most weeds although some of the larger Jacarandas, Guavas, Cotoneasters and Bauhinias need felling with a chain saw. Secondary treatment will be required to poison the re-growth of the Cat's Claw creepers and Ochnas. The next two photographs show the cleared area from two different perspectives. Unfortunately it was almost impossible to photograph the area before it is cleared because the undergrowth completely obscured the view.



Photo taken from the North-eastern edge of the cleared area



Photo taken from the Eastern edge of the cleared area

Some months ago we used the Sidewinder to poison a very large elm (*Celtis sinensis*) and a couple of Camphor laurels and Jacaranda trees. These trees have now lost all their leaves and appear to be either dead or dying.

About 4 months ago the council cleared most of the Climbing cactus/Dragon fruit (*Hylocereus undatus*) from the area near Cliveden Avenue. Unfortunately the plants left attached to the trees higher than 2 metres above the ground are still alive. This task needs to be completed by the council to rid the reserve of this vicious weed.

At the opposite end of the reserve (North-eastern corner) we have almost completely cleared the exotic plants from an area of about 3000 m². There is one remaining large elm (*Celtis sinensis*) which is quite close to a house in Eddystone Road and needs to be removed by an arborist. There are also two Cocos Palms (*Syagrus romanzoffianum*) which need to be poisoned. This area had one of the worst infestations of Cat's Claw creeper. The next photo shows the area after the Ochna, Elms, Privet and Brazilian cherries had been cut out and the Cat's claw cut down to ground level and the larger stumps poisoned. The ground is covered by a thick carpet of Cat's claw creepers.



Photo taken from the Eddystone Road firebreak looking north-west and west

The next photo shows the same area after the Cat's claw had been sprayed with Roundup. Again it was really difficult to photograph this area in its original state as visibility was limited to a couple of metres.



Photo taken from the Eddystone Road firebreak looking north-west and west after spraying with Roundup

The dead branches in the foreground are the remains of some of the Chinese elms.

In addition to killing the Cat's claw creeper the Roundup was very effective in controlling the large clumps of *Callisia fragrans*, *Callisia repens* (garden escapees) and *Rivina humilis* (Coral berry). Also to my surprise I found that glyphosate is very effective in killing *Tradescantia zebrina* as I had expected that this garden escapee would need to be hand weeded. After the Rivina was sprayed we had about 40 mm of rain (yes we did get a little rain about 4 months ago) and this caused a squillion seedlings to germinate. The subsequent dry weather has produced one benefit: all the seedlings died!

In addition to these two cleared areas we have cut down to ground level all the Cat's claw creepers and removed the exotic trees and shrubs from an area which I estimate to be about 10,000 m². This area is between the other two areas and to the north of the major erosion gully. Because of the extreme drought the Cat's claw has not yet re-grown from the underground tubers and cut stems and so it has not been viable to spray the area with Roundup. There are also 6 or 7 large Cocos palms in this area which haven't been removed or poisoned yet.

In summary I think the total Reserve is about 100,000 m² and we have almost completely cleared 6,000 m² with another 10,000 m² ready for spraying. Unfortunately what we don't have yet is a really satisfactory process for destroying the Ochna.

I am amazed that after 3 months without any rain, water is still welling up at the little spring. This seems to be well known to the birds in the area and they often gather there in small flocks. A week ago I noticed that one of the small termite mounds was covered in sloppy wet mud even though the surroundings were bone dry. So even in the middle of the worst drought I have experienced, the termites can still find water!

Recently we have been visited by these Mountain Brushtail Possums (*Trichosurus caninus*). The possum on the left is a female with a small possum in her pouch and the one on the right is her almost full grown child. This is a different species to the more common (in Brisbane) Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecula*). The Mountain Brushtail is easily recognised by the much darker, almost black fur and the more solid body shape.



The next working bee will be held on Sunday 3 June.