

Friends of Lord Howe Island

Newsletter No.21

Summer 2007

2007 a great volunteer year



The 2007 weeding program on Lord Howe Island was a great success. There were 104 people over six trips who contributed 1959 hours to weed eradication on the Island.

The target for the year was Climbing asparagus *Asparagus plumosus*. For many years the focus of the weeding weeks was on the area above Pinetrees tackling Ground asparagus *Asparagus aethiopicus* and a small area of Climbing asparagus on the east side of Edie's Glen. Having spent many trips going over the same areas with intensive follow up weeding, the groups switched focus to the southern end of Transit hill, starting at Blinkie Beach. However the terrain is steep and rugged for our groups, and the LHI Board staff are more suited to this work. So last October a trial was made to see how effective a group of 22 of our volunteers would be tackling very dense infestations of Climbing asparagus, on the area west of Edie's Glen. The infestations were so dense, with stems often 20cm apart, and you could not walk through the area.

Friends of Lord Howe members believe in minimal herbicide use, so the trial week used cut and scrape of stems method. A very tedious process, but using minimal herbicide (glyphosate). With a large group of 22 it is astounding much can be achieved in just a week of mornings. Also during the October 2006 week, four areas were set aside to trial the effectiveness of different treatments, to ensure the most efficient yet positive eradication was achieved.

So successful was this October week that all 2007 trips were focused on the same area. Following the results from trials in October 2006, the method used was to just cut the stem low down close to the ground and add a drop of glyphosate mixed with metasulfuron. The neat glyphosate is just as effective but the metasulfuron thickens the liquid, making application easier and less messy.

In all, 1959 hours weeding were achieved, most of this eradicating Climbing asparagus.

Additionally some group members carried out sweeps along the lagoon dune to remove Sea Spurge, which had only relatively recently reached Lord Howe Island. Over 2,000 plants of this weed were removed from Lagoon Beach south to Salmon Beach.



Tetrapanax tackled

A further area adopted in 2007 was the area of *Tetrapanax papyrifer* at the mouth of Edie's Glen. Over the last ten years there have been small attempts at eradicating this – mainly foliar spraying at irregular intervals. However the plants do resprout from the base, and the 7 metre tall forest of *Tetrapanax* soon establishes again. In June, Malcolm and Alison Mackenzie from New Zealander cleared about a third of the infestation, and in August Bruce Benseman from Tasmania, with help from Eric Ingram of Grafton cleared another one third. In October, Sue Bower (the LHI Board Flora Management officer) helped clear the remaining one third. There will be a lot of seedlings emerging but it is hoped to do some foliar spray through the year to minimise

any regrowth. And each year the Friends of LHI will attend to this area.

Also the 2007 winter groups planted several thousand seeds of native species found in the *Tetrapanax* area – seeds of Blackbutt, Greybark, Hopwood, Bullybush, Lignum vitae, Scalybark and Dogwood. It is proposed for the FLHI to fund several hundred tube stock plants to go in next winter to help revegetate the area and establish a canopy up to keep out weeds. A close eye will need to be kept on the area to eradicate any Crofton weed and Scotch Thistles that will invade the open area.

Plans for 2008 Season

Following the great success in 2007, a goal for 2008 is to totally eradicate primary Climbing asparagus from Transit Hill, thus removing any seed source for spread by birds. A rough measurement of the infestation indicates about half has been removed by 7 groups - in Oct 2006, and all six 2007 groups. So it is an achievable target for 2008 to remove the other half.

There will be many more weeks required over the following years to carry out follow up work over the area to remove any seedling growth. However a search of areas treated in October 2006 showed very few seedlings developing. *See back page for 2008 tour dates.*

Flora Management Officer appointed



Dean Hiscox, Hank and Sue Bower, Bruce Thompson on Mt Lidgbird

In August, a new position of Flora Management Officer was filled for a two year appointment on Lord Howe Island. The job is being shared by husband and wife team Hank and Sue Bower. Hank and Sue have been here in previous years

as volunteers on the LHI Board Cherry guava eradication program. They come from Byron Bay where they have been professionally involved in bush regeneration for many years. Coming from the country environment both Hank and Sue work well with the local teams and should make a big contribution to the weeding effort on the Island. Hank and Sue are keen to work with the Friends of LHI weed teams, and both joined in with the August and October groups this year. We will be working closely with them to formulate the plan to eradicate primary Climbing asparagus from Transit Hill in 2008.

Presidents Report

As the year draws to a close it is satisfying to know that such a great effort has been continuing into weed eradication on the Island. The large scale removal of the Climbing asparagus on Transit Hill is a major effort and a very worthwhile achievement for the Friends members. Also good news the continuing effort by the LHI Board teams across the whole Island removing the woody weeds and asparagus from some very remote areas. The appointment of a Flora Management Officer for the Island will ensure the efforts will be put in the right direction in the future.

A welcome to Rob Pallin onto the LHI Board, I am sure from his experience on the Island already on 6 weeding trips has given him an insight to the Island and the environmental situation. Also farewell to Terry Wilson, the LHIB World Heritage Officer. Terry has been a great communicator in the community and has achieved a lot on the environmental front. I wish Terry all the best in his next venture and hope we see him back here some time in the future.

Des Thompson President.

Friends of LHI Committee elected.

The Annual General meeting of the Friends of Lord Howe island was held at the island museum on June

At the AGM the following were elected as office bearers:

President Des Thompson
Vice president Ian Hutton
Treasurer Stephen Gale
Secretary John Flint

Committee Jane Gaye
Committee Judith Arnold
Committee Terry Wilson
Committee Robert Coenraads

Ten year weeder

In August John Zyla from Goulburn became the first volunteer weeder to attend ten weeding weeks. John and his wife Soie come each year, and sometime they have stayed for two consecutive weeks. They both enjoy a winter break from Goulburn where they live, and have seen a great difference in the infestations of Asparagus fern since they started coming.



John Zyla and his partner Soie

Sooty terns on the increase

In October 2007 Sooty terns became an issue for aircraft safety at Blinkie Beach dune. When aircraft approached from the east, flying over the dune, the terns would lift into the air, posing a threat to aircraft. Early in October signs were that some Sooty terns had settled on the dune. The LHI Board put out flagging to try to scare the birds away. This did not work entirely, as by this time some birds had laid eggs; and some eggs had to be moved.

The appearance of Sooty terns there has resulted from several factors. One is the natural increase in numbers that has been going on since removal of cats from the Island in the 1980's. Sooty terns had since then begun breeding along Middle Beach, North Beach, New Gulch, and an increase in the paddock leading to Malabar Hill.



Several factors have acted this year to prompt Sooty terns to colonise Blinky Dune. A large factor is that the Sooty tern colony at New Gulch has been displaced by increased growth of the native reed *Phragmites australis*, spreading to replace the grass cover in the valley where Sooty terns had established in the 1990's. Some of the terns from here have started nesting all along the dune of North Beach to the track into the picnic area. Another factor is cattle grazing on the side of Malabar Hill had been trampling on the eggs causing the Sooty terns to move. Also the numbers of Sooty terns breeding on the grassy slopes near Jim's Point have decreased, and this should perhaps be investigated.

In future years, flagging may need to be put in place early in the season to deter the Sooty terns from landing at Blinkie Beach dune.

25 Years World Heritage

December 2nd marked the 25th anniversary of World Heritage for Lord Howe Island.

To celebrate the event, the LHI Board arranged a number of events on the Island for the community and tourists. On Saturday 1st December there was a community bbq at Ned's Beach; and on Sunday there was a free concert at Ned's Beach, with the band *Sirocco*.

Also the LHI Board received a Commonwealth Government grant to complete a section of the LHI museum displays - From Coral Reef to Cloud Forest- highlighting the biodiversity of the Island. These new displays feature large photo/text panels, large murals by local artist Margaret Murray and LCD screens playing videos and slide shows of the Island's flora and fauna. It is hoped that the section completed will inspire sponsors to assist complete the environmental gallery to the same standard.



Part of new museum biodiversity displays

Local school children have had workshops on what World Heritage means, and took part in a dune sweep along Lagoon Beach to identify and remove any Sea Spurge- a great project for the children to be aware and involved in monitoring their environment for any invasive species, or changes in the environment.



LHI phasmid at the Island for Dec 2007

Also the LHI Board arranged for Patrick Honan from Melbourne Zoo to visit the Island with several phasmids. This is the first time phasmids have been on the Island since the 1930's, when rats wiped them out. In 1964 rock climber David Roots photographed a dead phasmid on Ball's Pyramid, which led to the eventual discovery of the survival of phasmids on the Pyramid in 2001. Two pairs of phasmids were taken to mainland Australia for captive breeding; and Patrick Honan has been looking after the breeding program at Melbourne zoo since 2002. He has made recommendations to the LHI Board for setting up an enclosure at the Island nursery to house phasmids for public display. His report also recommends setting up a display at the Island museum.

Terry Wilson, LHI Board World Heritage Officer departs.

In January 2008, Terry Wilson will leave his position as World Heritage Officer for the LHI Board. Terry had been in the position for five years, and has implemented a lot of good conservation programs on the Island. Terry was well known to the FLHI volunteer weeders, and we wish Terry all the best in his new ventures.

Terry contributed this short note:

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the Friends of Lord Howe volunteers who have made such a fantastic contribution to arresting the weed problem on the Island. During my five years on Lord Howe I have observed an amazing transformation, particularly on Transit Hill. Gone are most to the impenetrable walls of climbing asparagus, with a return to a healthy, rainforest system supporting a whole range of ground and understory species. The area is in good hands and the ongoing and consistent follow up work over the years has consolidated efforts and ensured long term success.

The Friends of Lord Howe Island is an amazing model for eco tourism and a credit to all the original instigators of the program who made the effort and commitment to bring the program to fruition. Through their practical hands on approach, the Friends have also assisted in raising awareness about the threat of weeds on the Island. Today the Friends are widely acknowledged and appreciated locally for their efforts and this has resulted in a more informed and motivated local community.

What I've enjoyed most about the Friends has been the opportunity to meet such a diverse and interesting group of people who come from far and wide and who in many cases return year after year to continue the battle.

On behalf of the Lord Howe Island Board, I'd like to particularly thank Ian Hutton for his dedication to this valuable program and Island representative and Friends President Des Thompson for his support of the program locally. I am confident that with the generous funding received from Commonwealth and State Governments and locally through the Board, combined with the ongoing efforts of the Friends,

we are well on our way to minimizing the risk that weeds pose to the Island.

Thank you again for your generous support and I look forward to regular trips back to this special place.



Terry Wilson (centre) chatting with FLHI volunteer weeders

Notes on weeding trips June/July 2007

June 9 to 16

A very enthusiastic team with 17 participants. With a mix of new weeders and repeat weeders. Those who had been before were Warren and Ann Irish, Stephen Ranft and Jeannie Davidson, Lynnette Paul and Bev Duncan. Quite few of the group were younger members in their 20's and 30's which is encouraging to see; and they thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience.



Supervisor for the week was Robert Coenraads, who enjoys leading the weeding mornings and taking part in the afternoon walks.

An active group, we enjoyed walk to Boat Harbour, North Bay and six went up Mount Gower. Also the weather was good enough one day for a round the Island cruise, on the Island veteran boat *MV B. Centauri*, which was enjoyed

by all; a great commentary on geology given by Robert.

Amongst the new members were Noel Tait and Robyn Stutchbury. Noel and Robyn are the world's leading experts on a small phylum of animals – Peripatus, or velvet worms, and gave a fascinating lecture on their work and what is known about these tiny creatures. (Noel was also one of my lecturers at Macquarie University back in the 1970's).



*Removing ground asparagus on the edge
Contribution from the Weeders Digest diary*

Well the last day of our weeding tour has arrived and it is with some trepidation that we all tramped across the paddock to where we have all become somewhat "territorial" over a spot of weed eradication. We worked with even greater enthusiasm, as we all wanted to leave our areas in pristine condition.

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The Lord Howe Island Board organized drinks and nibbles at the pinetrees Boathouse when we returned from North Bay. It was a wonderful finale to a special week in all our lives.



Boiling the billy at Boat Harbour

June 16 to 23

A small group of ten enthusiastic weeders, made up mostly of people from New Zealand and from Tasmania. The only repeat weeder for the week was Leslie Inglis.



The group at morning tea on weeding site

Arrival on the first afternoon gave a taste of what was to be one of the wettest weeding weeks, with a walk in storms to the bottom of mount Lidgbird. The creeks had covered the road and cut short our Little Island walk but the atmosphere was amazing. Even though showery weather was around most days it didn't deter activities. We either swapped around weeding/walking in the morning/afternoon; or weeded ground asparagus not requiring herbicide use.



Weather fined up for the Malabar walk

Contribution from the weeders digest diary

Another day of wind and rain. The mornings work spent with back to the gale, battling to keep eyes clear of grit. As a longer afternoon walk

was planned, we forgo our usual relaxed lunch at Pinetrees and set off with sandwiches. Heading south, the sea is magnificent, great waves dashing against the rocky shore with huge bursts of spray reaching metres high. There's a picnic spot beside a stream in a wooded gully, and amazingly shaped buttresses like sculptures. Cold and damp but such a beautiful place to take in the sounds of the forest.....

The storm has shredded foliage and brought down branches and plant litter – it almost looks as though a cyclone has passed through. Billy tea beside the pebble beach at Boat Harbour – a perfect day after all.



A walk in the rain to Boat Harbour

The rain did clear the last few days and the Malabar walk was enjoyed. On the last day the group carried out the restoration project on the endangered *Calystegia affinis* at Old Settlement.



The FLHI group treating kikuyu grass at Calystegia affinis site

July 14 to 21

Another small group, with 14 weeders, most having been before. We welcome new weeders

Liz Shotter, Brian and Patricia Osborne from Victoria, Cliff Ingram from Grafton and Heather Robson from Cammeray.

This week local resident Chris Murray helped out with walks and supervision. Most people know Chris as the airline agent who welcomes you to the island on arrival, but Chris is also a dedicated conservationist.



The focus for the group was the climbing asparagus up from Edie's glen. Everyone enjoyed the satisfaction of working through dense areas, freeing up the native vegetation. Seeing what had been achieved by the groups in June gave a sense that this was all working and having a positive impact.

Bruce Bensemann and Eric Ingram spent two mornings tackling the *Tetrapanax* work started by the June groups, and made a big inroad to the area adjacent to the fence.



The group at the climbing asparagus



Eric and Bruce tackling Tetrapanax

Eric Ingram from Grafton has been keeping bees since 1950 and gave a fascinating discussion about the habits and behaviour of bees one night. It was a mixed week of weather, but the group enjoyed walks to Little Island, Rocky Run and a reef walk at Ned's Beach. The Bob Henderson jazz band was playing at evening for some of the week.

Contribution from the weeders digest diary. (Bruce Bensemann)

*We hale from down in Tassy withy its timber covered hills
We get an old age pension, which helps to pay the bills
We head up north in winter, to escape the southern chills
To keep my heart in order, we take a good supply of pills
We have a love of islands, tops is the Lord Howe Island group
So we join with Ian Hutton, and the volunteer weeding troupe
We use the famous Peter lever, to dig out the asparagus root
Ian shows us all the sea creatures, on the afternoon reef walk loop
From our sheltered spot at Pinetrees, we gaze out across the bay
We are always made so welcome, it's a pleasant place to stay
If the weather is in our favour, we have a bbq at North Bay
The climb to the top of Mt Eliza, for those feeling fit that day
Most mornings we go out weeding, for the dreaded asparagus fern*

*In the afternoons, the walks reveal there is so much to learn
When walking in the forests, there are new sights at every turn
Because there are no snakes there is no cause for concern.*



Billy tea at rocky Run

Robert Pallin appointed to the LHI Board

Robert Pallin has been appointed as a member of the LHI board. Rob has been on weeding trips since 2002 and has come to know the Island well. He brings to the Board skills in business management and tourism through his experience with Paddy Pallin outdoor businesses and tours. Rob also has wide experience on a number of conservation committees on the mainland and should provide a very worthwhile input to the management direction for Lord Howe Island. Rob and his wife Nancy will continue to visit on the FLHI weeding trips, and have already booked for Aug 2008.



Rob Pallin at Edie's Glen

New Orchid for Lord Howe Island.

In October, while walking around the southern side of Mount Lidgbird on surveys of Big Mountain palm *Hedyscepe canterburyana*, I came across a new orchid species for the Island. A tiny *Chiloglottis* ground orchid just 60mm high and the flower 18mm tall. The group *Chiloglottis* are often called the bird orchids, and there are 15 species in Australia and New Zealand. Initial identification puts this one as *Chiloglottis formicifera*, but specimens have been sent off for positive identification.



Chiloglottis species on Lord Howe Island

Dates for 2008 weed trips

Aiming to make 2008 a big year to eradicate primary Climbing asparagus, seven weeks have been set for weeding ecotours.

June 7-14 is set aside for Friends of the Sydney Botanic Gardens group; July 5 to 12 for a group from Chase Alive. Other dates are as follows:

June 21 to 28 **July 12 to 19**
Aug 16 to 23 **Aug 31 to Sept 7**
October 25 to Nov 1 - cost to be advised

Price ex Sydney or Brisbane, twin share
June July Aug: \$2049.75 twin share
Sole room \$2224.75
Aug 31-Sept 7 is \$2143.56 twin share; \$2318.56 sole

Deposit \$ 200 (cheque made to Pinetrees Travel)
Balance required 45 days prior to trip.

Please book me on the Lord Howe Island bush regeneration tour (included is my \$200 deposit pp)

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss _____

Address

Phone _____

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QANTAS Frequent Flyer number

Friends of Lord Howe Island PO Box 155, Lord Howe Island, NSW 2898, Australia. Newsletter compiled by Ian Hutton
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