

# The Gorse Report

## Newsletter of the National Gorse Taskforce

Issue 1, October 2006

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**For further information or a copy of this newsletter visit -**

[www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/gorse](http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/gorse)

**or contact -**

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An Australian Government Initiative

### Welcome!

Welcome to the first edition of The Gorse Report, the newsletter of the National Gorse Taskforce. This newsletter will appear in spring and autumn each year. It aims to inform everyone interested in gorse management of progress being achieved on gorse across Australia, including an update on the National Gorse Program, the latest research, management techniques, case studies, events, resource materials, funding options, issues and challenges. If you would like to submit an article or make any other contributions to The Gorse Report, please forward these to the National Gorse Coordinator (contact details bottom left).

### Committee members

**Ashley Bastock**  
Tasmanian Farmers  
& Graziers Association  
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Dept of Water, Land &  
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Mines & Water  
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**Geoff Price**  
Environment ACT  
Australian Capital Territory



National Gorse TASKFORCE

DEFEATING  
THE WEED MENACE

## Introducing ... the National Gorse Taskforce

The National Gorse Taskforce was established in November 2004. We hold three teleconferences and one meeting each year. In 2005 we met in Launceston Tasmania, in 2006 in Ballarat Victoria with our next meeting in Adelaide in March 2007. At our yearly meeting and in addition to planning we have a field trip to view local gorse projects, meet some of the community and learn about different control techniques. This helps to build the awareness of the members and improves their capacity to understand the various integrated techniques available for gorse control.

The role of the National Gorse Taskforce is to facilitate, improve and encourage strategic national action by coordinating the implementation of the National Gorse Strategic Plan. In addition, the taskforce will set priorities and identify funding and resource sharing opportunities for the management of gorse across Australia.



National Gorse **TASKFORCE**



(Sandy Leighton)

Photo: members of the National Gorse Taskforce (right to left)

John Moore WA, John Thorp, Mich Michelmore NSW, Corey Watts, Laurie Norman, Ian Sauer, Hamish Hurley VIC, Anton Kurray SA, Karen Stewart TAS, Ashley Bastock, Jonah Gouldthorpe (Project Officer Gorse National best practice manual) INSET Sandy Leighton

## The National Gorse Program

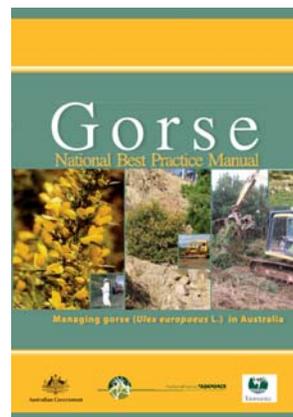
1995	Gorse biological control program began
2003	National Gorse Strategic Plan published
2004	National Gorse Coordinator appointed National Gorse Taskforce formed
2005	National Gorse Eradication Areas identified Gorse National Priority Action Framework produced (a document that helps guide investment in gorse management and maximise public benefit)
2006	NSW gorse data mapped National Containment Lines developed for SA, WA, Tasmania and NSW National gorse map produced Gorse National Communications Strategy developed

## Communications products

The development of the Gorse National Communication Strategy is nearing completion and discussions have already identified several products that would enhance existing gorse materials currently available in most states.

The National Gorse Taskforce has identified the need for and will produce four products namely -

- Gorse national best practice manual (Oct 06)
- Gorse commercial (Oct 06)
- Gorse newsletter (1st edition Oct 06)
- Gorse best practice management DVD (2007/ 08)



Gorse national best practice manual

## Launch - gorse national best practice manual

The Gorse National Best Practice Manual was launched at Sutton NSW on 16 October 2006 by Senator Eric Abetz Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Conservation. It was attended by 50 people including mayors, state and council weeds officers, farmers, Australian Landcare Council, National Gorse Taskforce and the Australian Government (DAFF).

Funding for the development, production and distribution of the manual was provided by the Australian Government's *Defeating the Weed Menace* initiative and DAFF funded the launch. The Project Officer Jonah Gouldthorpe has worked tirelessly over the last 12 months to produce the manual. Phone 1300 368 550 for a free copy.

The **manual is extremely useful** and contains the following information -

- Washdown guidelines
- Control methods
- Control costs
- Decision support tools for pasture, native bush & riparian areas
- 13 *real life* case studies
- Bureau of Rural Sciences new *A field manual for surveying and mapping nationally significant weeds* as a CD insert



Launch Gorse national best practice manual



An interested crowd listen to a demonstration of best practice spraying



An Australian Government Initiative



National Gorse TASKFORCE



DEFEATING  
THE WEED MENACE

## Case Study (adapted from Gorse best practice manual)

### Deep Creek Conservation Area South Australia

#### Volka Scholz

Senior Ranger

Dept Environment & Heritage SA

*The Deep Creek story illustrates how good documentation and dogged follow-up can defeat hundreds of hectares of gorse in native vegetation.*

Volker Scholz, Senior Ranger in charge of Deep Creek Conservation Park, bulldozed 40 hectares of gorse-infested native bush to get at the weed.

The 4300 hectare Deep Creek park protects the biggest block of coastal bushland on the Fleurieu Peninsula. When Volker Scholz first started working there in 1984, gorse had overrun 400 hectares of regenerating bush and threatened important flora, fauna and recreation values. By the time park and NRM Board staff tried to control it in 1984, the worst gorse was too dense to spot spray. Something drastic had to be done just to get access to the area. After much consideration, park staff chain-pulled, windrowed and burned 40 hectares of the worst-infested bush.

The first follow-up undertaken on the big infestation was to clean up gorse and scrub regrowth with a mulcher and slasher. This opened the area up enough to enable easy spot spraying of subsequent gorse regrowth. In the early days 2,4,5-T was used, but it was later replaced by triclopyr and metsulfuron-methyl herbicides. Cleaning up the site also meant that park staff could boom spray for other weeds.

Spot spraying of gorse in other bush areas in the park continued, using hand guns and backpacks. Marker dye was added to the herbicide mix to avoid double-spraying and missing patches, which saved time and money. Fire was used twice to burn out isolated stands of gorse, with great success in a previously sprayed patch, but with poor results in living gorse.



(Chas Hilder)

Chained and windrowed infestation at Deep Creek



(Volker Scholz)

Boom spraying was used as part of follow-up



(Jonah Gouldthorpe)

Use of dye makes spraying more efficient

## Deep Creek Conservation Area South Australia (cont)

Over the last five years park staff have re-mapped and revisited all infestations. Follow-up is conducted on a two-year cycle (this prevents gorse reaching maturity) by spot-spraying with backpacks, hand gun and a spray unit mounted on a quad bike.

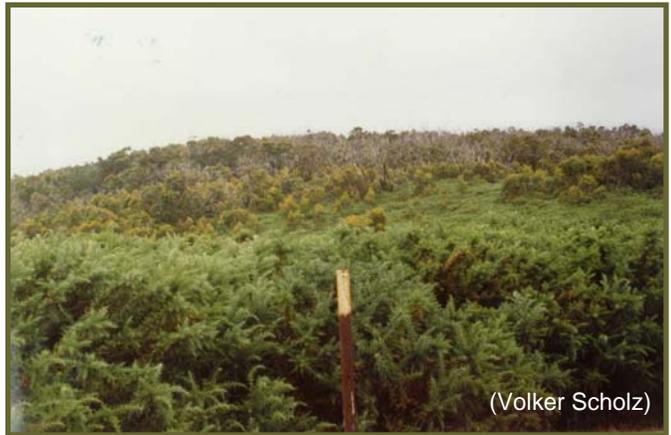
There were some problems along the way: winter spraying did not achieve good results, and now all work is done in September to December. Near escapes with two gorse fires demonstrated that although burning can be a useful management tool, it should be avoided in native vegetation.

Gorse control measures at Deep Creek have been documented with a high level of detail, including herbicides used, time of application and effectiveness. Volker Scholz also developed gorse mapping and established photo points early in the program. By doing this, he has been able to clearly identify what works and what doesn't, and to continuously improve control practices.

Gorse control at Deep Creek hasn't come cheaply. An employee is dedicated to weed control in the park for 12 weeks a year (0.25 FTE) at a cost of around \$11,000. On top of this is an annual chemical budget of \$6000 to \$7000.

Gorse infestations are now in a "holding pattern" in the park. Following-up small infestations in native bush is the highest priority. Large infestations are contained in pasture, but Volker Scholz wants to consolidate work done already before tackling new areas.

In Volker's words: "When you have a park of this size and you look at the reasons it came into being, we have to keep at it ... Deep Creek is the largest remnant of native vegetation on the Fleurieu Peninsula, and it must be protected."



(Volker Scholz)

Dense gorse infestation in 1984



(Volker Scholz)

Same point in 1991



(Jonah Gouldthorpe)

... and in 2006

## Biological control of gorse in Australia - past, present and future

### Dr John Ireson

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Research  
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The biological control program for gorse has recently been boosted by over \$600,000 in funding from the Australian Government's *Defeating the Weed Menace* program. The funds will be used by the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research, DPI Victoria and CSIRO to continue the mass rearing and release of biological control agents, as well as conduct surveys in Europe for additional control agents. Programs will be conducted in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and NSW. CSIRO will conduct surveys from its European base at Montpellier, in France.

The first biological control agent to be released for gorse in Australia was the gorse seed weevil, *Exapion ulicis*, released in 1939. Since its release gorse seed weevil is now common on gorse throughout Tasmania and Victoria and is also present in NSW and South Australia, but its impact on seed production has not been high enough to significantly affect plant densities. The larvae of the weevil only feed on seeds produced in spring and summer and are not present during the second period of seed production in autumn/winter.

A more recent biological control program involving host testing and importation of European agents has been underway in Australia since 1995. This program has so far resulted in the establishment of two additional agents, the gorse spider mite, *Tetranychus lintearius*, and the gorse thrips, *Sericothrips staphylinus*, both of which are foliage feeders. The gorse spider mite is now established in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and NSW. This agent has the potential to reduce dry matter production under field conditions by around 36%, but predators have restricted its impact.



(Wade Chatterton, TIAR)

Adult Gorse seed weevil and larval damage to seeds



(Wade Chatterton, TIAR)

Gorse spider mites



(Richard Holloway, TIAR)

Gorse spider mite webbing

## Biological control of gorse in Australia (cont)

The gorse thrips is established in Tasmania and Victoria and glasshouse studies have shown that it has the potential to significantly reduce seedling survival when integrated with grazing and pasture competition. However, an on-going field release program will be required for this agent because its populations are slow to increase and disperse. Commonwealth quarantine authorities approved the release of a third foliage feeding agent, the gorse soft shoot moth, *Agonopterix ulicetella*, in 2005 following the completion of host specificity tests. DPI Victoria will be importing this species into quarantine from New Zealand in spring 2006 to enable the initiation of a mass rearing program that will ultimately be conducted in both Victoria and Tasmania to enable its widespread field release. If this species can be established, the combination of three foliage feeders and one seed-feeding agent will all contribute to the biological control of gorse.

However, it is expected that another agent or suite of agents will be needed to reduce the vigour of gorse to a stage where gorse will be easier and cheaper to control in combination with other methods in an integrated control strategy. European surveys for additional seed-feeding, root-feeding and stem boring agents conducted by CSIRO in 2003 and 2004 failed to find any species that was likely to be useful in the biological control of gorse in its exotic range. Surveys for possible fungal pathogens are now planned for 2006-2008. If potential agents can be found, further research will be necessary to determine whether they are suitably host specific to enable their introduction to Australia. The biological control of gorse is a long-term program. Ultimately, it is hoped that a combination of agents will reduce the rate at which gorse invades new areas and the life span of individual bushes causing infestations to decline.



(Wade Chatterton, TIAR)

Gorse thrip



Gorse soft shoot moth



Gorse soft shoot moth larva



Gorse soft shoot moth damage

## Cradle Coast Tasmania - making moves on gorse

### Greg Taylor

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Tasmania's Cradle Coast NRM Region, covers about one third of the state, and contains some of Australia's most productive farmland, and also conservation areas of international importance, including the World Heritage Listed areas of Cradle Mountain and the South West. The Region also has numerous weed issues, and in 2005 a Regional Weed Strategy was developed, with implementation of that Strategy commencing in 2006.

As part of the implementation of the Regional Weed Strategy, Cradle Coast NRM is currently delivering a Gorse Incentive Program that aims to support landowners in their gorse control efforts. Although much good work on gorse control has been conducted over many years, gorse is still widespread throughout the Region, and is a major concern for many landowners.

The Gorse Incentive Program is of necessity strategic and focussed, and typically aims to deal with outlying infestations of gorse, before tackling the worst areas. So far the two municipalities with the least gorse – Kentish and King Island – are well on the way to having all gorse controlled. In other areas, where gorse is more widespread, some properties are determined to be 'containment' properties, where the management priority is to prevent gorse escaping the property boundaries. Additional works can be implemented subject to availability of funds.

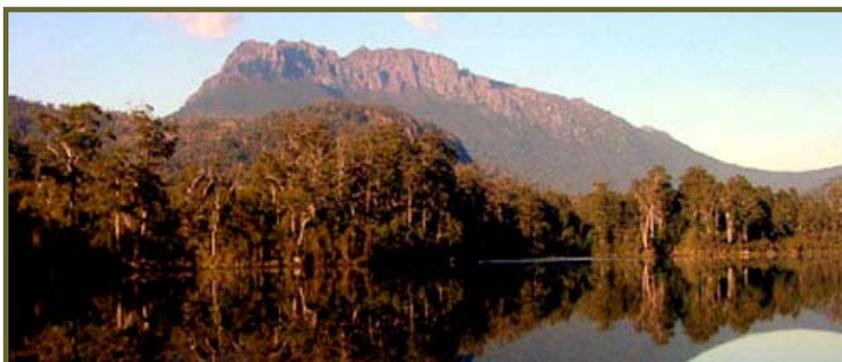
It is planned that the Gorse Incentive Program will work across all nine municipalities in the region within two years.

Through the program, landowners can receive fifty percent of first year management costs, and the support of ongoing management advice, provided they commit to follow-up maintenance for a further three years at their own cost. A contract defines responsibilities. All gorse sites are mapped, with information recorded on a regional database.

With an on-ground budget of \$100K in 2006, it is expected that substantial progress will be made in controlling the Region's gorse. A further allocation of funds in 2007 will be required to see the program extend across the whole region.

Supporting this on-ground control of existing weed populations, in 2007 the Cradle Coast Region will also be developing and implementing a Regional Weed Hygiene Plan. This plan will be aiming to identify strategies for preventing the establishment of new weed infestation. This could involve a range of issues, including management of grain and fodder movement, improved vehicle and machinery hygiene, and more effective management of weeds in transport corridors.

The combination of vigorous on-ground weed control programs, and improved weed hygiene, should help over time to significantly reduce weed problems in the Region.



## ‘People Power’ gorse gnashing on Schouten Island

### Pete Lingard

Ranger, Freycinet National Park  
Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service  
Pete.Lingard@parks.tas.gov.au

Combine the following ingredients -

- A decade of prior effort to clear BIG infestations of Gorse using BIG machinery and boom spray techniques
- Wide spread but broken distribution of gorse infestations of varying size and scale
- The magnificent Schouten Island, Freycinet National Park Tasmania, with a complex cultural history and special natural features
- A coordinating Parks & Wildlife Service Ranger
- A boat to get to and from the island
- A collective of up to 15 enthusiastic volunteers each year
- Tools of trade for cutting and swabbing gorse plants
- Up to ten days each year for 8 years in a row on the island
- Blood, sweat and tears and what do you get?

You get:

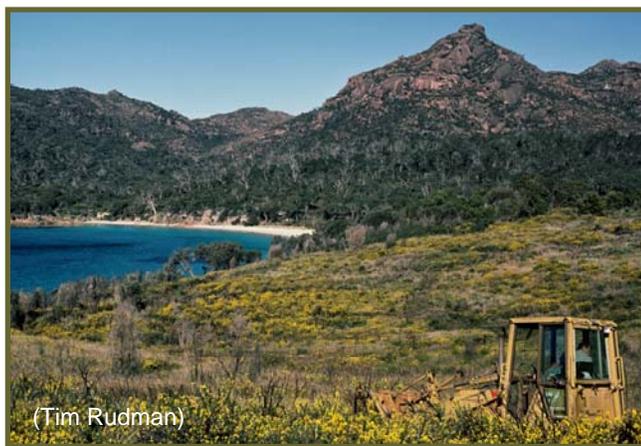
- A collective of increasing knowledge about Schouten Island
- Not much gorse left
- What gorse is left, is known about, is small regrowth and is going to be gnashed next year
- Follow-on interest in the Island's history and it's heritage huts (and restoration programs to boot)
- Good times
- Passionate commitment to a worthy cause

The Schouten Island Gorse Gnashing program has been a fine example of 'People Power' overcoming a formidable task with a regular, systematic and collective approach. Tens of thousands of gorse plants from seedlings to trees have been gnashed and then swabbed (or squirted) over the past 8 years from many infestations across half of the total area of

Schouten Island, an island of around 2400 hectares. Several trialled mixes of Grazon : Water (only in the early years) and now Glyphosate : Water (1:3 seems to work fine on gorse) have been used with 99% success rate. Over one hundred people, involved over 8 years, have contributed approximately 6700 person hours in total.

Secret to success?

- Coordination and committment
- A small \$\$ investment on a regular basis to the program
- Quality equipment
- Systematic and thorough approach
- Great people
- Good fun!



(Tim Rudman)

Gorse infestation on Schouten Island



It's a team effort

## Potential funding opportunities

The following websites provide links to a range of funding opportunities:

- **GrantsLink website** - [www.grantslink.gov.au/](http://www.grantslink.gov.au/)
- **Guide to Community Grants** - [www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/spgrants.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/spgrants.htm)

A detailed spreadsheet on potential funding options (both large and small) available nationally and within each state and territory can also be obtained from the National Gorse Coordinator.

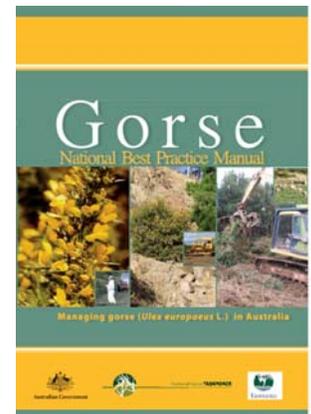
For the best chance of success, start planning your project early and ensure that you clearly demonstrate how the project meets the criteria outlined by the funding program.

If you are planning, or already conducting, a project that involves gorse, the National Gorse Coordinator is keen to hear about it and provide you with assistance or information where needed.

**Order your free copy of the Gorse national best practice manual**

**Call 1300 368 550**

or download a copy from [www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/gorse](http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/gorse)



Advertise your next  
big gorse event here...

### Upcoming Events:

The next face to face meeting of the National Gorse Taskforce will be held in March 2007 in SA.

If you are planning a gorse-related event and would like to advertise it in this newsletter, please forward details of the event to the National Gorse Coordinator.

**We're on the web!**  
[www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/gorse](http://www.weeds.org.au/WoNS/gorse)