

# The Bushcarer

Bush For Life  
Spring 2009  
Number 3



## Bush For Life News

### Spring Edition

Welcome to the third edition of the Bush For Life newsletter. In this edition we discuss Blackberry species in the Mt. Lofty Ranges and their treatment methods. We also highlight the importance of "sweeping" your Bush For Life site from time to time. Check out the back page for information on program changes as well as opportunities for volunteer involvement. Enjoy perusing this Spring edition and remember to keep it as a reference for your work in the field.

### Brushcutting on BFL Sites

Have you noticed that the weed grasses on your Bush For Life site are getting out of control? You may find that using a brushcutter to slash them at the right time can be a big help by reducing the seed set of annual grasses, encouraging regrowth of perennials for spot spraying and lessening fire fuel load. If you have already done a Bush For Life brushcutting workshop you can borrow a Trees For Life brushcutter to use on your site. However, if you haven't and would like to, please contact the Bush For Life Volunteer Coordinator Samantha on 8406 0542.

### Advanced Workshops

Trees For Life also run advanced workshops on

Plant and Grass Identification for Bush For Life volunteers. If you would like to book a place please call the Trees For Life office.

### Disposal of Infectious Weeds

Trees For Life now have the facilities to dispose of highly infectious weeds such as Monadenia, Bridal Veil and species of Bridal Creeper. If you have been bagging weeds after doing bushcare work on your Bush For Life site please do not dispose of these weeds in your home rubbish bin. Contact your Regional Coordinator or Randall Bates on 8406 0544 to organise delivery of these weeds to the Trees For Life office.

### Snakes and Bees

As the weather warms up snakes and bees will become more active. If you encounter a snake or bee hive on your Bush For Life site please avoid them and report the sighting to your Regional Coordinator. Remember to always wear long pants and a long sleeve shirt when participating in Bush For Life activities and if you have a known allergy to bee stings always carry the appropriate medication.

### Get involved with RabbitScan

Wild pest rabbits are on the increase across Australia and are a major pest for biodiversity. RabbitScan is a nation-wide challenge for

communities to assist scientists to map where rabbits are located. You can help by scanning your landscape for signs of rabbits and their damage until the end of September and let the RabbitScan team know what you see. Check out [www.rabbitscan.net.au](http://www.rabbitscan.net.au) or call Samantha on 8406 0542 for more information.

Cover photos from top to bottom:  
*Microseris lanceolata*  
*Convolvulus erebescens*  
*Brachycome parvula lissocarpa*



## Contact us

The Bushcarer is a production of Trees For Life.

If you would like to help us save paper by receiving this by email, please let us know.

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Trees For Life

You are one of over 700 bushcarers actively managing more than 300 Bush For Life sites encompassing more than 4000ha of bushland in South Australia

## Not all blackberry plants are the same

By LEANNE LAWRENCE

BFL Regional Coordinator

Blackberry is difficult to deal with as many forms have now been identified as being naturalised in the Mt Lofty Ranges with species responding differently to treatment methods. If you have Blackberry on a Bush For Life site knowing which species you are dealing with and the treatment method to use can be problematic.

There are 11 native species of blackberry in Australia and at least 23 introduced, primarily from Europe. These are collectively referred to as *Rubus fruticosus* Linnaeus *aggregata* which comprises at least 40 different genotypes.

### Biology

Blackberry is a perennial semi-deciduous shrub with arching prickly stems up to 7m long growing from a woody crown. It reproduces from seed and root suckers, with daughter plants formed where stem tips touch the ground. Canes are biennial usually dying off after fruiting in their second year. First year canes (primocanes) do not produce flowers or fruit and have few leaves. Second

year canes (floricanes) grow from side shoots of first year canes, have significantly more leaf and produce flowers and fruit. The main root from the crown can grow to a depth of 1.5m with many lateral roots growing along underground from the main root for 60cm!

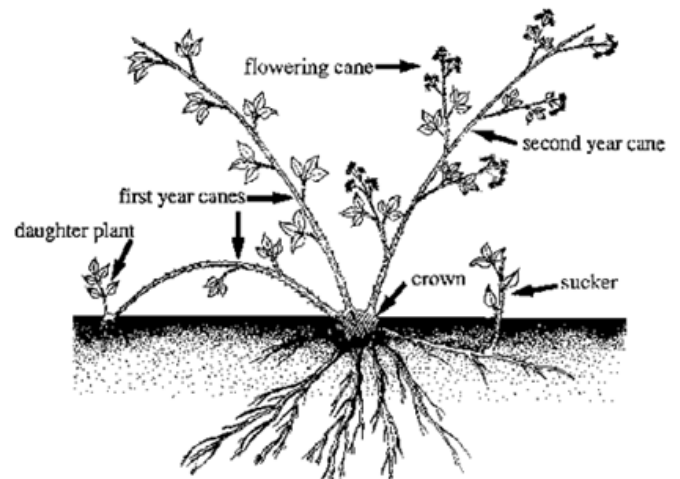
### Control Methods

The most effective way to kill blackberry is to kill the crown and roots. All methods outlined below are for treatment of the European aggregate recommended for volunteers working on Bush For Life sites with assistance from Regional Coordinators

Biological control agents have been introduced in the form of a rust fungus *Phragmidium violaceum*. This fungus is known to only affect some species and is recommended for large, difficult to access infestations. As with most host/parasitic relationships the fungus will not kill the plant but will inhibit reproduction

Spraying of blackberry plants during the active growth stage in summer is also a recognised treatment method. However, this is only effective when many floricanes and a large coverage of leaves are present as spraying only first year canes can encourage significant regrowth. In environmentally sensitive areas this is not a preferred option.

Slashing can be done during or just prior to summer but follow up must be done. Hand cutting of canes, particularly the primocanes can stimulate



Blackberry growth form (Source: DPI Victoria)

suckering from lateral roots and green canes left on the ground have the potential to reshoot.

Hand weeding can be done for small infestations or in environmentally sensitive areas if access to the crown is possible. The crown should be removed from small plants using minimal disturbance techniques and any remaining roots swabbed to prevent reshooting. If crowns are too large, the drill & fill method is an alternative option.

### Habitat Value

Bandicoots and woodland birds have been observed using blackberry thickets as refuges, nesting or sheltering. If you are working on a blackberry patch that is potential habitat for native species, clear the thicket in stages and always look for signs of native animals.

### What To Do

If you are treating blackberry on a Bush For Life site it is not as daunting as it sounds. Correct identification of weedy blackberry species from natives is absolutely essential. However, identifying which weedy blackberry species is present is not necessarily crucial. Sticking to Bush For Life principles of minimal disturbance and working slowly to benefit native plants will help to guide your course of action.

Considering the options outlined above the most effective method for blackberry treatment is to hand weed

small plants ensuring the remaining roots are swabbed. Green canes should be cut into smaller pieces and removed from the site. In larger thickets, work from the good bush starting on the edges of the main infestation. Remove the stem tips and any daughter plants working towards the main crown. Larger crowns can be drilled and filled or scraped and swabbed to reduce soil disturbance. Working slowly ensures you are observant of any native animals and plants which may be utilising the thicket. If the blackberry is in an area that is suitable to spray with herbicide please ask for assistance from your Regional Coordinator before undertaking any spray treatment.

### References

Amor, R.L. 1974 Ecology and control of blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus* L. agg.) II. Response of *R. procerus* to mechanical removal of topgrowth and to foliage applied herbicides Weed Research Volume 14 Issue 4 pp 239-243

CSIRO ENTOMOLOGY [www.ento.csiro.au/weeds/blackberry/index.html](http://www.ento.csiro.au/weeds/blackberry/index.html)  
Department Primary Industries Victoria [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/DPI](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/DPI)

WONS Blackberry Strategic Plan [www.weeds.org.au/docs/bbstrat.pdf](http://www.weeds.org.au/docs/bbstrat.pdf)  
Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, Blackberries (*Rubus* spp.) Fact Sheet.



Blackberry scrambling through native vegetation

## Round and round in circles: Are we chasing our tails?

By MARK ELLIS  
BFL Manager

The picture shown below is a Global Positioning System (GPS) track made by bushcarer Tom Bradley while working on Pimpala Reserve in Woodcroft. Tom set the GPS device in his pocket to “track” so that while he walked around the site, stopping to treat re-sprouting olives along the way, the device plotted his path.

GPS is a commonly used tool to record and re-locate sites of interest, whether it be weed populations, locations of threatened species, hazards or site boundaries. Data recorded in the field is downloaded into a computer and plotted on a site map using ArcMap or other software.

Tom’s systematic search serves as a very useful illustration of an important job that bush regenerators should make part of their annual works on their site, that is, searching the site for new, highly invasive weed outbreaks, and follow-up treatment of regenerating populations of weeds treated previously. The Bush For Life way to approach a site is to first identify the best area of native vegetation to start in and work outwards, often following weed fronts, controlling isolated outbreaks of weeds. However, periodically searching the wider bushland site is complementary to this highly focussed approach. Even when new weeds do not occur in the best bushland their control can be a high priority.

### Red Alert Weeds

While working away regularly on their weed fronts, bush regenerators might be blissfully unaware that only meters away a new infestation of a Red Alert Weed is becoming established. Red Alert Weeds are exotic

species that have the capacity to spread quickly, dramatically change the local flora and are often difficult to control (Croft, Pedler & Milne 2005). Examples are olive, bridal creeper, sweet pittosporum, monadenia, pentaschistis or fountain grass. They are often dispersed by birds or wind and can appear far away from an existing weed front. For this reason it is important that bush regenerators occasionally do a thorough “sweep” of their site, combing it for new invasions (as demonstrated by Tom’s track).

This systematic sweep of the site is also useful to ensure that after major infestations of a pest plant have been eradicated from a site (such as olives on Pimpala, after many years of drill & fill and cut & swab techniques), that the ensuing crop of seedlings from stored seed in the soil are treated before they too can grow and set seed

### How Often To “Sweep”

So how often should you “sweep” your site? That depends upon the integrity of

the bush, the types of invasion threats your site faces and the time available. Certainly once a year is a good idea, not many new weeds will become too established in just 12 months to escape control. It’s also important to consider the season, new woody weeds can be detected at any stage but more easily in summer or autumn when there is less green undergrowth. However understory invaders like Monadenia are best detected in spring when flowering heads give them away more easily. Combing the site on a regular basis can provide a reward as you may identify previously undiscovered populations of native species, however don’t do it so often that the site gets trampled.

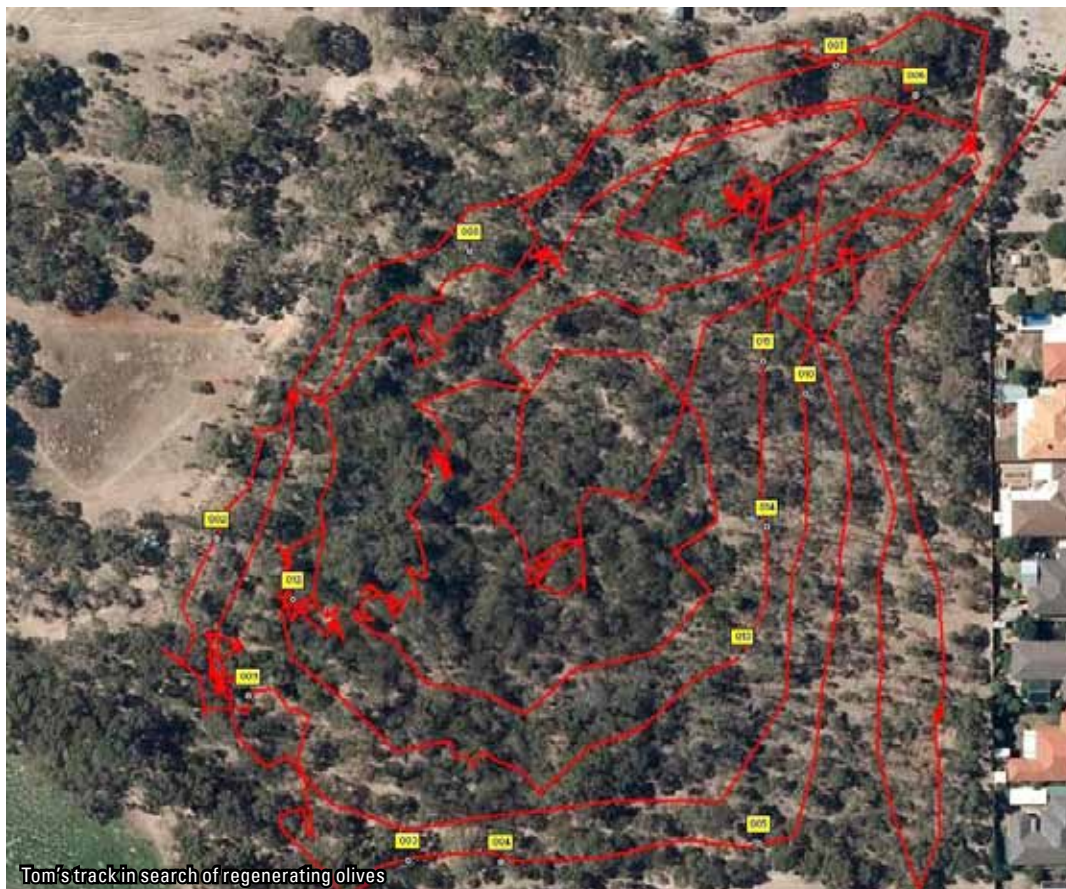
### Protecting Large Areas

Often land managers are under the misconception that Bush For Life volunteers are only active in small areas, but the importance of keeping an eye on the whole site, doing the occasional “sweep” and addressing outlier populations before they become a problem is invaluable to the long term survival of the site. Quite large areas of bush can be maintained weed free, or at least free of the real nasties this way.

As we know bush regeneration is never finished, when major weed populations are under control, and natives have started regenerating, it is the bush carer’s job to make sure the stored weed seeds in the soil and the invasions from over the fence never take the site back to how it was before bush regeneration started. So put it in your back of tricks ... the Site Sweep!

### References

S. J. Croft, J. A. Pedler and T. I. Milne (2005), “*Bushland Condition Monitoring Manual: Southern Mount Lofty Ranges*” Nature Conservation Society of SA Inc.



Tom's track in search of regenerating olives

## We need you! Bush Management Days for ElectraNet

Are you interested in bushcare and would you like to be part of a team? Do you want to really get to know a Bush For Life site and see the improvements that result from your bushcare work? If you answered yes, then Bush Management Days at the ElectraNet site in Cherry Gardens may be the activity for you.

Bush Management Days on the ElectraNet site are regular on-ground activities where usually 2-5 Bush For Life volunteers join Leanne Lawrence, the Regional Coordinator of the site, for a few hours work.

### The ElectraNet Site

When it comes to protecting our precious native vegetation, big is definitely better.

The ElectraNet property is about 70 hectares in size, with a section in the middle containing the sub-station infrastructure while the rest is high quality bushland. The property adjoins Mt Bold Reservoir and Scott Creek Conservation Park, combining to create the largest block of native vegetation in the Southern Mt Lofty Ranges.

The site contains several different vegetation communities, including stringybark woodland, cup gum and pink gum woodland and some riparian areas. To date 211 indigenous plant species have been recorded on the site, including 4 with State conservation ratings. There are over 20 native orchid species and many other beautiful flowering plants, which will make the site as pretty as a picture in spring.

If wildlife is your thing this is also the site for you, with 38 species of bird recorded, including Yellow-tailed Black



Cockatoos, Spotted Pardalotes and Scarlet Robins, plus Echidnas, Southern Brown Bandicoots and many reptiles.

Despite all the things the property has going for it, there is also the inevitable occurrence of various common weeds, including bridal creeper, watsonia, boneseed, broom and Erica, and this is where you can help. By coming along to one Bush Management Day at the Cherry Gardens ElectraNet site, or joining in on a regular basis, you can make a difference!

### Make a Contribution

So, how can you get involved? Check pages 4 and 5 of the Bush For Life Group Activities Schedule for the Bush Management Days being conducted by Leanne Lawrence at Cherry Gardens. Register your attendance with Leanne on 0407 387 652 and enjoy making a contribution to improving the health of a beautiful patch of bushland.



## Times a changin' in the Bush For Life program

Over the past year the Bush For Life program said farewell to some key staff members but due to funding uncertainties these positions were not filled until recently. We are now pleased to welcome new Field Officers Jenna Currie, Matthew Endacott and Peter Mahoney who will be undertaking a range of duties including BATs, Regional Coordinator and Fee For Service tasks. We also extend a warm welcome to Leanne Mladovan and Alex Coombe who will be job sharing the role of Operations Manager (North). As volunteers you will no doubt become familiar with them in the next six months.

With quite a few staff changes many sites will have a new Regional Coordinator. You will be advised by mail or phone over the next few months if there have been any changes to your site contacts.

If you have any queries regarding this process or the Bush For Life program, please

don't hesitate to contact the Bush For Life Volunteer Coordinator, Samantha Buxton on 8406 0542 or [samanthab@treesforlife.org.au](mailto:samanthab@treesforlife.org.au).

### Supporters:

The Bush For Life program is supported by the South Australian Government through the Adelaide & Mt Lofty and Murray Darling Basin NRM Boards and the Native Vegetation Council, participating local governments, Trees For Life members and donors, and the federal government's Caring For Our Country Coastcare program.



Government of South Australia

Adelaide & Mt. Lofty Ranges Natural Resource Management Board

South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board



Native Vegetation Council



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