

Eurong Bush Regeneration Project

Diary 13th to 19th May, 2012

Undertaken by a group of nine (9) volunteers organized by the Fraser Island Defenders Organisation to pursue a project of cleaning our garden waste and weeds from public lands within the urban areas of Eurong and replacing weeds with native plants to encourage all Fraser Island landholders to use appropriate natives and not to bring any more alien plants to the island. The project had also hoped to eradicate more of the lantana growing in the USL (unallocated state land) of Eurong

Participants

John Sinclair (Coorparoo)
Su Dawson (Camp Hill)
Michael Lowe (Tin Can Bay)
Kat Lowe (Tin Can Bay - Brunswick Heads)
Donna Bowe (Bowen Hills)
Robin Sevenoaks (Berridale)
Gavin Moss (Petrie)
Sheryl Bennett (Tin Can Bay)
Phil Bennett (Tin Can Bay)

Sunday 13th May

In contrast to previous bush regeneration trips this was a golden cloudless day with an optimum temperature. The sort of day that anyone of sensitivity would want to be in Queensland for.

The day was spent gathering the group together between Brisbane and Tin Can Bay and then stopping for lunch at Maaroom of the shores of Great Sandy Strait for lunch. There was a brief stopover in Moreton Bay to admire the heritage buildings and to fuel the car and reconnect the trailer lights before proceeding on to Mary River Heads to the ferry.

We arrived in Eurong at 5.15 pm and established our base camp for the week at "Talinga".

Monday, 14th May

The workers started early and were on the job by 7.30 am. Most of the team set to work on cleaning the replanted area of Easton Street from the fresh crop of weeds to emerge since the March weeding operation just 8 weeks earlier.

The plantings carried out in March showed a 95% plus survival rate, but there was a fresh crop of weeds that had emerged as a result of the seeds sown when the site had been a dumping ground for garden waste and the very good rain since March. This patch kept six members of the team busy from 7.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.. However, having weeded out the established area of new plantings, the group continued working beyond that towards the toilet block. Two trailer loads of rubbish we loaded and taken to the waste transfer station.

Michael, Gav and John Sinclair worked mainly on different projects. An inspection of the demonstration gardens behind the resort showed differing results. The Roundabout garden showed little regeneration of grass but the plants were low profile and hadn't made much growth. Midyim doesn't seem well suited for growing in such open conditions. Some supplementary planting and reconsideration of the choice of species is needed but this depends on the availability of nursery stock.

The Pandanus garden showed a lot of casualties and it seems to be the result of too much watering and nutrient because of the dispersal of resort waste-water on the site. The swamp hibiscus though was thriving. Some of the perimeter plantings had also died off or were suffering salt spray as a result of high wind that was surprising.

One problem identified was the dumping of the raked resort was on the opposite side of Easton Street. Some of this has occurred since our March team treated the area. Also notably it could be clearly demonstrated that the waste was allowing other garden plant species to escape into the bush. One red foliage weed (Purple alternanthera – *Alternanthera dentata*) was aggressively invading the ground cover.

John Sinclair decided to eliminate a big lantana plant growing very obviously near the road. It proved a difficult challenge because of the size and the accumulation of sand washed off the road that was burying the base. When it was finally uprooted a patch of small sisal plants and an asparagus fern were discovered growing beneath it. 15 Easter cassias were also eliminated but the red leafed weed needs lots of attention here.

After collecting some Roundup for the spraying program from the Ranger Station Michael began spray work while John and Gav talked a residential patch of weeds where a huge Bouganvillia and Easter Cassia were invading large Banksia. Last November one resident had expressed a desire to remove it and it was on the boundary with the old Greensill property whose owner had requested FIDO's assistance to eliminate the lantana also on the property boundary. It has change the aspect to have eliminated this difficult and thorny problem.

After a late lunch the team went on a tour of the Southern lakes. While the water was warm enough only Gav was brave enough to confront the crisp air after his swim. John Sinclair noted the water levels in Lake Birrabeen were the highest he had seen since FIDO was formed 41 years ago. A stop at Lake Boomanjin revealed a story of an artist who had painted the scene there some years ago when the water levels were lower. This resulted in an assignment for one of the team, Robin, to seek an artist to speak on the aesthetic and inspirational values of the Fraser Island landscape.

Returning to Eurong we stopped at Dilli Village to do some seed collection and the seeds of geebung, Alyxia and an unknown black berry were collected. Our golden cloudless day ended in the pink light of the beach where we observed at least a dozen Red-capped plovers feeding and avoiding incoming wave wash and a dingo.

Total hours worked 45

Tuesday 15th May

A very colourful sunrise marked the start of the day and although the clouds built up during the morning as we headed towards Indian Head they dissipated around noon and the weather resumed the magical autumn balmy weather.

The run up the beach and back to the weed-infested headland was marked by stops at Eli Creek and the Pinnacles coloured sands and on the return at the Cathedral coloured sands (Red Canyon) and the *Maheno*. Plans to go on to the Champagne Pools were discouraged by a litter of Backpacker vehicles in various stages of their attempts to get across the track cluttering up any clear runs.

Back at Eurong after lunch the group went to work at the gardens of the Eurong Resort to help eliminate the sources of the bridal creeper infestations. It was heavy work that resulted in two mountainous trailer loads of garden waste going to the dump.

While this was happening Michael and Gav were liaising with the QPWS staff and the nursery staff and collecting plants and supplies of wetting agent for the intended plantings to be done.

The group then turned their attention to the opposite side of the street to clear up the area lining Easton Street, adjacent to the community toilet block and to removing the Bougainvillia from the previous day's demolition work. The removal was a thorny problem but accomplished in the fast fading light.

Total hours worked 35

Wednesday, 16th May

Despite the weather forecasts predicting fine weather until Friday, it started raining soon after we went to bed and got progressively heavier during the night. By morning it was continuous rain alternating between light rain and very heavy unpredictable downpour.

There was a deterrent to commencing work until 8.45 when the compulsion to brave the weather took over. In the burst of work during a temporary reprieve in the weather two more trailer loads of garden waste to the dump being mainly the Bougainvillia removed the prior day. However there was a concerted effort to clean the whole area at the western end of Easton Street although this work was halted by a prolonged shower that caused all outside work to stop at about 11.15 am. With the very unpredictable weather the team started work assisting Michael to clean seeds and to gather new seeds for Eurong nursery.

John Sinclair was also able to procure from QPWS bamboo cane stakes and other items to assist with the seed collection and to mark the new plantings.

The dispirited team adjourned early for lunch and anticipated alternative plans for the afternoon outing. However the Heavens opened up and all plans of any outing were abandoned. However, Michael found a way to keep everyone busy and occupied for some time separating seeds. Then when this task had been completed he led them off on a seed gathering expedition which was later in the day to keep everyone busy around the table sucking, plucking and squeezing seeds out of berries to provide a good seed stock for future nursery plantings.

With this chore held in suspense until Happy Hour Michael and Gav went off to the QPWS office and nursery to do some volunteer work on cuttings. Then everyone else moved back into the regeneration area in Easton Street to tidy up earlier work and mark some of the emergent Tuckeroo to help avoid them being destroyed by home gardeners or motor mowers.

The main challenge though was the invasive Coral creeper that was smothering some taller trees adjacent to the toilet block and near Easton Street. Great heaps of garden waste await to be taken to the dump tomorrow. At length Michael and Gav returned from the QPWS and one trailer load went to the dump before the Heavens opened again and the everyone adjourned to "*Talinga*" to work on the seeds separation again — work for suckers.

weeks.

Despite the inclement weather it turned out to be a very satisfying and productive day in terms of work output.

Total hours worked 45

Thursday, 17th May

After a wet day we saw the starry night as an omen of a better day following. However at dawn the assault of the rain on the roof shattered our dreams of a fine day ahead. Despite this inauspicious start though the day did turn out fine and at 7.15 am workers started heading towards their self appointed chores which were:

- (a) clean up the Coral creeper in the picnic area;
- (b) start planting and establishing the areas we had prepared ;
- (c) clean up weeds and plant up the demonstration gardens on the western side of the resort; and
- (d) remove the garden waste which had built up as a result of yesterday's work.

While Michael very efficiently organized distribution of the nursery stock ready for planting, most of the team went to work cleaning up the dreaded Coral creeper that was surrounding the FIDO picnic shelter and in the area on the seaside of the road opposite the shelter. This was accomplished with great enthusiasm and a sense of pride although there is still a little more to follow up here tomorrow.

After an early smoko to allow for the earlier start the team went into a planting frenzy planting up the two resort gardens and the gardens behind the tennis courts as well as the supplementary planting in the Roundabout garden. Michael had also done a lot of planting on the seaside end of Easton Street taking advantage of the spraying he had undertaken in May that had suppressed the grass. Many hardy bush species such as wattles were planted out here.

The planting at the resort garden was accomplished and the resort has agreed not to introduce any non-native plants into these gardens. The resort will also instruct the groundsmen on the importance of not dumping lawn clippings in the bush adjacent to the resort.

Meanwhile Supe and the trailer were conducting regular shuttle runs between the work area and the dump to dispose of the mountains of garden waste that had been torn from the bush. Today six (6) trailer loads were taken to the dump bringing to 13 the total number of runs to the dump to date.

After lunch and watering in the new plantings the team took off to Central Station and Lake McKenzie. The photographer noted many things during their two hour 2.2 kilometre walk to Pile Valley along Wangoolba Creek and then raced to Lake McKenzie to allow Gav a chance to show he deserves to be in the Iceberg Club whose members swim in the open sea 365 days a year if given the opportunity. We arrived back at Eurong at 6.15 pm in the dark.

Unfortunately Michael's fishing while we were away yielded no fish for dinner and he exhausted his bait small bait supply but not his desire to try again.

Total hours worked = 50

Friday, 18th May

The morning began fine and early for our last full day of work that ended up as a marathon.

Workers had picked up tools and begun work by 7.15 am and some were earlier. The group split into two teams. One group, the women, went to work finishing the coral creeper in the picnic table island and generally tidying up the weeds around the toilet block. The men though headed off for the Second Valley to start attacking the infestation of Brazillian Cherry. Although many trees were removed from the road reserve this proved to not as much progress as we wanted. However it did elicit a lot of community support for the efforts to tidy up the Valley and the Brazillian cherries.

David Anderson appeared with his trailer and chain saw. He took three loads of our created rubbish to the dump, and offered assistance for any future FIDO weeding operation. He is the President of the Fraser Island Association and is keen to start a Eurong environmental group. He also agreed to water the new plants in the Second Valley. He has managed to control green panic by spraying and has tried to eliminate Brazillian Cherries but has found them very difficult to kill. However he is keen to build more support for weeding.

The intrepid Brazillian cherry attackers filled three trailer loads for the dump spurred on by Michael's discovery yesterday of a Brazillian cherry now established in the main road into Eurong probably as a result of bird dispersal.

The whole team reassembled for Smoko at 10.00a.m. when there was a further opportunity to liaise with Eurong Resort about the maintenance of the gardens with pure natives and on weeding as well as avoiding adding any introduced plants. Another trailer load of Coral creeper rubbish was taken to the dump and then most women went across to the Second Valley to work on the demonstration area there. There was an urgency to undertake planting there and 38 additional plants were added to the initial planting and the demonstration area was extended mainly seawards.

One alarming discovery was of more outbreaks of the pernicious Madeira vine. There is a lot of work to be undertaken in the Second Valley on weeds. However in his inspection of the area between the Second Valley and the Resort Michael discovered a huge infestation of more Coral Creeper and an extensive area of Singapore Daisy. This calls for a large spraying program and we

will seek the cooperation of the QPWS and Council with their spray trucks to tackle this infestation. Michael also discovered over 30 Easter Cassia infesting the area which he eliminated. However it was a sobering reflection of some unseen areas that are harbouring some very noxious and invasive weeds.

In the meantime Su and Kat cleaned up more of the area adjacent to the toilet block.

It was a long and extended shift that ended after 1.15 pm. After a late lunch and some more tidying up and storing equipment most of the team went for a very interesting and enjoyable walk to Wabby Lakes.

While we were away there was a break in the showery weather that enabled Michael to undertake some vital spraying including much Siratro, some couch areas, some green panic but most notably the area of Purple alternanthera that was spreading through the bush close to the Roundabout

Total hours worked 62

Saturday, 19th May

It was a frantic scramble to get the rubbish to the dump, the tools and equipment finally stored in the council shed and the material returned to the QPWS along with the impressively sized bag of seeds collected and catalogued by Michael with much assistance from other suckers. There were many people wanting to say farewell and it was 8.15 before we left Eurong but the ferry didn't arrive until 9.15. After morning tea in Queens Park Maryborough overlooking the river and failing to secure a copy of the article about our weeding we headed down to Tin Can Bay for lunch and a farewell to half our contingent before heading on to Brisbane in daylight before having to remove the bog-boards from the bull-bar.

It was a most successful trip where so much was achieved by just nine people working harmoniously and cooperatively with a common purpose. While two previous working bees had accomplished much during those weeks, the effort at Easton Street and in the area surrounding the Resort laundry on both sides of the road are the most obvious demonstrations of achievement yet.

FIDO is concerned though that the seed beds of weeds is so substantial in places that some means of longer term management such as mulching the planted area to suppress weeds in future is very desirable.

Summary

113 plants were established in the ground:—

20 in the resort laundry gardens,

15 in the roundabout garden,

10 in the Winnum and Kurrar Gardens

30 in the Easton Street Precinct and

38 in the Second Valley Demonstration area.

In future programs we should aim to have a stock of 110-120 plants ready for planting.

237 hours were devoted by the group to Bush Regeneration during the week.

The Group has identified more problem areas around Eurong to be treated as a priority in future programs.

Relationships with the community and support from landholders continues to grow and this augers well for future operations.

The assistance and enthusiastic support of QPWS Eurong staff was also most helpful and added positive encouragement.

There is reasonable confidence that the North East sector of Eurong is now cleaner and healthier as far as weeds are concerned but there are many more sectors of the Eurong area inside the Dingo Fence still to be contained and it may take years at the present rate to control just inside the Dingo Fence.

Again much of the achievement for the output is due to the expertise and energy of Michael Lowe who is the de-facto Director of Work. So much of the high team morale was due to the careful planning and catering undertaken by the indefatigable weeder and organizer, Su Dawson.