

Fraser Island Defenders Organisation
Happy Valley Weeding Trip: 5th - 11th August 2018



Note: *This program was originally sponsored by the National Landcare Program that has now abandoned funding support for any Bush Regeneration programs or any other programs in the Fraser Island (K'gari) World Heritage area. Therefore this program was entirely underwritten financially by FIDO that was committed to the program before being advised that there would be no funding for the 2018-19 financial year. Continuing this program has eaten significantly into FIDO's financial reserves but FIDO is determined to continue to ensure that all the gains made by Peter Shooter's 19 teams since 2014 aren't lost allowing weeds to flourish uncontrolled in Happy Valley and environs.*

Volunteers

Peter Shooter - Nambour
Cath Barron - Spring Hill
Neil Barron - Spring Hill,
Chris Breitenbach - Auchenflower,
Graeme Wood - Fairfield
Rhonda Wood - Fairfield
Leonie Martin - Castle Crag Sydney,
Maurice McCallum - West End
Anna Limmer - Spring Hill (German Student)



Induction at Happy Valley Day 1. Peter Shooter on left

Abrus precatorius var africanus

We are in the mopping up phase with this species, endeavouring to ensure there is minimum seed set to avoid reinfesting the areas we have been working on since 2014.

We revisited all the areas inside the dingo fence covered by our MOU as well as areas North and South of the village as well as North West and West of the village with the exception of the area West of the dingo fence between the grid on the Yidney Scrub Road and the grid on the Yidney Rocks Bypass road. We will inspect that area in November. In all of these areas the population is now very low, with all but no plants of seed-bearing maturity.

This species will flower and set seed in its first year. A very small amount was discovered carrying seed which we collected.

Across all the areas, small emergent plants were hand pulled. This was more difficult this trip as the soil was very dry. They pull much easier after rain. Plants that would not pull were foliage sprayed with 1.5% Roundup, mostly with hand held sprays, some with backpacks.

Mopping up is an on-going process that will continue for some time until hopefully the species is eliminated.

There is still a very heavy population in the section managed by the Council program in the middle of town. This area always carries a huge load of seed and was the case in August. This is frustrating as there is no doubt that the seed is dispersed by birds. I have drawn this conclusion from my observations at Happy Valley as well as on the Sunshine Coast and in Brisbane. This is also recorded in the literature.

With this in mind, having a huge seed source in the middle of town is disheartening, given the lengths we have gone to to eliminate the species, which as far as we know is still restricted to Happy Valley. Our aim and hope is

to prevent its expansion to others areas of the island.

It is also disheartening to see the area north of the Ambulance Station that we previously worked on, has become reinfested. There is now a substantial population of mature plants in that area that will seed in the next season.

There is a need for discussions with all stakeholders, in regard to the ongoing control program of this species. I hope a meeting can be arranged between stakeholders to address the ongoing control of this plant. If we can't at least get the seeding level down, then our almost 5 years of very effective work will have been to no end.



Wherever an Abrus plant has set seed the seed are collected and the site marked with flagging tape and position noted on the GPS to be monitored in the future for any seedlings that may arise from previously dropped seed.

Easter Cassia (*Senna pendula var glabrata*)

This was the second target species again this trip, following our collaborative Cassia Blitz with the Fraser Island Association in April/May. The main target areas were the second valley North of the Ambulance Station and East of the Yidney Rocks Bypass road.

While we removed huge amounts in both these areas, there is still a lot more to be done. These will again be the target areas in November.

Again, where possible, we pulled by hand. Where not possible, stems were cut low to the ground with long handled cutters or in the case of very large plants with a reciprocating electric saw. The butt was then squirted with 100% roundup.

Lantana (*Lantana camara*)

Wherever we encountered healthy lantana we treated it in the same way as Easter Cassia. ie cut and squirt with 100% Roundup.

Lantana is being held in check by various biological agents, so we mainly remove the vigorous healthy plants that the biological agents have not had a significant effect on.

Basket Asparagus (*Asparagus aethiopicus*)

There is a modest population of this invasive plant across the site. While we have been removing plants over the years on an ad hoc manner, this trip we made a concerted move against this weed inside the dingo fence and in other areas where we were working.

Previously we have used a large knife to cut out the crown. This trip we used a spade to dig up the plant. This method proved a much easier and very effective method given that the soil is sandy.

Broad Leafed Pepper (*Schinus terebinthifolius*)

A few small and middle-sized broad-leafed pepper trees were located East of Yidney Rocks Bypass Road and destroyed by cutting the stem low to the ground and applying 100% roundup to the stump. A few very large trees have been located past the end of Owen Street. These will be killed in November.

Changed landscape resulting from removal of Cassia and Lantana.

When we started this work, large areas were so heavily infested with Easter Cassia and Lantana that penetration was impossible. Both species had grown long sprawling branches that intertwined and frequently fell over, rooting where they touched the ground. This was especially so East of Yidney Rocks Bypass Pass Road. We have been progressively clearing tracks to locate and destroy Abrus and extending the eradication of Cassia and Lantana as we went.

Large areas are now relatively free of these two weeds, and the landscape is completely changed. Movement through the area is now relatively easy and native plants are responding well. At the beginning, the task was very daunting and seemed hopeless. It has been a huge job, but the results are now very rewarding.

Hours worked

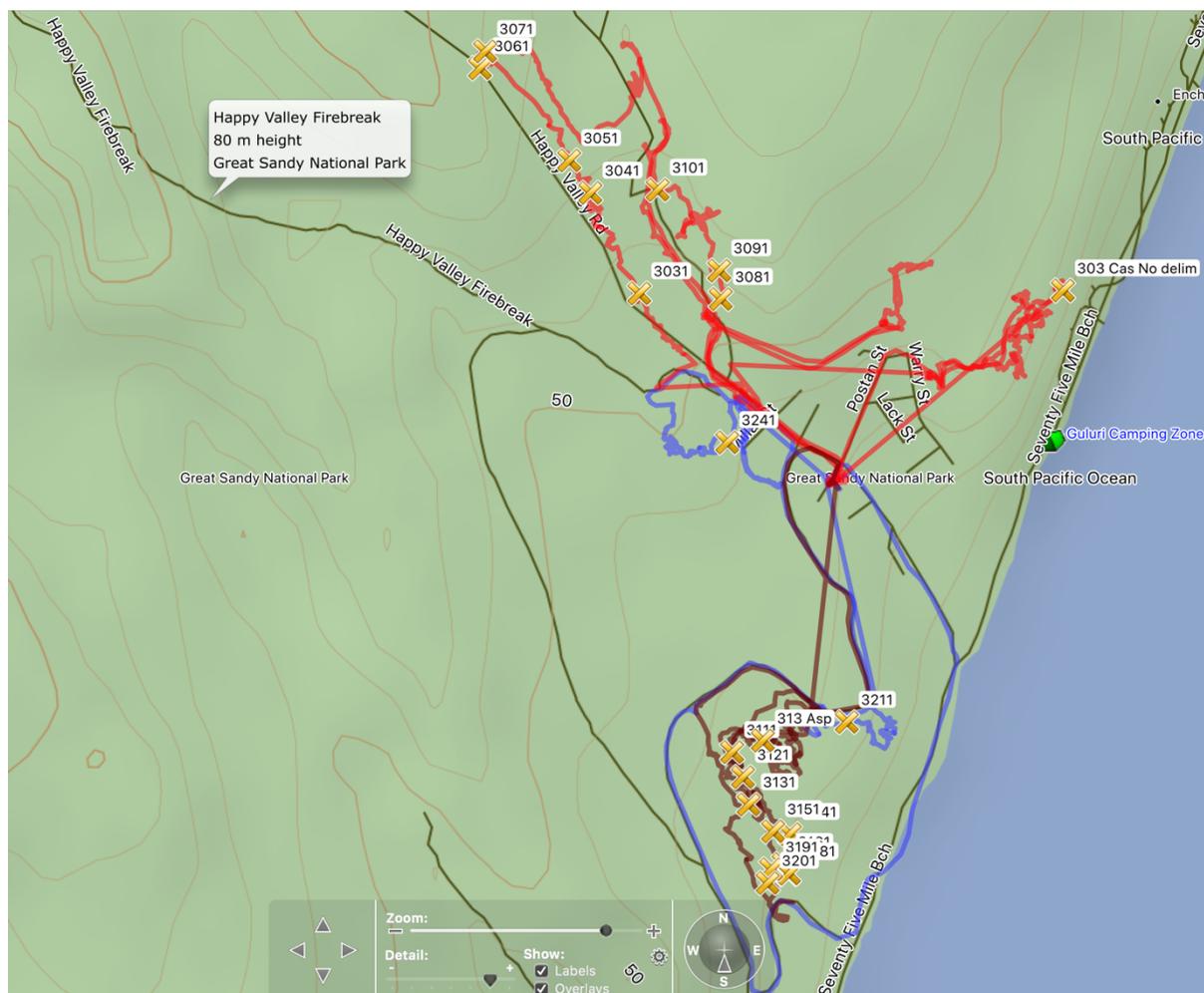
9 volunteers worked a minimum of 4hrs per person per day. Total in-excess of 180 hours.

Next Trip:

November 18th -24th

Peter Shooter

Survey Notes from Chris Breitenbach



This is just 1 of the 9 individual tracks represented when I was carrying the GPS. For example when we were chasing Casia in the Northern Valley, West of 303, the team penetrated further West taking out Casia. Hopefully on a future trip we can walk to the other red line on the ridge that intersects with Postan street where lots of mopping up was achieved. The crosses are where there were Abrus seeds found on this trip, and generally lots of wiggles represent mopping up activity.

Chris also noted: *It should be noted that I only recorded from Tuesday for 4 days as the first day involves orientation and working in a localised section. The distance travelled each day was between 5 to 6 km between at .4 to 1 km/hr while searching and treating weeds for a total distance of 21.9 kilometre. With 9 people assuming covering the same distance then $9 * 21.9 / 4 = 49.3$ km/day * 5 = 246 km of travel.*

On this trip I had GPS marked 10 significant occurrences of Abrus that needed to be revisited due to seed set in the Northern section and 12 in the Southern Yidney Rock section. The Northern valley is looking in very good shape as far as the previous Abrus infestation, and Casia has been given a good going over, but is a work in progress.