



Newsletter of the Weed Society of Victoria Inc.

volume 23 issue 4 2012

Weedscene

A participant's (and outsider's) confession

'What are we doing, as a scientific community?' Prof. Richard Hobbs's words rang in my ears, long after the last farewell had been bade, and the last poster had been peeled from the display board and reverently sheathed in its cartridge. What, indeed? Also, *How do we go about it? Who should take charge?* — and, the

track-stopping *Why do we even want to fight?* — these questions were raised, and answers expounded over four days of intense rhetoric and field trips. I had my head aching from information overload at the end of each conference day.

I had come to the 18AWC to present a poster. I wanted to show my results from my first postgraduate year, on how profuse vegetative reproduction and absence of enemy herbivore might assuage the self-incompatibility mechanism operating in invasive irises in temperate Australia. Having submitted my abstract far ahead of a full programme, a check on other posters confirmed my worst fear: with *ecology* in its title, my poster stuck up like a sore thumb amidst all the *biocontrol* and *management* rubric. I settled back for a week of being irrelevant.

Happily, it didn't turn out like that. Ecology was always humming in the background, as was another of my research topic, evolution. Indeed, the theme of the conference, *Developing solutions to evolving weed problems*, signalled recognition of how new and holistic

ways were needed to deal with a very slippery enemy. The concern is getting the message from the research camps to the practitioners.

Prof. Richard Mack gave a measured CAWS Oration on our professional obligation to reach out to the public and policy-makers on plant invaders. His message is timely, as animal invaders are far more salient in the media, and the fight against invasive plants is not helped by public perception of pure chemical-based approaches to weedy problems, a reflection of backyard weed eradication. Indeed, Mack's advice can be tailored to reduce crosstalk between weed researchers and practitioners, by collaborating more, and articulating messages plainly and concisely.

Whether this can be done soon is another matter. Invasion biologists are all too aware of the disparate results coming out of their camp, albeit announced with good intentions. For example, my findings on invasive irises were unlikely to translate to other species, which may operate under their own mechanisms and environmental impact. This disparity was addressed by



Professor Richard Mack

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COVER PHOTO:

Chrozophora tinctoria (courtesy Rob Richardson)

Joining the Weed Society of Victoria

The benefits of membership to WSV include:

- Weedscape: newsletter packed full of information
- eWeedscape: regular electronic bulletin on weed news and events
- Discounts to WSV seminars, workshops, conferences and other events
- Opportunities to network with others.

To apply for membership, download and print the membership application form from the WSV website, www.wsvic.org.au, complete the details and mail to the WSV Secretary.

Weedscape Newsletter of the Weed Society of Victoria Inc.

Contributions to Weedscape are welcomed. Please contact the editor for further information.

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■ Quarter page	180 mm wide x 64 mm high	\$135.00
■ Half page	180 mm wide x 128 mm high	\$275.00
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Anthony Kachenko, Environmental and Technical Policy Manager, Nursery and Garden Industry Australia. Talk: An industry perspective on weed risk

Prof. Richard Hobbs (a renowned restoration ecologist) in his keynote speech on how ‘systems thinking’ — a framework to identify how interconnected elements in a system interact and influence one another — could be used to formulate management action from biology. Hobbs also thought that the ‘native good, invader bad’ is naïve, an opinion mirrored by John Dwyer in his *Messages and metaphors: is it time to end ‘the war against weeds?’* As Dr Chris Johnson illustrated, the megafaunal extinction, coupled with the introduction of ungulates to Australia, changed our landscape, and brought new weeds. Are we then to call these ungulates invaders, and their vectors (that is, colonial settlers) the ultimate invasive species?

Hobbs raised an interesting paradox: the state of being practical, versus that of being pragmatic. His paradox may seem tautological — after all, many dictionaries define pragmatism as being practical — but Dr Rachel McFadyen’s talk on food security holds a key to this conundrum. As the world’s fourth largest net food exporter, McFadyen argued that Australia had relied too long and too heavily on chemical herbicides (a practical way to eradicate weeds), which would be less and less sustainable in the face of evolving herbicide resistance, production costs and a changing climate (a pragmatic consideration). Her call for more Federal and state funding for weed control research to maintain Australia’s food-basket role was rebuffed by Prof. Paul Martin. In his address on RIRDC funding, Martin was not overly optimistic that governments would once again garner the will or resources to fund weed research seen during Weeds CRC days. Instead, Martin thought that weed researchers might profit more from private and community outreach, resonating with Mack’s message.

Several subliminal themes have emerged from 18AWC, and they are ones that the weed research community cannot sweep under the carpet any longer. Weed science is paradoxically receiving less funding even as the problems loom larger. One way — echoed by many — is to do more with less, but the conference rhetoric suggests that we do it as intelligently as we can, and with as much a concerted effort as we can possibly muster. And as Jarvis Weston



Trade display area



Field trip to the Dandenongs

explained how weed containment (including a buy-back of an adjoining housing estate!) helped reinvigorate seabird habitat on Phillip Island, Anthony Kachenko on how the Nursery and Garden Industry Australia was tackling horticultural weeds, and other researchers on their work on weed containment and ecological restoration, it can be done.

Invasion biologists will continue to disentangle the mechanisms behind plant invasions. It is unlikely there is an all-in-one solution to our weed problems any time soon, and the need for an uncertainty-based decision-making framework for controlling both agricultural and environmental weeds will be needed urgently. G.H. Hardy (1877–1947) in *A Mathematician’s Apology* wrote that ‘I have never done anything “useful”. No discovery of mine has made, or is likely to make, directly or indirectly, for good or ill, the least difference to the amenity of the world’. It is not a position the weed community can afford to take, or to believe.

Gerry Ho, Victoria



News & Diary

Giving a RATS

The Summer 2012 online edition of *Giving a RATS* is out. Read all about the latest in herbicide resistance in the GRDC national glyphosate resistance team's newsletter.

Go to: www.agronomo.com.au

Ground Cover

Also from the Grains Research & Development Corporation, Issue 101 of *Ground Cover* (Southern edition) has been published online.

Go to: [> Media Centre > Ground Cover](http://www.grdc.com.au)

Global Herbicide Resistance Challenge

18–22 February 2013, Perth, WA.

Go to: www.herbicideresistanceconference.com.au

This conference offers a multidisciplinary forum focused on all aspects of herbicide resistance in crops and weeds and their impact on global food production.

Scientific sessions will range from the molecular basis of herbicide resistance evolution through agro-ecology and agronomy to on-farm resistance management. Registration is open until February 4.

Status and Future of Vegetable Crop Health RD&E in Australia Workshop

February 2013, Melbourne.

As part of a strategic study on vegetable crop health — covering both in-crop and post-harvest issues — Horticulture Australia Limited is partnering with consultancy firm RMCG for a one-day workshop for professionals in crop health management; weed researchers are encouraged to attend. The venue and time is TBA (tentatively 20 February). Contact Dr Doris Blaesing at 0438 546 487 or dorisb@rmcg.com.au about the project or the workshop.

16th European Weed Research Society Symposium

24–27 June 2013, Samsun, Turkey.

Go to: www.ewrs2013.org

47th Weed Society of Victoria AGM and Seminar

18 April 2013

AgriBio Centre, La Trobe University, Bundoora

Go to: www.wsvic.org.au

The one seminar to attend (if you'll excuse the spruik). There are a host of attractions — ready access, DPI's spanking new research facility, the catering — but the best is our conference theme: *Many ways to manage a weed*. Showcasing diverse topics on weed management scenarios, protocols and legislation, there is something for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk created the Turkish liberation movement in Samsun on 19 May 1919, effectively launching the Turkish War of Independence against the Allies. It's a little more pacific 94 years later, when the EWRS convenes at this Black Sea city to articulate the war against weeds. The programme spans weed biology and ecology, chemical and non-chemical weed management, and herbicide resistance. Register by March 1 for early bird rates.

12th Queensland Weed Symposium

15–18 July 2013, Harvey Bay, QLD.

Go to: www.QWS2013.com

Set in the luscious yet accessible whale-watching capital of Harvey Bay, speakers will share their success stories on weed control. A programme is not available yet, but you can sign up online to receive updates. The conference theme is *Weeds — everyone's business*, so you will want to pen this in your calendar.

New Zealand Plant Protection Society (NZPPS) Conference 2013

13–15 August 2013, Napier, New Zealand.

Go to: www.nzpps.org

Call for abstracts is now open. Check the website for programme updates.

Ecology and Management of Alien Plant Invasions (EMAPI)

12th International Conference, 22–26 September 2013, Pirenópolis, Brazil.

Go to: www.emapi2013.org

Registration opens February 1, 2013 and abstract submission a month later. A full programme was not available at time of press.

24th Asian-Pacific Weed Science Conference

22–25 October 2013, Bandung, Indonesia.

Go to: www.apwss2013.com

The theme for this conference is *The role of weed science in supporting food security by 2020*, and participants will present papers on sustainable weed management, threats and risks posed by weeds and their management, and weed control economics in Asia-Pacific. Take advantage of super early bird rates before 23 May.

From the President

The 18th Australasian Weeds Conference was certainly the highlight of 2012, and I would like to thank the conference organising committee, in particular Ros Shepherd, for all their efforts in organising the conference. The conference offered great networking opportunities and also provided an opportunity to showcase the results of many interesting weed projects.

But here we are now in 2013, and we are only a few months away from the Weed

Society of Victoria's annual seminar: 'Many Ways to Manage a Weed'. The seminar will be held in conjunction with the 2013 AGM, and will be held at AgriBio at La Trobe University. The AGM and seminar will be an opportunity for members to join the Committee of the Weed Society of Victoria. I urge members to attend the upcoming seminar and AGM. It will be your opportunity to meet more Victorian weedos and to get more involved in the running of the Society.



I'd like to wish all members the very best for the new year ahead.

Michael Hansford
President

Bookshelf

Invasive Plant Ecology

edited by Shibu Jose, Harminder Pal Singh, Daizy Rani Batish and Ravinder Kumar Kohli

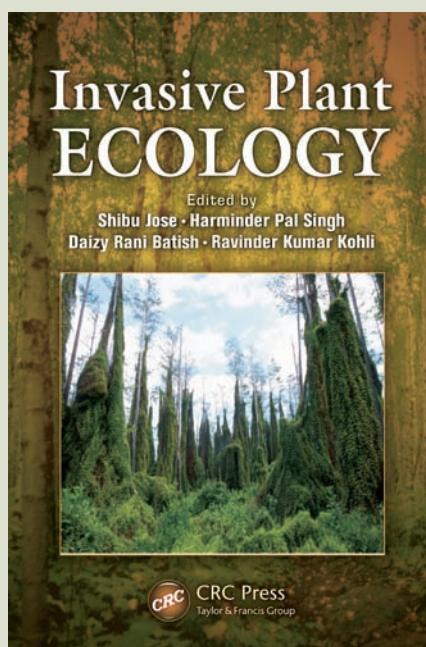
Published by CRC Press, hardback, 302 pages. ISBN 978-14-398-8126-2

Price: £63.99. Available January 2013.

www.crcpress.com

It is telling that the editors introduce this collection with a chapter titled *Invasive plant ecology: the horse behind the cart?* Each plant invasion is fundamentally an ecological phenomenon (albeit with a heavy dash of human intervention), but the act of deciphering the mechanisms behind each invasion is something else, and is often a step neglected in weed management. The editors attempt to address this by condensing ecological principles, case studies, and management approaches into a fairly slim volume.

Invasive Plant Ecology does away with the philosophical niceties concerning invasive species, and delves right into theoretical ecology underpinning plant invasions. Current research interests are well represented by chapters on the



novel weapons hypothesis, aboveground–belowground interactions, mycorrhizae, and mutualisms leading to biological invasion.

The ecological framework is embellished with case studies spanning North America, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa, and the volume wraps up with topics on invasive plant management and ecological restoration, including ones on management economics and geospatial tools. Some readers may lament the paucity of the

Usual Big Names in this compilation, but we pray that this may well make way for a refreshing perspective on what is otherwise a terribly complex phenomenon.

Farms with a Future

by Rebecca Thistlethwaite

Published by Chelsea Green Publishing, paperback, 304 pages.

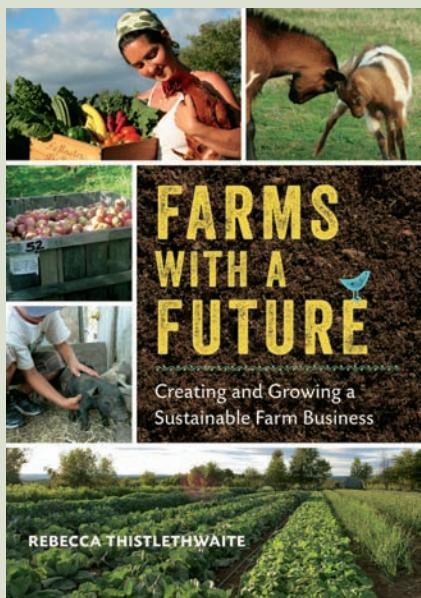
ISBN 978-16-035-8438-8

Price: \$US29.95. Available January 2013.

www.chelseagreen.com

Take it from a farmer, oxen trainer, food business consultant, and blogger. Rebecca Thistlethwaite is certainly in a good position to talk about sustainable farming. Having run a ranch in California raising organic livestock and poultry, she and her husband took a one-year sabbatical around the United States, living and working with farmers to understand what innovative methods worked, and what didn't. This book is the result of their research.

Thistlethwaite has astutely identified the bind local farmers are caught in. As land managers, they are expected to be custodians of the environment, but the strain of human population growth also places demands on food production.



Farms with a Future explores the passion, creativity, and entrepreneurship that's needed to help family farms find their niche and remain sustainable and successful in an age of agribusiness and consolidation.

This book's selling point is the author's focus on business management for long-term sustainability. Written from an American perspective, this book is for anyone aspiring to get into small to mid-scale market farming, or who wants to make their existing farm more dynamic, profitable, and, above all, sustainable.

Essential Bushfire Safety Tips Third Edition

by Joan Webster OAM

Published by CSIRO Publishing, paperback, 184 pages, October 2012, ISBN 9780643107809
Price: \$AU29.95

By the author of the acclaimed *The Complete Bushfire Safety Book*, this new edition of Joan Webster OAM's *Essential Bushfire Safety Tips* has been revised and updated. The book deals with people's fears and concerns following Victoria's 2009 Black Saturday bushfires and a maze of new official safety policies. Its concise and straightforward style clears a path of understanding through the tangle of conflicting opinions and misconceptions. It identifies the shortcomings and likely adverse repercussions of some of these policies, defines the actions necessary for

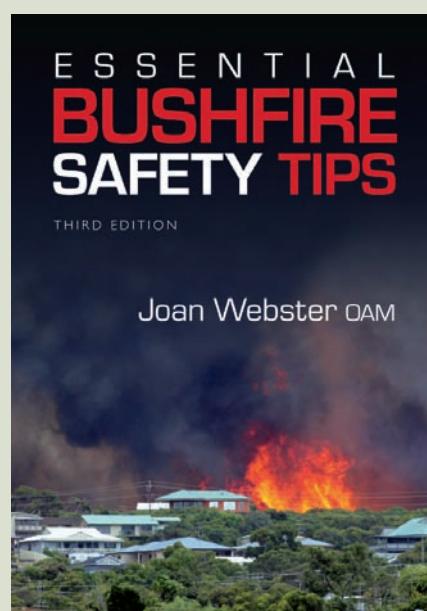
people to stay safe during a bushfire – and their homes to remain intact – and sets out safe procedures.

It reveals the scientific post-Black Saturday research into why people who stayed with their homes died during the fires, and shows that, despite the almost universal media reports that 'nothing could be done to save homes on such a day', many householders did, in fact, save their homes.

Included are new chapters on township protection; shelters, refuges and bunkers; as well as new information on choices of safe home bushfire strategies; protective house design, furnishings and gardens; protection of animals; and first aid.

This book fills the gap between bushfire authority brochures and long, in-depth books. Backed by scientific facts, it brings a message of hope and empowerment: that with appropriate knowledge, preparation and awareness, towns, homes and people can survive bushfires.

Set out in easy-to-access dot-point one-liners, it demystifies bushfire behaviour, explains how to prevent a bushfire from destroying houses, details the safe way to act at each stage of threat, describes weather factors and safe burning-off, details the benefits and hazards of staying, non-defensive sheltering, and evacuating, and how to make the decision on which course is best for you.



Living with Fire People, Nature and History in Steels Creek

by Christine Hansen and Tom Griffiths
Colour illustrations and photographs, maps
Published by CSIRO Publishing, hardback,
200 pages, ISBN 9780643104792,
November 2012, Price: \$AU49.95



Late on the afternoon of 7 February 2009, the day that came to be known as Black Saturday, the Kinglake plateau carried a massive conflagration down the fringing ranges into the Steels Creek community. Ten people perished and 67 dwellings were razed in the firestorm. In the wake of the fires, the devastated residents of the valley began the long task of grieving, repairing, rebuilding or moving on while redefining themselves and their community.

In *Living with Fire*, historians Tom Griffiths and Christine Hansen trace both the history of fire in the region and the human history of the Steels Creek valley in a series of essays which examine the relationship between people and place. These essays are interspersed with four interludes compiled from material produced by the community. In the immediate aftermath of the fire many people sought to express their grief, shock, sadness and relief in artwork. Some painted or wrote poetry, while others collected the burnt remains of past treasures from which they made new objects. These expressions, supplemented by historical archives and the essays they stand beside, offer a sensory and holistic window into the community's contemporary and historical experiences.

A deeply moving book, *Living with Fire* brings to life the stories of one community's experience with fire, offering a way to understand the past, and in doing so, prepare for the future.