



Restoration and revegetation area

Fishery Beach

Bald Hills revegetation for Glossy Black Cockatoo

Who would have thought, that we would still be at Lands End, working in a reserve that few others at the time even wanted to look at let alone work at it. That was nearly twenty five years ago now.

The area is quite significant, (200 hectares) and had I not decided to carry out restoration work when I did, I think by now it may well have been beyond help, and could have been cleared completely to eradicate the South African *Melianthus comosus*, or Cape Honey Flower, and houses built along the cliff-tops, because that was the intention many years ago.

The project started right back in 1995 when a person by the name of Ron Taylor (from the area at the time) discovered that I was looking for a conservation project to take the place of our once very popular Coorong Project (Potters Scrub). That project was losing some of its popularity amongst the Four Wheel Drive Association members, who incidentally did an amazing amount of work in the area. It was generally felt that we should give the area a break from continuous tree planting, and let nature take its course for awhile.

Ron had this very favourite area near Cape Jervis that he was very passionate about, but he knew that it had to be managed by someone, as there were an amazing number of native species being threatened by a wide variety of weed species, but the one that had infested a large proportion of the area, was a plant called *Melianthus comosus*, which most likely was a garden escapee, or had been dumped in the area at some time. It has been estimated to have been in the area for nearly fifty years. Being a bit of an amateur detective, and I don't mind being proven wrong, I believe it may have come from one of the Tallisker miner's gardens, because there is now a definite trail leading from that area.

It wasn't long before I had organised a day when all the Four Wheel Drive Association members could view the intended project to see if it would be a project that they all could be involved in. I think the day was somewhat overwhelming, because they never returned to the site, preferring to go elsewhere. That left me with the decision, do we take this project on, or should we too go to other areas. I decided at the time, that we should take the project on, and now in 2018, we are still at the site.

Soon after I was introduced to Ron Sandercock from the then Coastal Protection Board, who had written a report about the area, and encouraged me to undertake the huge task of doing the restoration and revegetation work across the project area.

Part of that document is below.

LAND CARE

Adjoining owners and local Cape Jervis residents have expressed their concern at the degradation of the general area. Offers have been made by them and the Society for Growing Australian Plants to assist in its rehabilitation and these should be accepted. Areas of interest should be ascertained and resource materials assessed to be integrated into a co-ordinated land-care program. The Australian Trust of Conservation Volunteers has recently been involved in the construction of access control fencing with Coast-care Program funding. The Program funding also undertook some cape honey flower removal by a front-end loader, which also created some level spaces for camping. The Trust is paid and available to undertake conservation projects in conjunction with locals and other volunteers.

My partner in the project, Margie Barnett, developed an initial action plan for the area, and it was then that the Lands End Restoration and Revegetation Project had its humble beginnings. I would like to acknowledge her efforts in those very early stages of the project, because without her enthusiasm at the time, funding to get plants into the ground, would not have happened as it did.

Work began with enthusiasm, and soon there were COOTS volunteers removing the weed species *Melianthus comosus*, spraying Bridal Creeper, collecting seed from the site, planting up areas that were cleared of weeds, doing plant and of course weed surveys, taking many photos of the plants, and generally doing all the types of tasks that are needed when trying to restore a degraded patch of remnant vegetation. The project was called a restoration and revegetation project, well that is because the area is actually in two major sections. One has the remnant vegetation on it, and certain sections of it are heavily infested with many types of weeds, the other section is cleared land. This is where major revegetation work took place. The COOTS Group did a small part of that section, but the vast majority of the planting work was done by Greening Australia. Their work was to plant native species that are endemic to the area, but in particular, the *Allocasuarina verticillata*, which is one of the favoured foods of the very rare Glossy Black Cockatoo, which at one time frequented this coastal area, but is now restricted to a very small section on Kangaroo Island. The COOTS plantings up on those bald hills support that "Glossy Black Cockatoo Project" by planting all the same species.

Some of those very early images of the plantings up on the bald hills:



It looks very different up there today:



While all the plantings were going on up on those bald hills, work began with earnest in the main reserve, which was heavily infested with a number of weed species, which included one that I never thought would become a bigger problem than the *Melianthus comosus*. It turned out to be a native species, *Acacia cyclops*, which was there in small numbers, but exploded out of control soon after we thought the *Melianthus* was coming under control. How wrong can one person be?

Let's first talk about the *Melianthus comosus*. When we first stepped onto that reserve it was wall to wall *Melianthus*. We began with a few pairs of loppers and a lot of enthusiasm, however after an entire weekend working on it, we had effectively removed and poisoned about ten square metres of the plant, and we had acres of it, so we knew that it would be a lifetime job doing it the way that we did, so an alternative needed to be found.



Talking about the problem at work the following week, and one of our gardeners suggested we use a brush-cutter, however after some experimentation, it was found that the only way to remove the plant, was to use a heavy duty brush-cutter with tungsten tipped wood blade. Anything else just wasn't up to the task. Machines were borrowed and eventually purchased, so that we could now

remove large areas in a single weekend, which is still the way we do it today. The Melianthus is cut down to ground level, allowed to recover, then spot sprayed with a mix of Brush-off and surfactant.

It was a turning point in our control of that African pest species.



We were initially told that the Melianthus will strike easily from any small cutting, and of course from the seed. The seed it has been found has a short life, and the cuttings do not strike as has been suggested, so once cut, there is only the regrowth that needs to be treated. Melianthus is then eradicated.

This has been going on since those very early days, and once there was approximately five acres of the pest, well I can safely say that at least three quarters of that infestation is now gone, and hundreds of new seedlings put back into its place. It certainly is very rewarding to see it today.

It has been extremely hard work, and many have been involved with the project over those many years, but I do need to acknowledge John Edmeades who has been there with me from the very beginning, and can still out work me every time we go there. He along with all the COOTS volunteers, have to be applauded for their dedication to the project.

Looking at the project today and what are our challenges now? First of all there is still Melianthus to work on, however as I said earlier, the Acacia cyclops is now a big concern, as we can spend all weekend removing hundreds of little seedlings, not to mention having to chainsaw all the big specimens too. The work is becoming overwhelming once again. Is this how it's always going to be? There is also Boxtorn, Horehound, Scabiosa, Onion Weed, Olives and a myriad of other weed species.

However, one look at the remarkable changes that we have made over the years, is very encouraging and does instil a great feeling of pride in what can be achieved by just a handful of people most of the time. Thank goodness we have Carolyn Schultz and Liz Cousins from the Cape Jervis Coastal Community Group working alongside us. That group works around the ferry terminal, but also assist us in the COOTS reserve as well. I am so appreciative of their support with the project. Others that assist us are Corey Jackson from the Yankalilla Council, and all the NRM people that are always available to do what they can. It makes the project run much easier knowing that there are others around who will support us.

So what does the future hold for the project, now that we all are getting somewhat older, and we must take things much easier because of it?

Well that remains to be seen.

On 17th September 2019, the Brinkworth Group visited the area, and I was very happy to be on site to explain how it all evolved, and to show the project today around thirty years later.

We first went up to what was once known as the "bald hills" which now are no longer anything like what we faced so many years ago. Neville Bonney with Greening Australia, began in that area by doing much direct seeding work, but that was only a start. Schoolchildren, Conservation Trust volunteers and other groups were all involved in what was then known as the Red Tailed Glossy Black Cockatoo Project, and the aim was to put as many *Allocasuarina verticillata* trees in to entice the birds back from Kangaroo Island.

Several schools of thought regarding that, as it seems that all there are is wall to wall Sheoaks, and for diversity that is not a good idea, so I suspect many will be replaced with other species as time goes on.

The Glossy's have not returned as expected, so maybe they will need to bring a breeding pair across to the mainland one day. Who knows now?

We then looked at the area around Fishery Beach before heading to the main restoration area that I work on these days, and did a good walk around a main part of the project.

Mind you we only touched on a small portion of the project area, and if we had had more time, maybe we could have looked at much more.

One of the plant species that I had hoped to show was *Orobanche cernua*, or Australian Broomrape, which should have been in flower, but that meant some trekking through sand dunes and I think that may have been a bit strenuous on the day.

Still we did get to see quite a lot of the project and had this wonderful picture of the group standing in front of some magnificent *Xanthorrhoea semiplana* ssp. *tateana*.



Finally we headed to the ferry terminal and watched all the goings on as the ferry was unloaded then loaded again. Quite a hive of activity.

We then visited the site of the Cape Jervis Community Group, which is managed by Carolyn Schultz and her team. Some weeding took place which was appreciated, and then it was time for me to head back home.

It was a great day, weather was perfect, and I suspect the group enjoyed the experience.

Jeff Reid.