

# Friends of Lord Howe Island

Newsletter No.36 Summer 2013



## New weeding tour format a success

In 2013 the Friends of Lord Howe Island weeding tours were given a new format. Groups this year stayed at a range of different accommodation places on the Island. For people who had been on a number of trips in previous years this was an opportunity to experience some different hospitality, see another part of the settlement area and meet some new lodge proprietors. For all people on the trips, the new format, eating at a different restaurant each night gave the opportunity to experience this side of the islands hospitality.

Three successful trips were run, each very well attended, with a total of 70 people weeding for the year. Warren Bennetts, who has been on ten weeding trips with his wife Carole wrote in the diary *"I want to take this opportunity to say the change of venues for the weeders has been a great success. My first reaction was "Oh no, not at Pinetrees!!" However with Beachcomber as our base and other restaurants for our evening meals has been fantastic; once again superbly organized"*

A great feature of the Friends weeding tour program has been the number of people who enjoy the week many times over - contributing to the island's conservation, plus enjoying the environment and company of fellow weeders. There have been 58 weeders taking part in 5 or more trips, and of those 20 have been on ten trips!!

In July 2013 Warren and Carole Bennetts were presented with certificates for attending ten weeding ecotours.



## Friends of LHI Weeding trips for 2014

Dates for 2014 weed tours are:

May 18 to 25

June 28 to July 5

August 17 to 24

August 31 to Sept 7

see page 9 for details.

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Another newsletter to follow shortly will detail the August 2013 weed trip; plus an account of the weeding day at Ian and John's new place at Yowie Bay - a day enjoyed by quite a few of our Sydney weeders, much appreciated by John and Ian, as many hands make light work.

## AGM Friends of Lord Howe Island

The AGM of the Friends of Lord Howe Island was held at the Island Museum 5.30pm on 22 May 2013.

President Chris Murray welcomed 26 members to the AGM and thanked the 2012/2013 committee for their valuable work in keeping the Friends group operating.

A new committee was elected:

President: Chris Murray  
 Vice President: Ian Hutton  
 Treasurer: Stephen Gale  
 Secretary: John Flint  
 Committee: Jane Gye, Robert Coenraads, Hank Bower, Margaret Lane.

World Heritage Officer Hank Bower gave an update on various environmental programs being run by the LHI Board.



## Presidents Report for 2013 - Chris Murray

Once again it is extremely gratifying to report that the Friends of Lord Howe Island are continuing their valuable weeding efforts, gradually restoring the natural forest on Transit Hill. In 2011, the last of the major infestations of Climbing asparagus were treated. Consequently, in 2012 there have been three successful tours, with a total of 66 participants completing follow-up weeding - particularly ongoing maintenance around Edie's Glen. The low level of asparagus regrowth is a tribute to a very thorough first-round weed treatment and removal, which has been in progress now for 16 years.

This current year, for the first time, Friends of LHI Groups will sample Lord Howe accommodation other than Pinetrees Lodge. Island lodge and restaurant owners have unanimously expressed their appreciation at being able to host the Friend's groups, as they provide valuable extra business at a quieter time of the year.

It was, however, also greatly appreciated by the current group of 25 Friends weeders, when Pinetrees Lodge hosted free drinks and a lunch on Monday 20th May, providing a very welcome break during a full days weeding near Edie's Glen. Jim McFadyen from Pinetrees particularly thanked the Friends for their weeding efforts, saying that Pinetrees was fully aware of the remarkable contribution being made, and that the Lodge wanted to express its appreciation for the Friends efforts.

## Secretaries Report - John Flint

Members to 15 May 2013

Financial to Oct 31	Total
2013	63
2014	30
2015	12
2016	15
2017	15
2019	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>136</b>

43 households, 93 singles.

Email addresses help reduce workload and costs, so please keep John updated with any changes.

## Treasurers Report - Steve Gale

Income : Donations	\$1,355.00
payments	\$1020.00
subscriptions	\$2975.00
interest	\$207.40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$5570.40</b>

Expenditure: Insurance	\$350.00
Stat fees	\$51.00
operating exp	\$76.15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$477.15</b>

surplus	\$5080.25
retained earnings year start	\$43,845.61
retained earnings year end	\$48,925.86

Net assets \$48,925.86

## Report on weeding week May 9 to 16 2013

A total of 24 volunteers participated in this week. This was a large and experienced group, with many regulars who have clocked up more than ten trips each contributing to the conservation of Lord Howe Island.

Somerset was the chosen accommodation base, and all settled in quickly thanks to our genial host Gai Wilson, who has come to know many of the weeders over the past 15 years. Nancy Pallin and Jane Gye shared leaders duties for this week.



*Standing : Karl Schurr, Caroline Murtagh, Annie McLusky, Veronica Lambert, Leonie Gale, Margaret Lane, Lee Courtwood, Frances Smith, Margaret Vautin, Gwenda Lister, Steven Smith, Margaret Morgan, Philip Lane, Annie Hawker, Anne Millard*

*Sitting: Nancy Pallin, John Morgan, Trish Evans, Ian Sinclair, John Pemble.  
(not in photo Rob Pallin, Steve Gye, Jane Gye, Steve Gale.)*

The weeding activities were to be varied, but the main focus was mopping up stray bits of Climbing and Ground asparagus at the site above Edie's Glen, where groups have focused for the past six years.

Members of the group also continued our restoration of the Edie's Glen gully, clearing secondary weeds such as *Bidens pilosa* and *Solanum nigrum*, Crofton weed, *Tetrapanax* and Castor oil plant – essential to allow the native plants to establish and shade out these weeds. A total of 335 hours were put into the Transit Hill and Edie's Glen sites.

As a departure from the normal routine this group spent one whole day walking the Boat Harbour track from Lance Wilson's house over Smoking Tree Ridge to Boat Harbour, then to Rocky Run. The purpose was to carry out surveys of, and remove Broad-leafed paspalum. This weedy grass was planted on the island as cattle fodder in the 1960's and has spread along this track as seeds on walkers' socks. A total of 1600 plants were removed using trowels and knives, with all seed heads removed and bagged, and 130 hours tallied up on this project. Seven keen walkers also made a diversion to Goat House cave on the return. Total hours for the week 465.



*Leonie Gale removing Broad-leafed papalum*

Activities for the May week were also varied. As we had put one whole day out on the Boat Harbour paspalum project, we had a day off weeding, at North Bay. This was a most enjoyable experience, as it was a leisurely day, with plenty of time to explore the environs, and have a long bbq. lunch. There was ample time to snorkel off the boat, to climb Mount Eliza and to scramble around to the Herring Pools. For lunch we had gourmet sausages from Top Shop, and a wonderful salad entrée of buffalo cheese, tomato and basil with olive oil drizzled over. Pancakes with jam and cream were a hit for desert.



Another great excursion was down to Little Island – the Providence petrels were doing their wonderful courtship flights- and a small contingent clambered up through the forest onto the scree slope to see something new. A great vista, many interesting ferns and mosses, and calling the petrels down was a highlight.



On the Friday morning we decided to tackle some of the Sea Spurge growing along Lagoon Beach. This weed is a native of Europe which arrived on the shores of Tasmania some 30 years ago, and its seeds have floated around the bottom of Australia and even out here to Lord Howe Island. This weed will require ongoing attention- as seeds will continue to float here from the coast of NSW, unless it is all removed from there as well. That afternoon the low tide gave a great opportunity to explore the sea creatures on the rock platform at Ned's Beach. At 5pm we all gathered at the Museum, and Hank Bower from the LHI Board thanked all the weeders for their ongoing commitment to flora conservation on the island.



On Saturday rain cancelled the plane, and the extra afternoon was another reef walk at Middle Beach- in the rain!! . Then a Sunday departure – a great week.

## June/July weeding trip

This crew was also quite large, with 22 participants, with many experienced weeders, and it was also nice to welcome a few new people to the project. Beachcomber was chosen as the accommodation, and there the group enjoyed breakfast in the dining room each morning. Robert Coenraads was leader for the week and as always, Robert brought his daughters Francheska and Leonora along.



*Back row: Helen Forstmann, Francheska Coenraads, Leonora Coenraads, Eric Ingram, Zara (visiting 1 day), Beverly Vale, Pamela Tiller, Eleanore Kozma, Jeannie Davidson, Stephen Ranft, Barbara Clarris, Barry Clarris, Robert Coenraads.*

*Middle row: Kate Kershaw, Terry Kershaw, Maya (visiting) Warren Bennetts, Carole Bennetts, Front row: Susan Metcalfe, Gail Metcalfe, Peter Metcalfe, Lesley Inglis, Mary Gerdes, Annette Wilson.*

This week turned out to be one of the wettest weeks ever for a weeding tour, but it didn't deter the members from doing some good hours weeding, and enjoying the island. The first morning weeding was postponed and was spent at the museum. The weather cleared enough in the afternoon to head down to Ned's Beach and explore the rock pools, plus hear a detailed story on the sedimentary geology from Robert and a walk along the clifftops to Middle Beach- not a bad first day despite the early showers.

The second day the rain held off and so off to work! It was a nice walk from Beachcomber along Middle Beach Road and through to Transit Hill, so the group used this access to our weeding sites each morning. Our initial area treated was some follow-up weeding just at the end of the boardwalk above Pinetrees grazing lease - an area that Friends groups had initially treated in 2005, and 2006. It was good to do this vital follow up and remove any Ground asparagus seedlings.



*The July group chasing small Ground asparagus in the kikuyu above Pinetrees.*

Day three the group put time into removing the Broad-leafed paspalum from the remainder of the Rocky Run, Intermediate Hill areas. We started at the track near the airstrip and walked up the steep Intermediate Hill track to search for and record any paspalum- fortunately not too much at all, just a few plants as we neared the junction with the Boat Harbour track. Then we continued to Rocky Run. Here we had lunch, then spent a few hours clearing the Broad-leafed paspalum from the creek side, which was very dense in places, with some quite large plants removed with Peter levers.



Day four was all day at North Bay – good weather and low tides allowed great beach walks looking at the visiting wading birds, a visit to the Gulch- and a walk up Mount Eliza. We had a good crew of volunteers to whip up some good salads and bbq sausages for lunch. The pancakes with jam and cream to finish were greatly enjoyed.



The lectures were held at Beachcomber before dinner, and one night we had a guests speaker- Pete McClelland the newly appointed Rodent Eradication Officer who gave a fascinating look at many islands around the world he has worked on this type of project.

The last few mornings the group weeded Ground and Climbing asparagus at an area to the SE of our main Climbing asparagus site; a bit of an outlier that was missed previously. Again it was good to remove all the mature plants that may produce seed, as well as seedlings. This is an area we will need to revisit on future trips. We managed to do the Malabar walk one afternoon and enjoy the fantastic views; and another day the low tide reef walk to discover all the amazing sea creatures, always a hit on these trips.



## Weed mapping redone.

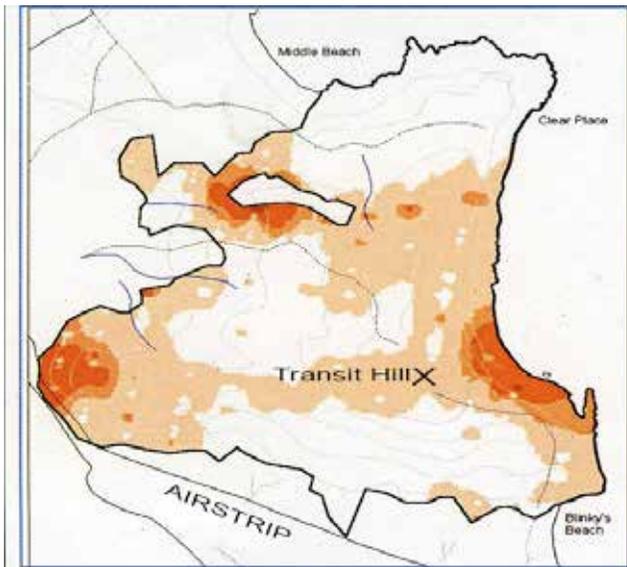
In 2002 the LHI Board had weed density mapping carried out across the island - this was essential to plan the strategy in dealing with the weed problem on the island. Since that time there has been a great effort put in removing Climbing and Ground asparagus from Transit Hill - by Friends of LHI, the LHI Board weed team and volunteers. Mapping weed densities on Transit Hill was carried out again in November 2013.

The maps are reproduced here - at the top for the mature Ground asparagus fern on Transit Hill - showing the density map for 2002 and also 2013. Note that the first mapping in 2002 was done **after** the Friends of LHI had been removing Ground asparagus from the bottom of the left hand side of the Transit Hill track for **21 weeding weeks**, so the original density of Ground asparagus does not show up on the Before Map for mature *Asparagus aethiopicus* (top left).

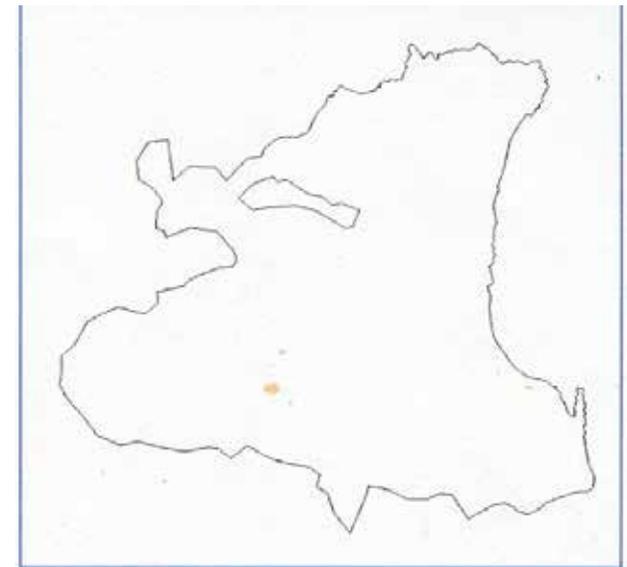
And the bottom maps show that the density of juvenile *Asparagus aethiopicus* plants has been greatly reduced.

Although there are still many areas with *Asparagus aethiopicus* seedlings (bottom right), the maps show that the battle is succeeding, in that most mature plants have been removed, so no longer is seed being produced to be spread by the birds.

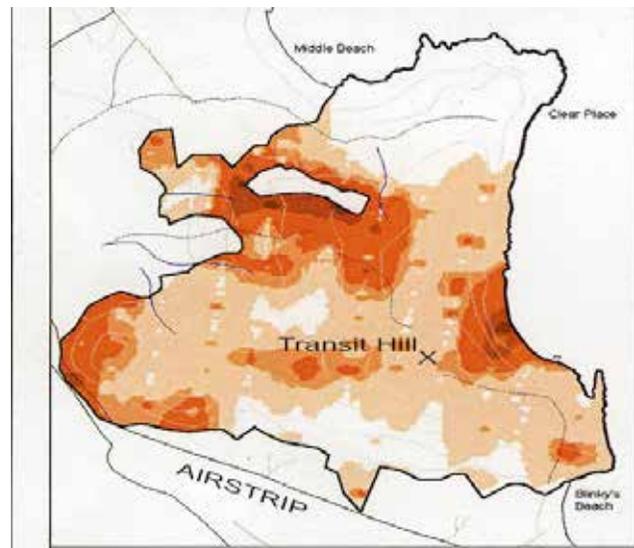
Next newsletter I will reproduce the Climbing asparagus weed maps, which will highlight the great effort that has been put in by the Friends weeding groups over the past 6 years.



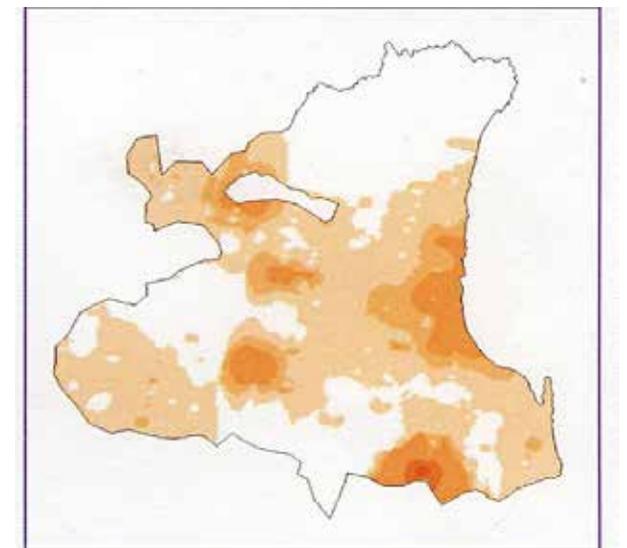
Before: *Asparagus aethiopicus* Mature 2002



After: *Asparagus aethiopicus* Mature 2013



Before: *Asparagus aethiopicus* Jun 2002



After: *Asparagus aethiopicus* Jun 2013

## Rodent Eradication Community Information Open house

On 15th and 16th August 2013 the LHI Board community consultants Ian Colley and Chia Moan organized a community information activity for residents to come down and have questions on the proposed rodent eradication answered by a selection of specialists brought over to the island.

In attendance were Toxicologist Penny Fisher, Dr James Doube, the doctor who was on Macquarie Island for the rodent eradication project there in 2011, Lord Howe Island doctor Frank Reed, Taronga Park bird keeper, Mike Shiels, who was on the island trialing Woodhen captive holding, various Board staff and members of the Community Liaison Group. About 65 residents and visitors attended over the two day sessions, and hopefully many questions were answered.

Consequent to the decision by the LHI Board to carry out resealing of the airstrip in 2015, the Board have decided to defer the Rodent Eradication project to winter 2016.



## Taronga Park Zoo staff trial Woodhen and Currawong holding.

In July 2013, four staff from Taronga Zoo Park were here to carry out trial captive holding of Woodhens and Currawongs. As part of the rodent Eradication project, it will be necessary to catch and hold 200 Woodhens and 100 Currawongs and hold them in captivity on the island to avoid them taking baits or dead rats that have eaten the poison brodifacoum. In 2013 funding was provided for bird keeping staff from Taronga Zoo Park to trial keeping 20 Woodhens and 10 Currawongs on the Island for a period of three months. This trial enabled confirmation that the pen design and diet for the birds was going to be suitable. The pens and diet were modeled on successful captive holding of Wekas in New Zealand, the closest relative of the Woodhen. The pens had the floor covered in palm fronds and leaf litter, with palm trunks and logs scattered throughout the pens to replicate the Woodhen's natural habitat. From the Weka studies it was known that although these birds defend and maintain a small territory in the wild, when kept in captivity with numbers in a confined area they settle well and live together without increased aggression.

The Currawongs were kept in pairs in large, long flight aviaries. Many bird species have been kept in similar pens at Taronga Zoo without any problems.

The birds were fed a diet that combined natural foods and live food items as well as a portioned captive diet that is both nutritionally balanced and varied. Mike Shiels gave me a tour of the facility towards the end of the trial, and he said all went well, with no surprises, and he is confident that the larger number of birds can be kept when the rodent eradication takes place.



# LORD HOWE ISLAND

## 2014 BUSH REGENERATION PROGRAMS

with IAN HUTTON

*This innovative tour program has been running since 1995, to date 74 groups have participated in assisting the LHI Board with conservation projects on the island.*

### *Somerset Apartments*

**Date:** 18 - 25 May from \$2289 ex Sydney or Brisbane  
28 June - 5 July from \$2099 ex Sydney

#### INCLUDES

Return QantasLink flights,  
7 nights accommodation in a Standard 1 bedroom Apartment, return island airport transfers, dinner daily & Ian Hutton's Bush Regeneration Program



### *Leanda Lei*

**Date:** 17 - 24 August from \$2119 ex Sydney or Brisbane  
31 August - 7 September from \$2119 ex Sydney or Brisbane

#### INCLUDES

Return QantasLink flights,  
7 nights accommodation in a Studio Apartment, return island airport transfers, dinner daily & Ian Hutton's Bush Regeneration Program



Prices are per person twin share, single supplements may apply. Minimum numbers required for each departure. Above prices may vary subject to final numbers. A \$200 per person deposit is required within 7 days of booking. Travel insurance is strongly recommended. For further information & conditions contact Oxley Travel.  
Information correct at time of printing.

For information on Author/Naturalist Ian Hutton visit: [www.lordhowe-tours.com.au](http://www.lordhowe-tours.com.au)

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**Unusual bird sightings  
April to December 2013**

In July 2013 a Nankeen Night heron was observed in the creek bed behind Old Settlement Beach. It stayed at least until early December and had been seen at Middle Beach Common, Ned's Beach headland and Soldiers Creek, as well as the Old Settlement Creek.



On August 23rd 2013 Ethan Kelly spotted this Rose-crowned fruit dove outside his kitchen window- a new species record for the Island.

On October 14 tour operator Anthony Riddle reported 3 Little Terns at North Bay. They have stayed and were still on the island in January 2014. They are often seen feeding on the surface in the North Passage, or sitting on North Beach. When they first arrived they were very skittish and it was hard to get within 50 metres of them; but they have become used to the safe environment here by watching the Sooty terns on North Beach, so are now very settled and I have walked within 10 metres of them.



Other visiting waders were 1 Curlew sandpiper, two Marsh sandpipers, two Latham's snipes and two Sharp-tailed sandpipers in October. On Balls Pyramid winter trips we saw Fairy prions plus Shy, Wandering, Royal and Black browed albatross.

Friends of Lord Howe Island Newsletter compiled by  
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**WEED TRIP BOOKING FORM**

for booking post the form and deposit cheque to:  
Lord Howe Island Nature Tours  
PO Box 157  
Lord Howe Island  
NSW 2898

Price subject to change without notice.  
Deposit \$ 200 (cheque made to Oxley Travel)  
Balance required 45 days prior to trip.

Please book me on the Lord Howe Island bush re-  
generation tour (included is my \$200 deposit pp)  
Name(s) Mr/Mrs/Ms/  
Miss \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_  
QANTAS Frequent Flyer number \_\_\_\_\_

My bush regeneration experience is \_\_\_\_\_ years  
I prefer to go on dates :

May 18 to 25 \$2289  
June 28 to July 5 \$2099  
August 17 to 24 \$2119  
August 31 to Sept 7 \$2119

OR EMAIL [ian@ianhuttontours.com](mailto:ian@ianhuttontours.com)