

# Creepers attacked

ABOUT 45 people from a diverse array of community groups, local government authorities, academic institutions, and government departments recently joined about 20 CALM staff and volunteers to seek better ways of eradicating the noxious weed 'bridal creeper.'

Despite its attractive name, bridal creeper has an unattractive habit of growing rampantly and smothering native vegetation. But it is most invasive on roadsides, water courses and bushland remnants exposed to human activity.

It is spread mainly by small birds that eat its berries and distribute the seeds in their droppings.

## Spreads rapidly

Since the early-1980s, bridal creeper (*Myrsiphyllum asparagoides*) has spread rapidly through much of the southern Wheatbelt, coastal environments and parts of the forests of the South West.

It is now regarded as a major threat to the conservation of biodiversity of the southern ecosystems of Australia, and the burgeoning presence of this horticultural 'escapee' now poses a major threat to land

by Verna Costello

managers and communities were it has established itself.

Science and Information Division Acting Director Neville Marchant welcomed those taking part in the symposium, and introduced them to the guest speakers, who included an impressive gathering of scientists, from Canberra, Victoria, South Australia, and Western Australia.

Other CALM staff who addressed the symposium were: Greg Keighery of Science and Information Bioresources Group, Patrick Pigott from Science and Information Division's Bioconservation Group, Rick France, ranger-in-charge of Stokes National Park, and Murray Mitchell, district operations officer from Katanning.

Equally impressive speakers were Eastern Hills Wildflower Society's Joanna Seabrook, CALM volunteers Jill Vines and David Pike; and consultant Ben Carr of the Friends of Woodman Point.

Using case studies from South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia,

topics included the history, distribution, ecology, biological control, prediction of spread, management planning, and chemical and physical control of bridal creeper.

## Lively discussion

A mildly controversial note enlivened the proceedings with Greg Keighery strenuously arguing that bridal creeper's genus name *Myrsiphyllum*, and that of the asparagus fern, *Protasparagus*, should be combined under the name *Asparagus*.

Some symposium participants expressed concern that some forms of mass eradication of *Myrsiphyllum* could adversely affect crops of the vegetable asparagus, but, as Greg argued, this would not happen with stringent controls put in place.

## Just as odious

Something that was agreed upon, however, was that bridal creeper by any other common name would smell just as odious.

Symposium participants were given little time to idly ruminate as proceedings swung from the ivory towers of sci-



Bridal creeper appears to have taken over this group at the symposium. Perhaps they stood too long shaking hands. They are, from left to right, David Lamont, Patrick Pigott, Jill Vines and Rick France.

Photo by Verna Costello

ence to the on-the-ground, hands-on side of the creeper coin, when CALM ranger Rick France told how he, as a one-man-band, persistently pursues the pernicious plant.

Operations officer Murray Mitchell, spoke on the planning, control and management of bridal creeper in the southern wheatbelt over the past six years.

Because of its successes, and the high level of commitment of a wide range of its staff, Katanning has become a model for other districts.

## Potted history

The day ended on a brisk note with volunteers David Pike and Jill Vines treating listeners to a highly professional presentation—the potted history of the Bridal Creeper

Removal Project at Boomerang Gorge in Yanchep National Park.

Their presentation was enhanced by volunteer Susan Harris's expertly produced video. They described how the project began, achievements, methods of recruiting volunteers and keeping them motivated, and the effective use of the media to both generate awareness of the problem weed, and

to attract more volunteers.

The tightly scheduled symposium was organised by Patrick Pigott and David Lamont.

Meal and tea breaks provided opportunities for the free exchange of information and ideas, with those taking part learning from each other in what was agreed to be a stimulating, intense and thought-provoking day.



SoB No 271/1 = 03/11/85 Bridal Creeper Symposium  
PICS & Verna Costello



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