

Invasive Willows

Monitoring Program



Background:

There are 300 types of willows world wide, mainly from the Northern Hemisphere. Of these about 100 have been introduced into Australia and of these 30 are spreading naturally through the environment. In 1999, willows, **except** *Salix babylonica* (weeping willows), *Salix reichardtii* (pussy willow) and *Salix matsudana x alba* (New Zealand sterile hybrid) were declared a Weed of National Significance [www.weeds.org.au/ WONS/Willows](http://www.weeds.org.au/WONS/Willows).

Where there are male and female plants flowering at the same time they can spread by windblown seed up to 60 km and a single large tree can produce tens of thousands of seed which germinate on exposed damp soil like mud and sand banks in rivers, creeks, swamps and wetlands. These types of willows form monocultures, shading out seed bearing native vegetation like casuarinas, bottle brush, tea trees, sandpaper figs, lilly pilly, and *Phragmites* that are the food source or cover for many native birds.

What we do:

Willow Warriors organise multiday and one day paddles for volunteers along rivers in south east Australia looking for and where possible poisoning these highly invasive willows that are growing into view along waterways and in wetlands before they have the opportunity to produce new seed locally or live debris that will float downstream and take root. The group provides most of the rafts, kayaks and other paddling, mapping and treatment gear. The volunteers provides the energy. The current list of rivers we monitor includes the Colo, Grose, Macdonald, Hawkesbury, Nepean, Wollondilly, Wingecarribee, Clyde, Deua, Tuross, Snowy, Murrumbidgee, Goodradigbee, Goobarrandra, Tumut and Murray. Typically we treat one to thirty seedlings or small black willows on each trip.

Conservation Objective:

To protect rivers, creeks and wetlands across south east Australia particularly in National Parks and other areas managed for their conservation values from the impacts of some types of invasive willows. The program monitors rivers and wetlands where there has been

previous control programs for *Salix nigra* (black willow), *Salix cinerea* (grey sallow willow or wild pussy willow) and some willow hybrids that produce large numbers of viable seed. In some circumstances we also look for and treat and *Salix fragilis* (crack willow) to prevent them spreading down stream into areas managed for their conservation values. This monitoring process protects the communities previous investment to eradicate those types of willows. **The program does not seek to remove all invasive willows particularly on land managed for agricultural.**

Conservation with adventure:

The activity involves paddling kayaks, rafts or inflatable canoes on flat water or white-water, camping on river banks on the multiday trips and in some cases car camping and doing monitoring paddles around those camping locations. Group sizes are limited to 8.

Difficulty:

These are all single day or overnight rafting trips for experienced kayaking / rafting volunteers but inexperienced paddlers can be accommodated on some trips if rafts or inflatable canoes are being taken. Most trips are grade 2-3 although there are the occasional grade 1-2 trips that will suit most volunteers. We poison black willows amongst reeds and other vegetation sometimes in waste deep water or ankle deep mud. Participants need to be fit, willing and able to climb around logs on slippery banks in and out of the water.

For more information or register
for an activity contact:

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