

I was granted the CAWS travel award to attend the 20<sup>th</sup> Australasian weeds Conference and present my talk 'Pairing biological control species: Cochineal insects *Dactylopius* (Hemiptera: Dactylopiidae) with prickly pears *Opuntia* (Cactaceae) within the South Australian Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges'. Accompanying me on my flight was one consignment of *Dactylopius opuntiae* var. *robusta* biotype the same insects that were the feature of my presentation. On Monday night these insects accompanied me out, as an opuntoid cacti intersted group gathered out of session for dinner. At the end of the night I fareweled my insects, handing them onto Kate Detchon from the Department Agriculture and Food WA , destined for wheel cactus *Opuntia robusta* infestations in the WA wheat belt.

After Tuesdays morning tea was the WoNS combined session on opuntoid cacti, blackberry and bitubush. My presentation on the biological control of opuntoid species using dactylopius insects started this session. This was followed by Peter Jones of Biosecurity QLD who talked specifically on the molecular biotype matching of *Cylindropuntia* cacti species as targets for *Dactylopius tomentosus* biotypes. Kay Bailey from the Department Agriculture and Food WA presented on WA's priority weed risk assement process, where opuntoid cacti species featured five times out of 25 of WA's highest risk species. I had the honour of sharing the remainder of this session with John Scott who presented two talks, one on managing an outlier population bitu bush in an industrial site on the WA coast, then a second presentation on revegetating creeklines after a episode of natural die back of blackberry in WA's south west forests. After such inspiring talks it was not so supprising to hear later that night John Scott was announced as the winner of the 2016 CAWS Medal.

On Wednesday morning I had the pleasure of moderating a morning session on weed risk assessments that featured a special presentation by Dorgee, a Bhutan national studing his PhD in Canberra. Dorgee's presentation was entitled 'Weed Risk Assements in Countries with Porous Borders a case study from Bhutan, describing issues with managing weed introductions in a landlocked country with uncontrolled borders.

After lunch on the Wednesday was another cacti inspired gathering this time to hear an update from Trevor Xivuri from the Republic of South Africa on the *Dactylopius tomentosus* var *cholla* (collected) biotype released in South Africa to target *Cylindropuntia fulgida* var *mamillata*. A networking discussion followed with 14 persons listing themselves as keen key national players willing to work with John Gavin of Remarkable NRM to revitalise Mike Chuk's Australian Invasive Cacti Network.

In closing Kate Blood of the Weed Society Victoria reminded me that 'I am still young' by inspiring me to give social media ago, with the networking value between our states societies being the key idea that sold me. And with this I wish to propmote Kate's vison that with the help of social media our weed societies can bond out of session, and help endorse our union under the collective banner of CAWS

Thursday took us on a field trip to Rottnest Island where while astride matching red bicycles a motley group assessed the comparable impacts of (standard) onion weed *Asphodelus fistulosus* against dune onion weed *Trachyandra divaricate*, and how these weeds are impacting differntly in each state. With *Trachyandra divaricate* as an emerging weed set to be listed for decleration in South Australia, the Rottnest Island field trip showed me that this is definitely a weed to watch when I return to Adelaide.

I personally would like to thank Sandy Lloyd, Weeds Society WA and Rachel Melland CAWS for leading us through such a wonderful conference, and to CAWS for supporting my attence through granting me the CAWS travel award in 2016.