

# Flying to the Rescue of Shorebird Habitat in the Coorong NP - Turning the Tide on African Boxthorn Invasion

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**Summary** African Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*), a Weed of National Significance and listed as a Declared weed across the Limestone Coast Landscape Board region is able to withstand harsh growing conditions and poses a threat to the fragile Coorong Ramsar listed site and surrounding coastal habitat of beach nesting and migratory shorebirds. 'Our Coorong Our Coast' (OCOC) is a 5 year National Landcare Program funded project addressing terrestrial-based threats to the Coorong RAMSAR site and the habitat of threatened bird species at strategic locations between the Murray River Mouth and the Victoria-South Australia Border.

The OCOC project has been targeting inaccessible Boxthorn infestations in remote coastal dune areas. Operating a Robinson R44 helicopter the pilot hovers low to the ground whilst the passenger applies a measured dose of *Tebuthiuron granules* around the dripline of each boxthorn plant. The

herbicide is moisture activated and will remain in the sandy soil until it is taken up following rainfall. Following trials of a range of treatment methods previously, aerial hand broadcasting has been found to be the most efficient and accurate way to apply the herbicide, resulting in the least amount of off-target damage. Additionally this method retains the dead boxthorn in situ, providing shelter for germinating native climbers to use the structure as a trellis. Economically aerial treatment has proven to be the most cost efficient way to treat large amount of boxthorn and in difficult to access land. Limitations with this method include not being able to fly safely in windy conditions and air sickness can be an issue for less experienced passengers tasked with applying the herbicide. Investing \$160,000 over 5 years the project has delivered 70,578ha of control (Canunda National Park and Coorong National Park) to date, with 7,288ha remaining for the project to be completed in 2022.