

Park Report 2023

Redwood Park Upper along Prince Henry Drive

Tom Esplin

I have worked alone during the past 12 months, unable to secure volunteer assistance. Despite this I have been able to contribute a significant number of hours to make solid progress.

I commenced clearing of invasive weeds in September 2020 in a (then) roughly 250 metre x 30m (since greatly expanded) section of Redwood Park adjacent to Prince Henry Drive (PHD). The most difficult weeds evident are privet and lantana, due to their unchecked growth over several decades. Most of the section was rendered impenetrable due to the choking effect of their dense growth mixed with native vines.

The first 2 years resulted in clearing around 1.5 acres, with heavy maintenance required to control regrowth of lantana and spread of other invasive weeds including fleabane, cobbler's pegs, blackberry nightshade. My efforts were rewarded with native ground covers providing excellent cover and limiting further unwanted seed germination. Native seedlings have flourished, aided by good rains, protective ground cover, and access to sunshine.

With maintenance needs declining over the initial 1.5 acres, I have been able to clear an additional acre over the past 12 months. This area covered steep embankment densely infested with privet and lantana. There is a lot of mature privet in this area and I've left larger specimens to provide semi-shade for the emerging native seedlings.

This area borders near-pristine dry rainforest, situated just 80m south of Prince Henry Drive and 30m lower elevation. This section of rainforest is established on rock talus. The talus has enabled the deep-rooted rainforest species to grow whilst preventing invasive shallow-rooted species from establishing. The area is abundant in giant stinging trees, figs, bloodwood, palm lilies, and hundreds of other native rainforest species (which I have been photographing and identifying).

I constructed a track down to the rainforest in February and have extended this track along the northern rainforest border, with a further southern descent, then an eastern return track through the rainforest (partially complete at this point in time). This track provides fast and safe access, in an area which was previously difficult and slow to reach. During the track construction I have been clearing the bordering bush of lantana and privet for a 5m to 10m perimeter. In progressing through the rainforest I am finding and clearing sections of climbing asparagus. There is a section of cat's claw infestation a little further east, which I will tackle when I can access via the track.

Over the coming year I plan to clear another acre of embankment 30m to 50m south of PHD, make further progress through the rainforest, as well as maintain the 3 acres already cleared. Maintenance involves traversing and applying spot poison to broadleaf weeds every fortnight in summer and monthly in winter. The work is slow and steady, but extremely rewarding.