

Tarrangower Cactus Control Group: Student Field Day Feedback
Monash University Biological Society July 2013

In July 2013 14 students (8 males and 6 females) from the Monash University Biological Society attended a 3 day cactus control field trip to Maldon/Baringhup. The average age was 21 years, ranging from 19 to 24 years. Students rated their knowledge of managing environmental weeds before the field day, from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high). The average rating was 2.2 (low) out of 5 (ranging from 1 to 4). They also rated their knowledge of wheel cactus before the field day, from 1 (nothing) to 5 (a lot). The average rating was 2.4 (moderate) out of 5 (range from 1 to 4). Seven of the 14 (50%) had not been on a cactus control field trip before. Six students (43%) indicated they knew of ways to control wheel cactus before the field day. The methods mentioned were injecting herbicides (n=6), biocontrol (n=3), physical removal (n=2) and burning (n=1).

Students provided feedback on knowledge acquisition and their experience of the field trip. On a scale from 1 (nothing) to 5 (a lot) they rated how much they learned about wheel cactus on the field trip. The average rating was 3.6, ranging from 1 to 5. The students indicated the types of information they had acquired and these results are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1: Knowledge acquired by students during the field trip

Knowledge area	Number of students	Percent YES
Country of origin	6	43%
How it came to Australia	7	50%
Where it is found in Australia	8	57%
Growing habit	8	57%
How it reproduces	9	64%
How it spreads	11	79%
Preferred habitat	5	35%
What works to control wheel cactus	13	93%
What doesn't work to control wheel cactus	12	86%

Students rated from 1 (nothing) to 5 (a lot) how much they learned about wheel cactus control during the field trip and the average rating was 3.9 (range 2-5). On a rating scale ranging from 1 (extremely worthwhile) to 5 (not at all worthwhile), the average was 1.7 (range 1-3), indicating all the students thought the field trip was worthwhile. All the students said they would recommend wheel cactus field days to other students or groups.

Students also provided feedback on what they liked most about the field trip. One student liked everything, two liked the casual atmosphere, one commented that it was *good fun* and another stated: *the cool weather, the cool people, the good food*. Others mentioned the positive group experience (n=4), satisfaction with killing cacti and seeing progress made (n=5), the good food (n=3), the host and his hospitality (n=2) and receiving a cactus warrior T-shirt (n=1). One student summed up a positive experience with the following: *I liked being on camp that involved worthwhile activities. This is my first voluntary experience. The hospitality was very good and my time here was great. There was no shortage of food, which was excellent.*

When asked to comment on what they liked least about the field trip four students stated there was nothing they did not like, indicating a positive experience. These sentiments are reflected in the following comments:

Nothing really. Anything I didn't like would have been unavoidable and an inevitable part of cactus injecting

The rest of my life will not be as much fun

Two students did not like the number of wheel cacti in the area. One did not like being squirted while injecting wheel cacti and another stated: *Probably the blisters from squeezing the injecting mechanism (solved with bandaids)*. Two commented that the weather was very cold and one thought the sheets could be cleaner.