

# Blackberries

## The Thorn in Our Side!



Alistair Lepkhammany, Patrick Doyle,  
Jaidyn Lewis and Isabella Lee

Murray High School



## **Creative Catchment Kids**

Creative Catchment Kids is an initiative of Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre. It aims to improve engagement between our funding partners and school students by providing opportunities for positive and authentic ventures that encourage students to develop creative solutions to agriculture and natural resource management issues.

**[www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/](http://www.wirraminna.org/creative-catchment-kids/)**

## **Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre**

The Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre is located in Burrumbuttock, north of Albury in southern NSW. Since 1995, the centre, which is adjacent to Burrumbuttock Public School, has provided opportunities for discovery and learning about the natural environment, the ecology of the local woodlands and the beauty of native plants.

**[www.wirraminna.org](http://www.wirraminna.org)**

## **Enviro-Stories**

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by Peekdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

**[www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)**

# Blackberries The Thorn in Our Side!

**Authors:** Alistair Lepkhammany, Patrick Doyle,  
Jaidyn Lewis and Isabella Lee

**Teacher:** Rick Hanna

**School:** Murray High School

## Local Land Heroes - Securing Our Region

In 2015, students involved in the Creative Catchment Kids program researched and wrote stories about their 'Local Land Heroes' who are involved in pest management in the Murray and Murrumbidgee regions. These heroes are local individuals, couples, a business or industries that have made a difference in their local community by contributing to the management of pest animals and plants. The program was generously funded by Murray Local Land Services and Riverina Local Land Services.

Local Land Heroes is part of Enviro-Stories, a PeekDesigns education program.



Local Land  
Services



Australian Government



Blackberries are a noxious weed; they can grow to a large, woody bush covered in thorns and produce small red and black berries. They are a weed of national significance and one of the worst flora pests in the Albury and the Upper Murray region. They are found in creeks and hilly areas. Blackberries can take over land and streams. They enjoy wet, damp areas, growing rapidly and can even double or triple in size each year.



Blackberries can dominate landscapes with their vast spread of vine-like growth. They attract other pests with their berries such as foxes, rabbits and even deer! Animals eat their berries and spread the weed via the seeds in their faeces. Blackberries have no natural predators and once they dominate a landscape, it takes a long time to reclaim it. Animals such as sheep and cattle won't go near blackberry vegetation due to their thorns and woody vines.





Blackberries were introduced to Australia in the 1850's. They were brought to Australia to help stop erosion near Melbourne and other cities. Blackberries were also used to make delicious food products such as blackberry jam, tarts, pies and many more. Now they have spread to various landscapes in Australia including our region. Blackberries are also found in the Blue Mountains and Snowy Mountains.



Local Land Care hero James de Hennin, chairs a local group called “The Mitta to Murray Blackberry Action Group”, which encourages farmers whose property is infested with the blackberries, to implement strategies to eradicate this weed and reclaim their land for viable agricultural production.

James grew up on a dairy farm at Greg Greg near Tooma, and is currently a beef cattle and prime lamb producer at Talgarno. He is the president of the local blackberry control group.



His role is to work with the project officer and steering committee who encourages local land owners to be part of a three year voluntary management plan; working to help control the blackberries on their property.

Over the years, landowners have spent many thousands of dollars and countless hours trying to control blackberry infestation and reduce blackberry growth on their properties.



Blackberries can be a harbor for pests like foxes and rabbits. They attract foxes to the area; therefore farmers can't put lambs in the paddocks since the foxes will kill them. Blackberries can be mistaken for raspberries, but blackberries have larger thorns, a bigger bush and their canes aren't as tight and firm as raspberries.





Blackberries are hard to eradicate. In this region there are forests where the blackberries have taken over parts of the landscape, while not being monitored by the government. They block streams with their growth and can spread to other properties. Their thorns also make them hard to remove.





There are various controls for blackberries, including land management and monitoring, biological control, chemical spraying, physical removal, herbicides, burning and grazing. You can help manage blackberries via biological control, which includes the use of natural enemies such as fungal diseases, mites and insects to weaken the weed. Hand and mechanical removal, grubbing, scalping, cultivation and slashing are all physical control methods that are used to get rid of blackberries.



Blackberries are quite common along the coast of Victoria, New South Wales and on parts of the Murray River. Blackberries belong to the *Rubus* genus also known as the European blackberry. Blackberries scientific name is *Rubus fruticosus* and there are many different species of *Rubus* genus; there are ten in Australia such as raspberry, dewberry and loganberry.



Since blackberries produce new canes each year and produce root suckers that can grow up to 45 centimetres underground this makes it tricky to remove efficiently. Blackberries can reproduce and spread by seed and vegetatively. They look like scrambling shrubs with their prickly canes and berries.



Blackberries will always be a problem in the future because they are a difficult weed to remove permanently and they cause devastation to land and local areas, and the government needs to recognise this, but as James de Hennin says "We're still fighting the good fight!"







Alistair Lepkhammany, Patrick Doyle,  
Jaidyn Lewis and Isabella Lee

2015 Year 9, Murray High School

## CONGRATULATIONS

Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre and  
the Creative Catchment Kids Program won the  
2015 NSW Junior Landcare Team Award and will be  
competing in the 2016 National Landcare Awards.



Local Land  
Services

