



**Tuesday 18 October 2011**

**Thorny challenge begins**

What invasive shrub found in Esperance and Ravensthorpe has large spikes that injure animals and vehicle tyres alike?

It's Boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*) and South Coast NRM is coordinating a two year project involving local contractors and Indigenous work crews to control its spread over 400 hectares.

Introduced from South Africa in the mid 1800's as a hedge plant, Boxthorn is now widespread in Australia and has nasty spines up to 3cm long that are known to puncture vehicle tyres and injure livestock.

The weed is considered a major problem as it invades native vegetation, alters habitat and overruns pasture and agricultural areas. Its dense thickets not only push out native plant species but they harbour invasive species such as foxes and rabbits.

South Coast NRM invasive species officer Charlotte Powis said the \$470,000 project, funded by the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program, would be a big step up in the fight against Boxthorn.

Ms Powis said the plant spread very quickly in summer when its red berries were eaten by birds and foxes which then excrete hundreds of seeds.

"Before the summer season really picks up, we want Esperance and Ravensthorpe locals to be on the lookout for the Boxthorn shrub and to let us know if they see one," she said.

The African Boxthorn can grow up to six metres high and features small white and lilac purple flowers and leaves which are smooth, fleshy and up to 3.5 cm long.

Its 5mm round berries are green when young and become orange-red when ripe. Seeds can germinate at any time of the year if there is adequate moisture and warmth.

It is not to be confused with the native Australian boxthorn, *Lycium austral*, which has narrow leaves measuring less than 5 mm long.

Ms Powis said work on the project would begin next month with assistance from the Esperance and Ravensthorpe shires, Department of Environment and Conservation, Main Roads, and the Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network.

Weed spotters should report Boxthorn by calling South Coast NRM on (08) 9076 2200 or (08) 9845 8537.

**ENDS**

Journalists can meet our Invasive Species team tomorrow in Esperance to take photos of a local boxthorn infestation. RSVP essential.

**Jenelle Bowles**  
**Communications and Public Relations Coordinator**  
**South Coast NRM**  
Direct (08) 9845 8521  
Mobile 0428 928 536  
Email [jenelleb@southcoastnrm.com.au](mailto:jenelleb@southcoastnrm.com.au)