



Media release

24 October 2011

Students weevil-breed for weed control

School students in the Burdekin have added weevil-breeding to their class studies in a bid to bring one of the region's most pervasive aquatic weeds under control.

Primary school students at Burdekin Christian College and Maidavale State School have been given large tubs of water to grow salvinia and its natural predator, the *Cyrobagous salviniae* weevil.

Funded by NQ Dry Tropics, the biological control project will enable the Burdekin Shire Council and Burdekin Bowen Integrated Floodplain Management Advisory Committee (BBIFMAC) to distribute weevils in weed-choked creeks and rivers in the Ramsar-listed wetlands of Bowling Green Bay, south of Townsville.

Salvinia weed is regarded as one of Australia's worst environmental weeds because of its invasiveness, potential for spread and economic impact.

NQ Dry Tropics WetlandCare Australia Consultant, Scott Fry, said the specially-bred weevils will be released into priority areas to feed on the aquatic weed, including isolated pockets such as billabongs.

"The schools have been given eight large fibreglass tubs in total which contain salvinia and weevils that we've sourced from Queensland Parks and Wildlife. The bugs will use the weed for food as well as a breeding ground," Scott said.

"It'll be the job of the students to ensure conditions are kept right so that the hundreds of weevils will multiply into thousands.

"They'll need to monitor temperatures and put in fresh salvinia to keep up the food source for the female weevils which lay one egg every two to five days over a 60 day period."

BBIFMAC Project Officer, Dennis Stubbs, said the project would complement other control methods being used on aquatic weeds in the region such as boat and aerial spraying.

"Salvinia is particularly damaging because it's a free floating weed which can form huge mats that clog waterways," Dennis said.

"It ends up having a whole series of negative impacts including reducing water quality and the number of native fish species, as well limiting the ability of birds to feed and breed.

"The larvae from the weevil which originates from South America actually feed inside the stems of the salvinia, while the adults feed on the buds.

"When we see the whole mat turning brown, beginning to sink and decompose, then we'll know this biological control is working."

Weevils are the main form of biological control for salvinia weed in Queensland, and have been used successfully in the past at Barrattas and Healy's Lagoon in Bowling Green Bay.

NQ Dry Tropics' region includes the local government areas of Townsville, Charters Towers, Burdekin, Isaac, Barcaldine, Etheridge, Hinchinbrook, Palm Island and the Whitsundays. **Media contact:** Kathy Cogo 0466 015 183. Email: kathy.cogo@nqdrytropics.com.au

Working together to improve land and water