



MEDIA RELEASE

Territory students weed out prickly shrub

Students at two Top End primary schools are hoping a tiny moth will be the latest effective weapon in the Territory's fight against *Mimosa pigra*, one of the worst weeds in Australia.

Middle Point Area School and Berry Springs Primary School students have spent the past five weeks rearing the moth, *Leuciris fimbriaria*, whose caterpillars only feed on Mimosa.

Mimosa is a prickly, woody weed that can grow up to four metres tall and forms dense, impenetrable infestations, and currently covers more than 800 square kilometres of the Territory's floodplains.

The students today joined biological control officers from the NT Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts in releasing the moths on the Adelaide River near their schools.

Biological Control Officer Bron Routley said that *Leuciris fimbriaria* was the 14th biological control agent to be released against Mimosa.

"*Leuciris* is a pretty white moth with gold edging around their wings. Adults have a wingspan of less than two centimetres" she said.

"The caterpillars of this moth are green with white stripes down their sides and it is the caterpillars that do the damage to the Mimosa by feeding on the leaves.

"The students have reared the insect from egg to adult in cages in their classrooms and they have absolutely loved it.

"They can actually see the science in action rather than reading about it in books and have enthusiastically approached the responsibility of feeding and looking after the moths."

This particular project is part of Weed Warriors 2005 and aims to teach students about weeds in the Top End and ways of controlling them.

Ms Routley said the NRETA Weeds Management Branch is planning to work with five more Territory schools next term in raising a beetle that eats the weed *Sida*.

Media note – For more information contact Bron Routley on 8999 2266

Ends

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