

Limestone Coast wetlands

Spiny rush removal



National Parks and Wildlife Service SA is removing spiny rush from four important Limestone Coast wetland sites. Spiny rush is a declared weed that forms dense, impenetrable thickets.

Once established, spiny rush is difficult to control and outcompetes other plant species that are required for a healthy wetland habitat. Therefore, it is essential that this weed is targeted in the early stages of spreading, to ensure the high-quality wetland habitat is maintained for the resident and migratory waterbirds and animals that depend on it.



Keep our wetlands healthy!

Help stop the spread of spiny rush

Spiny rush is a large, tough weed with sharp spines that quickly invades wetlands, forming dense impenetrable thickets and closing off open habitat to animals such as shorebirds. Spiny rush also displaces pasture plants and restricts the movement of animals and machinery, but if landowners control it in its early stages, they can help keep both wetlands and their adjacent properties healthy.

Landholders can make a big impact on the health of wetlands by controlling spiny rush in its early stages on their property.



Why wetlands matter

Regional wetlands of the Coorong and the South East provide vital habitat for shorebirds, including migratory bird species that travel from as far as Arctic Siberia to feed on inundated salt marsh and mud flats in summer. These wetlands provide the birds with critical food resources, including invertebrates such as snails, crustaceans, worms and insect larvae, which the birds rely on to fuel-up before making the journey back to the Northern Hemisphere to breed.

These birds feed on small invertebrates in open mud and shallow water.



What is spiny rush?

Spiny rush is a declared weed under South Australian legislation, therefore landholders' have an obligation to control it on their land.

Why is spiny rush a problem?

- highly invasive
- out competes other vegetation
- unpalatable to stock
- once established, it becomes impenetrable due to its sharp spines
- harbour for vermin, particularly rabbits and foxes
- reduces open feeding habitat
- changes wetland structure
- makes areas unusable for shorebirds.

Key features:

- forms large dense tussocks
- can grow up to 1.6 m tall
- rigid cylindrical stems ending in sharp points
- rounded globe-shaped plant form
- brownish-green flower clusters
- egg-shaped seed capsules.

How does it spread?

Spiny rush spreads mainly by seed transported in mud via:

- vehicles and machinery
- livestock
- boots and equipment
- water movement.

How do I remove spiny rush?

Manual removal (small patches)

- dig out individual plants
- remove as much root as possible
- bag plants to prevent seed spread
- monitor for regrowth.

Herbicide control

Best applied when plants are actively growing (spring-autumn).

Recommended approach

1. Slash or remove heavy dead foliage
2. Allow fresh regrowth
3. Apply suitable herbicide
Use a weed wiper for best results, apply slowly, make two passes in opposite directions and always follow label instructions.

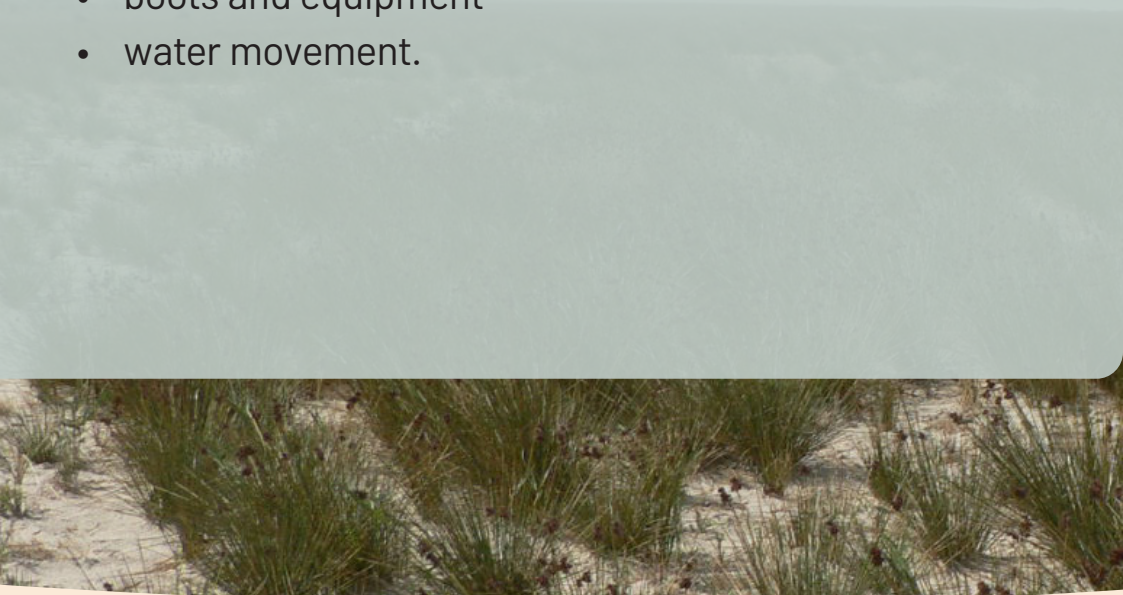
Contact the Limestone Coast Landscape Board for help with plants identification and recommendations on herbicide treatments:

Email: lc.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au

Phone: 08 8429 7550

Every plant removed makes a difference.

Keeping wetlands open helps protect our unique resident and visiting wildlife.



Don't mistake spiny rush for sea rush

Sea rush (*Juncus kraussii*) is a common native salt marsh species found in temperate coastal areas and provides habitat for native wildlife. It has a more erect, upright tussock shape than spiny rush, is not invasive or prickly and does not impede area access.



Spiny rush
(*Juncus acutus*)



Sea rush
(*Juncus kraussii*)

The Shorebird and Wetland Habitat program is funded by the Australian Government and delivered by the Government of South Australia to enhance the quality and availability of shorebird habitat and wetland ecosystems across the Coorong, Lower Lakes, Murray Mouth and South East regions of South Australia.



Australian Government



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