

Deal Island FoDI March 2025 Working Bee Report

Participants were Stuart and Georgie Dudgeon, Christine Bowman, Simon Olding, Paul Chisolm, and Sue Walker. Caretakers were David and Maggie, who participated in a number of working bee activities.

Summary

The group was treated once again to a perfect weather window for achieving our mission on the island. We couldn't have achieved what we were able to without preparatory assistance from Parks staff through delivery of approximately 550 metres of Jute soil saver matting, and 200 garden stakes. And thanks again to Wildcare and the TNCF for enabling our fortnight on the island through funding our flights and materials.

Our main work effort was creating erosion control barriers through the staking and placement of jute matting rolls on the highly erodible East Cove embankment. This was guided by a rehabilitation plan for East Cove developed by one of our committee members Mike Comfort. The group contributed approximately 276 hours on this project and post two rainfall events all concluded the 200 metres of barrier installed was working effectively by filtering soils from the small rivulets that cascade down the slope after the two rains. This also provided a good chance to plant and have watered in approx. 230 plants that had been propagated from cuttings and seed on the November working bee.

To enable watering of the plants the old jetty waterline which had been cut and removed in places was located. We are now able to feed water to a hose at the top of the embankment for watering. Thanks Simon and Paul for your persistence.

Weeding results were significant, due to the lack of numbers of Sea Spurge found, East Cove in particular had very light numbers. This may have been partly the result of the Summer caretakers' efforts as they removed 61 plants in February. The group members who had been before were again frustrated by what appears to be the relentless march of Ragwort across the island.

Other tasks completed included taking measurements and pictures of the roof and cladding structure on the museum dormer windows scheduled for repair in 2025, painting another wall of the generator shed (it and radio room now half painted) repair of slumping interpretive banners (thanks Simon), internal de-moulding of visitor house bedroom walls, and continuing to remove wallabies from the East Cove enclosure and compound.

A big thank you to all the working bee participants, who all brought good energy to the island as well as a range of specialist expertise, skills and a willingness to learn new skills including playing catan of a night.

East Cove stabilization and rehabilitation project

After several goes at making and placing the jute sausages, we settled on the procedure of;

1. Driving stakes along the length where the roll is to go (horizontal to the slope where practicable)
2. Cutting double the length of the sausage from the jute at the top of the embankment
3. Lay the jute stretched out and doubled above the stakes
4. Lay the whole Poas across the length of the jute
5. Roll into a sausage with the open end tucked underneath the roll
6. Wire the tops of the jute(through several layers) to the stake.
7. Pin the uphill lower side of the jute to the substrate with a tent peg sized piece of wire
8. Scrape some fines from above the sausage to commence the silting up process
9. Plant into open flatter spaces where plants are unlikely to have roots exposed.

Chipping Poas along fence lines around the compound meant that some members of the group were occupied with carting them in bags down to the worksite.



Others specialized in making the rolls and fixing them to the slope.

We were all able to participate in the planting out session once the rolls were in place.

Approximately 280 hours was spent on island on this project. Thanks again to all who assisted in planning and approving the works, those involved in handling and transporting materials, and the November working participants for establishing cuttings and seedlings to go into the benched areas, and lastly the caretakers who maintained the plants before and after they were placed.

A further 100 cuttings were established from Poas and creeper species

Weeding Results - Sea Spurge

Our East Cove Sea Spurge numbers continue to decline with only 320 plants removed, with 39 flowering/seed setting. There were no plants found on the more vegetated airstrip end of the embankment.

Garden Cove infestation is also reducing in numbers with 292 plants in total, 96 of which were flowering/seeding.

Winter Cove had 43 plants removed.

Note that these figures don't incorporate caretaker control efforts in these areas, so reductions can only be indicative. Over 100 hours were spent on Sea Spurge control in total

Horehound

Christine and Sue tackled the horehound infestation with great diligence spending 9 hours at East Cove removing 114 plants.

Ragwort

The regular search area at garden cove was completed. The new plants discovered and removed were predominantly on the northern side of the grasslands on the edge of the casuarina forest. A lot of these had flowered and seeded. A lesser number that had been weeded previously on the flagstaff saddle, where traditionally the main infestation has been, may have been as a result of caretakers and the November working bee actively weeding the area over the Spring/Summer

The infestation levels between the Lighthouse Track and Barn Hill continue to increase with flowering/seeding plants being found in March when at least some have dropped seed.

The group however still believed this was a worthwhile exercise in slowing the progressive saturation of the area with Ragwort.

Follow up on the beetle release site strongly indicates that the beetles have completed a full lifecycle on the island with a strong concentration of shothole in plants from the release site including up to 20 metres from there. The plants in the release site also lacked the growth vigor of the surrounding area with limited flowering stems evident.

The crown and stem boring moth release site was not looked at given the short period since the release in early January.

Arum Lillies

Given the limited number of plants found over the last several years, the one follow up on known locations in Spring is considered adequate to prevent further establishment.

Heritage maintenance projects

The continued monitoring and reporting on the museum house conditions has assisted PWS to prioritize funding replacement for the roofing.

Initially the waterproofing around the dormer window has been prioritized, with reroofing and guttering to follow. To support this, 20 hours were spent assembling the portable scaffold and measuring and photographing the detail for the works to be progressed. Hopefully this Summer will see this occur, and then the removal of all the 'leak catching' forticon ponds from inside the upper floor of the museum

The interpretive banners and their condition have been a frustration for some time with many sagging making them harder to fully appreciate. We were lucky to have Simon Olding on this working bee as he had produced similar banners as part of his business and was very quickly able to pull apart, reattach and reassemble them thus extending their life.

The ongoing management of internal mould was continued in the visitor house with the worst wall areas being done in the central bedroom. The more freshly painted areas of the kitchen and living room appear to be resisting the reestablishment of mould.

Another exterior wall of the generator shed was cleaned and painted which now means we have completed the two most weathered sides of both the generator shed and radio room.

Wallaby enclosure and wallaby removal

Wallaby numbers in the East Cove enclosure have remained low, and while on the island we removed another 8 wallabies when they were around the two gates. I estimated there were 10 or less, which if the numbers remaining inside the enclosure do not increase, will dramatically improve the chances of our plants surviving, and longer term, the stabilisation of the East Cove embankment. Maximising the benefit of this will be important while the existing fence remains in reasonable condition, which may only be for a further 5 to 10 years given the effects of salt air.

Future working bee priorities

- Continue the weed work programme
- Monitor biological control agent populations and the impacts they are having
- Use photo monitoring of the rehabilitation works as an assessment of the effectiveness of the works already completed
- The intent is to have delivered enough jute matting and stakes to continue to work on priority areas for stabilization. (approximately a third of the jute has been used) However to reduce foot traffic over the works already completed future work should commence from the bottom of the

slope in the same area, or tackle the upper slope to the west of the haulage way line which appears the next least stable area. This would however require further water supply extension to providing watering should the young plants require it.

- Continue to establish more cuttings
- Look at options for repair or replacement of flyscreens on the visitors house
- Discuss with PWS solutions for above the gas stove to more effectively prevent dust /dirt/soot falling down onto the stove and potentially into meals being prepared
- Discuss with PWS replacement of washing machine and broken lounge
- Discuss with PWS the leaks occurring in the south west verandah in southerly/ south westerly weather.