Deal Island FoDI November 2026 Working Bee Report

This springs crew were Stuart and Georgie Dudgeon, Tamara Terwal, Di Scarlett, Jo Burke and Rob Banfield. Tamara and Jo were on their second working bee, with Rob and Di our first timers. Dudgeons have lost count.

The caretakers were John Porter and Carol Bruce who were on the island during our November 2023 working bee. Funding from our 2024 TNCF grant was used, focusing us on the East Cove restoration/revegetation project.

Thanks to Frank and Jacob from Flinders Air Charters for fitting us into some narrow weather windows, Christine Bowman for her Flinders Island food logistics support again, and the SPRAT's committee for the continued use of the 3 GPS units.

Thanks also to Roz Thurn, for donating the catan set to the island (it got several workouts.. go Jo) and to David Reynolds who's recently published book 'A light under the clouds' provided some good story accompaniments to our evenings.

Our catering manager also earned a big thank you providing a very well stocked pantry. Thanks Georgie.



Load master checking no one has put on too much weight for the return flight



The group taking advantage of a gorgeous afternoon to check the lighthouse area

Summary

Our team worked through the usual range of tasks with great energy and enthusiasm, with the exception of the ragwort 'search and destroy' element. Early investigations of our little squally bank and East Cove areas convinced us that we are not having a lot of impact on the number, spread, and density of plants in these areas, despite our continued work on them. In fact, new location recordings show that the infestation is moving beyond the control areas we had been working on containing.

On a more positive note, some time was spent dissecting ragwort plant roots from our beetle release site. Out of the 7 plants examined one in particular showed damage thought to be as a result of beetle larvae.

Spring weather was its usual self with windy showery conditions interspersed with perfect sunny moments for much of our nine days on the island. Thanks again to Wildcare and the TNCF for enabling our efforts to continue on removing remaining Sea Spurge, horehound, mulien, Arum Lillies and thistles.

A further 220 metres (approx.) of Poa filled jute matting rolls were pinned to the East Cove embankment taking the total over the three working bees to 480 metres. Generally, the older areas treated look to have remained stable and yielded very few sea spurge. The regeneration appears to be occurring to some degree because of less soil/sand movement, however we are yet to achieve substantial planting success.

Approximately 60 mm of rain fell just prior to our arrival, which made for good planting conditions, for the surviving 36 potted plants from November 2025 working bee and direct plant 60 sword sedge from divided clumps.

Weeding results were significant particularly in relation to the declining numbers of Sea Spurge on East Cove. Several sites around the fringes of the Garden Cove Sea Spurge infestation were well established, yielding higher density and more advanced maturity.

Exterior painting continued on the Radio Room and Generator Shed, and the new roof on the Museum and outbuildings were greatly admired. I spent a few hours with caretakers assisting with diagnosing header tank water leaks. This also extended to trying to recall from over 20 years ago how all the water tanks are connected and where the plumbing goes. We got closer to a full understanding after several days of head scratching.

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

East Cove stabilization and rehabilitation project

After examining the previous efforts, we set about extending the work both further down the slope and to neighbouring unstable areas. There are now seven sites of multiple levels of jute and poa sausage pinned to the bank. We appear to have completed approximately 2/3 of the

priority areas. Wallaby numbers in the enclosure are still reasonably low although there a number of Joeys ensuring numbers will quickly increase. Removal during the summer working bee will be a priority. Attached is our table of plant propagation and success rates. Greater involvement of caretakers in the restoration project will be required for us to improve our plant success rates over time. 210 hours approximately were contributed.



'Working on the chain Gang'

lowering materials to the sausage makers



Working a new area above East Cove

Observations include;

- 37 surviving plants from previous transplanting and tillering efforts,
- Some expansion of vegetation in the already stable portions of the slope,
- Heavily disturbed soils under shade or shelter used by the wallaby population
- There is a good distribution of annual plants across the stabilized areas (these tend to die off by March working bee)
- Reduction in the total area where sea spurge is being found
- Minimal sea surge plants nearing maturity.

Weeding Results - Sea Spurge

Our East Cove Sea Spurge numbers continue to decline with only 93 plants removed from the beach and slope with several flowering, but not yet setting seeded. A further 56 plants including 15 flowering outside the western fence line of the enclosure known as the JMS site.

Garden Cove infestation was quite low at the back of, and on top of the dune (approx. 110) and East of the creek (8).

Out of the total of 637 plants most were found on and above the higher level dune to the west, and further up the creek line. This highlights the need for us to keep searching the whole mapped infestation

Winter Cove had 179 plants removed with only one flowering but without seed set. Pegleg, Big and Little Squally were found to be free of sea spurge.

Note that these figures don't incorporate caretaker control efforts in these areas, so reductions can only be indicative,. Approximately 130 hours were spent on Sea Spurge control in total.

And we have it on good authority that on top of Reg and Jenny Grundy following up on sea spurge in Autumn for us, the Winter Caretakers Deb and Craig Searle put in a big effort through the winter to assist..

Horehound

A collective effort of approximately 9 hours on the horehound found 81 plants with 10 in flower and potentially containing seed.

Ragwort

Areas west of the compound fence showed a significant increase in ragwort at both rosette, and larger plant stages. Plants were found west of the East Cove fenced area, and the infestation towards little squally had increased significantly. Adding to that Graden Cove up to the flagpole hill saddle has significantly expanded. The decision was taken to not continue with these control areas and focus instead on ensuring our biocontrols were taking off. A number of plants from close to our beetle release site were compared with plants from around the compound. There were signs of reduced root health on those from the release site with one plant showing signs of larvae having been present.

The focus now needs to be on ensuring we have established populations of the Crown and Stem boring moth. Plans are afoot for another release in January under the guidance of John Ireson (in a voluntary capacity) to collect, transport, and contain pupae to the island.

Stay tuned on that front.



Ragwort roots affected by Beetle larvae



The sea spurge search continues

Arum Lillies

The drainage line from the airstrip was checked with four bulbs being removed, and three on the whim end of the enclosure. One plant was close to flowering

Other weeds

Slender thistles were mostly in flower, so removal was done opportunistically as we traversed the slopes above East Cove. The caretakers John and Carol had taken on spraying them which was great to see. The numbers are much less this year possibly resulting form the drier year but more likely as a result of the huge effort Caretakers Karen Zeigler and Nick put in two springs ago spraying them.

Mulien was also removed in a number of areas when discovered.

Heritage maintenance projects

A further wall on each of the radio room and generator shed were prepped and one coat applied. Six walls down, only two walls to go.

The Museum reroofing looks good and appears to be very functional with extra downpipes added, fascia board replaced in places, flashing protecting shingles under the iron and behind gutter. All our drip trays in the upper floor appear to now be redundant.

The exterior walls last painted on our 2022 working bee, are starting to colour again.

The visitors house seems to be mould free on the inside, but is starting to look like the exterior needs some attention in the short term.

Thanks to Jane Hutchinson from PWS for upgrading the washing machine. For those who have used a twin tub before it was quite a nostalgic experience

Wallaby enclosure and wallaby removal

Wallaby numbers in the East Cove enclosure have remained low. We noted however there were a number of pouched young. The level of growth from inside the fence to outside is dramatically different, with the annual plant cover being longer, and bearing more seed in the fenced enclosure.



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, and adjust any further works accordingly
- Continue to establish more cuttings
- Look at options for repair or replacement of flyscreens on the visitors house
- Discuss with PWS the leaks occurring in the south west verandah in southerly/ south westerly weather.
- Continue to map the (hopefully) reducing areas of sea spurge with the aim of reducing search effort.
- Try and improve our 6% plant survival rate (see table below), by ensuring caretakers and PWS are aware of and interested in assisting with maintenance of seedlings and plantings
- Continue with painting the Asbestos clad buildings, including, lighthouse gen shed
- Discuss reestablishment of fire protection zone around lighthouse ruins
- Rust prevention on upper whim remains

Planting progress

Working bee	Propagated	Planted out	Survived 11/26	Sp
Nov 2024	230			
Mar 2025	99	180	1	Poa
Nov 2025	266	100??	36	Poa, 1 casuarina
Nov 2026	119 + multiple seeds in trays	39 (plus 40 Swords edge direct planted from divided root stock)	Good luck little fellas	Leptospermum spp Allocasuarina, senecio spp propogated