

Deal Island Working Bee October 2nd – November 12th 2024 Report

Participants

Cassie Strain (Captain grizzo), Catherine Stringer (Sketchy), Jane Davis (Cookie Blow), Mike Comfort (Floaty/Greg), Jenny Baulis (Loafy/Greg) and Ralph Baulis (Loggy).

Summary

Overall the working bee can be summarised by three things; hill climbing, Tussockgrass clambering and splendid.

The Spring working bee continued to see a good focus on our main weed control efforts on the island; to further consolidate the search and removal of Sea spurge, Arum lily, Horehound, Great Mullein and Ragwort in our managed areas. We added propagation to our regular task list and carried out some professional development.

This was the third FoDI visit for 2024.

Key outcomes from our 10 days were:

- Thorough searches of Garden Cove, Winter Cove, Pegleg, Little Squally and East Cove for Sea spurge.
- Follow up removal of Ragwort on the Garden Cove slopes and Barn Hill - Little Squally track area, and slowing its encroachment towards East Cove from the airstrip.
- Commencement of propagation for bank stabilization in East Cove; by seed, cuttings and tillering.
- Continuation of repainting of the radio room exterior.
- Cleaning 3 rooms of the visitor house.
- The spring caretakers had put in great efforts to control Slender thistle, which had built up in numbers, so we were able to remove the bulk of Slender thistle again.

Transport logistics were as usual, with tight weight restrictions, especially from Barnbogle.

Having most of our supplies purchased from Flinders again worked well. Thanks to Jane Davis's diligent collating of dietary requirements and ordering of a good array of food options. Thanks to Jenny and Ralph Baulis for purchasing the fresh food and providing very comfortable accommodation pre-trip. Thanks also to Christine Bowman for collecting, boxing up/freezing and delivering all our Flinders purchased food.

Thanks also to regular Deal Island visitors; Scott and Dan (D-up) and friends for donating and delivering 2 bags of native potting mix. Thanks also to Chris and Sue Read of Five Bob Farm, Birches Bay for donating 270 tube pots.

Weeding Results

Sea spurge

The group spent 132 hours on searching and removing sea spurge.

We traversed the slope with a thorough search pattern above East Cove with the higher numbers being found on the drainage line/ Whim tramway end. 287 plants were removed, with 22 plants flowering.

50 hours were spent at Garden Cove resulting in the removal of 454 plants. A large portion of these were again low to midway up on the elevated dune on the west of the cove. No new sites were located, however 2 mature plants were found approximately 300m inland within the past known infestation area. Only 7 plants were removed east of the creekline.

Winter Cove again delivered significant numbers of tiny seedlings, the dune search producing 153 plants.

No sea spurge was found in Little Squally, Big Squally or Pegleg.

Horehound

The western end of East Cove was thoroughly searched by the team with 348 plants found. 18 of which were flowering.

Ragwort

The group spent 105 hours on searching and removing ragwort.

We spent two half days thoroughly searching and removing ragwort between the Compound and Little Squally with approximately 3600 plants removed, dominated by patches of dense seedlings. Though no spraying was carried out on this working bee, it was noted that having a couple of the crew following along and spraying the areas of dense seedlings would be the most efficient use of time. The area of moderate density of ragwort has expanded out from the 2023 area, indicating that more time needs to be spent in this area. Due to the density and height of the Tussock grass, asking the summer caretakers to remove flowering plants, that are much easier seen in this zone, would also be very useful.

The upper slope of Garden Cove was thoroughly searched with 2210 ragwort removed.

The treeline from Garden Cove around to Flaghill was thoroughly searched with 2617 ragwort removed. The infestation on Flaghill through decreasing in density, has spread towards the eastern treeline. It is worthwhile searching the treeline around from Garden Cove, as seed appears to be blown to and settle near the treelines (as observed by Stuart Dudgeon on previous working bees).

The East Cove bank behind the Telstra chair, between the coast and the airstrip was searched with 900 plants found from level with and above the Telstra chair. The density

increased $\frac{3}{4}$ way up the slope and we stopped weeding; drawing a line in the chest high Tussockgrass.

The caretakers have removed a few ragwort plants from within the East Cove enclosure and in the dieback area of the Flaghill ridgeline.

The group looked for evidence of the Ragwort Flea Beetle at the beetle release site, however this early in the (beetle) season there was little evidence. The adults lay eggs in late summer and the larvae feed below ground from autumn until the end of the following spring, when pupation commences and the adults emerge.

Arum Lily

While searching for ragwort on the East Cove bank behind the Telstra chair, between the coast and the airstrip, 41 Arum lily plants were removed from 9 clumps of lilies. We dug out the clumps with a shovel and carefully collected all the little tubers.

The 6 regenerating Arum lily on the side of the Barn Hill track were also removed with a shovel.

Great Mullien

Several locations were removed by hand including 20 plants around a new vehicle turning circle at the airstrip and 8 plants along the hill track going down into Winter Cove.

Slender and other thistle species

Inspired and supported by the caretakers spraying greater than 10,000 Slender thistles within the East Cove enclosure, the group followed this up with hand removal of 1500 scattered plants on the upper bank of East Cove.

Another infestation of about 300 Slender thistles was controlled by the caretakers at the inland east end of Garden Cove after being identified by the group.

A number of Scotch thistles were removed on searches for ragwort around Garden Cove and outside the compound fence toward Little Squally.

These were not mapped.

Weed mapping and documentation

Three GPS's were again borrowed from the SPRAT's group, with new or dense populations marked. The group were also keen to develop their GPS skills. There was however very little new information to record as most of the weed occurrences were within existing search zones. (see appendix 1)

It was made obvious that it is very important to set up the GPS's with the latest weeding data from the previous working bees, which was not done for this working bee.

Visitors house

The group continued the work of the previous working bees and sugar soaped the balance of the house; the hallways and one of the bunk rooms.

No painting was carried out in the Visitor house during this working bee, though there is some paint available.

The Asbestos register specifies keeping all painted surfaces that are in a stable condition regularly painted. With this in mind our aim is to complete painting within the house interior, ensuring occupants are not exposed

Radio room /Generator shed

The asbestos register identifies the exterior walls as stable and in fair condition. Parks provided us with exterior paint to ensure these two buildings' cladding remains stable.

The north-west facing wall of the Radio room was in the most weathered state. The treatment was hosing and washing painted surfaces, before being given two coats.

Bank Stabilisation East Cove

Initial surveys and planning were carried out on renewed stabilization of the highly erosive calcarenite East Cove bank. Areas of the bank are continuing to erode especially in the vicinity of the Whim where there is bare ground. In other areas of the bank the natives; Coast groundsel, Yellow speargrass and the rare plant Coast twinleaf are naturally regenerating. The herb, Medick (*Medicago sp.*), a legume, is also spreading throughout the enclosure and though introduced, it is a short lived plant that is acting as a useful soil binder and soil improver.

245 plants were propagated; Seed collection was carried out on Barn Hill and the eastern slope of East Cove; Coastal teatree, Common teatree, Drooping sheoak and Coast groundsel. Cuttings were collected from East Cove; Grey saltbush, Coastal saltbush and Bower spinach. Tillering was also carried out using Coastal tussockgrass and Coast speargrass.

The vegetation along the mid-western fenceline was removed, after observing wallabies using the vegetation as a springboard to jump back into the enclosure! The height of the of about 20m of this fence was also increased.

Approximately 30 wallabies are still present in the enclosure, after another 13 were let out via the 2 gates during the working bee.

Professional Development, Other Odd Jobs and Fun Stuff

To break up the intense hill climbing and Tussockgrass clambering we did some professional development; basic GPS training, erosion options discussion (Mike Comfort) and sketching workshop (Catherine Stringer).

Ralph Baulis carried out FODI tool maintenance, sharpened kitchen knives and fixed the vacuum cleaner.

The water temperature in each of the Coves was checked; 14.5 degrees, with Winter Cove coming in at a balmy 15.

Boogie boarding was carried out by 2 brave members in 15cm swell.

We had 2 lovely dinner parties with the caretakers.

We also got locked into the vegetable garden by the caretakers.

Other fun things: Sunset walk up Barn Hill. Last morning walk up to the splendid view.

In Progress

The plan to introduce a second Ragwort biocontrol agent, the crown and stem boring moth to the Island is also continuing. This will hopefully be carried out during a summer caretaker handover.

Plan for an increase in bank stabilization work at East Cove now that Sea spurge is in such low numbers.

Painting Asbestos surfaces that are stable and previously painted.

Renegotiating our Volunteer Partnership Plan with the PWS staff.

Negotiating with PWS staff for the caretakers to care for FoDI propagated plants.

Not yet acted upon

Vegetation management around the lighthouse precinct and ruins needs to be reviewed in light of increasing vegetation height and fuel loads that are likely to increase the chances of damage should a wildfire occur.

FoDI owned supplies/ Equipment on Island

Equipment held on the island was reviewed and checked.

Thanks again to all those involved for making this working bee such a memorable one

Appendix 1 - Weed results

Zone	Total	Flowering
<u>Sea Spurge</u>		
East Cove Beach Zone	7	0
East Cove Enbankment	280	22
Garden Cove East	7	1
Garden Cove West	447	74
Winter Cove Beach	153	1
<u>Ragwort</u>		
Compound to Little Squally	3600	0
Airstrip to East Cove	900	0
Flagstaff hill saddle	2617	0
Garden Cove upper slope	2210	0
<u>Horehound</u>		
East Cove	348	18
<u>Arum Lily</u>		
East Cove	41	30
Barn Hill track	6	0
<u>Slender Thistle</u>		
Garden Cove inland east	600	500
East Cove: bank	1507	1400
East Cove: bank (sprayed by caretakers)	10,000 +	
<u>Great Mullein</u>		
Airstrip	20	0
Winter Cove track	8	0