Deal Island Working Bee Report, October 29th – November 9th 2025

Participants

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Summary

Overall the working bee can be summarised by four things; becoming social media stars, sausages and stakes, hunting for weeds on our hands and knees and Tang.

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, Horehound, Great Mullein and Ragwort in our managed areas. We added propagation, planting and erosion control to our regular task list. 342 person hours were spent doing all these activities on the working bee.

This was the second FODI visit for 2025.

Key outcomes from our 10 days were:

- Thorough searches and removal of Sea spurge at Garden Cove, Winter Cove and East Cove.
- Follow up removal of Ragwort on the Garden Cove slopes and the Compound - Little Squally area.
- Continuation of propagation for bank stabilization in East Cove; by seed, cuttings, tillering and transplanting, as well as seed collection.
- Continuation of erosion control using sausages and stakes in East Cove.

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

Having most of our supplies purchased from Flinders again worked well. Thanks to Gabrielle & Lily's diligent collating of the food shopping list & purchasing the freshest of fresh food & providing emergency Tang supplies on a long hot day. Thanks also to Christine Bowman for gathering, collecting, boxing up/freezing and delivering all our Flinders purchased food and potting mix to Whitemark Airport. Thanks to the caretakers Jenny & Ralph Baulis for sharing your broccoli bonanza!

Our trip was publicized by Lily's daily facebook posts that summarized our days work, yummy meals and stunning scenery. So much so that some of the group was recognized by fans on our way home!

Thanks to Wildcare and the Tasmanian Nature Conservation Fund for enabling our working bee on the island through funding our flights and materials.

Weeding Results

Sea spurge

The group spent 124 person hours searching and removing sea spurge.

We traversed the slope with a thorough search pattern above East Cove with most the numbers being found on mid-upper slope at the drainage line/ Whim tramway end. 110 plants were removed, with 5 plants flowering.

60 person hours were spent at Garden Cove resulting in the removal of only 172 plants. A large portion of these were from the beach to about 200m inland, on the dune at the west end of the Cove. No new sites were located, however 1 mature plant was found approximately 300m inland within the past known infestation area. Only 22 plants were removed east of the creekline and most of these were above the creek about 150m inland.

Winter Cove again delivered significant numbers of tiny seedlings, the search producing a whopping 1268 plants, most of these just above the tideline to the north of the creek mouth, found on our hands and knees (see photo evidence). Only small numbers along the dunes. One large but immature plant way up the creek.

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 194 plants found. 28 of which were flowering. Looking back through recent working bee reports, the numbers of Horehound are slowly rising again. So more time and more regular checks should be carried out to contain the infestation.

Ragwort

The group spent 111 person hours on searching and removing ragwort.

We spent two days thoroughly searching and removing ragwort between the Compound and Little Squally with approximately 8743 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. It was also noted that many patches of dense seedlings were in a divot, indicating a ragwort was removed in the previous year. So we covered bare ground with grass thatch where possible as a trial. The area of moderate density of ragwort has been slowly expanding, indicating that more time needs to be spent in this area. Or consider changing management from eradication to containment in this area & prevent it's spread up Barn Hill and down to Little Squally. 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 mid-lower slope of Garden Cove was thoroughly searched with 1070 ragwort removed.

The saddle between Garden Cove and Flaghill was thoroughly searched with only 1680 ragwort removed. The infestation on Flaghill, through decreasing in density, has spread towards the northern 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).

A new infestation has started along the Flaghill ridgeline at the dead tree/exposed rock area with 100 vigorous plants removed from amongst the ferns and Poa's.

Ragwort Biocontrol

The group looked for evidence of the Ragwort Flea Bettle at the beetle release site, a few shot holes were observed, however this early in the (beetle) season there was little evidence. The adults lay eggs in late summer on the ragwort rosettes and the larvae feed below ground on the ragwort roots from autumn until the end of the following spring, when pupation commences and the adults emerge.

The cover and density of ragwort within the release site was resurveyed. It was found that though the number of plants had increased by whopping 284% since 2023, many of these plants were small, with the cover of ragwort within the site actually decreasing by 27%. This indicates that the Ragwort Flea Bettle larvae have been building up in numbers and killing the larger ragwort plants (by feeding on their roots over autumn and winter), leaving mostly new seedlings at the site in spring.

A second Ragwort biocontrol agent, the crown and stem boring moth has been introduced to the Island along the Pegleg track. Details of this should be found so it can also be monitored.

Arum Lily

The current caretakers have removed 1-2 clumps of Arum lily on the East Cove bank behind the Telstra chair, between the coast and the airstrip. No time was available to check this site during the working bee.

No Arum lily was found on the side of the Barn Hill track.

Great Mullein & Cretin Mullein

Eight widely scattered Great mullein were removed from the eastern inland areas behind Garden Cove.

A single flowering Cretin mullein was removed on the back dunes at Garden Cove.

Four Great mullein, including one that had set seed, were removed between the Winter Cove track and the lowest 'canyon' and within the lowest canyon.

Slender and other thistle species

Approximately 250 Spear thistles were removed opportunistically during ragwort removal.

Widely scattered Slender thistles were removed in Garden Cove and 2 large infestations marked and GPSed with the hope that the caretakers may have time to spray them.

Many Slender thistles were in flower in East Cove, which the caretakers were spraying, though the ongoing wet weather was interrupting this work. The FODI team did not have time to assist with this ongoing control.

Weed mapping and documentation

Three GPS's were again borrowed from the SPRAT's group, with new or dense populations marked.

<u>It is very important to set up the GPS's with the latest weeding data from the previous working bees.</u>

Visitors house

Luckily for us the winter caretakers had given the visitor house a good de-moulding, so we only had to sugar soap the back bunk room and rear entry.

No painting was carried out in the Visitor house during this working bee.

The back bunk room windows were leaking on our last (very wet) day on the island. Another job for the list!

Bank Stabilisation East Cove

Work continued on the establishment of erosion control sausages using doubled over jute mesh, rolled tightly around dug up Poa tussocks and staked across the slope. Approximately 1 day (2 half days as hard steep work!) was spent making about 10 sausages (approx. 60m of sausages) on the opposite side of the erosion gully.

266 plants were propagated; Seed collection was carried out on Barn Hill; Coastal teatree, Common teatree, Drooping sheoak. Cuttings were collected from the caretakers garden in the compound. Tillering was also carried out using Coastal tussockgrass.

<u>Propagation</u>

	Name	Number	Type
Coastal tussockgrass	*Poa poiformis*	56	tillering
Bower spinach	*Tetragonia implexicoma*	42	Cutting
Coastal saltbush	*Rhagodia candolleana*	26	Cutting
Common boobialla	*Myoporum insulare*	12	Cutting
Drooping sheoak	*Allocasuarina verticillata*	50	Seed
Coastal teatree	*Leptospermum laevigatum*	50	Seed
Common teatree	*Leptospermum scoparium*	30	Seed
	TOTAL	266	

Of the 230 plants that had been propagated in November 2024 and planted in the erosion control sausages of the previous working bee in March 2025, only 1 Poa was able to be located. The reasons for the poor survival rate are mostly likely a combination of wallaby browsing, transplant shock and lack of water. The herb, Medick (*Medicago sp.)*, a legume, has spread along the top of the sausages and though introduced, it is a short lived plant that is acting as a useful soil binder and soil improver. Due this low survival rate, it was decided that the plants propagated in the March 2025 working bee would be planted in the 5 upper March 2025 sausages amongst the Medick, where there was more soil, moisture and cover. Transplanting of Drooping sheoak's from the compound and young Coast swordsedge growing up in the Barn Hill track were also trialed. All of this planting was done in the rain (sort of yay).

Planting

	Name	Number	Type
Coastal tussockgrass	*Poa poiformis*	100	Tillering
Bower spinach	*Tetragonia implexicoma*	10	Cutting
Grey saltbush	*Atriplex cinerea*	5	Cutting
Drooping sheoak	*Allocasuarina verticillata*	15	Transplant (from compound)
Coast swordsedge	*Lepidosperma gladiatum*	20	Transplant (from track)
	TOTAL	150	

No wallabies were let out of the enclosure via the 2 gates during the working bee as the weather was wet and cool, so they were not thirsty. Removing wallabies via the top gate and topping up the water container could be a task for caretakers to take on.

Fun Stuff

Many swims were swum, quite a few with jelly fish.

We had a lovely BBQ & lunch & cups of tea with cookies with the caretakers.

As tradition requires we cooked and ate many cakes and cookies & as a bonus learnt how to turn UHT cream into delicious butter.

Other fun things: Hike out to the Lighthouse, with most of the team heading down to Big Squally and along Old Squally Track. With a few energetic members doing the clifftop to Little Squally walk. Sunset walk with dessert at the Splendid View on Barn Hill.

In Progress

Negotiating with PWS staff for the caretakers to care for FODI propagated plants & water top 5 rows of plants of the Erosion Stabilisation (hose reaches).

Not yet acted upon

More paint for the Visitor House and Radio Room and Generator Shed.

Repair back bunk room windows (re-putty or silicon exterior of windows)

FoDI owned supplies/ Equipment on Island

There are now 300 tube pots for propagation.

There are 9 bags of jute (approximately 25m per bag) & 210 stakes remaining.

The regularly visiting yacht, ‘Flight’ will hopefully drop off 2 bags of native potting mix in January 2026.

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

Appendix 1 - Weed results

Zone	**Total**	**Flowering**
<u>Sea Spurge</u>		
East Cove	110	5
Garden Cove East	22	0
Garden Cove West	150	2
Winter Cove Beach	1268	0
TOTAL	**1550**	**7**
<u>Ragwort</u>		
Compound to Little Squally	8743	0
Flagstaff hill saddle & upper slope	1680	0
Garden Cove mid-lower slope	1070	0
Garden Cove both side of creeks	42	0
Flaghill – dead tree rocks	100	0
TOTAL	**11,635**	**0**
<u>Horehound</u>		
East Cove	194	28
<u>Arum Lily</u>		
East Cove	0	0
Barn Hill track	0	0
<u>Slender Thistle</u>		
Garden Cove Creekside	118	118
East Cove: bank	0	0
<u>Spear Thistle</u>		
Widely scattered over island	250	0
<u>Great Mullein</u>		
Airstrip	0	0
Winter Cove track	4	1
Garden Cove	8	0