

Deal Island Working Bee March 13 - 23rd 2023 Report.

Participants

Mike Comfort, Stuart and Georgie Dudgeon, Jo Burke, Graham Bailey, Christine Bowman.

Summary

The working bee group spent a total of nine days on the island and two three quarter days travelling packing and unpacking gear. Eight days were spent undertaking weeding and heritage maintenance tasks, the ninth spent exploring the lighthouse precinct and Big Squally Cove.

Key outcomes were the prepping and completing the painting of the exterior of the fuel and paint stores and Privy, re-weeding sea spurge areas, conservation works on the Whim, commencing internal painting of the visitors house, and reworking smaller more isolated pockets of Ragwort.

Timing for the sea spurge follow up was perfect as much of it was flowering with no evidence of seed having dispersed from the 3278 plants located and removed. Given plants contained seed it was decided to build a storage container for storage of the seeding plants.

Ragwort, not surprisingly continues to expand its range with a number of new locations found on the slopes leading up to the saddle between flagstaff hills. Plants ranged from flowering only to releasing, or having released seed

The working bee group was made up of a mix of experienced and new members. This led to many good discussions on technique, and FoDi's overall role and achievements. The weather once again proved to be perfect for completion of the tasks allocated.

The group was once again warmly welcomed by the caretakers, this time Duncan and Michelle. they were keen participants on several of our weeding days and are committed to continuing to assist with our weeding efforts.

Logistics were made much easier with the majority of the supplies being ordered through Walkers supermarket and packed and weighed by Christine(A Big Thank You)

Weeding Results

Sea spurge

160 hours was spent on searching and removing sea spurge.

A concerted effort was made to do a thorough search above East Cove. Detection was made much easier through the more mature plants flowering, resulting in a more visible yellowy green colouring.

Three mornings were spent at Garden Cove resulting in the removal of 882 plants. a large portion of these were again higher up on the elevated dune on the west of the cove. One new site was recorded with 168 plants some of quite mature size.

Winter Cove also produced significant numbers, the initial dune search producing 170 plants. Eight of us did a follow up check finding an additional 40 plus plants. This proved to be good training for some of our newer participants, who were honing their weed identification/spotting skills.

Little Squally Cove despite its limited area, had five plants found by three different people over 3 different morning /evening walks

Arum Lillies

Several of the Arum lilly sites were searched with no new plants detected. Given how easily they are detected when flowering thoroughly checking these sites could be reduced to spring only...

Horehound

The two known sites at East Cove and the next smaller bay to the west were checked, firstly as a training exercise then as a thorough search. 12 hours were spent in total removing 158 plants from the east Cove area with none being detected in the bay to the west. A number of plants were carrying small amounts of seed.

Ragwort

The time of year meant that much of the ragwort was either in flower, or seeding, or had already released seed.

The positive outcome was that the site that had had time put into it at the flagstaff hill saddle has greatly reduced numbers from spring. Unfortunately, some that were missed had flowered.

Several other sites were found against the casuarina line above, and to the west of Garden Cove, however the lower grassland areas still don't seem to have been populated.

A repeat of the search done in November was carried out at Garden Cove up to Flagstaff hill saddle. This was again found to be free of ragwort from our search which is

an indication that seed is being carried and dropped along the casuarina edge garden cove, because of their effect on wind, rather than dropping into the lower grassland areas.

The infestation between the compound and Little Squally Cove that was worked on in November had a healthy population once again with a number of flowering plants. This site was again treated by removal of all plants found with seeding plants contained in a bin liner bag before being pulled to prevent further seed dispersal. A repeat of the broader search of the grasslands in this area revealed that the infestation still remained fairly localised.

The walk to Winter Cove was an eye opener for those that hadn't seen the extent of Ragwort there previously, including myself. It reminded the group that we are only holding small areas in abeyance on the island.

Great Mullien

Little effort was put into this weed other than learning its identification.

Slender and other thistle species

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

Four gps's were again borrowed from the SPRAT's group, set up with the latest weeding data from the November working bee (Thanks to Jon Marsden Smedley once again). The group was overall less familiar with gps application and use, which meant several training sessions were required.

Weed numbers and proportions were largely recorded on notepads while locations and weed type were gps'd. Unfortunately, the notepad went the way of several of the group leaders' possessions, and got mislaid somewhere in grasslands around garden cove. This resulted in a number of weeding effort totals being based on recall of the days weeding.

As a result of none of the members either being able or willing to download GPS data on island we've given Don Cameron some homework to edit the data and delete the training sessions. Thanks Don for undertaking the task.

Having completed a second working bee the methodology using GPS collection has become a little clearer.

I've concluded the following;

1. where defined search areas are likely to continue to have seedlings being removed we really want one waypoint to represent that area and a total taken each time we visit, while also having a mapped area that represents the extent of the required search.

2. where a new area not previously mapped is found then this should be recorded as a new site, and /or the search area extended.

e.g. at garden cove on the elevated dune two major sites have previously been weeded. The totals this time get saved as one waypoint adjacent to the previous one with the new weed total from that working bee

A new site adjacent to the existing known infestation should be added as a separate site but because it is within fifty metres of the existing search area it could have the search area expanded as a mapped area, or the new site be added, and a follow up total each time its visited added. Open to discussion or clarification...

Superintendants cottage maintenance

It was good to be able to go back and complete the task commenced last time by painting/limewashing the two sheds adjacent to the museum house, the connecting walls and the privy. Each only got one coat but overall the site looked in much better condition.

Another task involved an attempt to tension the interpretive banners in the museum, as these were sagging to varying degrees.

Jo and Christine initially tackled the task with some enthusiasm starting with the one sided banner. As time progressed i got the feeling they were wishing we had heeded the warning label on the bottom of the banners to not try to tension them. After the first 2 hours following a fair amount of googling and phoning a friend, it was worked out that the banners weren't actually attached to the stands at the base, as the original banners, that had suffered mould discolouration, had been replaced by laminated banners in the same frames.

Dogged determination and a total of around 8 hours combined effort meant that the one banner now looks much more presentable...

The Whim

Unfortunately, the East Cove whim is steadily circling to the ravages of time, with one supporting arm now detached and the other close to letting go, with only 1 or 2 mm of the 10 mm steel bracket thickness left. These timber arms secure the top of the axle. The call was made by Dominique for us to undertake some preservation works on the remains of the Whim structure.

After locating a good quantity of Linseed Oil, Jo Georgie and Christine set about oiling the remaining standing timber components. Some stage 1 Kill rust treatment was also found and applied to the steel work.

Hopefully our efforts will mean the remains of the operating structure will survive until some conservation works can be undertaken.

Caretakers House

Dominique provided some paint for us to start repainting some of the worst areas of internal paint in the caretakers' house. In November the house had a particularly robust mould population. While sugar soaping rooms made the house more livable i am keen on FoDI or caretakers progressively painting the house out with the aim of reducing the amount of mould growing on the walls and to ensure the asbestos lining remains well covered. The shower/laundry area and ceiling is now all the one colour (sorry to those that chose the two tone yellow paint scheme) Hopefully the mould resistant paint will live up to expectations.

The current caretakers were happy to take on the regular airing of the house while they are on the island, which may help to reduce the mould levels next spring.

Bank Stabilisation East Cove

Whilst sea spurging at East Cove the existing stabilisation efforts were examined .Much of what has been done 10 or more years ago with rolled coya matting has remained in place however the barriers are generally at their limit as far as catching and stabilising more soils as it moves down slope.

The plan was hatched to combine drain clearing on the lighthouse track with securing more brush across the contours of the existing stablisation efforts, and to commence some new stabilisation locations. While only one trailer load of brush was placed it could certainly improve the stability of the bank over time.

Overall the banks seemed to be barer than in November. This is possibly the result of the time of year, with annuals drying off, but also browsing pressure, resulting from an increase in animal movement between water and food sources within the fenced enclosure.

A walk of the fenceline meant to exclude wildlife showed that wallabies were easily able to enter the enclosure from a hole under the fence just near the jetty shed. It was the groups opinion that the fencing should be resecured at a time of year when less wallabies are in the area and efforts made to remove the population to give the bank the best chance of recovery. October November would be ideal.

Update on the last future work recommendations

In Progress

- The need for some assistance from bio-controls on ragwort was further emphasized by seeing the extent of ragwort while out in flower or seeding
- The ability for the group to access a population of Beetles on Bruny Island was tested in January, which now means we are needing to seek approval and funding for a capture and release hopefully next January. A day spent with the ragwort biocontrol guru revealed that the challenges of accessing populations of the two biocontrol moths and keeping them alive to establish them on Deal was going to be a lot more challenging.
- Window sashes and sills, barge and fascia boards on all outbuildings also need checking with some repairs needed to the generator shed windows
- The interior of the visitors house was mouldy and paintwork is deteriorating. Progressive repainting could be scheduled on future working bees

Not yet acted upon

- The weed mapping, and sharing of information methodology needs to be resolved so that caretakers who aren't familiar with weed identification and treatment can easily contribute to control programmes, particularly in spring (update and simplify the weed folder for caretakers and provide electronic mapping function that is easily learnt for recording and searching)
- The repair or replacement of the roof on the museum house will need to be programmed with the next couple of years
- The exterior of the radio room, jetty shed, generator shed, lighthouse generator shed, and the visitors house require painting in the next few years.

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.

Some additional high quality weeding hand forks would be useful

Thanks again to all those involved especially Jo Widdowson, who's passion for the island and its well being continue to motivate us all

