



# Newsletter

No. 14, September 2020

## FOMI Works on Maatsuyker Island (19/20 season)

FOMI coordinated two working bees to Maatsuyker Island during the 19/20 season, being: 10 – 14 December 2019 to undertake the weed control and shearwater monitoring program and 28 February to 9 March 2020 for building maintenance and weed control; The Shearwater monitoring (breeding success) was undertaken from 9 – 11 March 2020.

FOMI volunteers during this seasons working bees contributed 1500 hours to the care of the island, a total of \$60,000 in kind in one season.

Weed Control Brief Report (December 2019 and February/ March 2020). The broad aims of the seasons weed control field work were:

Follow-up four target weeds Veronica (Hebe) elliptica, blackberry (Rubus fruticosus agg), Montbretia and Californian Thistle

- Follow up on other weeds Agapanthus orientalis
- Survey areas (use of Hip-chain method)
- Rope Access targeted area survey
- Photo-point Monitoring

The December 2019 (10 – 14 December) works undertaken by Marina Campbell with assistance from Bree Woods on spraying days. The focus being on spraying Montbretia and checking Hebe outlying sites.

The Feb/March 2020 (28 February – 9 March) works included rope access survey undertaken by contractors Dave James and Andy Angliss. Dave and Andy carried out four days of rope



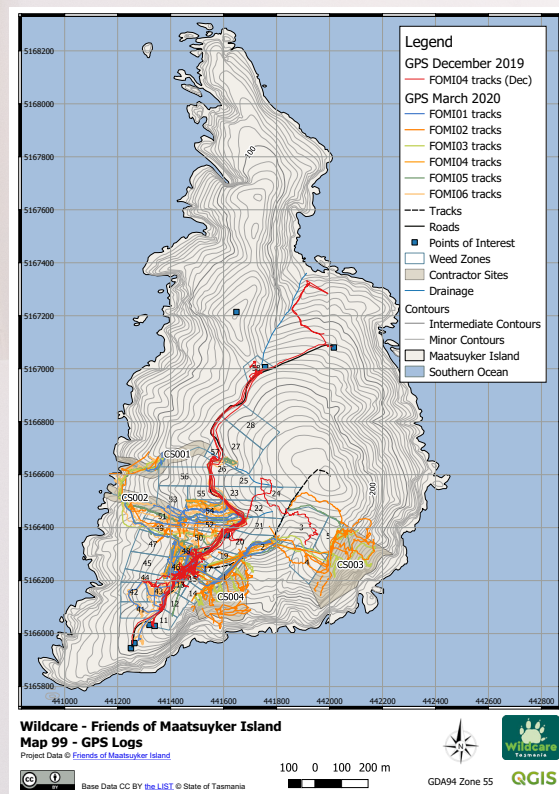
Kate and Bruce Frankcombe  
Photo credit: Tim Smith

access survey as well as volunteering on the weed control program. The weed control team included Marina Campbell, Bree Woods, Tim Smith, Shirley Zang, Heidi Krajewsky and Stephen Anstee. The focus of this working bee was on the blackberry, hebe elliptica and Montbretia mop up.

The rope contractor survey project contributed greatly to the weed control program with survey of previously out of reach sites as well as extending the area now deemed safe for future ongoing monitoring. The rope work was funded through the State Government Weed Action grant program. The Map of GPS track logs (see attached) gives a picture of the area covered by the weed control team (including the rope work).

The 2019/20 weed control and shearwater monitoring program are supported by a generous donation by the Pennicott Foundation (also see stories on page 3). FOMI were thrilled to be awarded \$20,000 toward the Weed Control program with an Aust Government Community Environment Program grant to support the 2019/20 season. A big thanks again to Heli-Resources for the generous donation toward the FOMI flight during our March weed control works.

FOMI acknowledges the role of PWS Volunteer Caretakers who make an extraordinary contribution to Maatsuyker Island. We were extremely well supported by Bruce and Kate Frankcombe during the season works, with the quarters spruced ready for volunteers, plenty of goodies from the Quarters One kitchen and a helping hand with any task toward the FOMI projects being undertaken. Thank you, Bruce and Kate.



## Thank you Amanda and Paul

Amanda and Paul beautifully captured their six months on Maatsuyker in story, drawings and photos in their book *Maatsuyker Through our Eyes*. Amanda and Paul have generously donated \$1500 for the sale of their book to FOMI for works on the island. The book is available for purchase at Fullers Bookshop, Hobart.



## Bruce closes the door on a Mystery

A call to locate a door of the same vintage (1890s) and design as the others in Quarters 2 resulted in the recovery centre at Jackson Street Glenorchy finding and donating a perfect match. The donated door, disposed from a Hobart home renovation, was taken to Maatsuyker Island with other heavy materials in September and installed by caretaker Bruce Frankcombe to replace the mysteriously missing door of one of the bedrooms. Thank you to the Recovery Centre, which is committed to reduce waste and has a vast range of items awaiting your purchase for repurposing, and thank you Bruce for completing the job. The shop is located at Jackson St, Glenorchy, 6274 1046, [www.recoveryshop.com.au](http://www.recoveryshop.com.au)



Donated door and  
Bruce Frankcombe  
Photo credit: Ron Fehlberg

## Maatsuyker Island Working Bee February – March 2020

Brief Report from the Building Team.

**Quarters 3:** Middle west bedroom and south west bedroom had thirty percent of floors from west wall completely replaced with new plates, floor joists and flooring. Both rooms had extra vents cut into the foundations for improved ventilation.

**Quarters 2:** South west bedroom had fifty percent of the floor pulled up and new vents cut in. Unfortunately lack of time and floorboards halted this project till the next working bee. A donated heritage door with an old style rimlock was fitted to this room. Quarters 2 veranda sub floor had metal vents removed and replaced with terracotta vents.



**Minor Works:** A new water meter fitted in Quarters 1. An inspection of the underfloor of the south west bedroom floor Q1. All gas stoves in Quarters 1, 2 & 3 were replaced with new stainless steel flexible hoses and Quarters 1 stove had a security plate fitted to the floor.

**Lighthouse:** Ground floor sashes removed, repainted and resealed, hinge pins lubricated. Windows now operational. Bird prevention screens fitted. Replaced door seals on balcony door. Light mechanism, rollers and track cleaned, all moving parts oiled and clockwork mechanism run and checked.

Ron Fehlberg - Building Co-ordinator



Building team at work  
Photo credit: Ron Fehlberg

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## Robert sees first hand long term success

We were really pleased Robert Pennicott was able to come for a day visit during the December working bee to see first hand the contribution of the Pennicott Foundation toward the weed control and shearwater monitoring programs. Robert has supported these programs over the past three years and has generously committed to a further three years.

Photo: Sheryl Hamilton, Robert Pennicott, Marina Campbell  
Maatsuyker Lighthouse with The Needles in the background.  
Photo credit: Marina Campbell



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## Shearwater deaths in Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska cause concern

Every year short-tailed shearwaters that breed in south-eastern Australia, including those on Maatsuyker Island, undertake a huge migration to the northern hemisphere to feed at winter foraging areas.

In June—Aug 2019, there were reports of thousands of dead short-tailed shearwaters in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska (<https://www.fws.gov/alaska/stories/2019-alaska-seabird-die>). This was likely linked to warmer ocean conditions affecting their main prey items. This significant incident, and reports of shearwaters arriving 'late' at breeding sites in south-eastern Australia, led to concerns about the 2019/20 breeding season.

There were reports in September/October 2019 that shearwaters were 'absent' or 'late' arriving at their southern breeding colonies (<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-10-05/mutton-birds-delayed-migratory-vic-arrival-alarms-birdwatchers/11572220>). However, monitoring at breeding colonies is not generally undertaken until early December following the end of laying and when adults are incubating their single egg. Therefore, early December monitoring is the most reliable comparison with previous seasons' data and observations.

Field work in early December 2019 marked the 7th season of FOMI's short-tailed shearwater breeding population monitoring on Maatsuyker Island. Using a specialised camera burrowscope, about 900 burrows were checked in the long-term monitoring plots. Although burrow occupancy (i.e. the percentage of burrows containing an adult shearwater on a nest) was slightly lower than average, it was within the range of previous seasons' monitoring at Maatsuyker Island. Monitoring undertaken by the Tasmanian State government (DPIPWE) on islands in the Furneaux group showed similar results from December 2019.

However, the trend of warmer waters in the Bering Sea (<https://www.arctictoday.com/warming-temperatures-and-less-ice-are-transforming-the-bering-sea-ecosystem-scientists-say/>) leading to a potential increase in the frequency of shearwater mortality events at their winter foraging grounds is of great concern. This will likely lead to decreased breeding productivity at southern breeding colonies. On-going annual monitoring at breeding colonies, including Maatsuyker Island, is crucial.

FOMI are very grateful for all funding support of their on-island projects. The 2019/20 season was funded by a generous donation by the Pennicott Foundation and FOMI general fundraising. Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) provided both logistical support and transport cost-sharing as part of the FOMI Working Bees and PWS volunteer caretaker support. Helicopter Resources also provide support for the FOMI Working Bees.



Photo: Image on the 'burrowscope' monitor of a short-tailed shearwater adult on a nest within a burrow  
Photo credit: Sheryl Hamilton

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## Mark, Mick & Maatsuyker

The first time I had the privilege of visiting Maatsuyker Island in 2013, it was very disappointing to see the deterioration and condition of the Lighthouse. A determined FOMI committee decided that an effort would be made to get funds together to restore the Lighthouse before it became beyond redemption. In March 2016 with funds raised by FOMI and a grant from Parks & Wildlife we were able to employ Mark Sheriff, Mick McNamarra and Brian Burford. They spent a month working on the outside of the Lighthouse including the roof and lantern room. After many coats of paint the Lighthouse looked like new again.

During the March 2017 working bee Mark came on the working bee as a volunteer and worked on the lantern room and the top deck, walls and stairway. Peter Rigozzi our Heritage officer for Parks was able to obtain some finance to complete the major upgrade of the landings, the rest of the walls and stairways. Mark and Mick were able to complete this work in November/December 2019. They both worked tirelessly and achieved a great outcome with the help of Bruce and Kate the caretakers.

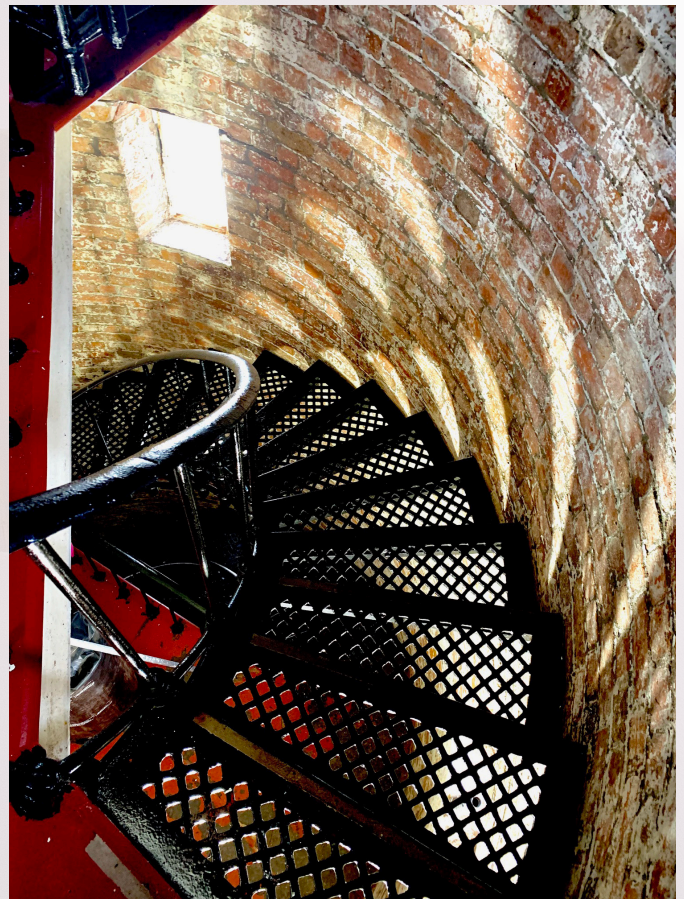
In Mark's own words, "Maatsuyker remains a truly unique tower, unlike many of the lighthouses around Australia where they run tours and today, resemble more like club houses. The location of this tower gives it quite a sacred feeling, some people would wonder why bother! Why I shall return as a friend of. I left my harness up in the Lantern room as a projection of future work. It has been a truly great time in my Lighthouse life to be part of this maritime history and can't thank you all enough".

FOMI is truly indebted to Mark for his efforts and dedication and the outstanding commitment to our Lighthouse cause. He will be for ever a true friend of the Maatsuyker saga.

Ron Fehlberg



Above: Mark at work stripping the brick walls  
Below: completed stairs and walls  
Photo credit: Mark Sheriff



Heritage objects and Kate's Lighthouse drawing  
Photo credit: Mark Sheriff

## Pennicott Foundation donation

FOMI is extremely grateful to Robert Pennicott and the Pennicott Foundation for the ongoing commitment towards the weed control and shearwater monitoring program.

We are very encouraged by the weed control work on Maatsuyker, undertaken since 2003. We aim to continue controlling blackberry, Hebe elliptica and Montbretia for at least the next five years, with the ultimate objective to declare these weeds eradicated. We are proud of the concurrent and complimentary shearwater monitoring program. FOMI have undertaken monitoring of the short-tailed shearwater breeding population for seven seasons, with the aim to collect at least 10 years of data.



## Membership helps all Wildcare groups

FOMI encourages all friends to ensure their Wildcare membership is up-to-date. To do this follow this link [www.wildcaretas.org.au](http://www.wildcaretas.org.au) to pay your membership or even better receive your membership for free when you renew your PWS pass. Once you have renewed please ensure you have 'joined the branch' by ticking the Friends of Maatsuyker Island branch. You can become a member of any number of branches.



David and Diane Masters, PWS Volunteer Caretakers, on the lighthouse balcony as the December 2018 Working Bee team depart on the helicopter. The lighthouse is decorated for the first time with some of the new Signal Flags made by FOMI. On the left side, the flags spell "FOMI". On the right side, the flags spell "X" (for Mark 'the X-factor' Sheriff, lighthouse restorer extraordinaire) and "PWS".

Photo credit: Sheryl Hamilton



FOMI extend a huge shout of thanks to the PWS team for all their support throughout the year.



FOMI thank Heli-Resources for their support toward our working bees.

## Interested in joining or knowing more about Friends of Maatsuyker Island

Contact: Fiona Taylor, Secretary, FOMI - Wildcare Inc. [wildcaremaatsuyker@gmail.com](mailto:wildcaremaatsuyker@gmail.com)

Or visit: [www.wildcaretas.org.au](http://www.wildcaretas.org.au)

Like us on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsOfMaatsuykerIsland](https://www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsOfMaatsuykerIsland)