

Seabird Island Restoration Group

Meeting 10th June 2023

Location

Lindisfarne Rowing Club. 2pm

Welcome and Introductions

Peter Mooney introduced himself and Sue Robinson to attendees and gave a quick oversight of other key group members who have been involved with SIRG to date.

Apologies

Mark Holdsworth provided an apology.

President Report

Peter Mooney (Acting President) gave a summary of how SIRG was established. There are already some well-established groups responsible for restoring some of Tasmania's islands. The Friends of Bass Strait Islands has been operating for over 20yrs, successfully removing significant amounts of introduced plants from islands. The Friends of Fisher Island has restored the famous Dom Serventy Mutton Bird research hut on Fisher Island, located near Lady Barron, Flinders Island.

However, there was not a group dedicated to the removal of vertebrate pest species (mainly rats, mice and rabbits). Many islands in Tasmania could be restored (by removal of invasive plants and vertebrate pests) to their original condition. This would allow seabirds to re-colonize those islands and use them for breeding,

This is the reason that SIRG was created. The group was created from some previous successful eradication works on islands like Big Green Island, on the Western side of Flinders Island. This was a relatively large island with an infestation of the Black Rat. Over a period of several years the PWS, Biosecurity Tasmania, Wildcare and the Pennicott Foundation collaborated to successfully eradicate the rats. Since then, a group of small islands, Gorges Rocks near Eddystone Point, has had rats removed by the early members of SIRG.

Secretary Report

Sue Robinson (Acting Secretary) and more importantly SIRG Scientific Advisor has been performing an assessment of islands around Tasmania. Sue's day job is with Biosecurity Tasmania, therefore has a good Statewide perspective of biosecurity risk. Sue explained the different processes used to eventually eradicate vertebrate pests from islands. First an assessment of what pests are on an island is performed with trapping techniques. Then a plan will be developed for the removal of the recorded pest species. Usually, introduced plants are removed to ensure the island vegetation is in a natural state for seabirds. This can take some time. The aggressive invasive plant Mirror Bush (*Coprosma repens*) can be difficult to completely remove. Sometimes the removal of vertebrate pests can be achieved while removing the invasive plants at the same time. There are different methods used to remove vertebrate pests. Often, they are trapped within bait stations. This requires each bait station to be checked every day. On Big Green Island we had over 2000 bait stations positioned. Each station's success or failure is recorded on location sensitive iPads and then loaded to software each evening. When it is noticed that there are a few pests left bait cards will be placed to note how many are chewed each evening. This will indicate where on an island the pests are still active. Often this is in place for over a year to be able to ensure all pests are removed. Lastly rodent detection dogs are used to finally ensure no pests are left. Once the introduced plants are removed and the pests are removed, long term monitoring is required. This will involve regular visits to the island to ensure no regrowth of the invasive plants is occurring and that no re-introduction of the pests have occurred.

During the past 18 months several people have been assessing and researching which islands around Tasmania would be the best to begin restoration works. This assessment has considered a range of factors like site suitability for rare species of seabird, potential for general seabird recolonization, potential for re-introduction of pests and accessibility of the island.

Sue has produced a strategy that has considered all these factors. There was some discussion about the many different tasks that members of SIRG can volunteer for. Beyond the obvious fieldwork required there are jobs to be completed that involve different skills. For our program to be long term successful we need to raise the public awareness, in particular the maritime community, about the risks of introducing pests to islands. We discussed the merit of dedicating people to the design and delivery of note sheets and publications that can be effective in alerting the public to these issues.

Treasurer's report

Mark Holdsworth (Acting Treasurer) was unfortunately working on Lord Howe Island on the meeting day. However, he did provide information that showed SIRG has no financial liabilities and has some funds remaining from previous Wildcare grants. A full financial statement will be

provided to members soon. Sue mentioned the Federal Government funding that has been provided to Biosecurity Tasmania for improved biosecurity of Tasmania's offshore islands. She explained that there is money available for set tasks associated with the restoration of islands. The details of what is possible are still being assessed through Biosecurity Tasmania.

General Discussion

Several members contributed to the discussion in reference to SIRG's own biosecurity measures used whilst doing field work. Suggestions were made about the excellent practices of the Friends of Bass Strait Island and Friends of Maatsuyker Island. We could use some of their practices. There was also discussion about existing publications about biosecurity best practice and whether SIRG could adopt some of those practices.

General Election of Office Bearers

Secretary – Chris Arthur was nominated and not opposed by members at the meeting.

Treasurer – Mark Holdsworth was nominated and not opposed by members at the meeting.

President – Peter Mooney was nominated and not opposed by members at the meeting.

Resolutions

It was agreed that information would be distributed to members outlining a schedule of proposed tasks over the coming 12mths with details of the type of duties needed. A schedule of field trips with proposed dates would also be provided.

All members were encouraged to send any questions and suggestions to Peter via the SIRG email system.

Meeting Closed

4pm

Attendees for SIRG meeting, 10th June 2023

Carolynne Smith

Karin Beaumont

Michael White

Kirstin Seaver

Simon Pahor

Irene Slaven

Chris Arthur

Sally McMillan

Vicki Campbell

Alan Wiltshire

Marilyn Pauley

Catherine Stringer

Chris Jones

Jessica Ford

Jean Jackson

Gabrielle Balon

Don Cameron

Lee Cameron

Sue Robinson

Peter Mooney