

Purge the Sea Spurge scourge

Consider this

Enjoy a day out in some of the best scenery in Victoria while working to save a threatened bird species.



Under supervision from Parks Victoria, Friends of the Prom is working on an ambitious plan to restore the beach habitat of the threatened Hooded Plovers at Wilsons Promontory National Park's Squeaky Beach by removing the invasive weed, Sea Spurge.

We invite you to come along to our next working bee to remove Sea Spurge from Squeaky Beach.

When: Saturday, 10th November 2018.

Meet: 9:00 am at Squeaky Beach carpark.

Bring: BYO drinks and lunch. Gardening gloves* (leather or rubber). Bring eye protection* and sun screen. Some gloves and eyewear will be available on the day. A small trowel could be useful for the deeper rooted weeds.

Wear: Clothes suitable for changeable Prom weather - long sleeves and sun protection are recommended, but also pack wet weather gear.

Stay: Free camping is available for sea-spurge volunteers at the Stockyards Camp on Friday and Saturday nights. BYO camping equipment.

Saturday dinner: Free BBQ dinner provided by Friends of the Prom, BYO drinks.

RSVP : to Friends of the Prom by Friday 2 November – see contacts below.

*Sea Spurge is a deceptively harmless-looking plant but has a milky sap which can cause skin or eye irritation to some people if they have direct contact. That's why wearing gloves and eye protection is important.

Sea Spurge drives away Hooded Plovers

Sea Spurge is a coastal weed that is native to parts of Europe, Africa and Asia. It is now present on many of our beaches ranging from West Australia to New South Wales.



Sea Spurge takes over the sandy dune areas where it out-competes the native vegetation and changes the beach dune shape. In the process of taking over, it can expel the resident native fauna such as the threatened Hooded Plovers.



The Hooded Plover inhabits sandy ocean beaches. There they pick tiny invertebrates from the sand near the water's edge. They lay their eggs in shallow scrapes in the sand, above the high-tide mark or among dunes. Usually one or two eggs hatch after about 30 days of incubation. Hooded Plovers don't like to nest in areas heavily infested with Sea Spurge because it obstructs their line of sight for the approach of predators. This can make whole sections of the beach unviable for nesting.

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How to combat Sea Spurge?

Friends of the Prom has adopted a method of weed removal based on a scientific method developed by the SPRATS group (Sea Spurge Remote Area Teams). SPRATS is a volunteer group which successfully removed Sea Spurge from 600 km of coastline in remote South West Tasmania over about 10 years. The group used a combination of spraying with weedicide with follow up hand weeding of residual Sea Spurge plants. They monitored progress and were able to demonstrate a steep decline in Sea Spurge after only 2 or 3 visits – see Figure 1.

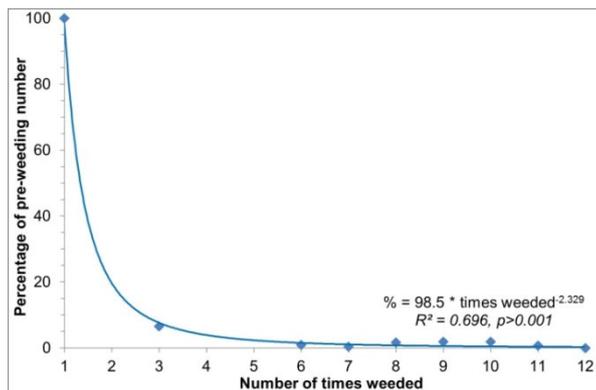


Figure 1: Percent Reduction of Sea Spurge cover with repeated weeding (J. Marsden-Smedley 2018)

After spraying, the first few visits require a larger number of volunteers to pull out the remaining Sea Spurge. From then on it is quite easy to keep Sea Spurge under control. Small groups of volunteers would make occasional visits to previously infested sites to pull out any re-emerging Sea Spurge by hand.

Squeaky Beach

Friends of the Prom has decided to use Squeaky Beach as a test case for Sea Spurge removal at the Prom. This is one of the most popular beaches for visitors and is heavily infested with Sea Spurge. It also has several breeding pairs of Hooded Plovers.

Once we have demonstrated that Sea Spurge can be removed successfully at Squeaky Beach, we will move our focus to other Prom beaches infested with the weed, e.g. Norman Bay.

Using funds successfully obtained from a Victorian Government Coastcare grant, a contractor sprayed infested areas on Squeaky Beach with weedicide during June 2018. These areas are now showing significant dieback.

We have already successfully removed Sea Spurge from a small area at the northern end of Squeaky Beach as shown in the before and after photos below. This was achieved by a major full-day working bee in February 2018, followed by a small one over half a day in June 2018. No spray was applied to this area.



Before



After

The November 2018 working bee will concentrate on hand weeding along the back dunes of the main beach.

Contact for more information and RSVP

email: info@friendsoftheprom.org.au; or
phone: Bill on 0417 341 504

Reference:

J. Marsden-Smedley 2018 - *Sea Spurge Remote Area Teams: Summary of work performed 2006/07 to 2017/18, and work required 2018/1*. Unpublished report