

Islands Land Management

lungtalanana, Babel, Mount Chappell, Badger & Big Dog update FEB2014



This is just a quick review of some of the things the Islands land management crews have been up to in the past 6 months. As always wild weather, fire, broken parts and the remote location have all played their part. But the two small crews have still achieved a lot of good work monitoring wildlife, muttonbirds, heritage sites, killing weeds, planting native plants and maintaining shacks and tracks.

For reports, maps, questions or concerns please call:

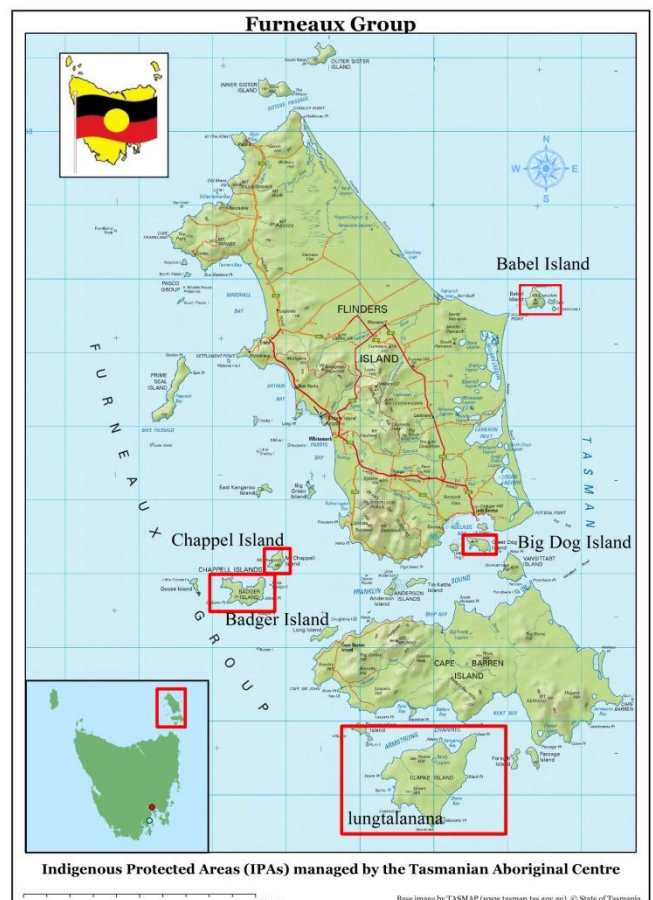
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Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre Inc.



Big Dog



- The crew have been continuing their work maintaining tracks and controlling mirror bush in rookeries. It is a hard weed to kill and always needs to be followed up.
- In August the team surveyed the islands for blue gum and white gum as possible habitat for the endangered Swift Parrot and Forty Spotted pardalote. Although the chances of these species being found on the island are slim, many other species were recorded including the Nankeen Kestrel and a range of honeyeaters.
- Fireweed has taken over large areas of rookery since a fire last winter.



TAC Muttonbird surveys

- To help us understand the health of the muttonbird population we have done a lot of research into the best way to survey the birds. A TAC survey plan has been made that involves surveying Big Dog, Chappell and Babel every year in December to see how many holes are occupied by birds. This way we can compare our information to that taken by scientists in the past (like Irynej Skira) and to other islands in the area that have similar surveys done by the state government. This season (Dec '13) on Babel and Big Dog, an average of 57% of burrows were occupied, compared with 33% on other muttonbird islands in the region. Although our numbers are higher than other islands, the general population showed a significant drop in numbers, and the biggest drop in numbers since monitoring in the area started in 1997.
- We intend this to be the first of continuing and consistent annual monitoring.
- Next year we hope to weigh birds as part of the survey to assess the birds health after their long journey back to the burrows in spring.



lungtalanana



A hot fire on lungtalanana in February '14 has burnt a large percentage of the island. Thankfully no one was injured, and due to the hard work of the caretakers, land management crew and fire service only some minor damage was caused to infrastructure. The fire will have a very big effect on the landscape due to the large area and intense heat of the fire. The island was evacuated during the fire, while some staff remained to put out spot fires and grass fires around the homestead. Ambrose's crew, who were there doing maintenance on the airstrip and completing annual weed control, are now focussing on helping Ricky and Anita with the mess that the fire has left behind.



Badger Island



- In December '13 a trip was made to Badger with a consultant to see whether there is any potential for 'Carbon farming' on the island. This would involve some of the island being revegetated with forest. At this stage we need more information before it can seriously be considered.
- Badger's woodlands have been largely decreased due to clearing, fire and grazing over the last century. A large area of remaining sheoaks in the centre of the island are falling down due to their shallow roots (see photo). There are no young trees growing to replace the dead trees, although there is plenty of seed. It is thought that the large wallaby and sheep population on the island are eating all the young tree saplings before they are able to grow up.
- Drummer's crew has made a wallaby proof fenced off area to stop grazing. Over time we will see if this allows seeds to germinate and establish.
- The islands heritage sites (as identified in the Badger Cultural and Heritage plan) are currently being surveyed.



Badger



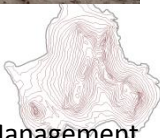
Chappell Island



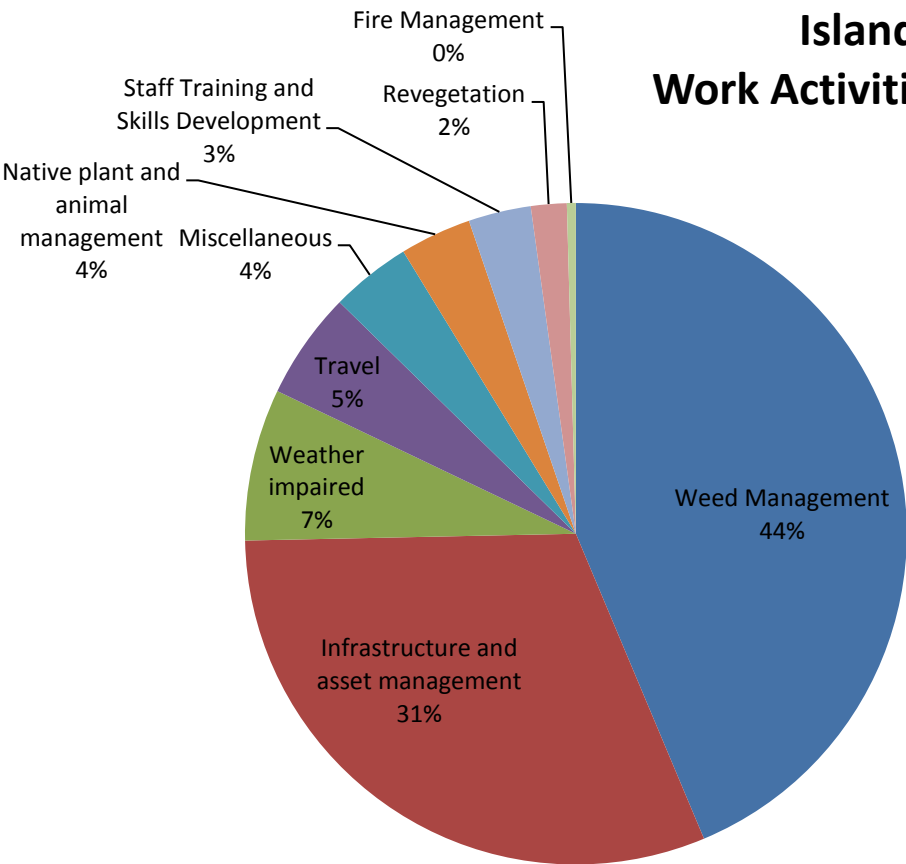
- Ambrose crew continue the battle against boxthorn on Chappell. The problem is big, but the crew are organised and hard working, using the cut and paste method, and following up all their work. The aim is to protect the muttonbird rookeries, and a large area in the south of the island has been completely cleared.
- Through Ambrose trip reports we are getting an insight into the nature of Chappell, the whales off the coast, the Cape Barren Geese breeding, the sliding tigers...
- Heritage sites will be photographed and inspected for any immediate work to preserve them early this year.



Babel Island



- Since getting a new Land Management tractor onto the island in late winter 2013 a 3.65ha area that was once entirely boxthorn has been cleared by Drummers Crew (see photo). The area will be carefully monitored for regrowth. Some native species will regenerate naturally while some areas that are now bare are being planted with local tussocks and shrubs so that it doesn't become a sand blow or is again taken over by weeds.
- Due to disrepair and strong winds the old generation muttonbird sheds are falling down. ALCT have begun work to stabilise the sheds that remain.



**Island Work Crews
Work Activities Late 2013**