

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Weeding out environmental issues

The volunteer group Sea Spurge Remote Area TeamS (SPRATS) will be running a coastal weed management workshop at UTAS today.

SPRATS is a WildCare group that was formed in 2007 by a group of volunteer bushwalkers and bushcare people who combine remote area bushwalking with weed management.

The aim of the group is to eradicate all sea spurge and marram grass from the 600km of Tasmania's west coast and south coast between Strahan and Cockle Creek. Sea spurge is a weed that is devastating coastal landforms and ecosystems across Southern Australia.

Dr Jon Marsden-Smedley, Research Fellow in the UTAS School of Geography and Environmental Studies, is conducting research into sea spurge and marram grass and is involved in SPRATS.

“On Tasmania's south and west coasts, sea spurge is causing major adverse impacts.

“The majority of this coastline is World Heritage listed for its outstanding natural and cultural values,” Dr Marsden-Smedley said.

“Sea spurge could also adversely impact birds like hooded plovers, pied oystercatchers and sooty oystercatchers, which have their strong-hold on this coast, along with the critically endangered orange-bellied parrot.”

Some of the topics covered in the workshop will include volunteering, approaches to weed management, weed threats and minimising the impact on shorebirds.

Dr Marsden-Smedley said a critical aspect of SPRATS is combining high level recreation with effective environmental work.

“This means we do the environmental work, but also take the time to swim, snorkel, take photographs or just sit and enjoy one of the world's last great wilderness areas.

“In doing so, volunteers have a highly rewarding time which means they return season after season.”

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