

# book review

by Clio

## MAATSUYKER THROUGH OUR EYES

Caretaking on Tasmania's wild and remote Maatsuyker Island

On busy mornings, when you're running late, the grey faceless buildings of the city are closing in and everyone in southern Tasmania is trying to get into the same car park, the craving for solitude can be strong. Perhaps that solitude could be found in the corner of a cafe, but you'd probably still be dreaming of being alone somewhere more remote, with scenery that demands to be looked at. Somewhere like Maatsuyker Island perhaps?

For most of us, dreaming of Maatsuyker is as far as we'll get, our knowledge limited to photographs. The volunteer Friends of Maatsuyker Wildcare Group visit periodically to care for the buildings and help with the island's 'management', as do Parks and Wildlife staff and their contractors. But for an extended stay on the island you need to sign up for the volunteer caretaker program. Paul Richardson and his partner Amanda Walker stayed for six months over the winter of 2015. As a couple who fish commercially, they were not so much seeking solitude as to know a place that was already familiar, but only from a distance.

This book is an absorbing and beautiful telling of their story, with Paul's text lavishly illustrated by Amanda's wonderful photographs. As they say in their preface there are surprisingly few images taken on the island, and this book more than plugs that particular gap. Paul covers all aspects of the experience, starting with the excitement of having their application accepted. Just a short time is available to organise six months of their lives into 39 plastic bins weighing less than 750 kg, with 190 daily meal plans. In exchange for having the island pretty much to themselves there was work to be done: recording daily weather observations, cutting grass, repairing storm damage, managing the veggie garden and looking after the island's buildings. Amanda's camera records all this, as well as their exploration of their temporary home. Her shots of weather rolling in across the ocean are stunning.

Amanda and Paul chose winter for their stay as they wanted to see the Southern Ocean 'in full flight. You know, 10 metre seas and 70 knot winds'. Spells of such weather, and the aftermath, are described almost reverentially, while the camera captures the majesty of weather at its rawest. Bad weather brings extra work, checking buildings and equipment and clearing fallen trees; all part of the experience and rewarded by the 'indulgence' of a bottle of wine after the 1500 weather observation. The stay is not without drama. Paul describes how an unwelcome bout of pneumonia coincided with a lightning strike that knocked out all power in a dramatic and damaging fashion. 'Never a dull day, never a dull moment'.

This handsome, well-designed book will delight anyone with an interest in the islands and oceans of Tasmania and the people who make their lives there.



by Paul Richardson and  
Amanda Walker (2018)  
Forty South Publishing

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311 pages | hardback  
Illustrated  
(lots of colour photos)

## knot so hard

a series by Frank Charles Brown

### No 46 – Strangle Knot B

This knot has been described previously, but this alternative method of tying might be interesting and even useful. The knot is reported to be nearly as secure as the Constrictor and possibly a little easier to untie.



1 STR-B-1 Make a  
Double Thumb Knot.



2 STR-B-2 Twist the  
loop generated.



3 STR-B-3 Bring the two  
loops created and pass



4 STR-B-4 Dress down.