



FOFI News



The newsletter of the Friends of French Island National Park Inc.

April 2013



Pied Oystercatchers and Swans

Mick Douglas

PROJECT DAYS

We take the 10.15 am ferry from Stony Point. If you plan to come, **please contact Murray Bouchier** on 9876 1410 at least 7 days before the project day.

April 13 Swamp monitoring

May 11 King Quail search

June 8 Planting with FI Landcare

July 6 Western Port wader count

ACTIVITIES REPORTS

January 12: Albions and Spit Point.

We were fortunate to have a cool overcast day after an extended period of hot and dry weather. Mick transported five members to Albions Forest in the far east of the Island to carry out a bird survey.

Albions Forest was utilised by the former McLeod Prison Farm and Mick estimates the forest regrowth to be approximately 40 years old and several trees to be 60 years old. It is a valuable asset which was reflected in the bird life we encountered.

Martin's sharp ears soon picked up the call of a Rufous Fantail which was flitting around in the upper story with a group of 6 Grey Fantails. The call is somewhat higher than that of a Grey Fantail. It seemed odd to see a Rufous Fantail in such a dry habitat as one normally associates them with moist gullies and creek lines.

Species recorded for Albions: Eastern Rosella (2), White-browed Scrubwren (1), Striated Thornbill (2), Brown Thornbill (5), Varied Sittella (4), Grey Fantail (9), Rufous Fantail (1), Spotted Pardalote (2), Silvereye (4), Grey Currawong (1), Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (1), Grey Shrike Thrush (1) Crescent Honeyeater (8) Yellow-faced Honeyeater (2) Eastern Spinebill (1) Yellow Robin (2), Olive Whistler (2), Golden Whistler (8), Rufous Whistler (3).

FRIENDS OF FRENCH ISLAND NP

President: Frances Garner. **Secretary:** Meredith Sherlock (3/11 Raymond Ave, Frankston 3199: ph. 9770 5229). **Editor:** Geoff Lacey

We went on to Spit Point where we had lunch overlooking Westernport Bay and we took pleasure in watching 40 Tree Martin's flying low over the mangroves. A group of 14 Red-necked Stints wheeled around us. A further count included White Ibis (6), Great Egret (2), Pied Oystercatcher (5), Silver Gull (180), Crested Tern (12), Caspian Tern (2), Pacific Gull (2) and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (18).

Our thanks go to Mick for transport and companionship for the day.

Bette Mitchell

February 9: Western Port Wader Count

We formed 3 separate groups for this wader count. Dave Stephenson drove one group, consisting of Murray, John, Diane, Liz and Geoff, to **Rams Island**. There were very few waders present at this site.

We did not wade out to the island but we could see more than 50 Fairy Terns wheeling round at great speed, obviously protecting their chicks and bringing in food from the bay. The Fairy Terns have been breeding here, in more than one session, since the beginning of December. In addition we could see a pair of Caspian Terns with one young bird.

We then travelled to **Chilcott Rocks** on the west coast and walked south towards the main high tide roost. We counted about 100 Pied Oystercatchers, 18 Lapwings but no small waders. We travelled north to **Fairhaven piers**, on which there were 3 Pied and 39 Little Pied Cormorants. Our total count for Black Swans on the west coast was over 530.



Fairy Tern Mick Douglas

As this was also the occasion of the Summer Waterfowl Count, we visited some of the inland swamps as well. At **Bullock Swamp** we found a lot of waders foraging in the very shallow water: about 400 Red-necked Stints, 10 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and 2 Curlew Sandpipers. But the biggest surprise was a Black-tailed Native-hen at a smaller pond.

We observed a Yellow-billed Spoonbill at Rowe's, and we counted more than 100 Cape Barren Geese in swamps and farm paddocks along Coast Road.

Meanwhile, a second group, comprising Chris Chandler and 3 people from Birdlife Australia were driven by Lois Airs to near the EcoFarm. They then had a long walk to **Spit Point** and **Bluegum Point**. They observed a surprising number of waders at Bluegum Point: 1085 Curlew Sandpipers, 1200 Red-necked Stints and 2 Red Knots.

The third group, comprising Martin, Des and Meg, walked from Tankerton to **Tortoise Head**. Martin reports as follows.

Upon arrival at the beach north of Tortoise Head we quickly detected numbers of small waders just above the high tide mark (mainly Red-necked Stints and a few Red-capped Plovers). After much careful observation we decided that there were two Lesser Sand-plovers amongst the smaller waders. The longer legs of these birds and more upright stance helped us realise this was something different.

Approaching Tortoise Head we could see various birds of prey circling above the headland with a number of Little Ravens. Swamp Harrier, White-bellied Sea-Eagle, Little Eagle, Whistling Kite and a Brown Falcon were all easily observed.

The spotting scope came in very handy at the wader roost as we counted the Eastern Curlews, Pied and Little Pied Cormorants and Caspian Terns (2). No smaller waders were seen here but eventually we detected a single leg-flagged Whimbrel amongst the Curlews. The 'usual' solitary Sooty Oystercatcher was also seen along with a few Pied Oystercatchers.

Geoff Lacey & Martin O'Brien

March 9: Weeding near Freeman Point

Arriving on the 10.15 ferry six FOFI members met up with ranger Mick Douglas. He took us across the island to an area of open forest west of the EcoFarm, where Boneseed had taken a hold. Having worked in this place in the past, it was rewarding to find that the number of plants was quite low, and so it did not take long to remove those that still remained.

After removing the Boneseed, we moved to an area between the EcoFarm and the Freeman Point beach. This area was once covered with large Cluster Pines which Parks Victoria removed some time ago. However, each year regeneration of seedlings takes place. Small pines are easy to

remove, so it is important to pull them out before they reach some size. We worked for some time in the heat and we think that all the pine seedlings were removed.

We then moved to the beach and had lunch under the shade of an old Coast Banksia. Two members took the opportunity for a swim.

After lunch we visited Long Point. We could see many birds to the west of Rams Island and on Bird Rock (exposed at low tide), including: 28 Pelican, 8 Great Egret, 8 White Ibis, 8 Pacific Gull, many Swans.



Great Egret Mick Douglas

Many Great Egrets have been seen around French Island shores this season. The biggest count was 34, recorded by Chris just west of Peck Point on 6 February.

We then shifted to the west coast for further bird counts. Birds at Linley's Swamp included 1 Whistling Kite & 65 Royal Spoonbills.

Thanks to Mick and FOFI members for the good day's work.
Murray Bouchier

Johnny Loy is leaving Australia

I joined FOFI in 2009 and took part in the King Quail search led by the late Des Quinn in September. Since then I looked forward to each outing; the feel of the island and that wonderful group of people touched me. French Island is a special place where community and simplicity still take place. And FOFI is a rare example of keen modest naturalists who simply love the bush.

I will be leaving Australia in few weeks. I just wanted to express my great appreciation to this group who organize and carry on all the surveys and outings. And I wish FOFI will grow and gather momentum for the years to come. Keep watching and caring for that wonderful place, French Island.

Johnny Loy

FOFI wishes Johnny all the best for his future.

FOFI NEWS BY E-MAIL?

If you receive FOFI News in the post but would prefer to get it by e-mail—in colour—please send a message to Geoff [glacey@unimelb.edu.au].

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