



FOFI News



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

August 2014

PROJECT DAYS

The ferry now leaves **Stony Point at 10.00 am** (not 10.15). If you plan to come, **please contact Murray Bouchier** on 9876 1410 at least 7 days before the project day.

August 9, September 20, October 11: Activities to be advised after consultation with rangers.

November 22: Western Port wader survey.



Pied Oystercatchers

James Vincent

ACTIVITIES REPORTS

July 26: Western Port wader survey

Four FOFI members: Murray, Helenna, James and Geoff, together with ranger Scott Coutts, faced cold north-west winds as we carried out the regular winter wader count.

We went first to Long Point for the **Rams Island** count. There were 6 Pied Oystercatchers, a pair of Caspian Terns and a few other birds, although we suspect there may have been more huddled up, out of our view, on the leeward side of the island. A Swamp Harrier flew over Long Point.

On farmland adjacent to Long Point Road and Tankerton Road were many White and Straw-necked Ibis; also Cape Barren Geese and a Yellow-billed Spoonbill at a dam.

Scott then drove us to the **west coast wader roost**. The saltmarsh was full of water and that is where we found most of the birds. We walked north along the beach to near Chilcott Rocks, had lunch sheltering behind saltbush, and counted the birds in the saltmarsh in stages on our return walk. These included about 80 Pied Oystercatchers, 11 Shelduck and 1 Shoveler. An adult Sea-Eagle and a Whistling Kite flew over the inner edge of the marsh. There were 118 Chestnut Teal swimming in the bay.

FRIENDS OF FRENCH ISLAND NP

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

We moved on to Fairhaven piers, which provided roost for 1 Pied Cormorant and 36 Little Pied Cormorants. Further north at Mini Inlet we were surprised to find a Little Egret—quite uncommon on French Island—along with 13 White-faced Herons.

Although not part of the official survey, we had time to check out the swamps along Coast Road. Rowe's north swamp had many birds, especially Chestnut and Grey Teal, and we were surprised and delighted to see 15 Caspian Terns (unmistakable with their red beaks) roosting together on a sand spit. We had never seen that many together before. A Swamp Harrier flew over. Linley's Swamp was nearly full. There were a few birds, including 5 Hoary-headed Grebes.

At this stage, having accomplished our main objectives, we adjourned to the store for a good cup of coffee. Then with the little time left we decided to check out the Tortoise Head saltmarsh. This marsh was also full. So we managed to count a few extra birds before it was time to meet the ferry for the trip home.



Sweet Wattle along Coast Rd

James Vincent

August 9: Sea-Eagles and photo point

There were only three of us on this activity: Murray, Scott and Geoff. We had three tasks: (1) to check on Sea-Eagle breeding, (2) inspect the vegetation at The Anchorage, and (3) update a photo point. It was

a pleasant, cloudy day, and we were generally sheltered from the keen north-west wind.



White-bellied Sea-Eagle

Johnny Loy

Sea-Eagles. The number of known nesting sites for the species in the Western Port area has increased over recent decades. There was only one site in the early 1980s—on the south coast of French Island—but today at least 6 sites: 3 on French Island and one at each of Phillip Island, Devilbend Reservoir and Quail Island. This increase has been achieved partly through the creation and upgrading of a number of reserves in the area, in particular French Island National Park.

On this occasion we checked out the newest site, in a tall tree on the south-west of the island. As we approached along the coast an adult Sea-Eagle flew out from the nest area, circled around, landed somewhere and returned a little while later. We hope this is an indication that successful breeding is in progress this year. Annual monitoring of breeding sites during the nesting season is important in order to determine how successful breeding is over time. All breeding data are added to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas database.



Burley Cliffs, The Anchorage

Geoff Lacey

The Anchorage. We had lunch at this site, then walked along the shore, examining the splendid old Cretaceous sandstone formation at Burley Cliffs. In parts of the shore you can see the interface between this sandstone and the basalt that came later and covered it. Here and there some stunted specimens of Blackwood and Drooping Sheoak find a foothold on the cliffs. The vegetation above the cliffs looked in pretty good condition. Shining Coast Pomaderris (the only stand on the island) was thriving. It seems to fit in well among the Black Wattle, but in places it is being squeezed by expanding Swamp Paperbark.

A little higher up we were surprised to find several fine specimens of Austral Indigo (generally a forest shrub) growing among bracken and sedges. Towards the western and lower end of the cliffs there is a good bit of Small-leaf Bramble and an increasing range of shrubs, including Hop Goodenia, Sticky Boobiella and Twiggy Daisy-bush. The main weed problem seemed to be little patches of Bridal Creeper.

There were plenty of birds, including a Great Egret in the mangroves; a Crescent Honeyeater above the cliffs; Australian Ravens, Eastern Rosellas and Grey Currawongs in trees to the west; and a pair each of Cape Barren Geese and Shelducks, together with 12 White Ibis in the wet farmlands along Anchorage Road. Other raptors for the day included a Black-shouldered Kite near Tankerton Rd and a Brown Falcon north of Tankerton.



Mosquito Creek forest -- photo point

Geoff Lacey

Photo Points. Back in March 2007 Mick Douglas, Murray Bourchier and Geoff Lacey began a program of setting up 'photo points' in a number of the representative ecosystems of French Island. The purpose was to have a base for tracking changes in these ecosystems (for example in the forest understorey) over the years. At each point we drove in a stake (the top painted red) to mark the photo point; we recorded GPS readings, took photos, recording their direction, and made brief notes on the site. All data will be recorded on a disk, so that in future people can go to the same sites and observe the changes.

We began a second set of photos at the same sites in 2011 to check on the changes in the ecosystem, and we completed one of the two remaining sites on this work day. This site is in the forest in part of the national park along Mosquito Creek. We found that there has been a significant growth of new wattles and shrubs in the understorey (see picture). Our previous photo in 2007 (in the long dry period) showed an understorey of mainly bracken and leaf litter.

Production of this newsletter is funded through Melbourne Water's Community Grants Program.

