



FOFI News



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

January 2012

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.

- Feb 11** Westernport wader count
- Mar 10** Monitoring at Gartside's
- Apr 14** Weeding at Freeman Point
- May 12** King Quail search



Bullock Swamp

Wal Mitchell

FOFI ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held at 10 Orrong Ave, Frankston
Wednesday 15 February at 7.00 pm. All welcome.

ACTIVITIES REPORTS

October 8: Mt Wellington bird count

A small group of FOFI members attended our activity to monitor birds numbers and species, especially at Mt Wellington. The results are sent to the database of the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.

Mick drove us to Chilcott Rocks to check the wader roost as migratory waders are now returning from the Northern Hemisphere. Westernport Bay looked beautiful and the water was calm—such ideal conditions for counting birds. About 80 Pied Oystercatchers took to the air as we entered the beach and what a sight as they wheeled above us protesting loudly at our presence.

We were pleased to see a large flock of waders consisting of Red-necked Stints and a few Red-capped Plovers amongst them. We estimated a flock of 600 birds. They flew up and down the beach turning and wheeling in a tight group with an occasional flash of white of their undersides as they turned. It is surely one of the wonders of the natural world to see a group of migratory waders in flight.

There were many Black Swans with young on the saltmarsh and 3 Australian Shelduck. Offshore there

FRIENDS OF FRENCH ISLAND NP

President: Frances Garner (10 Orrong Avenue Frankston 3199: ph. 9766 1009)

Secretary: Meredith Sherlock. **Editor:** Geoff Lacey

were 20 Chestnut Teal, 16 Little Pied Cormorant and 6 Pied Cormorant.

A flat tyre forced us back to the depot for Mick to get a spare wheel and we had lunch there and noted a Pallid Cuckoo calling in the distance. We enjoyed views of a Wedge-tailed Eagle flying over and being mobbed by a pair of Ravens, and Golden and Rufous Whistlers and a Grey Fantail in the garden.

We then made our way to Mount Wellington where the orchids and wildflowers were flowering in profusion. Mick showed us several Flying Duck Orchids. There were several spider-orchids in flower, the speciality of the day being the French Island Spider-orchid. There were many Sun-orchids to be seen, just waiting for the sun to come out to bloom. It was also interesting to see the sedge-like grass, Hooker Fescue, in the Melaleuca gully.

The birds were fairly plentiful at Mt Wellington and numbers were up on last year. Species included: Crescent Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Fantailed, Pallid and Shining Bronze Cuckoos, Nankeen Kestrel, and there were 23 Magpies.

The sighting for the day would have to be the close views of a male Olive Whistler along Link Road. We rarely see Olive Whistlers, although they are often heard calling at various sites on French Island, and it was a very exciting observation.

Thanks again to Mick for transport.. *Bett Mitchell*

November 26: BOCA Western Port Wader Survey

Attendees: Murray Bouchier, John Prytherch, Art Terry, Ken Harris, Johnny Loy, Geoff Lacey, Martin O'Brien, Des Palmer, Bett & Wal Mitchell and ranger Mick Douglas.

Ten hardy FOFI members endured the wettest outing in a long time to undertake the quarterly Western Port wader count. The weather pattern for the Saturday was for showers with periods of rain and locally heavy falls.

Ken and Johnny agreed to make the trek to Tortoise Head via the saltmarsh while the remainder of our group went directly to Rams Island. The road to Long Point turned up a number of Cape Barren Geese adjacent to farm dams in the paddocks.

The fence above the beach produced some interesting bush birds with Grey Shrike-thrush and a Common Blackbird being heard. A single Swamp Harrier circled low over the paddock. Other birds recorded at Long Point were a Brown Falcon, an Australian Magpie and a Skylark on a fence wire.

On this visit to Rams Island the tides were more to our liking with a fairly wide isthmus still connecting the beach to the island. We knew something was afoot on the island, as a pair of angry Caspian Terns immediately flew up to 'escort' us away from the island as soon as we showed ourselves. The harassment continued all the time three of us were going to/from the island, with Geoff being pooped on by a very well aimed tern.

A quick check of the island revealed only a small number of Red-necked Stints and an Eastern Curlew but there were two downy Caspian Tern chicks. A pair of Black Swan were nesting on the eastern end of the island. 2 Pied Oystercatchers and one Sooty Oystercatcher were also recorded, and only 2 Red-capped Plovers on the beach.

There were Pied and Little Pied Cormorants on the old jetty pylons and a small flock of Pied Cormorants well out on Bird Rock which was still above water at the time. No Crested Terns were seen in the area.

Even with the poor weather we proceeded to check the other wader roost on Fairhaven beach. The wind had picked up dramatically and changed to a strong westerly but we still managed to record 600 Red-necked Stints, around 250 Black Swan, including many large young, and 8 Chestnut Teal. In the saltmarsh were about 100 Pied Oystercatchers, 20 White-faced Heron, 2 Australian Shelduck, 20 Masked Lapwing, a few White-fronted Chats and a single Eastern Great Egret (rarely recorded at this location). On the beach were a pair of Cape Barren Geese and a Red-capped Plover nest with 2 eggs.

At Tortoise Head Ken and Johnny recorded 130 Eastern Curlews, 17 Ruddy Turnstones, a Nankeen Kestrel, a Black-shouldered Kite and a Little Eagle (not often recorded on the island).

Thanks ranger Mick for transporting us in the rainy conditions. Mick not only ensured our group didn't have to be out in the rain all day but took us to the Tankerton Store for a warm cuppa and sweet slice.

Martin O'Brien

December 10: Swamp survey

After 2 years of good rainfall following the long drought, several of the French Island swamps have plenty of water. So 8 FOFI members and Mick Douglas set out to check their present state.



Linley's Swamp Geoff Lacey

Bullock Swamp is now a vast sheet of shallow water. It looked beautiful under the grey sky. We stood on the grassy surrounds of the south bank and observed. Among the many bird species, we were most delighted to watch 43 Greenshanks roosting in the distance at the water's edge, with 14 Curlew Sandpipers. In contrast in the foreground a gentle Pipit moved around in the grass and a Black-fronted Dotterel kept to the narrow muddy fringe.

A Swamp Harrier flew over and put to flight about 100 ducks, mostly Grey Teal. Two Kestrels were in the air too. Way over near the house there were many White Ibis with 2 Royal and 3 Yellow-billed Spoonbills.

After lunch we travelled down Coast Road from where we had good views of Linley's Swamp and 3 other swamps on private land—all full of water and with plenty of birds.

Further south we explored Duscher Swamp, which has some big pools and is elsewhere soggy or covered with shallow water, with lush growth of water plants, especially Swamp Club-sedge and Broad-leaf Rush and some big clumps of Pithy Sword-sedge.

Dark clouds were approaching with rumbles of thunder, while Pobblebonk frogs were calling on all sides. We were delighted to see 6 White-necked Herons foraging in the water—uncommon on the island. There were also 11 Masked Lapwings, a black-shouldered Kite, a Little Grassbird and many Swampheens.

Our final visit was to Clump Lagoon. It is full to overflowing and there were some White Ibis and other birds. Many thanks to Mick for transporting us on this wonderful day.

Geoff Lacey

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



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUE JANUARY 2012

Name

Address

Phone No.

E-mail

Membership per person or household: \$5

Please return to Mrs Marg Medley, Hon. Treasurer, 11 Neville St, Mooroolbark 3138