



# FOFI News



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

January 2015

## FRIENDS OF FRENCH ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

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

### PROJECT DAYS

The ferry leaves Stony Point at 10.00 am. If you plan to come, please contact Murray Bourchier on 9876 1410 at least 7 days before the project day.

**February 21:** Western Port wader survey.

**March 21, April 18, May 16:** Activities to be advised after consultation with rangers.

### FOFI ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

will be held at 10 Orrong Ave, Frankston  
Wednesday 18 February at 7.00 pm. All welcome.



Eastern Curlews & Whimbrel

Wal Mitchell

### ACTIVITIES REPORTS

#### November 22: Western Port Wader Count

A group of nine people turned out for the Western Port wader count on French Island.

**Tortoise Head.** One group consisting of Bett and Wal Mitchell, Meg McMillan and Ken Harris walked south through the saltmarsh to the high tide wader roost at Tortoise Head.

A pair of Cape Barren Geese were seen on the salt marsh at the start of our walk and three Black Shouldered Kites and a Swamp Harrier flew overhead.

It was high tide when we reached Tortoise Head and a good number of waders were already at the roost. A pair of Caspian Terns were nesting on the shingle and we conducted the count as quickly as possible to minimise disturbance to the breeding birds who were very agitated by our presence.

A large flock of 124 Eastern Curlew and one Whimbrel together with 13 Ruddy Turnstone, 200 Red-necked Stint and 9 Red-capped Plover occupied the roost.

There were also 11 Pied and 1 Little Pied Cormorant, 5 Sooty Oystercatcher, 8 Pied Oystercatcher, 2 Pacific Gull, 6 Silver Gull, 1 White faced Heron and 1 Pelican. Offshore there were 4 Chestnut Teal and 39 Black Swan.

A Fairy Tern flew past as we were leaving the roost, which gives hope that they may return to French Island to breed once again this year.

We climbed up on to Tortoise Head to view the bay east of Tortoise Head. Ken nearly stepped on a very large Copperhead Snake which seemed unmoved by our presence.

There were few birds on the salt marsh but the Swamp Harrier flew around us and 2 White Ibis and 4 Great Egret were seen in the distance. On the bay to the east there were 60 Black Swans. *Bett Mitchell*



Pied Oystercatcher nest

Wal Mitchell

**Rams Island.** Meanwhile Scott Coutts drove Murray, Anna, Rob, Liz and Geoff to Rams Island. As it was well before full tide, the causeway was exposed and two of us went on to the island for a quick check for waders on the far side.

As we approached the island a Caspian Tern flew off its nest, flying towards us and protesting loudly. Waders included 25 Curlew Sandpiper, 14 Ruddy Turnstone, 6 Pied Oystercatcher, 1 Sooty Oystercatcher, 12 Red-capped Plover and 50 Stint. There were a few other bird species as well.

Driving back on Long Point Road we observed 20 Shelduck, 1 White Ibis, 1 Royal Spoonbill and 5 Galahs, all in a grassy paddock.

**West coast.** We then drove to Chilcott Rocks and slowly walked south along the west coast to the main wader roost, counting all species. We had lunch there at high tide. Birds observed included 290 Black Swan, 80 Straw-necked Ibis (flying over), 30 Pied Oystercatcher, 24 Red-capped Plover and 170 Stint.

The numbers of migratory waders counted at Rams Island and on the West coast these days are

much lower than we used to get in the 1990s. The main factor is probably the loss of habitat at the stopover locations in East Asia, for example through the enclosure of tidal mudflats in South Korea.

Scott then drove us a little further north to the Fairhaven campsite, where we observed 16 Little Pied Cormorants perched on the old piers. Two of us also inspected the grove of Coast Banksia just to the south. This seemed to be in good condition, although a number of the trees are senescing and being replaced by some new saplings. The bright flowers of Variable Groundsel were conspicuous along the shore.

Geoff Lacey



Variable Groundsel

Geoff Lacey

### December 20: French Island swamps

Three FOFI members and two visitors from a Mornington Peninsula group took part in this bird count on the swamps. Terry Easy drove us to the sites in the Parks Victoria vehicle. It was a beautiful overcast mild day.

**Clump Lagoon** is full. It was difficult to gain access to a good viewing spot because of the dense Melaleuca and some Blackberry. As the name implies, there are big clumps of healthy Tall Sedge in the water. We counted 90 Grey Teal, 30 Chestnut Teal, 20 Black Duck & 4 Hoary-headed Grebes. The many bush birds around the swamp included Fantailed Cuckoo, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, and we listened to the melodious calls of the Grey Shrike-thrush, Rufous and Golden Whistlers.

**Heifer Swamp** The track to Heifer Swamp featured Swallows, Tree Martins, Dusky Woodswallows and Eastern Rosellas. Terry's intimate knowledge of the track system enabled us to quickly find the best access points to Heifer Swamp and the obscure track into Little Heifer. Somewhat to our surprise, both swamps were full of water.

Access to Heifer Swamp is very difficult because of dense Melaleuca all around the edge. However, 9 Freckled Ducks were flushed; they flew around and settled. We had also seen two of these rare birds at Linley's Swamp in September. There were a few other waterbirds near the north end of the swamp. Reed Warblers were calling. Bird numbers probably

vary a lot throughout the day as birds fly in from the bay or from one swamp to another.

**Little Heifer Swamp** has many clumps of Tall Sedge in good condition around the edge and some in the water. However, we saw very few birds on this occasion.

After a leisurely lunch under some trees we set out to check the swamps along the west coast.

**Bullock Swamp** was low and drying out. We counted 80 Cape Barren Geese and 6 Masked Lapwing. There were also 65 Royal Spoonbill and 53 White Ibis in the adjacent Molloy's paddocks and pond.

Geoff Molloy showed us the remains of a Messmate that had been struck by lightning a week earlier. The tree exploded.

**Rowe's Swamps** had water and a good number of birds, including 32 Grey Teal, 24 Masked Lapwing and 13 Greenshank.

**Linleys Swamp** also had plenty of water and was, as usual, rich in bird life: Highlights were: 4 Yellow-billed Spoonbill, 3 White Ibis, 9 Pacific Black Duck, 163 Grey Teal, 18 Chestnut Teal, 5 Shelduck, 2 Shoveler & 6 Purple Swamphen.

Geoff Lacey

### January 17: Albions Forest and Spit Point.

Our annual survey along Albions Track produced good numbers of birds and the forest looked good after the plentiful January rain. There was a beautiful Hyacinth Orchid alongside the track.

The birds were very active in the cool conditions and we were delighted to have excellent views of a pair of Satin Flycatchers. Wal's sharp eyes spotted a Scarlet Robin. Crescent Honeyeaters were the most numerous of the honeyeaters and were calling all along the track. Grey Fantails were also abundant and there were large flocks of Silvereyes.

We enjoyed lunch on the beach followed by a walk and bird count along the edge of the mangroves and saltmarsh to Spit Point. Numbers were fairly low but included 2 Great Egrets and 5 White-faced Herons.

Our sincere thanks to Terry Easy for providing transport on the day.

Bett Mitchell



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### MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL DUE JANUARY 2015

Name

Address

Phone No.

E-mail

Membership per person or household: \$10

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