



FOFI News



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

July 2013

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.

Aug. 10, Sep. 21, Oct. 19: Activities to be advised after consultation with rangers.

Nov. 16 Western Port wader count

FRIENDS NETWORK DISCOVERY WEEKEND

This year's Discovery Weekend (previously called a "Conference") will be at Oasis Camp in **Mt Evelyn** from **13 to 15 September**. There will be talks and a range of excursions

Further information: email: friendsvic@hotmail.com.

ACTIVITIES REPORTS

April 13: Wetland monitoring

Present: Murray Bouchier, Chris Chandler, Geoff Lacey, Martin O'Brien & Ranger Mick Douglas.

In spite of strong northerly winds, our day started well with a pair of Hoary-headed Grebes adjacent to the Stony Point jetty and the usual distant Black Swans, Ibis and a few Eastern Great Egret south of the point near the mangrove boundary.

Mick Douglas first transported our group to Linley's Swamp. This had continued to dry since February but the shallow water meant good foraging habitat for small waders and good refuge for larger birds waiting out the tide change. Highlights on our list of 34 species were: 6 Red-kneed Dotterels, close views of 3 Flame Robins sitting on fence wires, and then later 8 Greenshanks that came in and landed.

It wasn't long before hunger pangs brought us to the Redbill Creek saltmarsh. On the way in we noted good regeneration of Manna Gums. From the marsh we could see many hundreds of Black Swans in Western Port, a Whistling Kite, a Swamp Harrier, a Great Egret, and 2 Pied Cormorants flying north.

We proceeded to Clump Lagoon via Redbill Road. The lagoon was full but we could see no birds in the water. The southern side had received an ecological burn the previous week, but still a number of bush birds could be heard nearby: An agitated Brown Falcon came up to observe us through the blackened landscape. Its chook-like cackling call made it a female.

FRIENDS OF FRENCH ISLAND NP

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

Next was Heifer Swamp, which was still full of water. Chris waded out through the wetland vegetation to record the depth of 700 mm. In spite of the dense Melaleuca we managed to observe small numbers of Grey Teal and Coots. A single Swamp Harrier flew over.

Little Heifer Swamp was also fairly full. The eastern shore is lined with dense Tall Sedge. There were 2 Hoary-headed Grebes, a Moorhen and small numbers of Black Ducks, Grey Teal and Coots.

Another great day monitoring the island's wetland habitats with FOFI members and supported by Parks Victoria.

Martin O'Brien



Great Egret Mick Douglas

May 11: King Quail habitat and swamps

Murray, John, Geoff and Mick set out on this beautiful day to search for the elusive King Quail. We first searched in short heath with open bands of sedge along Link Road, where the species was last seen, and then in similar habitat east of Clump Lagoon. We did not find any quail.

These sites had been burnt about 6 years ago and the vegetation was in fine condition, but the very dry summer would not have been favourable to the quail. However, there were a few bush birds. Also 14 Black-Cockatoos flew over, a pair of Whistling Kites circled round and a Brown Falcon sped past.

After lunch in the heathland, we drove west along Redbill Road and were delighted to see a flock of 30 Blue-winged Parrots fly by.

We headed south again along Coast Road. Tony Rowe's north swamp had water. We counted 100 White Ibis, 48 Cape Barren Geese, 20 Grey Teal, 22 Wood Duck, 6 Black Duck and 5 Masked Lapwing.

At Duscher Swamp we searched unsuccessfully for King Quail. The swamp had been nearly full in the winter but is now completely dry, easy to walk across and with good cover of sedges and grasses. There are a number of dead Tree Everlastings that had grown on the swamp floor in the dry years and were killed off when the swamp filled.

Around the edges of the swamp we saw or heard Silvereyes, Grey Fantails, a Spotted Pardalote and a crescent Honeyeater.
Geoff Lacey



The planting *Geoff Lacey*

June 8: Planting near Long Point

Mieke, Art, Geoff & Murray joined with French Island Landcare & Bass Coast Landcare Network for our annual tree planting. After disembarking from the ferry we met up with the Bass Coast group and Lois Airs took us in her bus to the Hatton property. There we collected the plants and gear and carried it to the planting site on the coastal slope north of Long Point.

This site is a continuation of previous plantings over many years. It is wonderful to see the degrees of maturity from the first plantings of local species. All the plants used are from seed collected on the Island and grown in the nursery.

The weather was perfect for our task, mild and sunny. Visibility was remarkably clear. By lunch time most of the plants were in the ground. FI Landcare provided lunch in the courtyard at Hattons. It was much appreciated by all.

After lunch we put the remainder of the plants into the ground. That made a total of 700 for the day. Once again many thanks to the Hattons for their hospitality.
Murray Bouchier

July 6: Western Port wader count

Wintry weather in the form of showers and strong NW winds greeted a hardy bunch of FOFI members on the second wader count for 2013.

We split into 3 groups to cover the various sites, ensuring that each team had a spotting scope. **Fairhaven beach & Rams Island:** Murray Bouchier, Geoff Lacey, John Prytherch, Martin O'Brien & ranger Scott Coutts. **Tortoise Head:** Ken Harris, Des Palmer & Chris O'Brien. **Blue Gum Point & Spit Point:** Chris Chandler, Helenna Mihailou and James Vincent.

The **west coast** was taking the full impact of the NW winds with the sea looking like a washing machine. Most birds were sheltering in the very wet

saltmarsh. We saw many Black Swans here plus a few Australian Shelduck. Scanning the western channel we picked up a tight raft of Chestnut Teal bobbing between the waves and further along at the Fairhaven jetty ruins we counted 11 Pied Cormorants and 6 Little Pies. A single Little Black Cormorant flew past as well.

Rams Island. The early high tide (11.15 am) meant there was no access to Rams Island on this day but, buffeted by the wind, we managed to detect 7 Red-capped Plovers, 11 Red-necked Stints, 4 Crested Terns, 3 Pacific Gulls, 3 Double-banded Plovers, 1 Caspian Tern and 5 Pied Oystercatchers. After a while most of the waders left the small island and landed on the shore in front of us providing great views of these rapid-running little birds.

We carefully scanned the distant, and very small, Bird Rock which had a number of Pied Cormorants and Pacific Gulls. Checking the general sea offshore we could see a single Shy Albatross cruising into the strong winds over towards Phillip Island.

Back on Long Point, Scott Coutts detected an Australian Kestrel and Black-shouldered Kite making good use of the strong winds.

Tortoise Head. Meanwhile Ken's group had a fantastic experience of seeing an Eastern Grass Owl foraging in the open on the east side of Tortoise Head. This is a new species for the island and only about the 20th record of the species for Victoria. Ken's team had extended views of the bird from the top of Tortoise Head. The group also recorded 130 Pied and 7 Sooty Oystercatchers.

Blue Gum Point. We later heard from Chris Chandler's team. Their highlight was 3 Terek Sandpipers at Blue Gum Point.

We finally headed out to catch the ferry, with a lovely rainbow falling over Tortoise Head to keep us company. Thanks to Scott Coutts for transport, company and detecting some of our birds today.
Martin O'Brien

CHANGES IN PARKS VICTORIA

There has been some restructuring in Parks Victoria. Mick Douglas is no longer working on French Island and is in the office at Rosebud at present. FOFI members have enjoyed a long and happy relationship with Mick since the 1980s. We hope to have a detailed article on Mick's achievements in a future issue of the newsletter.

Scott Coutts has taken over as Team Leader on French Island. We look forward to working with Scott, a familiar friend over the years.

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