



# FOFI News



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

September 2011

## PROJECT DAYS

We usually take the 10.15 am ferry from Stony Point. If you plan to come, **please contact Murray Bourchier on 9876 1410** at least 7 days before the scheduled project day to ensure we have transport for you on the island.

- Oct 8** Bird monitoring
- Nov 26** Westernport wader survey
- Dec 10** Swamp monitoring
- Jan 14** Bird count, Gartsides



Rams Island at high tide

## VALE DES QUINN

Des Quinn, co-founder of FOFI, passed away on 1 September in the Blue Mountains National Park. He was a bird observer of great skill, and had been doing extensive bird studies in the Grose Valley and adjacent areas for a number of years.

Des was also a much loved guide and friend to many in FOFI. We are planning a special memorial issue of FOFI News in the near future.

## ACTIVITIES REPORTS

### July 30: BOCA Western Port Wader Survey

Present: Murray Bourchier, John Prytherch, Ken Harris, Johnny Loy, Geoff Lacey, Martin O'Brien, David Stephenson (PV ranger),

Seven FOFI members & ranger Dave Stephenson experienced a most unusual wader survey day, with low numbers of birds recorded for the first time in most people's memories.

Ken and Johnny trekked to Tortoise Head via the saltmarsh while the remainder of our group went to Rams Island. As usual our trip across to Long Point turned up a number of Cape Barren Geese adjacent to farm dams. The wet conditions brought a few Masked Lapwings and the odd Australian Shelduck

The fence above the beach at Long Point produced some interesting bush birds with Willy Wagtail, Grey Shrike-thrush and White-browed Scrubwren being heard. A single Whistling Kite circled over the paddock west of the road.

## FRIENDS OF FRENCH ISLAND NP

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

**Secretary:** Meredith Sherlock

**Treasurer:** Marg Medley

**Activities Coordinator:** Murray Bourchier

**Editor:** Geoff Lacey

Rams Island was at about peak high tide when we arrived, which meant we had to view across the water to record any birds. We suspected there would be more birds on the southern side of the island but still managed to see a pair of Caspian Terns, Black Swan (nesting), 2 Pied Oystercatchers, 50 Double-banded Plovers and 6 Red-capped Plovers.

Little Pied and Pied Cormorants could be seen on the jetty ruins to the west of Rams Island and a few Crested Terns could also be seen roosting.

On our return to Tankerton before proceeding up to the Chilcott Rocks area we observed a small flock of Common Mynas at the corner of Long Point and Tankerton Roads. Dave noted that the numbers of these pest species have increased on the island in recent years. Hopefully the impact these birds have will be low, as they are known to take over tree hollows used by native birds and mammals.

Hopes were high for more waders on the west coast. We noted that the saltmarsh south of Chilcott Rocks was extremely full. Our walk south produced over 100 Pied Oystercatchers, 30 Red-capped Plovers, a few Double-banded Plovers, 20 White-faced Herons and many nesting Black Swans, with about a dozen active nests seen plus a few clutches of small downy young. A few Australian Shelducks and 20 White-fronted Chats were also seen.

Bush birds heard in the tea tree behind the saltmarsh included Brown Thornbill, Grey Fantail & Grey Currawong. An adult and then a juvenile White-bellied Sea-Eagle flew south over our heads. Flocks of Silvereyes and Goldfinches were also seen.

Out in the western channel numerous Black Swans could be seen and a few flocks of mixed Grey and Chestnut Teal floated on the water before taking flight. Martin detected a pair of Australasian Shovelers among the teal.

Only a handful of waders could be seen on the west coast beach. The complete absence of any Curlew Sandpipers or Stints was most unusual. Ken

and Johnny also had very low numbers, with similar species plus some Eastern Curlews. Martin followed up these findings with DSE staff who had been surveying similar areas during the week prior and found that Barrallier Island had many birds. This may explain the very low numbers we recorded in our areas. Thanks to Dave for transport and additional fauna advice on the day.  
*Martin O'Brien*



Coast Banksia at Freeman Point

### August 13: Pine eradication at Freeman Point

A beautiful calm day greeted us for our August activity. A small number of FOFI members turned out for the task of removing pine seedlings and Golden Wattle and Mahogany Gums from a small area on the coast at Freemans Point, adjacent to the Eco Farm.

Westernport Bay was dead calm and it made a lovely backdrop to our activity. Lunch was enjoyed overlooking the water and enjoying the antics of a group of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos that unlike us appreciate the pines as a food source.

We managed to remove all the unwanted species and it was heartening to see Coast Banksia seedlings re-establishing with the removal of the large pines that has been undertaken in recent years. It is hoped that we can restore the area to Banksia Woodland and provide a more natural food source for the Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos.

An annual weeding programme will need to be undertaken as this area is close to the Eco Farm which has a large number of pines and other weeds that will inevitably encroach into the park.

A low point of the day was finding a Boobook Owl that had become entangled in a barb wire fence and must have suffered a horrible death. It highlights the need for a review of farm fencing and the hazards that they can pose for wildlife.

Martin O'Brien informs me that the Scientific Advisory Committee recently assessed a listing for fence entanglement and he kindly sent me the nomination which makes for horrific reading.

Mick drove us back to the ferry and we called in to Fairhaven on our way. Mick had seen large numbers of Eastern Curlew a few days before but we only managed to see four individuals.

The saltmarsh was full of water and there were Black Swans with young and two Australian Shelduck.

A large number of Pied Oystercatchers were feeding on the mudflats but no small waders were seen.

There have been very few northern hemisphere waders observed this year and the general consensus is that they are utilising the perfect conditions inland after the good rains.

Thanks again to Mick for transport and his untiring support.  
*Bette Mitchell*

### September 10: Sea-eagle search

On a windy day with morning showers, Mick drove four FOFI members (Meredith, Diane, Murray, Geoff) to the Blue Gums area. Our aim was to find out if the White-bellied Sea-Eagles have built a new nest on the south coast, to replace their old damaged and abandoned nest.

We scanned the entire site from high ground and then walked along the shore in the area of the old nest, but there was no sign of any Sea-Eagles. If they were present and breeding we would expect one of them to fly out over the bay on our approach. We guessed that the Sea-Eagles have chosen a new site a bit further along the coast – to be investigated on another occasion.

We picked a sheltered spot on the beach for lunch – next to a patch of Pigface. Its beautiful pink flowers made a nice contrast with the adjacent bright yellow Hop Wattle. Bird species in the bush included the Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Yellow Robin, Crescent and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, and Brown Thornbill.

Birds seen higher up from the grassland included 2 Swamp Harriers, 2 Brown Falcons, and flocks of Straw-necked Ibis flying over.

As we still had plenty of time, Mick drove us to check out two swamps that have a little more water than a few months ago. At The Shag we saw 6 Australasian Grebes and 1 Hoary-headed Grebe swimming and diving. Duscher Swamp has some big pools of water. We saw a White-faced Heron and a Little Pied Cormorant. Both swamps had many Welcome Swallows and a few Fairy Martins whirling around.

There has been a wonderful sequel to this visit. On September 14 when Mick Douglas was visiting another stretch of the coast he saw a Sea-Eagle fly in from the sea and over the trees, with a fish in its talons. So it looks as if the birds have a new home and are in process of breeding.  
*Geoff Lacey*

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