



Annual General Meeting

Mon 27 August, 7.30pm
Meeting at the Ocean Grove Nature Reserve, drive down the driveway about 500m

Where Port Phillip Bay Can Take You
Monique Bregman teaches Science and Marine Studies at Christian College Bellarine as well as working with SEA ALL Dolphin Swims operating out of Queenscliff as a snorkel instructor and marine interpreter.

Yes, we won!

Donna Smithyman and Lachie Jackson went to the **Victorian Coastal Awards** on Thurs 26 April and Friends of Mud Islands came out on top in the community group category. Yes, we won! We have been presented with a print of a type of coral with a plaque attached. Another reason to come to the AGM – to see our lovely award.

Winter Wader Count

Mud Islands, 1 July 2007

We arrived at Mud Islands on a rising tide for a day of weeding, collecting litter and bird counting. High tide was early afternoon which was ideal for the birds. Peter Menkhorst was conducting one of his regular shorebird counts on the islands. About half a dozen of the group joined Peter on the bird count as well as collecting litter along the beach as we went.

Silver gulls had started nesting and their nests were everywhere through the salt bush and along the beach. In some cases eggs were only centimeters from the waves at high tide which did not bode well for their survival. Walking along the east coast there was plenty of activity amongst the gulls but not much else. Their screams

accompanied us for much of the day as we walked around the island. A pair of Pied Oystercatchers (one colour-banded) were at the point and a large Australian Fur Seal was resting on the beach nearby.

About half way along the north-east side we stepped up onto the sand bank where we had a good view of the northern part of the central lagoon. The light was fantastic. The winter sun was almost directly behind us with the warm glow that happens when the sun is low in the sky, although it was not warm in temperature.

There was a group of Red-knots and a number of Bar-tailed Godwits. Some of the knots were in full breeding plumage, their chests a deep, almost brick, red. A few Great Knot were also in near breeding plumage, very obvious from their black speckled sides and bellies. Other waders in this area included Grey Plover, Greenshanks, Red-necked Stints and a small number of Sharp-tailed, Curlew and Marsh Sandpipers.

Further out a trio of Pied Oystercatchers appeared to be hunting. As a close group they moved across the lagoon stabbing and plunging into the water – more like herons than the usual feeding behaviour of oystercatchers.

It was almost full tide when we set off across the lagoon. The water was somewhat fresh and at times just above the knees. To the right a small group of pelicans was just starting to nest. Another group had formed a nesting colony near the northern end of the western island where several were already sitting on nests. Viewing the pelicans through scopes, the rose-pink of their bills (breeding colours) was spectacular. There were also small groups of White Ibis that were just re-establishing their breeding colonies.

A large group of waders turned out to be Double-banded Plovers. There were about 300 of these NZ winter migrants clustered on the western side of the lagoon. The

count was done whilst the observers themselves waded in 30cm of water. Also in this area was a small group of Fairy Terns.

Turning south along the edge of the west island the birds met up with the rest of the group who were busy weeding. We joined them and helped with the removal of weeds for a while before the whole group set off back to the landing beach. By this time we also had some reasonable collections of beach-washed litter to carry off the islands.

The southern channel was flowing well when we got there. Most of the sand bars near here were still under water. A small length of sand was occupied by two Pacific Gulls and about 7 Kelp Gulls ranging from 1st or 2nd year to adult. At times both species were visible in the same field of view in the scope enabling easy comparison of the two species. The water levels did not drop much while we were watching the gulls so it was wading again. This time the water was almost waist deep resulting in wet shorts and a need to change from wet clothes when we got back to Queenscliff.

When it came to loading the boat there was a big positive to the high water – those in waders who towed our rubber dinghy out to the boat had only a few steps to wade as our boat could get almost to the shore.

All-in-all it was a great day. The weather was better than expected. The waders were fantastic in their breeding plumage even if we did have to wade to see them and the other waders got us off and on the boat without mishap.

Story: Euan Moore



Some of the waders who don't mind getting wet feet.

Photo: Jennifer Rolland



One of the multitude of silver gull nests on the island, many in precarious positions!

Photo: Jennifer Rolland

.....Snippets

Environment Victoria has prepared an eco-friendly guide to help us make good decisions at the supermarket. It can be downloaded from their website at www.environmentvictoria.org.au.

To see how your energy supplier's Greenpower product rates see www.acfonline.org.au/greenpower. The chart has been set up by environmental groups to help consumers choose green electricity products.

The influence of age on the reproductive performance of Crested Terns breeding at Mud Islands

Honours project by Caroline Wilson

Study description

In most animals that reproduce up to several times in a lifetime, individual reproductive performance increases with age during the first reproductive years of life and decreases only at very old ages. Given the existence of a large crested tern (*Sterna bergii*) colony dominated by known age individuals, the aim of this study was to investigate the influence of age on the reproductive performance of that species.

This study was undertaken at Mud Islands, during the 2006/2007 breeding season. Breeding pairs from 89 study nests were assigned to 'young' (4 to 6 years), 'middle-aged' (7 to 11 years) and 'old' (>12 years) age classes; pairs containing individuals

from two different age classes were placed into a 'mixed' age class. Comparisons of their reproductive performance were made during this study, including timing of breeding, reproductive success, incubation length, nesting position, chick growth rates, chick provisioning rates and meal size.

Outcomes

Younger crested tern pairs had a significantly lower success in several different reproductive parameters as compared to older pairs; however there was a slight decline in some of these measures of success once pairs reached 12 years of age, possibly as a result of reproductive senescence (the deterioration of reproductive and foraging abilities with age).

Younger adults were found to lay and hatch their eggs significantly later in the season, when resources may be limited. This may be because older adults can accumulate sufficient body reserves for reproduction sooner than younger pairs, possibly in response to differences in foraging efficiency among age classes. Length of the incubation period was also shorter for 'young' and 'mixed' pairs; it is thought that the incubation drive in young birds, is less than that of older birds. Younger adults were also found to have a lower hatching success, suggesting that younger pairs may not be as capable as older pairs at defending their nest from predators such as silver gulls, or because older pairs tended to nest closer to the centre of the colony than younger pairs, were there may be a lesser risk of egg predation. This is supported by the positive relationship found between nesting position and hatching success.

'Old' and 'middle aged' adults were found to feed their chicks significantly more frequently than 'young' parents, signifying that birds in the younger age class may be less efficient in finding food than older birds. This age-related difference in chick provisioning rates may explain why chicks from 'old' and 'middle aged' pairs were also found to have a slightly higher growth rate than chicks from 'young' pairs.

Breeding success was very low for the study group; however there was no significant difference in fledging and breeding success between the four age classes. Breeding success for the entire colony was also much lower when compared to past years; this may have

been due to changes in food supply and increased silver gull predation.

Overall, this study offers further insight into the field of age-related reproductive performance and provides additional information on the breeding biology of the crested tern; a species that has generally been little-studied in Victoria.

News from our Membership Secretary

Well done to everyone for all our hard work; the membership base is strong: over 70 paid up, including adults and children. Working bees have been generally well attended. We have had interest from other coastal groups from Torquay and Barwon Heads with members of their groups joining us on our weeding trips when our numbers have been low. In fact it is thanks to these groups that so far this winter we have not had to cancel a trip due to low numbers.

Membership renewal time – please complete the attached form and send it with your remittance to the **FOMI Secretary by September 30.**

Future FOMI trips

26 August – Weeding and sea grass monitoring if anyone is interested.

October – **Alternate excursion**

23 September - Weeding

25 November –**Seagrass** monitoring and weeding

Please email fomislands@yahoo.com.au to register for any of these trips or phone Felicity on 5258 2559.

Committee Meetings for 2007

7:30 pm, Monday 26 November, Ocean Grove Nature Reserve

FOMI website

Doug Miller has done a great job creating our own website. Visit it, use it and advertise it! <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fomi/>

FOMI Membership form

Please complete and send to:
Friends of Mud Islands
PO Box 2010, GEELONG, 3220.

Membership Type (tick one)
 Single \$10 Family* \$15

Please accept my donation of :
 \$20 \$50 \$100 other \$ _____

Enclosed is a cheque/cash for: \$ _____

As part of my membership I wish to receive:

1. Notification of the group's monthly activities
 yes no

2. The "Mud Islands Times"
 yes no

Name: _____

Postal Address: _____

Telephone number: H) _____

Contact telephone on trip weekends M) _____

Please provide your email address, so we can easily and cheaply contact you about our activities.

Email: _____

Names of the individuals this membership covers:

I/we agree to be bound by the constitution of Friends of Mud Islands Inc. during my/our membership. Our remittance for membership is enclosed herewith.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

*Family membership's include 2 adults & all children under 19 years of age at same address.

**Membership period is the standard financial year.

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received:

Added to membership register Y/N