

The Mud Islands Times



Winter 2014

National Listing for Coastal Saltmarsh vegetation community

The Federal Government has listed *Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh* as a threatened ecological community under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Coastal saltmarsh makes up a large amount of the vegetation communities found on Mud Islands. The *Coastal Saltmarsh* ecological community is mainly associated with the soft substrate shores of estuaries and embayments (sandy and/or muddy) and on some open, low wave energy coasts. The *Coastal Saltmarsh* ecological community consists mainly of salt-tolerant vegetation (halophytes) including: grasses, herbs, sedges, rushes and shrubs. Succulent herbs, shrubs and grasses generally dominate. Many species of non-vascular plants are also found in saltmarsh, including epiphytic algae, diatoms and cyanobacterial mats.

Species characteristic of the ecological community, due to their dominance in at least some of its range, may include:

- *Austrostipa stipoides* (spear grass) – up to 1 m, in better drained landward margins.
- *Gahnia filum* (clumped sedge, can grow up to 1.5 m), with *Gahnia trifida* in WA.
- *Juncus kraussii* (sea rush) - dominates in fresher conditions in estuaries or seepage zones.
- *Samolus repens* (creeping brookweed) - low-growing herb.
- *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* (beaded glasswort/samphire) - dominates in wetter parts of coastal saltmarsh zone;
- *Sporobolus virginicus* (salt couch) - the most widely distributed saltmarsh plant
- *Suaeda australis* (seabite) - in drier, better drained conditions than *Sarcocornia*;
- *Tecticornia pergranulata* (blackseed samphire) - succulent shrub up to 1 m
- *Tecticornia arbuscula* (shrubby glasswort) - succulent shrub up to 2 m
- *Triglochin striata* (three-ribbed or stalked arrowgrass) - common in less well drained depressions of saltmarsh plain; and
- *Wilsonia backhousei* and *Wilsonia rotundifolia* - feature of southern Australian saltmarshes - both endangered species in NSW.



Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh was assessed under the following EPBC Act criteria:

- *Small geographic distribution coupled with demonstrable threat.*

The *Coastal Saltmarsh* ecological community has a very restricted distribution on the basis that it is fragmented with small patch sizes generally under 10 ha in size.

- *Reduction in community integrity*

The integrity of the *Coastal Saltmarsh* ecological community has reduced through the combined impacts of threats such as increased fragmentation, tidal restriction, increased marine inundation and mangrove transgression, and invasion by exotic plant species.

- *Rate of continuing detrimental change*

The Committee considers the rate of continuing detrimental change in the *Coastal Saltmarsh* ecological community to be substantial as indicated by a serious intensification in the disruption of a key driver of important community processes (i.e. sea level rise).

As a consequence of these three criteria the *Coastal Saltmarsh* ecological community has been listed as **vulnerable** under the EPBC Act.

Reference: Conservation Advice Paper 118

(<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/communities/pubs/118-conservation-advice.pdf>)

Nominations are now open for the Victorian Coastal Awards for Excellence. Contact www.vcc.vic.gov.au for more information



Meet Steve Tuohy: Parks Victoria's new contact for the Friends of Mud Islands



How long have you been working for Parks Victoria?

I gained my first position with DNRE as an Aerial Photographic Interpreter with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Forest Management) based in East Gippsland. This work involved collecting floristic data for a state-wide forest resource inventory. During this time in East Gippsland I also assisted with the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby Program, then went on to work as the Coordinator/Warden for the endangered Little Tern (Gippsland Lakes).

In 1998 I commenced work with Parks Victoria as a Ranger at the then Angahook-Lorne State Park (now the Great Otway National Park). I am coming into my 16th year with Parks Victoria, during this time I have undertaken numerous roles including; Western District Lakes Ramsar Project Officer – Colac, Field Service Officer – Serendip Sanctuary, Fire Operation Officer – Colac, Port Phillip Bay Western Shoreline & Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar Project Coordinator, Geelong and my current role as Ranger (Marine) based at Queenscliff.

In which parks have you worked?

Since commencing employment in the natural resource management field I have been fortunate to work in many amazing locations across Victoria including; Snowy River National Park, Greater Otway National Parks, Western District Ramsar Lakes, Serendip Sanctuary and Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park.

Apart from Mud Islands, which is your favourite park and why?

I love the Victorian high country. The Alpine National Park around Mt Hotham & Dinner Plain area would have to be my favourite park. I have previously worked in the area and really enjoy the seasonal changes in both the weather and environment.

What is a favourite hobby or pastime of yours?

One of the reasons I love the high country is because my favourite winter pastime is snowboarding, and I am hoping for a reasonable season this yearfingers crossed! Other interests include bike riding, snorkelling and spending quality time with my family.

What do you enjoy about working on Mud Islands?

I enjoy the isolation of Mud Islands. Being so close, but not that accessible to many makes it a real treat to visit and work. I can remember my first experiences going out to the Islands with Lachie, what an absolute thrill it was getting on the boat and going out there to work. Lachie was great mentor to me and taught me a great deal about the Islands and access. It seems a bit strange going out there without the big fella!

A few years ago during an indigenous and cultural heritage survey of Mud Islands a potentially explosive ordnance was found partially exposed in the sand on the shoreline of the north island. I notified the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Group (Army) and without hesitation they organised for a representative to assess the situation. It was identified as a 10inch artillery projectile or 'shell' as fired from the coastal defence guns such as those at Portsea, most likely fired from Portsea (sometime between about 1900 & 1930). With the projectile and some military history understood, the explosive's expert set and fired a small charge to the base of the ordnance detonating the explosive in to numerous small pieces. A couple of pieces remain on my desk as paper weights! The explosion was quite loud, apparently it was heard from Portsea. A police helicopter overhead confirmed that! An interesting memory of MI.

Goodbye and Good Luck, Lachie!!

Lachie Jackson was, and still is, one of the great institutions of Mud Islands. Lachie was our own Mud Islands Parks Vic Ranger for many years until his retirement from PV in November 2013. Lachie, as a group we thank you for your enthusiasm, knowledge, humour, and dedication. We hope that we continue to see you out at the islands tackling the boxthorn full on.

Here are some photos of Lachie in action on the islands.



Setting up camp. Lachie is wearing his infamous red striped trackie daks.



The good old days; getting rid of the large boxthorn heaps with fire



Lachie with Jeff Yugovic eyeing off the enemy



Boxthorns didn't stand a chance with Lachie around.

Something to keep an eye for on Mud Islands

A couple of years ago we came across a strange looking plant on the beach of Boatswain Island. It was identified as Horned Poppy (*Glaucium flavum*). While we have not seen it in such large numbers again it would be great for everyone to keep an eye out for this emerging weed. If we keep on top of it then it will not be a problem.



Horned Poppy with flower.



Plant with long thin seed head.

What to take on a working bee!

Clothing needs to be appropriate for weather conditions and activities of the day.
We suggest wearing/carrying layers of clothes.

- T-shirt & longed sleeve shirt-for protection in scrub.
- Trousers rather than shorts
- Woollen jumper for warmth on island & boat trip.
- Water windproof jacket for boat trip & island.
- Sunhat.
- Back pack (small) to carry food and spare clothing.
- Sunglasses and binoculars for bird watching.
- Sturdy boots
- Include sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Lunch, Morning & afternoon tea
- Water

The list is for your guidance. Weather conditions on the bay can vary considerably during the day.

Things you need to know:

Remaining Trips for 2014

- July 13th - winter wader counts
- August 24th - clean up the tern colony
- November 23rd - seagrass monitoring

The Annual General Meeting

Date to be announced due to availability of Guest Speaker
Parks Victoria Office - Queenscliff

Reminder: Memberships for 2014/15 financial year are due from July 2014.

DON'T FORGET TO BOOK YOUR SEAT:

Book your seat on the boat by the Friday before the trip.

Contact Felicity at

fomislands@yahoo.com.au

