



Good season for short-tailed shearwater breeding on Maatsuyker Island

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF MAATSUYKER ISLAND Story by Sheryl Hamilton

The Friends of Maatsuyker Island, WILDCARE Inc. (FOMI) have now completed three seasons of monitoring short-tailed shearwaters (Tasmanian muttonbirds) breeding on Maatsuyker Island. These burrow-nesting seabirds undertake an amazing migration twice a year. They spend the austral winter in the northern hemisphere before returning to breed each spring at colonies mostly around Tasmania. The female bird lays one egg per year in late November/early December in a 'nesting chamber' at the end of a long burrow. The short-tailed shearwater colony on Maatsuyker Island has been estimated to be the third largest in Tasmania (after Babel Island and Great Dog Island, both in Bass Strait) and is also the largest Tasmanian colony that is not subject to regular 'muttonbirding' (i.e. the harvesting of fledgling chicks).

For the 2015/16 season, study burrows on Maatsuyker Island were checked by the FOMI Shearwater Program team in early December 2015 (when nesting adults were sitting on newly

laid eggs) and in March 2016 (when pre-fledging chicks were still in the burrow). The burrows were inspected using a 'burrowscope'—a camera at the end of a long 'hose' which is gently pushed down a burrow towards the nesting chamber, with the image projected onto a screen outside the burrow. Burrow occupancy in early December 2015 was almost 70% which is relatively high for this species and shows that the 2015/16 breeding season was off to a good start. For the 2015/16 season, breeding success (the number of chicks in March as a proportion of the number of nests in December) on Maatsuyker Island was 76%.

On Maatsuyker Island, shearwater burrows are also monitored in a gully that was previously infested by blackberries as well as in an area previously infested by *Hebe elliptica*. As part of FOMI's Weed Control Program, this blackberry patch was initially controlled in 2004 and the *Hebe* area had primary control in 2008. There have been a number of

years of follow-up weed control since then. FOMI have recorded shearwater burrows becoming established in both of these areas and we aim to continue to monitor this shearwater recolonization process.

It is well known that there is a large inter-annual variation in breeding population numbers for a range of seabird species and, therefore, it can be misleading to only obtain one or two years of data. It is important to monitor populations for a number of years to be able to gain an understanding of what is happening with the population. FOMI aim to continue monitoring the shearwater population on Maatsuyker Island for a number of years to gain a better understanding of this important seabird population.

FOMI would like to acknowledge the funding received for the 2015/16 shearwater monitoring from a WILDCARE Inc. Board of Management Internal Grant. The remainder of costs were covered by FOMI general fundraising.



Above: Burrowscope screen image of an adult bird inside a burrow

Left: Sheryl Hamilton (FOMI) inspecting a short-tailed shearwater burrow using a burrowscope.

Photo: Georgie Hedley



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Arthur River Survey

THREATENED PLANTS TASMANIA

Story by Robin Garnett and Phil Collier

Thanks again to everyone who turned out to survey for *Prasophyllum* sp. *Arthur River*. We found about the same number of plants as last year at both sites: approx. 75 off-road and 24 on the road side. There is a third site across the road which we will keep an eye on in future years. On the day Phil had a permit to collect type specimens and duplicates, in order to complete a full formal description of this new species. There were two surprising things: firstly, the fleshy “roots” are a little unusual compared with Nicholls paintings of other *Prasophyllum* spp. in the old “Orchids of Australia”. But the biggest surprise for Phil is that the anterior lobe of the column is present in some flowers and absent in others ON THE SAME SPIKE. The anterior lobe does not feature in the description of the genus *Prasophyllum* and appears to be unique to this species. Also the unornamented labellum is unique in *Prasophyllum*. Phil will keep working on the description, and hopefully will be able to submit the paper by the end of the year.

Threatened Plants Tasmania survey for *Prasophyllum* sp. *Arthur River* Photo Robin Garnett



CEO report

Professional development for Board of Management members and Branch Presidents and preparation of the Annual Report – Yearbook for 2016 represent the major focus of tasks since the last edition of Wildtimes.

Governance Workshop for Directors

A one-day workshop on governance was delivered to Directors in September. Its focus was on assisting Directors to increase their confidence, competence and professionalism as a volunteer member of the WILDCARE Board of Management.

While being a volunteer member of the Board of Management can be challenging, it should also be rewarding and fulfilling. The workshop was therefore designed to enhance Directors’ understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the legal framework in which they operate.

Workshop delivery was supported by a workbook, including six hands-on workshop exercises to ensure learning was pitched at a practical level.

Presidents’ Forums

Presidents’ Forums offer an excellent opportunity to network, enhance knowledge and understanding, ask questions and raise issues that concern you or members of your Branch.

With these objectives in mind, a series of two Presidents’ Forums was facilitated for Branch Presidents (or their nominee) in Hobart and Deloraine during November. The content of each Forum was the same – fundraising successfully at your Branch, getting the best from

the WILDCARE website, attracting new members and community support and a question and answer panel discussion. Workbooks supported workshop delivery.

Whenever there is a change of office bearers at your Branch, please ensure that you communicate the new details to Jodie Epper, Volunteer Facilitator, or myself. This helps us to update the website in a timely fashion and ensure your Branch receives the latest information on Presidents’ Forums and other events.

2016 Annual Report and Yearbook

For the third consecutive year, we are producing this important publication. Rather than simply publish an Annual Report which satisfies compliance requirements, we aim to produce a Yearbook which showcases the diverse programs, projects and activities of as many WILDCARE Branches around Tasmania as possible. At Branch level, this offers an excellent means to raise your profile and highlight your achievements.

Has your Branch not been featured? Well, it’s up to you to submit a newsworthy story for publication. There are numerous calls made for this throughout the Branch network from September onwards. Make a note now to have an early conversation with me and avoid missing next year’s yearbook.

21st Anniversary Celebrations

2018 marks the 21st anniversary of the founding of WILDCARE. We are therefore seeking to develop a vibrant calendar of events to celebrate this notable milestone. We invite you to be actively involved.

Watch this space!

Improvements to the track at Lake Fenton

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF MOUNT FIELD

One of the major walking destinations in the alpine area of Mount Field National Park is Mount Field East. Walkers going there now have a vastly improved start to their journey thanks to the Friends of Mount Field group and a Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife grant. The initial part of the track which is mostly uphill, used to be difficult to negotiate however walkers can nowadays pass safely well above the mud, roots and water, following bridge construction and track refurbishment.

The track begins at Lake Fenton firstly by crossing Lady Barron Creek and then heads uphill to Windy Moor and then on to Mount Field East. Lady Barron Creek is the only outlet from Lake Fenton. It is quite an unusual situation as the flow at this point is intermittent simply because water is taken out of the depths of the lake by a siphon pipe and then put back into Lady Barron Creek a short distance downstream. Although Lake Fenton was a natural lake it was dammed with a small concrete wall in 1954 so that the water could be piped to Hobart. Where the track crosses the creek just below the dam there is usually little water running, however this changes when the lake is full and the overflow enters the creek. This can see quite large amounts of water rushing down.

Since getting the Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife grant the Friends of Mount Field with the coordination of the Parks and Wildlife Service got off to a flying start and

had completed the bridge within a month of receiving the money. In early January 2016, the track was closed for two days whilst a contractor with heavy machinery removed the existing pipes and cleaned out the creek bed at the crossing point. A few metres downstream the debris that had built up from past flooding was also removed as part of this work. The old pipes were then re-seated and two new pipes added to allow for better flow of water. Boulders were added on top followed by gravel to provide a smooth walking surface.

Prior to the project walkers had to go down over a few small boulders, walk on the top of two cement pipes and then ascend again via more boulders to reach the creek bank. The completion of work raised the track level somewhat and it became a smooth almost flat crossing. However, despite the work being done with engineering advice it did not allow for the enormous flooding that occurred in July 2016 which resulted in everything bar the pipes being washed away. We were back at square one.

Ironically a much higher and secure bridge will be the final outcome. Because the bridge work had been substantial it was able to be the subject of a successful insurance claim. It was deemed that the replacement would need to be a truss bridge with the pipes to be removed from the creek to give unimpeded water flow. Overall a very agreeable outcome from what

seemed a real setback. The new bridge has been designed and built and ready for installation.

The major part of the project was the construction of a board walk over the existing walking track. The uphill section of this track has become eroded and consequently now has a considerable flow of water running down it in all but very dry spells. There are also boggy stretches. The area is unsightly and hazardous with numerous exposed tree roots and rocks making walking unpleasant. In addition the muddied water, made worst by walkers' boots, flows into the drinking water catchment. The newly constructed board walk considerably improves walker comfort and protects the environment. Lake Fenton supplies 20% of the water for the greater Hobart area and any action that helps the water quality by reducing turbidity from muddy track water is most beneficial. The initial 100-metre section of board walk was constructed by contractors while a further 45 metres were made jointly by Parks staff and Friends of Mount Field volunteers.

2017 CRAIG SAUNDERS GREAT PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

"Who is doing what in the bush?"

We are looking for the best photo showing people DOING things anywhere WILDCARE activities occur.

Each WILDCARE Member can submit up to three images. Images should be 1-5 MB. Email to: Jodie@wildcaretas.org.au by Wed 19 April 2017.

An independent panel of judges will determine the winner. The winning image will feature in the next Wildtimes newsletter. The winner will also receive \$1000 that will be donated to a WILDCARE Branch of their choice.

All images submitted for the completion may be used in future WILDCARE publications. Good luck and get snapping.



Before



After

Successful first working bee

WILDCARE FRIENDS OF BILLY BROWN FALLS Story by Annette Cauchi

Recently a successful working bee was held at Billy Browns Falls walking track near Judbury in the Huon Valley. It was the first on-ground effort of the WILDCARE Friends of Billy Browns Falls.

Under the guidance of PWS rangers, the volunteers' first task was the installation of a sign on Judds Creek Road welcoming visitors to the Russell Ridge Conservation Area. This area forms a conservation corridor along a high altitude ridge between Wellington Park near Hobart and the South-west World Heritage Area.

Billy Browns Falls are a hidden treasure of the Huon Valley, gushing down a steep-sided hidden valley accessible only to walkers. They are named after William Charles Brown, an early 20th century pioneer of the Judbury district who purchased 200 acres of Crown Land on the upper reaches of Judds Creek and with his wife Maud, produced cream and butter which was carted down to the Mosquito Point Jetty at Ranelagh and loaded onto steamers for sale in Hobart.

Even then the waterfalls were popular with locals for picnics, but the only way to access them was by scrambling up steep, slippery rocks, difficult enough in dry weather but dangerous and nearly impossible after rain. In 1993, local retired sawmiller Ron Woolley, together with his brother Peter and friend Bob Richardson, found a suitable route and cut a track into the Falls from the old Judds Creek Trail. Today's visitors still follow that same route.

At the WILDCARE working bee everyone pitched in to dig holes, assemble, erect and concrete the sign as well

as documenting details for the asset register. Then it was on to the walking track where the project was to carry in and install a bench seat at the track's highest point, a place where walkers can rest and absorb the peace of the forest after their climb.

Volunteers and rangers on the day had to carry the wooden bench and steel legs, two bags of concrete, a full water container, crowbar and shovel, tools, and a chainsaw up the steep track to the top of the ridge. When they finally reached the spot the team swung into action digging holes and concreting the bench into position. Rangers Ben and Shane also cleared debris and fallen logs from the track.

Track design expert Martin Hawes also attended and helped out on the day,

giving the benefit of his extensive experience. Martin has recently been engaged as a consultant to Environment Tasmania's Community Forests Walks project and, on a recent field trip to view some results of that project, he made the acquaintance of Friends of Billy Browns Falls members who invited him to their working bee. After the bench was installed and quick-set concrete dried the group enjoyed a picnic lunch, then a few continued on to the falls, clearing more debris and windfall along the way. Three other walking parties were met along the track during the day, showing that the walk is valued by the community which is good news for the hard-working volunteers.

Future plans include a carpark for walkers, vehicle barrier at the start of the walk, drainage improvements in some muddy sections and the development of a picnic area at a picturesque waterhole near the carpark.



Thank you To these people for their donations: Saffire Freycinet, Guests, Robert Brooke, Tracey Simpson, Andrew Smith, Craig Parsey, RACT, Tim Machin, Josephone Watts, Leslie Midson, Nye Evans & Ros Holgate, Megan Tighe, Robert Brooke, Debra Ploughman, Dick & Pip Smith Foundation, Mark Thelander, Ross Quick, Sara Slattery, Coreena & Roy Vieth, Robert Brooke, Ann Dombroski, Rosalie Whalen, Rosemary Hearne, Pam Scott

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NOTICE - put it in your diary

Most AGM's are boring but not this one! Come along to beautiful Bruny Island and check out the Friends of Bruny Island Quarantine Station. The AGM will be held on the 5th March. 2017.

More details will be posted on the Wildtimes calendar of events closer to the event, visit www.wildcaretas.org.au



Share your story

Send your submissions to wildtimes@wildcaretas.org.au
Deadline for the next issue is 13/4/2017.

WILDCARE Inc

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