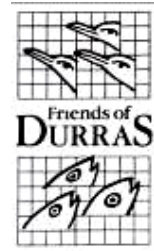


**FRIENDS OF  
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10 July 2007

# Clarion Call

## The Friends of Durras Newsletter



### JULY 07 Newsletter

In spite of the time, resources and money that the attempted takeover issue has consumed, the Friends of Durras have still maintained a watchful eye over the environment of Durras and Murramarang that we care for so much.

In fact there has never been a more important time for an active environment group to be operating in this area.

### Crown Lands

Over the past year or so, our primary focus has been the South Durras Crown land portions 92-95 located in the vicinity of the South Durras Holiday Park and at the rear of Lakeside drive.

Lobbying on this issue has included surveying of these parcels of land. Night time spotlighting has identified this site as one of the richest areas for gliding possums in our local area. Consistently in about an hour of spotlighting from dusk, gliding possums identified have been up to 15 Greater Gliders, 4-5 Yellow-bellied Gliders, Feather-tailed and Sugar Gliders.

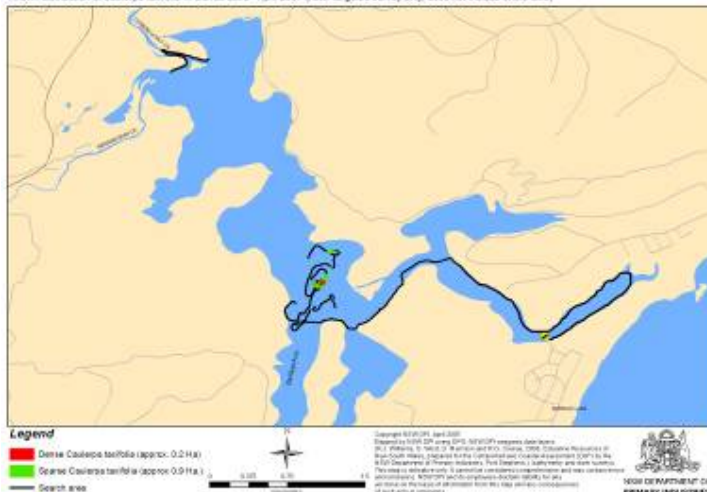
Letters on behalf of FOD have been written to the State Government requesting this Crown land to be added to Murramarang National Park.



### Caulerpa discovery

Sometimes Environmental issues "come out of the blue" certainly the discovery of Caulerpa

Known distribution of Caulerpa taxifolia in Durras Lake - April 2007 (note: targeted survey only, does not include entire lake)



Taxifolia in Durras Lake by a very alert Bateman's Bay Fisheries Officer while out on patrol is one of these type of issues. Subsequently a team of Department of Primary Industries officers conducted diving survey work in parts of Durras Lake. This included diving in areas of poor visibility.

These officers discovered one healthy patch of Caulerpa Taxifolia covering an area of about 200 square

metres. Nearby was a sparsely covered area of Caulerpa over a similar area.

Caulerpa is very fast growing, overruns all other types of aquatic vegetation including Seagrasses, pieces as small as a millimetre can grow into mature plants and create new colonies, it can live out of water for a week, it has the potential to threaten all coastal ecosystems, actively excludes native species of algae and invertebrates, could lead to a reduction in fish stocks, a resident of Lake Conjola (where there is a significant infestation) describes Caulerpa as wretched, horrible stuff. Caulerpa doesn't require light or deep water to grow, nothing eats it, has the ability to turn a coastal lake into a sterile pond. Control is difficult. For example in one experiment, two divers using suction equipment took one hour to clear four square metres.

## Rehabilitation Work in the Powerline Easement



Friends of Durras have been lobbying Country Energy regarding the powerline easements in the Durras, Murramarang area. Concerns have been raised about erosion and clearing practices along these easements. In a response to these concerns Country Energy has undertaken rehabilitation work in the powerline easement area adjacent to the South Durras road. Perhaps people driving in along the Durras road have noticed some of this



rehabilitation work undertaken? This area is primary catchment for Durras Lake, a very important area to minimise the export of sediment to the lake, which can be detrimental to the lakes aquatic values. Further work is being planned in other powerline easements of Murramarang National Park.

## The Shorebird recovery program

The Shorebird recovery program is another example of the efforts of the Friends of Durras. Work that has been undertaken has included detection of shorebird nests, the fencing off of these sites and the monitoring of the birds progress. Friends of Durras has been liaising with Government organisations such as the Rural Land Protection Board in relation to fox control in these areas. Lobbying of the operators of nearby Caravan Parks for increased



awareness of Shorebird habitat has made an enormous contribution to improving shorebird habitat viability. Liaison with media organisations including submitting articles and photographs to various local and regional newspapers has also been beneficial to our unique coastal shorebirds.

The area north of Lakesea Caravan Park is now referred to as the Durras shorebird area or the "bird sanctuary". Rightly so. It is certainly inspiring to observe

critically endangered shorebirds like the Hooded Plover adults and Fledgling appear in this area over last summer. There are approximately 46 individual Hooded Plovers remaining here in NSW.

### Shorebirds and Offshore Islands

The Murramarang coastline is fortunate to have a number of offshore islands along its coastline. All these islands are extremely important ground nesting bird habitat. In recognition of this, all landings are prohibited. Shorebirds found on these islands are the Sooty Oystercatcher, Little Penguin, Storm Petrels and Shearwaters. Over summer NPWS officers were able to land on Grasshopper Island (most times extremely difficult to land) and undertake some



survey work.

These officers were pleasantly surprised to locate 12 Sooty Oystercatcher nests on this island. Some banding was undertaken of Sooty Oystercatcher hatchlings during this visit.

### Saving our "Sooties"

Rats are thought to have first reached Brush Island (located at the northern end of Murramarang National Park) in 1932, stowed away in cargo that washed ashore after the Melbourne cargo ship, the "Northern Firth" struck a nearby uncharted reef.. These skilled predators have had an enormous impact on the islands wildlife. The delicate white-faced Storm Petrel hasn't been seen on the island since 1967 and the breeding attempts of the Sooty Oystercatchers have been severely disrupted.



An ambitious project to rid Brush Island of Black rats is almost complete. Soon Brush Island will be added to the list of approximately 100 islands around the world where Black rats have been eliminated. Some of the most successful eradication techniques have been developed in New Zealand. Numerous birds such as the Saddleback, Black robin, Hihi, and Kakapo have been rescued from the brink of extinction by introducing breeding colonies onto offshore and estuary islands made free of rats and other feral animals.

### **Launch of Eurobodalla Shires Draft Management Plan**

Friends of Durras representatives attended a stakeholders meeting with Eurobodalla Shires staff and Councillors, FOD will be working on a submission on this plan.

### **New Telstra Mobile Tower**

The new Telstra Tower which is now operational in South Durras (located on the edge of the South Durras Crown land, near the former transfer station).



This project has been going on for nearly two years. While the progress has been slow the Friends of Durras assistance and cooperation in helping Telstra find a suitable site has been greatly appreciated. The Friends of Durras has provided various reports and information along the way, for instance the Kevin Mills report which has assisted town planners in the preparation of the review of environmental factors for this project. The completion of this Mobile Phone tower demonstrates that large companies can work with the local community in achieving a result that satisfies the objectives of various stakeholders and interested parties.

The improvement of Mobile Phone coverage will be of enormous assistance to various Government Agencies, Emergency Services and locals, including boating operators. Wireless broadband will be provided from this tower which will be greatly appreciated by clients of nearby Caravan Parks and Murramarang Resort.

### **Sea Acres**

The Friends of Durras has had calls of assistance from Maloney's beach residents about the proposed Sea Acres resort development on the Southern boundary of Murramarang National Park. We are now liaising with this community on this issue.

### **Bay Stages Car Rally**

A Friends of Durras representative has met with Resort Management and Ian Bigg, an organiser of this car rally event recently. Murramarang Resort has lobbied for this car rally event to be based at the Resort. This event will occur from Friday 20th of July to Sunday 22nd of July. Cars participating in this event will be restricted to the speed limits of the roads leading in and out of the South Durras area. All of the car rallying will be conducted in State Forest areas on the western side of the highway.

## **New Package Wastewater Treatment Plant at Murramarang Resort**

Friends of Durras representatives attended a stakeholder meeting at Murramarang Resort earlier this year. The Friends of Durras welcome this project as we have raised concerns over a number of years about their under performing wastewater system.

## **Sea Spurge**

Sea Spurge removal has occupied considerable time of Friends of Durras members and South Durras Landcare. Except for Richmond beach and North Head beach, mostly we have the Sea Spurge problem under control. For example, during the June long weekend, Friends of Durras members removed all the Sea Spurge from Oaky beach.

### **Before and After**



We will continue to monitor the Murramarang coastline for this invasive weed. The NPWS has plans to get a team of volunteers to remove Sea Spurge from Richmond beach shortly.

## **Bitou**



Friends of Durras were asked by the NPWS to remove a significant outbreak of Bitou bush at the Southern end of Murramarang. This involved work on extremely steep slopes. All Bitou was removed. The NPWS were extremely grateful for this effort. Work like this by volunteers means valuable resources of the NPWS can be diverted to an area of the management of Murramarang that volunteers are unable to perform.

## **Bateman's Bay Marine Park**

The zoning for this Marine Park will come into operation on the 30th of June. The implementation of this will be slow. Marine Park Officers will not be fining first time offenders who have made honest mistakes and are found fishing in no take zones. Various fishing writers for newspapers have described the Bateman's Bay Marine Park as a huge win for recreational fishermen because of the exclusion of all Commercial Ocean trawling and netting in Durras lake and the Clyde river, that there will be lots of room to fish and every species will be catchable. Anglers who can travel a short distance in a car or boat will be spoilt for

choice along the South Coast. The most important message is that the South Coast is still well and truly open for fishing. I would like to encourage Friends of Durras members to view the FOD Bateman's Bay Marine Park submission on our website. This is a very impressive document.

### **Longbeach Dune rehabilitation work.**

No doubt Friends of Durras members are aware of the controversy surrounding this voluntary conservation work. The Environmental reporter for the Sydney Morning Herald wrote an article about this issue just recently (2-6-07) Due to "decibel debating" Eurobodalla Shire Councillors voted overwhelmingly to remove the 200 low lying shrubs and grasses on the foreshore of Longbeach. This move by Eurobodalla Shire is thought to be unprecedented.

### **And Finally**

We as the Friends of Durras have achieved so much since the group was formed in 1985. The Friends of Durras has been directly responsible for the additions of nearly 10,000 hectares of former Forestry and Crown land to Murramarang National Park. We now have the Bateman's Bay Marine Park along the Murramarang coastline including the offshore islands and Durras Lake. Some years ago, Marine Scientists conducting a diving expedition in the waters off the Tollgate islands described it as like discovering "new life on earth" with over two hundred marine plant species identified. This location was described as one of the richest places for marine diversity on the South Coast of NSW. Just like we have a reserve system on land, it is appropriate and important to have a reserve system over our ocean and estuary environment.

It is indeed a privilege to live in such a special place as this.

See you all at the next Spurge Pull,

***The FoD Team***