



FRIENDS OF DURRAS
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MEDIA RELEASE

Friends of Durras Plan Environmental Action for the October Long Weekend

This October long weekend Friends of Durras volunteers will be out doing what they love best - helping to maintain the long term health of the Murramarang National Park.

Over these three days there will be a systematic count of shorebirds along the entire length of the Murramarang coastline, combined with the removal of washed up rubbish from rocks and beaches. On Sunday, 1 October, action will focus on pulling out the noxious weed sea spurge from Middle Beach (just south of Pretty Beach), and anyone who cares about the coastal environment is invited to pitch in.

Ms Lorna Tilley, Secretary of the Friends of Durras said “Sea spurge is a major threat to beaches along the south eastern Australian coastline, because it smothers native vegetation and destroys shorebird habitat. Along with Durras Land Care, we’ve been working to banish sea spurge from local beaches since it was first identified here about three years ago. We’ve organised lots of half day weed pulls with helpers aged from 8 to 80, and with cooperation from National Parks and Wildlife Services we’ve made huge inroads in rooting out this pest from the southern Murramarang beaches. Now we are working our way up the coast.”

Tilley said that everyone is welcome to participate. “People should wear rubber gloves, as the sap from the plant is toxic and can irritate the eyes and skin, and also bring along lots of water to keep themselves hydrated. That’s the practical side of things. But we also want this to be a family, friends and fun event, with time out for socialising and swimming - so bring along a picnic as well, if you feel like it!”

Tilley said that the shorebird census also being undertaken over the holiday period is a very important activity that Friends of Durras have performed regularly in the past. “Murramarang National Park is a particularly favourable environment for shorebirds. For instance, there are now only about 300 sooty oyster catchers left in the whole of NSW - before European colonisation the population was much higher, but coastal development and the introduction of foxes and dogs have destroyed breeding grounds. Murramarang and the offshore islands are probably home to about one third of the remaining birds in this State. The Friends of Durras shorebird tally will allow us to be more accurate in accounting for this and other endangered shorebird species, and provide information to help plan for habitat protection.”

Tilley agreed that activities such as those planned for next weekend add up to a significant investment of time and energy for Friends of Durras members. “Why do we do it? Well, the short answer is that we feel it’s a privilege to be able to give something back to the environment we enjoy so much. Friends of Durras was formed in 1985 with the goal of protecting and improving the local environment, and in the last 21 years, as a result of our efforts, the Murramarang National Park has been expanded from a base of 1,600 hectares to 10,500 hectares. Not only has this had massive benefits for regional biodiversity, but you could say that it’s also been ‘tourism gold’ for the local economy - we are now a major tourist attraction. We want to make sure these outcomes are preserved. There are always housekeeping tasks, but helping to look after this area is a special responsibility we gladly accept.”

People wishing to participate in sea spurge removal from Middle Beach next Sunday should meet at the Pretty Beach car park at 10.00am. Middle Beach is immediately to the south of Pretty Beach, and is reached from Pretty Beach by walking around the rock ledge. For more information about the sea spurge ‘pull’ people can email Friends of Durras at info@friendsofdurras.org