

THE SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER OR MUTTON BIRD

The Short-tailed Shearwater (*Ardenna tenuirostris*) or "Mutton Bird" nests in large numbers on Griffiths Island. The name "Mutton Bird" was given to it by early settlers who used its fatty flesh for food and as an oil source.

Each year the breeding birds return to the nesting grounds within three days of the 22nd of September. Individuals return to the same nest burrow they occupied the previous year and generally mate with the same partner throughout their breeding life.

Mating occurs early in November and after returning from a two week period at sea the female lays one white oval egg about the size of a hen's egg. The egg hatches around mid-January with both parents sharing the incubation duties in that time. Both parents feed at sea during the day, returning at dusk to feed the chick by regurgitating food from their stomach. In mid-April the adult birds commence their northern migration leaving the young behind. Hunger brings chicks from the nest some weeks later and soon after they set off after the adults at sea.

OTHER FAUNA FOUND ON ISLAND

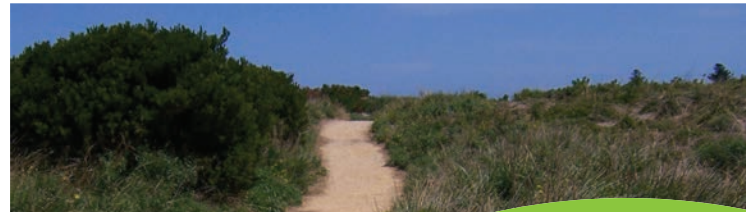
Over 80 bird species have been recorded on the island, predominantly sea birds and waders. Among the birds likely to be seen are sandpipers, pied oystercatchers, terns and gulls.

There is a resident group of Black Wallabies which can regularly be seen feeding quietly as you walk the island. Short Beaked Echidnas, Blue Tongue Lizards, Brown Snakes and Copperhead Snakes may also occasionally be seen.

Griffiths Island has suffered considerably from man's intervention yet nature has recovered to once again make it a largely natural environment.

WALKING THE ISLAND

There are no toilets or shelter on the island, the nearest being at Martin's Point. It takes approximately 25 minutes to walk to the lighthouse via the walk along the formed river bank and a limestone track. A complete circuit of the island takes about 75 minutes on foot. There is limited disability access, with none beyond the lighthouse as the track is rough, over sand and rocks in some places and walking along the southern beach sections depends upon the height of the incoming tide.



CONTACTS

Friends of Griffiths Island (FoGI)

Email: fogipf@gmail.com

Like us on Facebook!

www.facebook.com/FOGIPF

Moyne Shire Council:

5568 0555

www.moyne.vic.gov.au

Port Fairy Visitor Information Centre:

1300 656 564

www.portfairyaustralia.com.au

www.facebook.com/portfairyvic

GRIFFITHS ISLAND

Griffiths Island is a sanctuary for plants, birds and animals, and is a delicate system that can easily be disturbed.

Before you cross onto the Island please remember the following:

- Only walk on marked tracks
- Do not intentionally disturb any birds or other animals
- Do not leave litter
- NEVER take your dog or cat onto the island
- DO NOT cross the causeway if waves are coming over the concrete pathway



FoGI



MOYNE
SHIRE



GRIFFITHS ISLAND

A dune habitat comprising 37 hectares of remnant coastal scrub and grassland, this crown land parcel was first reserved as a public park in 1902. The original three islands (Goat, Rabbit and Griffith) were joined by siltation and deposition of sand after the river training walls were constructed from the 1870s.

The first documented European to visit Port Fairy was Captain Wishart who took shelter during a storm while looking for sealing grounds in 1828. In 1833 John Griffiths set up a whaling station on the island and had a large timber house built there in 1837. By the early 1840's so many whales had been killed that the supply was almost exhausted and the whaling station closed.

The lighthouse and a lighthouse keeper's cottage were built around 1859 with stone sourced directly from the island. Originally painted red, it was changed to white in the 1930's. The lighthouse is still fully operational and over the years the light's power has changed from vegetable oil, kerosene, gas and wind to solar power.

The lighthouse keeper's cottage was demolished in the 1950's following the departure of the last lighthouse keeper. The Norfolk Pine Trees (*Araucaria heterophylla*) on the island were planted in the mid 1930's by the Harbour Master Hugh Haldane while tending the lighthouse.

TRAINING WALLS

The training walls were built from the 1870's and were used to direct the Moyne River out into Port Fairy Bay and keep the mouth permanently open.

The visit of the eminent maritime engineer, Sir John Coode, to Australia in 1878, led to his advice being sought on Victorian port projects.

At Port Fairy, an important recommendation was to enclose the "Puddeny Grounds" with a sinuous training wall constructed around Goat Island that would harness the wave power coursing through the South West Passage to flush the lower reaches of the river into the bay.

Coode's plan was perhaps too successful, as the power of the waves racing along the "canal" was sufficient to force the slowly moving coastal steamer Eumeralla onto the training walls and aground in 1909.

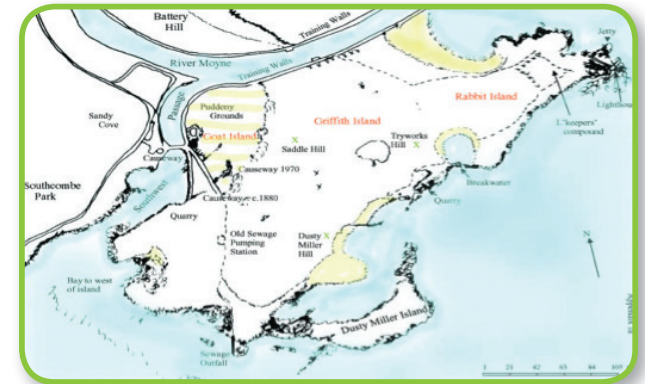
The "surge" at the Martin's Point junction of the Passage and the river also regularly frustrated fishing boats attempting to reach their moorings upstream.

A pedestrian bridge was built in 1900 to connect the training walls on the northern side of the island with the mainland to permit visitor access.

By 1911 the stone causeway was constructed after the initial bridge was washed away during storms.

INTERESTING FACTS

Two of the earliest shipwrecks in Victoria happened on the south coast of the island. In November 1842 the *Dusty Miller* was caught in a gale. Thankfully all but one person survived; and in May 1846 the *Squatter* came to grief on a reef after being battered by heavy weather. Fortunately no lives were lost in this incident.



Around 1850, a Mrs Dunlop maintained a kind of mission on the island for the education of Aborigines. She was apparently a colourful character, using a whaleboat crewed by six Aborigines in red shirts and white trousers for trips to the mainland. The mission was apparently unsuccessful closing in 1853.

Much of the stone used in the construction of the second stage of the Warrnambool breakwater in the 1920s was sourced from Griffiths Island.

A section of the island was infrequently used between 1920 and 1952 as a rifle range over 700 yards.

