



The contractors' campsite on Tullaberga Island gives a good sense of scale for the weed eradication works currently being undertaken. The section of foliage in the foreground is the boxthorn currently being eradicated. (PS)

Banishing the Tullaberga boxthorn

Parks Victoria staff and contractors have started a weed eradication program to control boxthorn and mirror bush on Tullaberga Island, near Mallacoota.

While the weather stays favourable, the crew will keep busy cutting down the weeds and burning them in small piles as they work their way across the island over the next fortnight.

Ranger team leader, Phil Re-

ichelt, explained the aim of the weed eradication program was to restore the bird habitat of Tullaberga Island. The island is a major offshore breeding ground for hundreds of seabirds such as the white faced storm petrel, shearwaters and little penguins.

"With no foxes, cats or rats, the island is a safe refuge for these breeding colonies. The island is particularly important for the Petrel which only has three breeding

colonies in Victoria, the other two being in Port Phillip Bay," Phil said.

"The problem with boxthorn is that it traps adult birds in its long thorns and prevents them from making burrows, which they need to breed. Like mirror bush, boxthorn is an introduced weed that has no place on the island."

Phil said Parks Victoria was on track to remove all the mature boxthorn bushes from the island

by next year.

"As soon as we remove the mature bushes, the job becomes much easier and then it's a matter of keeping the seedlings that pop up from the ground under control."

The funding for the program has come through the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority from the Australian Government under the National Landcare Programme.