



Tullaberga Island, off the coast near Mallacoota, is home to hundreds of seabirds in the breeding season and Parks Victoria has been undertaking a habitat restoration project to rid the island of its thorny problem. (PS)

# Restoring Tullaberga's bird habitat

**Seabirds will benefit from the restoration of their habitat on a key offshore breeding ground near Mallacoota.**

The long-term objective of controlling boxthorn and mirror bush on Tullaberga Island has taken on a new lease of life in the third year of a five-year program.

The island, just off the coast near Mallacoota, is a major breeding ground for hundreds of seabirds such as the white faced storm petrel, shearwaters and little penguins. It's the second biggest breeding colony of the petrel in Victoria.

Funding for the program has come through the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority from the Australian Government under the National Landcare Program. Parks Victoria is delivering the on-ground works on the island, which is part of Croajingalong National Park.

Boxthorn is a thick and thorny introduced weed, and a major hazard for these birds, trapping adults in its long thorns and preventing them from making burrows, which are necessary for breeding. With no foxes, cats or rats the island is a safe refuge for these breeding colonies.

Parks Victoria has taken a different approach to the control program this time. Instead of daily boat trips to the island, the contractors and their gear were taken by boat and set up camp. They then camped on the island for two intensive stints of several days, which made it quicker and easier for ongoing clearing and burning.

Around a hectare of the island was cleared of the dense thorny bushes and follow up work was done over the rest of the island re-



The island is Victoria's second largest breeding ground for the white-faced storm petrel. (Photo: Andrew Silcock)

moving boxthorn and mirror bush seedlings.

As a follow-up, Parks Victoria firefighters were later dropped by helicopter onto the island to burn the remaining piles of boxthorn. This was done in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning as part of the planned burning operations carried out across East Gippsland.

Area chief ranger, David Burton, said it had been a long-term aim to restore the bird habi-

tat of Tullaberga by controlling this invasive and nasty weed.

"Tullaberga Island is going to be a much better breeding habitat for these birds in the near future, now that we're getting on top of the Boxthorn. By the end of this current program, in two years' time, we'll have removed all the mature boxthorn bushes on the island. After that we'll follow up and keep on top of the seedlings that will continue to pop up from seeds stored in the soil."



Parks Victoria contractors working on the invasive weed clear-up. (PS)



DELWP firefighter Phil Reichelt was involved in the burn-off of the cleared boxthorn, supporting the Parks Victoria works. (PS)