

**BOULLANGER BAY/ROBBINS PASSAGE  
RAMSAR NOMINATION**

**REPORT OF A NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST  
PROJECT**

**PROJECT: NWP 13028**

**AUGUST 2000**

**HELEN DUNN**



Birds Tasmania

NHT logo?

## **Acknowledgements**

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I am grateful to many people who gave their time and expertise to assist in collecting and interpreting data relating to the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area. There are many individuals in the Smithton community as well as scientists and managers in the Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment and research institutes whose names are listed in appendices to this report. Their contributions were invaluable in developing an understanding of this species area.

Several people gave particular help. Priscilla Park of the Wader Study Group of Birds Tasmania provided valuable help in assembling wader counts and other bird records from a range of sources. Stewart Blackall of the Nature Conservation Branch arranged for the preparation of a digitized boundary. Sally Bryant of Birds Tasmania and the Threatened Species Unit set up an informative display for the public meeting and gave helpful advice to proceed the project. Doug Watkins of the Wetlands International program of Wetlands Australia brought extensive knowledge and experience to the analysis of the bird data in relation to the Ramsar criteria. Peter Cotsell and Kathy Eyles from the Wetlands Unit in Canberra gave ongoing support and advice from the Government perspective as well as taking a personal interest in the site.

Local Parks rangers in the Smithton area, Peter Hefferon and Lalani Hyatt provided very useful information and insights from the local setting and hosted site visits. The Circular Head Council provided facilities for the public meeting.

Helen Dunn

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## **Proposal to nominate Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage as a Wetland of International Significance (Ramsar Site)**

### **2 1. Background**

#### *1.1 The origin of the nomination*

Birds Tasmania first became aware in the early 1980's of the significance of the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area of far north-west Tasmania as an important area for migratory wading birds in Tasmania. Population estimates by Watkins (1993), based on some limited counts by the (then) Bird Observers Association of Tasmania, indicated that the area met criteria for Ramsar listing for seven species. Watkins (1993) recommended that the 'National Parks and Wildlife Service...investigate options to ensure that the conservation values of Robbins Passage are maintained (and that) consideration should be given to nominating the area for listing under the Ramsar Convention' (p 133).

Since that time, the Bird Observers, now Birds Tasmania (a regional group of Birds Australia), have been pursuing the listing of the area and asked the Nature Conservation Branch<sup>1</sup> of the Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment (DPIWE) to commence the process. Previous applications were made by the Department for Natural Heritage Trust funding to undertake the work, but these were unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, at the instigation of Birds Tasmania, the area was listed on the Register of the National Estate in 1996, and the importance of one roost site, Shipwreck Point, was noted in the Marine Farming Development Plan for the area (Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment 1999).

In 1998, Birds Tasmania applied for Natural Heritage Trust funds to prepare a submission for nomination of the area under the Ramsar Convention. A budget of \$72, 200 was proposed to:

‘Assemble existing information and acquire new information for a submission of the Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage sites for Ramsar listing. This will

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<sup>1</sup> The name Parks and Wildlife Service is now used for the section responsible for park management. Policy, planning and conservation are under the Nature Conservation Branch.

involve a comprehensive collection of new and existing bird information, a botanical and invertebrate survey of the area and collection of additional information as required by the guidelines for the preparation of Ramsar sites nomination documentation' (NHT application form).

The grant was successful but the sum of only \$25 000 was allocated. This meant that botanical and invertebrate surveys could not be undertaken. In addition, new requirements by Environment Australia meant that greater attention had to be paid to community consultation as a component of the nomination process. Dr Helen Dunn was appointed project consultant in November 1999.

### **3 1.2 A rationale for proposing the nomination**

Members of Birds Tasmania had visited the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area and saw the value of the place first-hand (Wall 1955, Ashby 1987, 1990, 1991). It is remote and difficult to access, and the early visits by a member sea kayaking in the area drew wider attention of the bird enthusiasts (Ashby 1987). Then counts of birds were undertaken at the more accessible roost sites (TBR 1994 -1998). The dramatic tidal flows and extensive mudflats had a particular wilderness quality which provided some protection to the waders.

However, concerns about the long-term protection of the feeding and roosting sites began to arise, particularly as Birds Tasmania noted pressures on other Ramsar sites in the State. Increase in human activity both for recreational purposes and for economic activities, especially marine farming, was creating increasing levels of disturbance to both the habitat and to the birds themselves. Increasing use of 4WD vehicles and other off-road transport was seen as a serious threat in the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area. This was likely to be exacerbated by subdivisions on adjoining land creating more ready access to the community than had been previously available. In addition, there was concern that changes in land use by neighbouring large properties from sheep farming to intensive dairying would result in impacts on the marine environment from fertilizer and effluent.

New technologies to develop and popularize transport allowing greater public access in coastal areas is a growing problem. Quad bikes, hovercraft, jet skis and the like are now more widespread in the community and could spell disaster for bird life. In

addition, as other areas of the north-west Tasmanian coastline have greater controls placed on off-road vehicle use, displaced riders are likely to transfer their activities to unregulated areas. Evidence from wheel tracks on sandy coasts where shorebirds nest showed already that the natural values of Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area were being threatened.

While Birds Tasmania acknowledged the risk that Ramsar listing might create greater publicity for the area, it was considered that this was outweighed by the potential for greater protection and more appropriate management of the area. At the time of proposing the nomination there was no legislative protection for Ramsar sites, but it was hoped that at least Ramsar listing might lead to more respect for the area and this would be taken into account in other plans such as the Marine Farming Plan. In addition, the values of the area were recognised and endorsed by the Nature Conservation Branch and other sections of DPIWE so it was expected that Ramsar listing would be a factor in management decisions for the coastal area.

#### ***4 1.3 A new legislative and government context***

The new Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999) will come into force on July 16 2000. This Act identifies Ramsar-listed wetlands as matters of national environmental significance and introduces an environmental assessment and proposal process for actions that may have a significant impact on the ecological character of a Ramsar wetland.. Before an area is designated as a Ramsar wetland, the Commonwealth must be satisfied that all stakeholders, including whole of State Government, State agencies, non-government organisations and the community agree to listing the wetland as a Wetland of International Importance. The Commonwealth must also be satisfied that proposed management arrangements are in place prior to listing. Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, all Commonwealth Ramsar sites are required to have management plans. The Commonwealth must also use best endeavours with the States to ensure plans are prepared for all other sites.

At a State level, the Tasmanian government will not proceed a nomination without evidence of community consultation. If the Tasmanian government supports the nomination this will be an acknowledgement of management responsibility for the area.

These changes in context for the nomination process have meant that the tasks of the project officer have been directed more towards community consultation than was originally envisaged in the application. The nature, extent and outcomes of the consultation process are not specified.

The scope of information required for the nomination documentation is also wider than that foreshadowed by the project applicants. As well as data and analysis of the values of the place according to the Ramsar criteria, the proforma requires statements about social and cultural values, threats and proposed conservation management strategies. These elements also required additional research and other contacts. However, collation of these data provides a sound basis for the preparation of the management plan once the site is listed.

## **2. Data collection and community information processes**

### ***2.1 Project tasks***

Project activities were renegotiated between officers of the Wetlands Unit of Environment Australia, Birds Tasmania and the consultant in light of the new requirements for the nomination process. The proposed invertebrate survey, although important and useful, was cancelled because of expense, logistical problems and its non-essential nature in the preparation of the nomination. An amount was set aside to support community consultation and preparation of a statement of cultural values to be undertaken by the Aboriginal community through the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council. General community consultation was a primary task. It was agreed that the consultation should take on four purposes: to inform people with particular interests in the area of the proposal, to inform the wider community in the region, to discuss any issues and to gather information about the community's perceived social and economic values of the area.

A second major strand of the project was to compile the data for the nomination form. This included descriptions of the place, land use, threats and conservation measures. Data were then compared with the Ramsar criteria to identify on which criteria the site reached the agreed standard. In addition to information from Birds Tasmania, information was to be sought from other specialists about other wetland-related

values. A draft boundary which captured all the natural values was then to be prepared.

During the life of the project contact was to be maintained with the lead agency, the Nature Conservation Branch of the Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment. This ensured that officers would be fully informed about the process and the expectations of Birds Tasmania that the nomination would be followed up at State level.

## **5 2.2 *Compiling the data for the nomination form***

Scientific data and administrative information about the proposed site were collected from a range of different sources, including documentation and personal knowledge of scientists. Documentation included data compiled for the listing in the Register of the National Estate, records of Birds Tasmania, journal and newsletter articles and other published and non-published sources. Meetings were arranged with many scientists and managers from government agencies and the University of Tasmania. As word spread about the project, other interested parties also made contact with the project officer and offered information or assisted with local site information.

The list which follows summarizes the persons contacted or providing information. A full list of names and contact details is provided (Appendix 1a) so that future progress towards nomination can be facilitated by contact with particular individuals if required.

### **Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Land and Water Resources Branch          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Manager</li><li>▪ Water Resources Officer North-West (2)</li></ul>   |
| Marine Farm Planning Branch              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Manager</li><li>▪ Rice Grass control officer</li></ul>   |
| Coastal Policy Unit                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Manager</li></ul>  |
| Tas. Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Scientist</li></ul>  |
| Nature Conservation Branch               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Director, National Parks and Wildlife Service</li><li>▪ Threatened Species Unit officer (fauna)</li><li>▪ A/Senior zoologist</li><li>▪ Earth scientist</li><li>▪ Botanists (2)</li></ul> |

- Wetlands officer
  - Project officer (birds)
  - GIS officer
  - A/district ranger
  - Ranger
- 6 University of Tasmania**
- 7 Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council**
- 8 Environment Australia**  
Wetlands Unit
- 9 Wetlands International**  
\*note – Wetlands International are not part of the Wetlands Unit or Environment Australia, they are an NGO.
- 10 Other**
  - Birds Tasmania wader study group
  - Local bird observers and naturalists

Discussion relating of the values of the site also revealed some concerns and issues with the present and possible future management of the site. Although natural values had persisted apparently relatively intact to the present time, recent changes in land use and changes in patterns of use in the area were seen to be placing this situation at risk. A current threat to the site is the invasion of *Spartina* or rice grass, an invasive exotic grass of mudflats.

Completion of item 19 on the proforma regarding Aboriginal (cultural) values of the site was left in the hands of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council. Discussions were held between the project officer and the manager and project officer of the Land Council, which in Tasmania is the body which deals with matters of Aboriginal heritage. It was agreed to contract the Land Council to conduct its own consultation with the Aboriginal community. The outcomes of this process would be to inform the local Aboriginal people of the proposed nomination and to prepare a brief statement of Aboriginal values to be incorporated in the nomination. This procedure was agreed to ensure that the wording would be appropriate and acceptable to the Aboriginal community. Liaison was maintained between the project officer and the Land Council.

The data collected by Birds Tasmania in regular bird counts between 1993 and 1999 (TBR 1994 - 1999) were analyzed with the assistance of the project officer for Wetlands International. This provided the accurate contextual data on population numbers from which the percentage occurring within the site could be calculated.

Assessment of the nature of the site and the dates of recording indicated that data from all roost sites could be combined to provide a summary of the numbers of birds using the site. In addition, information on the nationally endangered orange-bellied parrot which uses this area on its migration route, was also compiled for the project.

### ***2.3 Informing the community***

The community includes the immediate community of the Smithton area, North-west regional interests as far afield as Burnie, and the Aboriginal community. In the local area, private landowners, leaseholders of Crown land and landowners whose activities might impact on the site were contacted. Names and contact details were obtained from the Crown Land Services Branch and through the Landcare group lists.

Local marine farmers with leases in the Robbins Passage/Duck Bay area and others with commercial interests in the waterways such as abalone divers and scale fishers were interviewed. Lists of marine farmers were obtained through the Marine Farming Plan and from locals. People with recreational interests such as fishing and shooting were contacted through informal networks such as local sports shops and individuals who had collaborated with Parks officers on data collection.

The general community's interests were pursued through contact with the Circular Head Council and local park rangers. Aboriginals living in the area were informed of the proposals by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council.

Individual meetings or telephone discussions were held with numerous people over a period of six weeks. One landowner also elected to meet with the officers of Environment Australia to discuss his particular interests and concerns.

The purpose of meetings with local people was to explain what the proposal was about – why the place was considered to be important, and the consequences of listing. The Ramsar concept of 'wise use' was explained and any particular issues that the person might have about the implications for their activities were discussed. Benefits of listing including security of access, an integrated management plan and the potential for niche tourism or marketing advantage were pointed out. It was also suggested to people that, for many users, issues of maintaining good water quality and

general protection of the environment was in general community interest as well as protecting the habitat for the birds.

Material was provided to those interested. This included copies of some papers from the Ramsar Info Pack downloaded from the website, Environment Australia leaflets on Australia's Ramsar sites and shorebirds, and a draft map of proposed boundaries for the site. A full kit of material was also sent to the local Primary School Landcare teacher.

Several 'naturalists' working locally on a full-time or part-time professional basis in this field were also contacted. These people worked in roles as varied as photographer/illustrator, field bird census collector and ecotourism.

Categories of people interviewed are listed. Full contact details are provided in Appendix 1b, 1c for follow-up contacts.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>11 Circular Head Council</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mayor</li> <li>▪ Environment Officer</li> </ul>   |
| <b>12 Commercial operators</b>   |  |
| Marine Farmers                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 8 oyster farmers</li> </ul>   |
| Abalone diver                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 only individual who operates in the area</li> </ul>   |
| Scale fishers                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussion with 2 , 1 other harvests in the area</li> </ul>                                   |
| Sports Store operators           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 1 Smithton</li> <li>▪ 1 Burnie</li> </ul>   |
| <b>13 Recreational interests</b> |  |
| Duck-shooters                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 3 individuals</li> </ul>  |
| Naturalists                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4 individuals</li> </ul>  |
| Recreational fishers             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ one club representative</li> </ul>  |
| <b>14 Land managers</b>          |  |
| Private landowners /managers     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meetings with 2 landowners, (one contacted by local ranger, another uncontactable)</li> </ul> |
| Leaseholders                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 2 only - Contacted by mail – live out of the area</li> </ul>                                  |

A community meeting was scheduled to take place after the individual meetings. This was held in the Council Offices in Smithton on April 16, 2000. Information about the meeting was distributed widely: all those interviewed or previously contacted were sent personal invitations; notices were sent to council and sports shops; word was spread by the local Parks rangers, and the meeting was publicized in the local press.

Advertisements were placed in the weekly Circular Head Chronicle a week prior to the meeting and again on the day of the meeting. An advertisement was placed in the Burnie based Advocate newspaper on the Saturday prior to the meeting. The Chronicle ran a story on the proposed nomination a week before the meeting. On the day before the meeting, the project officer was interviewed for a local ABC radio station. Following the meeting, reports appeared in the Advocate newspaper and in the Circular Head Chronicle. Copies of the advertisements and articles are attached (Appendix 2).

Approximately 60 people attended (Appendix 3) the community meeting which was chaired by the consultant. Officers of Environment Australia were able to answer queries from the management perspective. Presentations were made by a local bird observer, DPIWE bird specialists and the Wetlands International officer outlining the remarkable journeys of the birds which use the area and pointing out its significance in an international, national and Tasmanian context. A lengthy period of discussion on the implications of listing, questions about any constraints or restrictions that might be imposed and possible management of the area followed. It was suggested from the floor that further consultation was necessary and even a draft management plan might be needed before there was any consensus of general community support. It was pointed out that a management plan would follow and not preempt any listing of the place. Nevertheless, some individuals requested that a clearer statement of management purposes and strategies was necessary, along with some indication of community involvement in management. There was no objection on the grounds that the area did not have the values claimed for the place.

#### ***2.4 Liaison with the lead agency***

The lead agency with responsibility for the area is the Nature Conservation Branch of the Department of Primary Industry, water and Environment. The project officer had briefing meetings with the wetlands officer, a meeting with the PWS Director and ongoing contact with various specialists as well as the local rangers. This not only provided important data for the nomination and information on matters relating to items 22 –26 of the Information Sheet but also ensured that the agency was kept informed of community attitudes and level of support for the project.

A digitized boundary of the proposed site will be prepared by the GIS section of the Department when this is finalized.

Contact was also maintained with the Wetlands Unit of Environment Australia to provide a Commonwealth government perspective on the process of nomination and to gain advice on procedure. In addition, the project officer for Wetlands International was located within the office of Environment Australia providing a link with the international project and current work on migratory bird data. The project officer proved invaluable in interpreting and assessing the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage data.

The two officers from Environment Australia and project officer of Wetlands International went on a fly-over of the site in April 2000. This gave them an appreciation of the nature and size of the site, and the location and distribution of roosting sites.

### **3. The Ramsar proposal for Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage**

#### ***3.1 The state of the proposal***

Analysis of the data available for the proposed area indicates that the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area meets several of the Ramsar criteria. The completed proforma and proposed boundary accompany this report.

The following sections, **3.2** to **3.5**, provide a background to the summary information of the form. The values and issues which will form the basis of management proposals for the site are explained and discussed.

Nature Conservation Branch officers have been involved in key meetings with the community, with officers of Environment Australia and in discussion on the values of the place and the boundaries. A meeting was held with the Director, Parks and Wildlife Service and the Division's wetlands officer at an early stage in the project. It was agreed that the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area should be considered a high priority wetland in Tasmania, and that the agency would have major carriage of responsibility for management. The Director pointed out that in order for the nomination to proceed, a case must be placed before State Cabinet, evidence of a level of community consultation and support must be demonstrated, and funding implications analyzed. Community consultation undertaken for the Birds Tasmania project would go a long way to meeting expectations for the consultation process.

#### ***15 3.2 Description of the area, physical and social context.***

Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage lie in the far north-west of Tasmania between the Tasmanian mainland and the near offshore islands – Perkins, Robbins, Hunter and Three Hummock Islands being the largest. The area is very shallow, with extensive intertidal sandflats (Dixon 1996). The tidal range reaches up to 4 metres, the highest of anywhere in Tasmania (Sharples 1998). As the tide falls, a rapid outflow through Walker Channel leaves wide areas of sandflat and sea grass exposed. Seasonally this area attracts the migratory waders for feeding, whilst at high tide the birds roost at various points on the neighbouring islands.

16 A few years after the initial invasion of Tasmania by Europeans, settlement had spread to the far north-west and in particular, the Van Diemens Land Company

was given an extensive lease of the farthest north-west corner. The property Woolnorth was developed and until about five years ago, few outsiders had a ready access to much of this coastline. With approval of the Foreign Investment Review Board, the property was purchased by a New Zealand dairy company and converted to intensive dairy farming. Some property subdivision into share farms has enabled more ready access to the area.

Marine farming of Pacific oysters began in the Smithton area in the 1970's. Some early leases proved to be inappropriately sited and new areas have been opened up. A Marine Farming Development Plan was approved in 1999 (DPIWE 1999). Other harvesting of marine resources include mutton-birding, abalone harvesting, scale fishing and some kelp harvesting.

The far north-west is a traditional rural community with a long history of farming and forestry. Recreational pursuits have been followed in the extensive areas of unallocated Crown Land and Protected Area. Such classifications allow for multiple use, for example cattle grazing on foreshore areas and hunting of game and duck. There is little land set aside in the area with a primary conservation purpose. Hence, proposals associated with protecting conservation values, even if traditional pursuits may be permitted, are regarded with suspicion.

The hinterland of the area is now used mainly for dairy farming with an estimated 50 000 cattle in the area. Catchments flowing into Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage drain from these farms. Particularly since the recent large scale change in use from sheep to dairy cattle, there has been concern about the potential effects of nutrient and effluent on the water quality and consequent impacts on sea grass and invertebrate life.

### ***17 3.3 A summary of the legislative and administrative context for the site***

Management issues relating to activities within the site, or impacting upon it, fall under a range of legislation State Policy and Agreements.

- Crown Lands Act 1976
- Threatened Species Protection Act 1995
- Parks and Wildlife Act 1970
- Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994

- Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995
- Marine Farming Planning Act 1995
- State Coastal Policy 1996
- State Policy on Water Quality Management 1997
- Water Act 1999
- Aboriginal Relics Act 1975
- Local Government Act 1993
- Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993
- Japan – Australia Migratory Bird Agreement JAMBA
- China – Australia Migratory Bird Agreement CAMBA

Much of the area proposed for Ramsar listing lies below high water mark and hence its management is the responsibility of the State Government.<sup>2</sup> There is no coastal reserve protecting the coast west of the Montagu River. With the exception of Robbins Island, all the off-shore islands are Unallocated Crown Land. Perkins Island and Montagu Island are leased for grazing. All these areas are subject to the Crown Lands Act. Robbins Island is private property, used for grazing and accessed at a channel crossing at low tide.

The area lies within the municipal boundary of the Circular Head Council. The Council leases a recreation reserve at Stony Point which is popular with campers. The Council also has a responsibility for water quality in the area as a result of discharge of treated wastewater from the council sewage plant at Smithton. It is also responsible for enforcing dairy effluent controls.

The Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment (DPIWE), through its Water Resources Branch, supports farmers on land and water management issues such as catchment management, salinity control, water quality and irrigation. Decisions and recommendations of the Water Resources Branch of DPIWE have potential to affect drainage issues in the area.

DPIWE also administers the marine farm industry. The Marine Farming Development Plan for far north-west (Robbins Passage to Duck Bay) was approved by the Tasmanian government in May 1999. This provides a statutory framework for the

use, development and management of marine farming in the area. The Plan will be reviewed within five years.

Harvesting of other marine living resources, such as scale fishing and abalone harvesting is also controlled by the DPIWE. Size limits are set for individual fish species, and netting is banned from some nearby estuaries and inlets, but none within the proposed Ramsar site are closed to netting. Commercial abalone harvesting is strictly regulated under license conditions, and recreational fishers must comply with size and bag limits.

The Parks and Wildlife Service and Nature Conservation Branch of DPIWE are responsible for managing recreational duck shooting under the Parks and Wildlife Act 1970. No areas in the far north-west are identified as sanctuaries for duck and groups of enthusiasts from Smithton and further afield visit the area during the season. Duck shooters are licensed and subject to a species and bag limit. Licenses are only issued after completion of a training course and assessment to ensure that protected duck species are not targeted.

Harvesting of mutton birds (yolla or short-tailed shearwater) has been a traditional practice since before the arrival of Europeans. There are many large rookeries around Boullanger Bay which are visited by both Aboriginal and other members of the community in the harvesting season. Commercial harvesting had been in operation until the 2000 season when the last remaining commercial processor was forced to close because of non-compliance with health regulations.

### **18 3.4 Natural values and conservation management concerns and issues**

19 Although the area was primarily nominated for its significance as a site for migratory wading birds, evidence from other specialists in the Nature Conservation Branch identified a number of other wetland values in the area. Important wetland values identified in the area include:

- The most significant site in Tasmania for numbers of migratory waders (Watkins 1993, Birds Tasmania 1995 – 1998)

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<sup>2</sup> Some old property titles are believed to extend to low water mark.

- Habitat for more than 1% of populations of eight species of waterbird (Watkins 1993)
- Habitat including extensive nesting areas for resident shorebirds (Bryant pers.comm 2000)
- Large, intact and healthy seagrass beds, with distinctive faunal communities (Rees 1993, Jordan *et al* 1998)
- Habitat and nesting sites for resident shorebirds and local migrants (OBP recovery Team 1999; Brothers pers.comm. 2000)
- Nesting sites for vast colonies of short-tailed shearwaters (mutton birds) (Skira *et al* 1996)
- Fly way and feeding ground for short-tailed shearwaters (mutton birds), albatross and other more oceanic species (Skira *et al* 1996; Brothers *et al* 1996; Brothers pers.comm 2000)
- North-south flyway route for non-marine migrants such as Latham's snipe (Naarding 1983)
- Habitat for a number of listed rare or threatened bird species, including the nationally endangered orange-bellied parrot (Bryant & Jackson 1998; OBP team 1999)
- Good representative example of an undisturbed tidal channel system and actively prograding shoreline (Dixon 1996; Sharples 1998)
- Indications of a distinctive fish community and importance as a fish nursery (Jordan *et al* 1998)
- Estuaries of conservation significance, including distinctive invertebrate communities of high diversity (Edgar *et al* 1999)
- Saltmarshes of conservation value for diversity of invertebrates (Wong *et al* 1993)

Names of specialists consulted and their field of expertise are provided in Appendix 1a.

The importance of the area was first drawn to attention by local bird observers noting the large flocks of waders feeding in the area in summer months. Subsequent systematic observation by Birds Tasmania has provided the basis for estimating overall numbers, calculating the species which represent more than 1% of their total population (the Ramsar threshold) and recording rare and threatened species in the area. The summary table of records for the area is shown on page 15.

Summary of Shorebird Counts for Boullanger Bay

Species	87	88	89	90	91	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	0	Summer Max	Winter Max	1% Criteria
168 Lathams Snipe	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0
153 Bar-tailed Godwit	90	5	0	4	133	13	1	284	350	37	61	500	0	500	2	1 200
150 Whimbrel	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
<b>149 Eastern Curlew</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>210</b>
158 Common Greenshank	5	10	16	42	25	0	40	100	50	27	75	110	0	110	0	400
160 Terek Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0	0
155 Grey-tailed Tattler	7	0	0	9	0	0	180	0	0	6	5	6	0	180	0	250
<b>129 Ruddy Turnstone</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>851</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>1 850</b>	<b>1 050</b>	<b>1 920</b>	<b>2 800</b>	<b>1 762</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>2 800</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>250</b>
165 Great Knot	60	0	0	1	2	0	1	14	0	29	10	25	0	60	0	0
164 Red Knot	120	76	2	1 021	1 505	18	403	1 050	11	808	820	804	0	1 505	90	2 000
166 Sanderling	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	24	12	5	0	28	20	28	1	100
<b>162 Red-necked Stint</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>3 400</b>	<b>1 850</b>	<b>2 100</b>	<b>2 410</b>	<b>1 000</b>	<b>3 050</b>	<b>4 150</b>	<b>2 500</b>	<b>6 659</b>	<b>4 450</b>	<b>4 045</b>	<b>1 600</b>	<b>6 659</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>4 700</b>
978 Pectoral Sandpiper	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
163 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	0	20	0	0	0	0	4	35	20	11	68	56	0	68	0	0
<b>161 Curlew Sandpiper</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1 800</b>	<b>1 060</b>	<b>2 150</b>	<b>1 520</b>	<b>912</b>	<b>1 900</b>	<b>3 400</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>2 310</b>	<b>1 870</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>3 400</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2 500</b>
<b>130 Pied Oystercatcher</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>727</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>1 143</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>1 143</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>131 Sooty Oystercatcher</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>373</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>440</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>40</b>
137 Pacific Golden Plover	1	243	89	370	212	110	150	112	0	109	162	272	15	370	2	1 000
136 Grey Plover	1	42	0	0	137	0	100	240	21	12	95	200	0	240	0	250
143 Red-capped Plover	0	46	153	78	62	152	225	130	70	137	188	54	82	225	221	0
<b>140 Double-banded Plover</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>786</b>	<b>1 200</b>	<b>300</b>
139 Lesser Sand Plover	0	0	13	4	0	0	2	9	5	8	27	11	0	27	1	100
<b>138 Hooded Plover</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>50</b>
135 Banded Lapwing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	13	50	0
133 Masked Lapwing	3	14	63	142	75	26	2	12	0	6	363	199	2	363	350	0
934 Reeve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
Unidentified small waders	0	10	1 220	0	383	0	0	0	0	220	0	500	0	1 220	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>6 979</b>	<b>6 131</b>	<b>8 137</b>	<b>8 489</b>	<b>3 591</b>	<b>7 749</b>	<b>12 276</b>	<b>4 950</b>	<b>14 143</b>	<b>12 564</b>	<b>10 997</b>	<b>3 394</b>			

Bird counts have been recorded from a number of roost sites across the proposed area for listing. Justification for adding the numbers from all sites to determine use of the area by waders is made on several grounds. Counts were undertaken over the same time period at high tide when the birds are not expected to be on the move. The roost sites are widely dispersed and some species of birds appeared to favour different roost sites from other species. Thus it appears that the sites host different individuals at the time of counts and figures from all sites may be combined.

Evidence from Parks rangers and local bird observers suggested that waders feeding in the area roosted further afield than originally considered for nomination. In particular, the spits at each end of Anthony's ('7 Mile') Beach at Stanley were sites used by certain species. It is now proposed to include these roost sites within the nominated boundary.

The highest estimated total numbers for the site based on the count in 1997 was around 14 000 migratory waders. The nature of the site, with its difficult access and limited opportunity and resources for counts, suggest that other, more remote, roost sites are likely to have been omitted from this estimate and the true numbers could be greater, approaching the Ramsar threshold of 20 000 for a site.

Evidence of a range of additional significant bird values strengthens the case for Ramsar nomination. Notably, the sandy foreshores and saltmarshes provide feeding and nesting habitat for a number of species of resident and migratory species. Among these are thirteen species listed on the JAMBA or CAMBA agreements. A further three species scheduled under the Tasmanian and/or Commonwealth threatened species legislation are found in the area. These are the orange-bellied parrot (classed as endangered nationally), the fairy tern (classed rare in Tasmania) and the hooded plover (classed vulnerable and under monitoring in Tasmania). The area generally attracts some of Tasmania's largest numbers of short-tailed shearwaters which breed in colonies, particularly on the islands. The shallow seas of Boullanger Bay are thought to be significant feeding grounds for these birds (Skira *et al* 1996).

The role of the seagrass in relation to the waders is unclear. The beds are one of the largest in Tasmania and amongst the larger healthy seagrass beds in Australia (Rees 1993, Jordan pers.comm 2000). The area, location and type of the seagrass is shown in the map in Appendix 5. Preliminary research has shown that these *Heterozostera*

beds have macroinvertebrate communities which are distinctive from *Heterozostera* beds in other parts of the State (Jordan *et al* 1998).

Seagrass ecosystems are under threat on a world scale. Ramsar listing would provide an opportunity for monitoring the habitat and ensuring its conservation. Monitoring of seagrass is particularly important as an indicator of the health of the ecosystem generally. Specialists from the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute have joined with DPIWE officers to make application for funding to establish and validate a monitoring protocol for key seagrass beds in Tasmania, including Boullanger Bay. Use of these habitats by fish is also likely to be important in sustaining the fish stocks in Bass Strait (Jordan pers.comm. 2000).

The Welcome River estuary was identified as of moderate conservation significance (Edgar *et al* 1999). The macroinvertebrate communities showed the third highest species richness in the State with a total of 71 taxa. Twelve of these species were restricted in Tasmania to the Welcome Inlet (Edgar *et al* 1999 p 65).

The hydrology and geomorphology of the area is an outstanding example of a tidal channel system with active coastal development (Dixon 1996, Sharples 1998). Because of its isolation and lack of human developments in the area, the place remains with very few constraints on the natural system such as sea walls, breakwaters or dredging.

As well as identifying values of significance for Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage, several specialists, bird observers and other naturalists raised issues of concern in the protection and conservation of the area. These include, in no particular order of priority:

- The spread of rice grass *Spartina angelica* from Duck Bay westwards at least as far as the Robbins Island crossing
- Increasing 4WD, quad bike and boat access to roosting sites
- 4WD use of foreshore areas, especially on foredunes and in *Sarcicornia* saltmarshes

- Adequacy of water quality monitoring in relation to discharges and use of the waterways
- Potential impacts of dairy effluents and unknown effects on the water of extensive land clearance
- Clearance of adjacent native vegetation, especially tall *Melaleuca* scrub
- Invasion of exotic species such as spurge *Euphorbia*
- Lack of detailed information, baseline data and understanding of the ecosystem as the basis for management
- Level of protection and management of Perkins Island and the major roost site at Shipwreck Point
- Uncontrolled fishing, especially netting, considering much of the area is likely to be a nursery site
- Lack of a strategy for coastal management and implementation of State coastal policy
- Cattle of the foreshore areas with overgrazing, trampling and introduction of weeds
- Burning on off-shore islands which damages roost sites
- Potential future threats from new all-terrain vehicles
- Potential future threats from harvesting of other native marine resources such as seagrass, kelp and clams

### ***3.5 Community values, management concerns and issues***

The Circular Head community has had a continuing link with the coastal area and use of its resources. A variety of native species are harvested, both commercially and recreationally. In recent years, introduced Pacific oysters have been farmed in some areas. Important social, economic and recreational values for the community include:

- Growing industry in farming of Pacific oysters
- Variety of scale fish and shark for commercial and recreational catch
- Abalone habitat
- Rock lobster as high value commercial species
- Potential for future developments in farming of marine resources such as abalone, seaweed
- Numerous mutton birds rookeries available for commercial and recreational harvesting
- ‘Birding’ and use of other marine species as a continuing element of Aboriginal culture
- Recreational duck-shooting
- Informal camping
- Recreational boating
- Grazing
- Access by hovercraft from Shipwreck Point for oyster farming
- Off-road vehicle use
- Bird observation and natural history
- Coastal ‘wilderness’ area

The earliest use of the area by the Aboriginal community is reflected in a statement prepared by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council. Community knowledge and documented evidence (Plomley 1966) indicate widespread access and use of various marine species for food, fibre plants and shell necklaces. Mutton-birding has continued as a cultural element to the present time. The rights of aboriginal use of some of the marine resources is acknowledged under the Living Marine Resources Act 1995

Commercial harvesting of mutton birds is now declining as a result of apparent decline in demand. There was no commercial harvest in 2000 season because of the closure of the processing operations under health regulations. Harvesting of mutton birds for food was a part of the life of the Aboriginals who lived in the area prior to European invasion, and continues as a cultural practice.

The oyster farming industry is seen as an important industry in growth and diversification for the area. There are some 10 individual operators, with leases at different phases of development and production. Trial and error has, to a degree, meant that some leases are poorly sited with the tidal currents and silt transport rendering them less suitable. Generally, though, the differences in substrate and flow are utilized to advantage at different phases of growth and preparation for harvesting. The area is now subject to a Management Plan (DPIWE 1999) which specifies zones and lease areas within the zones. The plan places particular controls on aspects of some zones and leases, including access. The Plan must be reviewed within 10 years, although any person can request amendment after the first two years of the plan have elapsed.

The farms occupy only the Robbins Passage sections of the proposed Ramsar site, Boullanger Bay being unsuitable for oyster farming. The area of the farms is shown in the map in Appendix 5.

Duck shooting and scale fishing were introduced by European settlers and formed both a source of food and recreational activity which continues to the present. It is claimed that the numbers of duck have increased as a result of land clearance and construction of farm dams which have provided ideal habitat for the duck. Some duck shooters assist the population by providing nesting boxes. Various sections of the coastal area and estuaries are the 'province' of different groups of duck shooters who have informal clubs or groups which use the territory. Shooters come from quite far afield in Tasmania because of the excellence of the area for their sport.

Small boats usually provide the base for recreational scale fishing (rather than the shore) though there has in the past been extensive netting. There are no restrictions on netting in most of the nominated Ramsar area with the exception of Mosquito Inlet (north-east coast of Robbins Island). Netting is banned at nearby Duck Bay and West

and East Inlet (Stanley). Such bans may be placing greater netting pressure on Boullanger Bay and the estuaries flowing into it.

There are 3 – 4 commercial scale fishers, most based at nearby Stanley, who fish in the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area. It is believed that the sea grass beds are an important nursery for sustaining fish populations in Bass Strait. Although there are no restrictions as a shark nursery, it is claimed that net size helps to avoid depleting the stock.

One abalone diver is licensed to fish commercially in the area which has some prime sites on the islands on the westerly perimeter of Boullanger Bay. Similar types of habitat also yield rock lobster, now a strictly controlled commercial harvest.

There is evidence of use of the coastal areas for camping and several reports of illegal ‘shacks’ on Crown Land. Such informal and unregulated recreational activity has been part of the culture of the north-west and is regarded as a community right. Similarly, 4WD and quad bike use has, in the last couple of decades, become an institution in the area. Owners regard the open coasts as places to enjoy such recreational pursuits.

The area has importance for members of the local community who are interested in natural history, especially birds. Although there is no formal local bird club or group systematically visiting the area, individuals visit the place to observe the birds. They also appreciate the place for its ‘wilderness’ character. Many individuals in the community may not necessarily have a deep knowledge of the birds or be able to identify them but, nevertheless, believe that the birds are an important feature of the area.

Members of the community identified some things happening in the area which concerned them or which they thought might threaten their interests and ongoing activities. These were raised either in private conversation or at the community meeting. They are not necessarily views held by all community members. Issues and concerns included:

- Inappropriate access and behaviours by 4WD-ers
- Overfishing , especially by commercial fishers

- Depletion of stock, notably flounder, as a result of netting
- Water quality and risks of impact of farm effluents
- Effluents, chemicals and water quality monitoring
- Flagging the breeding or roosting sites may attract vandals
- Overfishing, especially by netting
- Need to control fishing in nursery areas, for shark and other species – breeding stock are being taken
- Spread of rice grass and other weeds
- Properties with title to low (or high) water mark have used it inappropriately – eg cattle grazing
- Fears of restricted access if Ramsar listed
- Fear of imposition of additional monitoring requirements
- Past activities such as mudflat drainage
- Land tenure issues for Ramsar boundary
- Management arrangements for a Ramsar site and relationship to mainland regulatory arrangements
- Over-burning of coastal scrub on islands damages roosting areas and coastal vegetation
- Unknown impact on hunting, grazing, 4-wheel drive use and aquaculture if Ramsar listed.
- Fear of changing the ground rules eg will grazing continue?
- Fear of closure of activities such as duck shooting as a result of pressure from environmentalists

- Need for continuity of marine farm plan
- Unregulated and risky activities at illegal shack sites
- Difficulties with access within marine farm zones
- Increased access on Perkins Is, by supposed 'bird observers', who then leave litter, damage vegetation and light fires
- Fear of exclusion of community interests if the place were to be listed as a Ramsar site

## **20 4. Recommendations and requirements for proceeding the nomination**

### ***4.1 Achievements of the Natural Heritage Trust project***

The project has established that Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage reaches the threshold for Ramsar listing based primarily on the criterion for 1% or more of population of species of waterbird. Documentation of the site demonstrates its importance in an international, national and State context as habitat for shorebirds, especially migratory waders, and as a good undisturbed example of coastal wetland complex.

The proforma for nomination accompanies this report and recommended boundary is provided. This boundary takes into account the distribution of key roosting sites and feeding areas for migratory species, and the nesting and foraging areas for resident shorebirds based on the expert knowledge and long-term observations of Birds Tasmania members and Nature Conservation Branch bird specialists. The boundary also includes saltmarsh habitat which is critical for the endangered orange-bellied parrot on its migratory route.

Community consultations undertaken for the project are documented in this report. The community has been widely informed of the proposal to nominate the area, the reasons for its significance and the nature of Ramsar listing. There have been contributions from the community on the social and economic values of the area, and any concerns about the proposal to nominate have been recorded.

The Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council has provided a statement of Aboriginal cultural values for inclusion in the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands. The Council has undertaken consultation with the local Aboriginal community so that they are now aware of the proposal and implications of nomination. The position of the Land Council on land tenure, ownership and management is reflected in a statement under the section on Land tenure in the RIS, and will need to be considered in the management plan for the area.

The consultations which have taken place meet the requirements and expectations for the Natural Heritage Trust project.

General responses within the community have been mostly positive: no argument has been made against the conservation values of the area, and many of the concerns of individuals have been allayed by careful explanation of the nature of Ramsar listing, particularly the principle of 'wise use'. Other multiple-use Ramsar sites in Tasmania and the community input into the management plans for these sites provided examples of how the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area might also be managed. Some of the issues raised, particularly in the community meeting, were the outcome of fear of possible unknown consequences or poor understanding of the implications of Ramsar listing. Some of the fears appeared to be deliberately fostered by a few individuals.

A number of the issues and concerns about the Boullanger Bay/Robbins Passage area were common to both the expert scientists and to many people in the community. These included: water quality and impacts of farming effluents; spread of rice grass; inappropriate access and behaviours by some 4-wheel drivers; depletion of fish stocks by netting and possible overfishing, and uses of the coastal zone. Some key issues had several dimensions, for example the issues of access to Shipwreck Point, one of the prime roost sites. In general, many people in the community seemed to understand and accept that for most of Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage, and for most of the year, multiple uses were quite acceptable and could be encompassed within an appropriate management plan for the area.

Commonwealth and State government requirements for proceeding with the nomination have been clarified. Since most of this site is the responsibility of the Crown, the State will have primary management responsibility. For the lead agency, the Nature Conservation Branch of the Department of Primary Industry, Water and

Environment, the project has brought the task of preparing the case for nominating the area to a critical point. All information has been collated, and the community is aware and ready for further consultation towards an indicative management strategy for the area. This further stage will need to be undertaken in order to satisfy some community members and therefore government requirements for community support.

#### ***4.2 The need for further consultation***

A proposal was put at the community meeting that there should be further consultation before proceeding with the nomination. The purpose of this consultation was mainly to explore possible management structures and processes. A suggestion that a draft Management Plan be prepared before any community endorsement was rejected as inappropriate by both the officers of Environment Australia and the State agency, because such a process would pre-empt the acceptance of the place for listing by the Ramsar Bureau.

Nevertheless, in order to satisfy those demanding further consultation at this stage, some consultation will be necessary in order to meet the expectations that

- all the community values and issues are acknowledged, and
- possible mechanisms for involvement in management are outlined.

It was requested that this should be in written form. The process to develop and endorse such a document was not specified. Nor was it specified who, or what groups, should be involved in this second phase of consultation.

If the nomination is to proceed, it is clear that further consultation will need to be undertaken, and that this should be done sooner rather than later, so that the work done so far is built on and not forgotten. This next phase of consultation will need to be undertaken in close liaison with the Nature Conservation Branch. This will ensure that necessary information is completed to enable the agency to prepare a Cabinet submission.

#### ***4.3 A proposed strategy***

A proposed strategy is offered for consideration. Additional funding should be sought to complete the nomination and implementation of the Ramsar listing.

Ideally, funding should be sought as a complete package, with two separate phases. The first phase should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity and would comprise focussed community consultations to endorse a framework for management of the area, and the finalizing of the digitized boundary. Assistance would be provided to NCB officers in the preparation of the cabinet submission.

The second phase of the funding would be used to prepare the formal Management Plan that will be consistent with regulations under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. This phase should be undertaken as quickly as possible after the Ramsar listing is approved and will draw largely on the prior research and consultation.

Some suggestions for the immediate consultation phase are as follows:

- Focus meetings with particular interest groups to clarify values, threats, concerns and issues
- Workshop a draft framework for management which acknowledges the interests and involvement of various players
- Community meetings, possibly with local facilitator
- Invite those persons who attended the community meeting to further involvement in the consultation, either through meeting participation or written comments
- Media calls for comment on draft framework
- Canvas letters of support

A strategic approach to the consultation process and detailed planning will be developed if there is a likelihood of funding.

#### ***4.4 Recommendations for Birds Tasmania and Nature Conservation Branch, DPIWE Tasmania***

It is recommended that Birds Tasmania present the Nature Conservation Branch with this report and the accompanying Ramsar Information Sheet and request the agency to proceed the nomination through further stages to cabinet submission.

It is further recommended that Birds Tasmania encourage the Wetlands Unit of Environment Australia to allocate sufficient funding to undertake the additional consultation work required and also to set aside funding for later preparation of a Management Plan for the site.

It is recommended that Nature Conservation Branch also work with the Wetlands Unit to access funding for the preparation of the Management Plan. The progress so far at last gives an opportunity for the Nature Conservation Branch to proceed on a project which the officers of the DPIWE have seen for some years as very significant.

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## Appendix 1 a

**Scientists, naturalists and other experts consulted  
in the collation and interpretation of data**

<b>Name/expertise</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Information or comment provided</b>
<b>Doug Watkins</b> Senior Program Officer	Wetlands International	Analysis of wader data and Ramsar criteria
<b>Stewart Blackall</b> Wetlands officer	Nature Conservation Branch DPIWE	Site information, Ramsar nominations
<b>Alan Jordan</b> Research scientist	Tasmanian Fisheries and Aquaculture Institute	sea grass mapping and interpretation, invertebrate communities of seagrass and fish data
<b>Chris Rees</b> Manager	Coastal Management Unit, DPIWE	Seagrass mapping
<b>Louise Gilfedder</b> Botanist	Nature Conservation Branch DPIWE	vegetation
<b>Jane Elek</b> President	Marine Naturalists Society	Invertebrate sampling options
<b>Liz Turner</b> Invertebrate zoologist	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery	Invertebrate sampling options, limited data available
<b>Richard Donaghey</b> Project Officer	Bushcare & Land for Wildlife, DPIWE	Birds in the north-west
<b>Simon Plowright</b>	Birds Tasmania, Smithton	Wader observations
<b>Richard Mount</b>	Coastal Unit DPIWE	Coastal Atlas, mapping
<b>Peter Bosworth</b>	Investigations Branch, DPIWE	GIS sea grass maps
<b>Ray Murphy</b>	Zoology Dept University of Tasmania	Estuary monitoring program
<b>Alastair Richardson</b> A/Prof	Zoology Dept University of Tasmania	Invertebrate sampling options
<b>Graeme Edgar</b> Researcher	Zoology Dept University of Tasmania	Estuaries/seagrass
<b>Chris Sharples</b>	Consultant	Geomorphology and hydrology
<b>Tony Thomas</b> Manager	Marine Farming Branch DPIWE	Marine farm planning

**Appendix 1 a (cont.)****Scientists, naturalists and other experts consulted  
in the collation and interpretation of data**

<b>Name/expertise</b>	<b>Agency</b>	<b>Information or comment provided</b>
<b>Doug Nicol</b>	Marine Resources Branch DPIWE	Sea grass harvesting
<b>Paul Hedge</b> Rice grass control officer	Marine Farming Branch DPIWE	Rice grass control
<b>Tim Rudman</b> Weeds officer	Nature Conservation Branch DPIWE	Rice grass control
<b>Sally Bryant</b> Scientific officer	Nature Conservation Branch DPIWE	Threatened species esp. fauna
<b>Mike Temple-Smith</b> Manager	Land and Water Resources Branch DPIWE	Rivers policy
<b>Irynej Skira</b> A/senior zoologist	Nature Conservation Branch DPIWE	Mutton bird data
<b>Mark Holdsworth</b> OBP recovery officer	Nature Conservation Branch DPIWE	Orange Bellied Parrot data
<b>Richard Ashby</b>	Birds Tasmania, North- west	Wader records
<b>Peter Hefferon</b> Ranger	Parks and Wildlife Service, DPIWE	Local information
<b>Lalani Hyatt</b> Ranger	Parks and Wildlife Service, DPIWE	Local information
<b>Peter Cotsell</b>	Wetlands Unit Environment Australia	Ramsar criteria, nomination requirements
<b>John Smith</b> Manager, recreational fishery	Marine resources DPIWE	Recreational fishing matters
<b>Sean Riley</b> Manager, scale fishery	Marine resources DPIWE	Fishing regulations
<b>Priscilla Park</b> Wader study group	Birds Tasmania	Wader records and site information

## Appendix 1 b

## Marine Farmers, Robbins Passage area, April 2000

Name	Address	Zone/lease	Operational?
J D Poke	Bouldans Bay Oysters	1/22 3/21 8/30	Y Y Y - in part
F A & MT Kennedy (Frank)	Scarness Pty	3/20	Y
MJ Kennedy (Mick)	Perkins Bay Oysters ?	3/25 3/54	Y – sand movement Y
I Murphy (Ray)	Couta Rocks Marrawah	3/32	Y
BJ Cox (Brad)	Big Bay Oysters	3/82	Y
Scarness & MJ Kennedy		4/152	Y – with conditions applied in MFP
RJH Murphy (Ray)		8/19 8/29	Y Y
I & A Duthie	Montagu Tas Oysters I.Duthie@dpiwe.tas.gov.au	8/31	Y
Kurt McBain		3/227	Y
Paul Viney	Smithton Shellfish	1/24 8/33	Y Y- In part
David Jongbloed	Works with I Duthie		

**Appendix 2 a**  
**Invitations to community meeting April 12 2000,**  
**and previous individual consultation**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Prior contact</b>
PORTEUS, Laury	RA 23057 Marrawah Rd SMITHTON 7330	6452 2201	Naturalist	PWS ranger	Meeting
PORTEUS, Peter	O'Neill's Rd TROWUTTA	6456 5178/ 0418 107 305	Duck Shooter	PWS Ranger	Meeting
MAGUIRE, Paddy	229 Ben Hill RD MONTAGU	6456 6127	Abalone diver	PWS Ranger	Meeting
KRUSKA, David	DPIWE, PO Box 61 SMITHTON 7330	6452 1233	Water manager	DPIWE	Meeting
KENNEDY, Mick	6 Fenton St SMITHTON 7330		Oyster Farmer	Man Plan/I Duthie	Meeting
NICHOLSON, Guy	26 Epsom Rd PENGUIN 7316	6437 2824	Duck shooter	P Porteus	Inward Phone
HAMMOND, K & J	Robbins Island PO Box 339 SMITHTON 7330	6456 6175	Land owner		Meeting
HUMMELL, Lyn	Smithton Primary School, PO Box 262 SMITHTON 7330		Landcare teacher		No
HERRON, Damien	DPIWE, Box 44A HOBART	6431 4684 018 373 568	Fishcare officer	Anna Wind	No
HINES, Ross	Council Chambers, Goldie St SMITHTON 7330	6452 4800	Mayor		Meeting
KING, Geoff	RSD 161 Marrawah SMITHTON 7330	6457 1191	Landowner/ environment	Anna Wind	Inward Phone

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Prior contact</b>
PAUL, Lexie	4/1 Euroka Ct BURNIE 7320	6432 1093	Field Nat	Anna Wind	No
PLOWRIGHT, Simon	58 King St SMITHTON 7330	6452 2196	Birds Tas	P Park	Meeting, phone
MURPHY, Ray	147 Nelson St SMITHTON 7330	6452 1217	Oyster farmer	Man Plan, I.Duthie	Meeting
SMITH, Stuart	Smithton Sports Store, Emmett St SMITHTON 7330	6452 2319	Sports/rec fisher	PWS ranger	Meeting
COX, Brad	Big Bay Oysters Perkins Is SMITHTON 7330	6452 3047	Oyster farmer	Man Plan/I Duthie	Phone
MORGAN, Matthew	4 Hale St STANLEY 7331	6458 1379	Comm.scale fisher	I Duthie	Phone
BROGDEN, Veronica	Council Chambers, Goldie St SMITHTON 7330	6452 4843/ 6452 1265	Environment officer		Meeting 14/3
POKE, Jon	Bouldans Bay Oysters PO Box 84 SMITHTON 7330	6452 2262	Oyster farmer	Man Plan /I Duthie	Meeting 14/3
MCBAIN, Kurt	C/o BP Service Station, King S SMITHTON 7330t	6425 2896 0428 135 914	Oyster farmer/scale fisher	I Duthie	Meeting 14/3
JONGBLED, David	C/o I Duthie		Oyster farmer	I Duthie	No
DONAGHEY, Richard	Po Box 274 ULVERSTONE 7315	6445 1025	Friends of Wildlife	Anna Wind	No
TENNANT, Wayne	489 Partridge Rd SMITHTON 7330	6456 7197	Montagu L'care	DPIWE	Meeting 14/3
ELSE, Ken &	VDL Company (C/o Pole's RE,	6452 2911/2519	Woolnorth		Meeting 14/3

BLAIR, Graeme	Emmett St) SMITHTON 7330		managers		
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<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Prior contact</b>
POPOWSKI, John	RA 23610 Bass Hwy SMITHTON 7330	6456 3132	Welcome L'care	D Krushka	Phone
Van LOON, John	Main Rd TOGARI SMITHTON 7330	6456 7184	Togari L'care	DPIWE D Krushka	Now part of Montagu L'care
O'REILLY, Frank	Bass Hwy BOAT HARBOUR 7321	6445 1162 0418 141 192	Comm mutton birder	PWS	No response to phone, letter sent
VINEY, Paul	Goldie St SMITHTON 7330	6542 5068	Oyster Farmer	I Duthie	Phone
SCOTT, Audrey	Green Hills STANLEY 7331		Landowner	PWS ranger/DPIWE	Lalani to contact
WELLS, Monte	Green Hills STANLEY 7331	6458 1152 0418 582 526	Landowner	PWS ranger/DPIWE	Lalani to contact
HURLEY, J	Wharf Rd STANLEY 7331		Comm. Fisher		No
DUTHIE, I	14 Dallas Ct SMITHTON 7330 (or DPIWE)	6452 2250 (h) 6452 3624 (w)	Oyster farmer	Man Plan	Meeting
YOUNG, Adrian	Young's Outdoor Shop, BURNIE 7320	6431 6706 (w) 6431 6294 (f) 6431 3097 (h)	Duck Shooter	P Porteus	Phone
WIND, Anna			Coastcare	DPIWE	Email
WATTS, Gary	111 Stirling St BURNIE 7320	6431 2397	Field Nat	Anna Wind	No
ASHBY, Richard					

## Appendix 2 b

## Community meeting held at Smithton, April 12 2000 - Attendees

Howard, Rodney	62 Mount Rd Ridgeley
Young, Adrian	419 Upper Stowport Rd, Stowport 7321
Stimpson, Trevor	Po Box 353 Wynyard
Watts, Garry	111 Stirling St Burnie 7320
Bramich, Rex	8 Kingsley Av Burnie 7320
Nicholson, Guy	26 Epsom Rd, Penguin 7326
Kennedy, Mick	6 Fenton St Smithton 7330
Smith, Stuart	53 Emmett St Smithton
Caldwell, Brian	PO Box 200 Smithton
Porteus, Peter	60 O'Neills Rd Trowutta 7330
Quirk, Neville	18 Sassafras Cres Burnie 7330
McBain, Peter	16 King St Smithton 7330
Ashby, Erica	10 Anne St Heybridge
Ashby, Richard	10 Anne St Heybridge
Porteus, Laurie	RA 23057, Marrawah Rd Smithton
Holdsworth, Mark	NCB, Hobart
Murrell, Joe	(Manager Perkins Is) PO Box 377 (322?) Smithton Bootes Rd Monatagu 6452 6142/018 141 202
Duthie, Ian	PO Box 61 Smithton
Drevenkar, Dot	PO Box 63 Smithton
Hammond, Keith	PO Box 339 Smithton
Jaeger, John	26 Hill St Smithton
Carson, John	37 Massey St, Smithton
Poke, John	Bouldans Bay Oysters PO Box 84 Smithton
Watkins, Doug	Wetlands International Oceania
Park, Priscilla	Birds Tasmania 98 Nowra Rd Roches Beach 7120
Simco, Howard	8 Long St Penguin 7316
Hyatt, Lalani	PWS C/O Council Chambers, Smithton
Hefferon, Peter	PWS C/O Council Chambers, Smithton
Hines, Ross	(Mayor) Council Chambers, Smithton
Goldstone, Mark	(General Manager) Council Chambers, Smithton
Brogden, Veronica	Council Chambers, Smithton
Rabjohn, Leeanne	Council Chambers, Smithton
Spinks, Jim	???, Paradise
Spinks, Marilyn	
Bishop, Jeannette	West Inlet, Stanley
Donaghey, Richard	Myalla Road Myalla
Donaghey, Carol	Myalla Rd Myalla
Bryant, Sally	DPIWE, Tas
Blackall, Stuart	DPIWE, Tas
Cotsell, Peter	EA, Canberra
Eyles, Kathy	EA Canberra

Note: Some local residents did not record their attendance

**Appendix 2 b (cont.)**

**Community meeting held at Smithton, April 12 2000 - Apologies**

Ken Else	VDL Company
Graeme Blair	VDL Company
Ellison, Pat	PO Box 3088 Ulverstone 7315 pellison@tassie.net.au
Popowski, John	Welcome Landcare
Anna Wind	Coastcare officer
Simon Plowright	58 Smith St SMITHTON

## Appendix 3

## Circular Head Chronicle Articles

April 5 2000

## Study into airborne visitors

THOUSANDS of international visitors are expected in Smithton this summer.

Over 12 000 overseas visitors stay in the Smithton area each summer. They are birds which migrate from the northern hemisphere to spend the summer feeding on the mudflats exposed at low tide.

Over a dozen different kinds of shorebirds or waders migrate to Circular Head for the summer.

As well, there are large numbers of Tasmanian resident species.

In fact, Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage attract more waders than any other area in Tasmania.

Each year, volunteers from Birds Tasmania, assisted by the Park and Wildlife Service, observe and count the numbers of each species.

Birds Tasmania has proposed that the area should be listed as a Wetland of International Significance, a so-called Ramsar site.

If it goes ahead, listing will give recognition to the importance of the area for bird migration and ensure proper management.

However, as project officer Helen Dunn explained, this does not mean that all other activities will be banned.

"The Ramsar Convention recognizes 'wise use' of wetlands. So activities like aquaculture, fishing and recreational uses may continue, provided that they do not harm the environment or birdlife," said Dr Dunn.

Australia currently has 53 wetlands of International Significance listed under the Convention on Wetlands signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971. Australia had the world's first designated Wetland of International Importance listed under the Convention.

Tasmania presently has ten Ramsar sites listed, with most of them in the east of the State, like Moulting Lagoon.

"The area to be nominated is mostly below high water mark apart from several roosting sites, with the total area is over 100 square kilometres," said Dr Dunn.

"As well as being important for the bird life, the Boullanger Bay area also has large sea grass beds which are sensitive ecosystems in decline on a world scale.

"Sea grass beds provide important fish nursery areas which re-supply fish stocks in deeper waters. So for a lot of reasons, it is an important natural area," she said.

The birds which migrate to the area are listed on international agreements between Australia, China and Japan.

The waders include several different kinds of plovers, sandpipers, green-shanks and stints. The area is also the breeding ground of the more familiar migrants, the mutton bird or short-tailed shearwater, and threatened species of terns.

"The birds are quite amazing," said local bird expert Simon Plowright. "They breed in places like Russia, Mongolia and China and then fly thousands of kilometres to the summer feeding grounds in Tasmania.

A few years ago, a curlew sandpiper was banded in Siberia and two months later it was recorded at Perkins Island.

"The birds can fly very long distances but they also need to stop off at staging points along the way, so we have international agreements protecting wetlands for the birds as they travel across the world," he said.

"At low tide the birds disperse over the mudflats to feed. When the tide comes in they retreat to roosting places

such as Bird Point (Robbins Island) and Shipwreck Point (Perkins Island).

"It is important they are not disturbed at these places," Mr Plowright said.

"Among the resident bird population, there are about a dozen species which are listed as rare or threatened in Tasmania which live in the area. All in all, Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage are very special places for birdlife," said Dr Dunn.

Dr Dunn was in the Smithton area last month, meeting with landowners, oyster farmers, fishermen and others whose livelihood depends on the Boullanger Bay and Robbins Passage area.

Jon Poke of Bouldans Bay Oysters says "while I have reservations about these processes in general due to the constraints they place on the community going about their daily lives, I will support this process as long as we can be assured that our normal activities will not be curtailed," he said.

Mayor Ross Hines believes that looking after the environment of the area is "something that is important to us all."

There will be a meeting at the Circular Head Council Chambers on Wednesday April 12 at 7.30 at which more information about the birds and the process for nomination as a Wetland of National Significance will be available.

A panel of speakers including staff of the Wetlands Unit of Environment Australia in Canberra and members of Birds Tasmania will address the meeting and answer questions.

Everyone is welcome to attend and for more information, contact Helen Dunn on (03) 622 7543 or email: Helen.Dunn@tassie.net.au.

April 19 2000

## Wetland listing gains support

THE PROPOSAL to list Boullanger Bay to Perkins Bay as a wetland of International significance was received well by locals last week.

According to project manager, Dr Helen Dunn, some 12,000 overseas visitors stay in the Smithton area each summer.

They are birds which migrate from the northern hemisphere to spend the summer feeding on the mudflats exposed at low tide.

Aware of this, volunteers from Birds Tasmania already assist Parks and Wildlife Service in observing and counting species.

Wanting to list the area as a wetland of International significance, a public forum was held to discuss the issues at hand.

A forum held in the Council Chambers, saw some 40 people come and discuss the positive and negative aspects of the move.

Access to the area was of high concern, with many people worried about their current activities and whether or not they would

remain.

According to Dr Dunn, others were worried about the management of the wetland, and whether locals would be involved.

"There were a lot of issues raised at the meeting, some good and bad," Dr Dunn said.

"Obviously people are concerned with the negatives of the listing, but some were also happy about it.

"We will put together some form of proposal and will continue to consult with the public on this issue," she said.

"From here we will debrief on the meeting and look further into the issues.

"Perhaps there will be some more informal meetings, but if and when any public activities arise, people will know about them," she said.

For more information on listing the Boullanger Bay to Perkins Bay as a wetland of International significance, contact Dr Helen Dunn on 6226 1747.

Appendix 3 (cont.)

Advertising in the Circular Head Chronicle

April 5 2000

**Boullanger Bay to Perkins Bay**  
~ A Wetland of  
*International Significance?* ~

Birds Tasmania is nominating this area for listing as a Ramsar site, or Wetland of International Significance.

**You are invited to a free community meeting to find out more.**

- Why is the place important?
- What kinds of birds are seen there and why do they come here?
- What is the benefits and implications of listing as a Wetland of International Significance?

**PANEL:**  
*Doug Watkins - Shorebirds International*  
*Richard Ashby - Local bird watcher, Birds Tasmania*  
*Peter Cotsell - Wetlands Unit, Environment Australia, Canberra*  
*Sally Bryant & Stewart Blackall - DPIWE, Tasmania*

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 12, 7:30pm**  
Circular Head Council Chambers, Goldie Street SMITHTON  
**ALL WELCOME**  
Further Info: Helen Dunn (03) 6229 7543 or email [Helen.Dunn@utas.edu.au](mailto:Helen.Dunn@utas.edu.au)

April 12 2000

**Birds Tasmania**

**Boullanger Bay to Perkins Bay**  
~ A Wetland of *International Significance?* ~

Birds Tasmania is nominating this area for listing as a Ramsar site, or Wetland of International Significance.

**You are invited to a free community meeting to find out more.**

**MEETING TONIGHT**

**Wednesday April 12, 7:30pm**  
Circular Head Council Chambers,  
Goldie Street Smithton - All Welcome

**PANEL:**  
*Doug Watkins - Shorebirds International*  
*Richard Ashby - Local bird watcher, Birds Tasmania*  
*Peter Cotsell - Wetlands Unit, Environment Australia, Canberra*  
*Sally Bryant & Stewart Blackall - DPIWE, Tasmania*

Appendix 3 (cont.)

The Advocate

Article, April 25 2000

The Advocate, Tuesday, April 25, 2000

The Advocate **Circular Head News**

# Bird group proposes plan for wetlands area

A bird lovers group is attempting to implement a management plan for an wetlands area north of Montagu, home to more than 10,000 migratory birds.

A public forum was held in Circular Head on April 12 to discuss the proposal of listing the area from Boullanger Bay to Robbins Passage as a Wetland of International Significance.

Birds Tasmania has nominated the area under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, com-

monly called as a Ramsar site. Representatives from Birds Tasmania and the Wetlands Unit of Environment in Canberra addressed the meeting attended by more than 40 people.

Birds Tasmania project officer Helen Dunn said issues raised at the meeting concerned access and use and how a management plan for the area would be developed.

Dr Dunn said if the area was listed as a Ramsar site, other uses of the area would still be recognised.

"Marine farming and duck shooting, for example, could continue in the area as long as there is no damage to the environment," she said.

Dr Dunn said the area identified for listing attracted the highest number of migratory birds anywhere in Tasmania.

"This is the most significant site in Tasmania with between 12 to 14,000 birds migrating here each year as well as many local birds."

Birds Tasmania will now engage in another stage of

documentation and public consultation.

When the community has discussed the implications of listing and identified management issues, Birds Tasmania will submit the proposal for Ramsar listing.

The nomination then needs to be endorsed by the State Government.

"This is a good opportunity for a community to work together and demonstrate that appropriate human activities can continue in an important wetland area," Dr Dunn said.

Advertisement April 8 2000

**Boullanger Bay to Perkins Bay**

**A Wetland of International Significance?**  
Birds Tasmania is nominating this area for listing as a Ramsar site or Wetland of International Significance.

**You are invited to a free community meeting to find out more.**

- ★ Why is the place important?
- ★ What kinds of birds are seen there and why do they come here?
- ★ What are the benefits and implications of listing as a Wetland of International Significance?

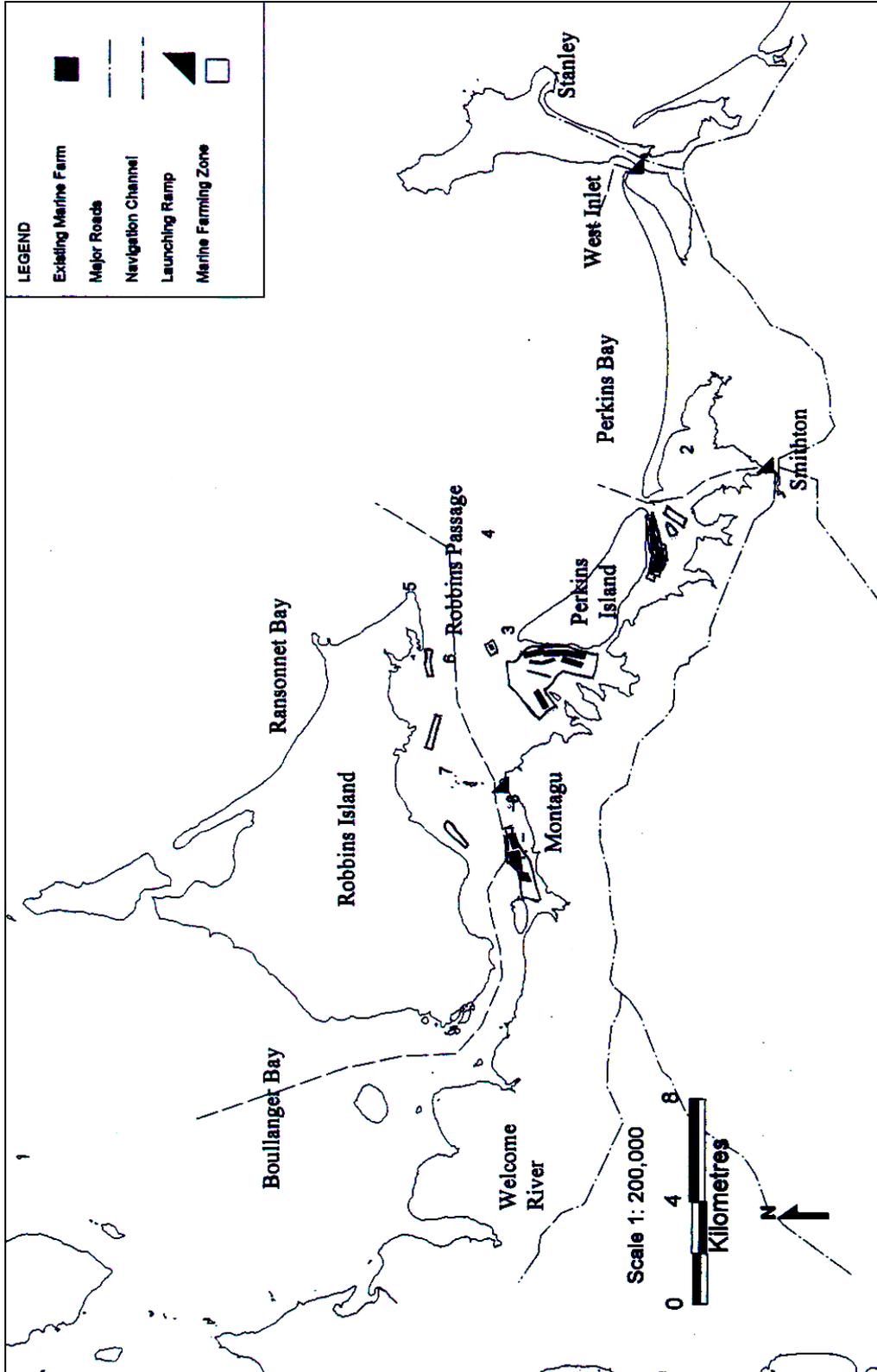
**Panel:-** Doug Watkins, Shorebirds International; Richard Ashby, local bird watcher, Birds Tasmania; Peter Cotsell, Wetlands Unit, Environment Australia, Canberra; Sally Bryant and Stewart Blackall DPIWE, Tasmania.

**Wednesday, April 12, 7.30 p.m. Circular Head Council Chambers, Goldie St, Smithton.**

**ALL WELCOME**

Further information: Helen Dunn (03) 6229 7543 or Email [Helen.Dunn@utas.edu.au](mailto:Helen.Dunn@utas.edu.au)

Appendix 4  
Marine Farm Zones  
(Source: DPIWE 1999 p 16)



Appendix 5

Sea grass distribution

(Source: Rees 1993 p 106)

