

Mr Gary Prescott,
BTYC

1 February 2007

Dear Mr Prescott,

RE: Landing vessels at Observation Point

Thanks so much for your email correspondence about clarification of landing at Observation Point on the Australia Day long weekend 2007.

Phillip Island Nature Parks (PINP) is the responsible land manager of over 1800 hectares of Crown Land on Phillip Island. (Please see map below)



This area includes Observation Point which is a very important high tide roost for the migratory shorebirds as described in the attachment you sent.



make a return to nature

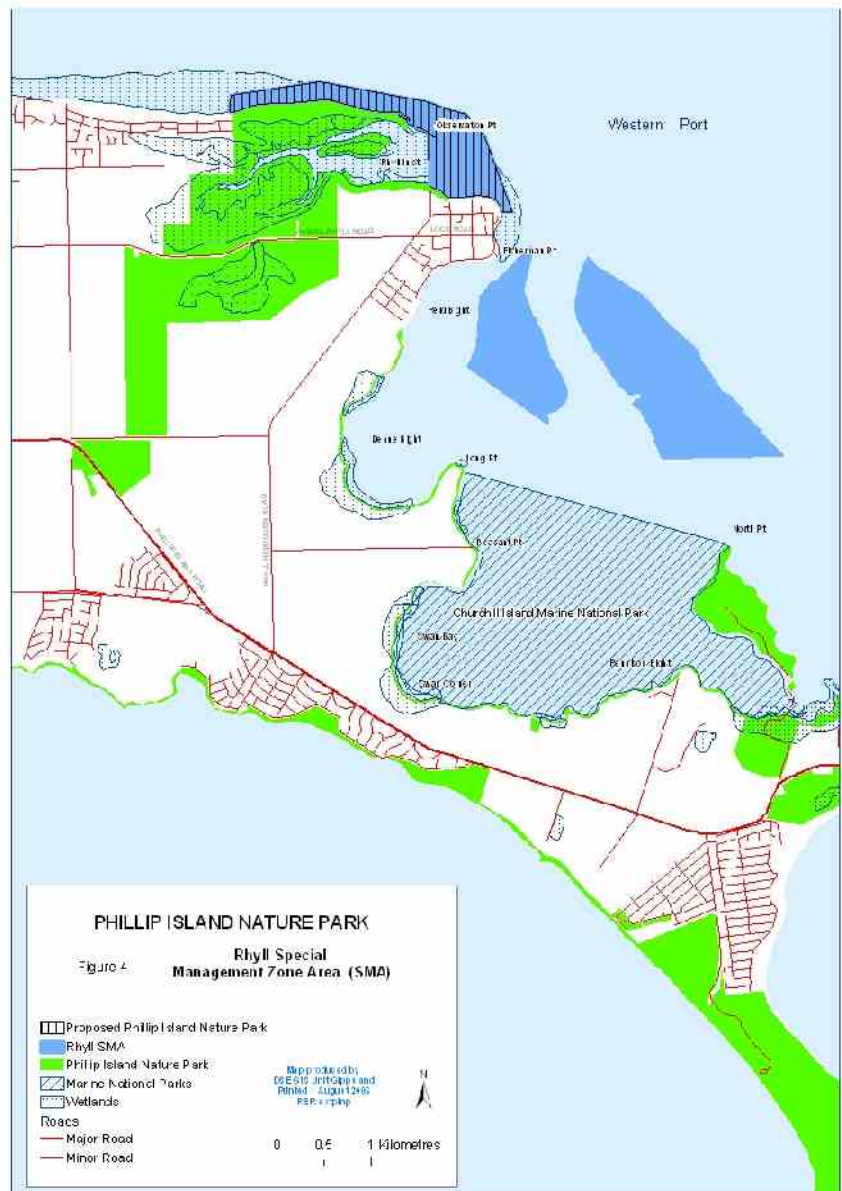
The latest research has shown that Observation Point is the eighth largest roost for shorebirds in Western Port including 81% of Bar-tailed Godwits 80% of Whimbrels and 42% of Red Knot. The site is of State Significance and within the Western Port Ramsar Site. The Convention on Wetlands, signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Currently, as you may have noticed signs and ropes on the sand beach, a pair of Hooded Plovers has nested for the first time since 1992. These birds need protection from disturbance and dogs and the Nature Park is lucky enough to have volunteers help in there protection as there are less than 40 on Phillip Island.

During the long weekend 12 boats were reported to anchor off the point and unfortunately two dogs were reported on the sand spit that combined with the people on the sand caused the international shorebirds to take to flight for hours as they were constantly disturbed over the high tide.

Although juveniles of these birds remain in Australia all year, adults are only in Australia for our summer and fly to the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions over our winter to breed. They are birds have high energy demands and cannot afford to lose body condition prior to their flight north. Birds such as Eastern Curlew would have already been putting on weight to fuel their migration in early March to their breeding grounds in north eastern Asia, including Siberia to Kamchatka, and Mongolia.

To help protect these bird and other natural values of the site a Special Management Area (SMA) was recommended for this site by the Environment Conservation Council in 2000. A management statement is currently before the Minister for Environment for this site to help direct protection measures and identify natural values. Attached is the map from this site on the SMA including observation point.



make a return to nature

Under current management arrangements and regulations No Dogs are permitted at any time on the beach or land east of Silverleaves housing estate to protect this sensitive site. Beach users are permitted to walk or land on the beach west of a sign on the beach just west of the sand spit.

This will prevent the walking/landing from making the shorebirds take to flight at high tide during their roost. In the past, campers with fires and dogs have threatened the natural values of the site.



Once the SMA is undertaken then PINP and other agencies will work with user groups such as you to look at measures to prevent disturbance from recreation boaters and other user groups. As you may be aware personal water craft (jet skis) were also present on the sand spit over the long weekend. These discussions are aimed at providing access and recreational opportunities without disturbing the birds and implement agreed management actions. Some suggestions may include, speed restrictions, no go zones, access restrictions based on tide etc. These restrictions need to be consistent with other user groups such as pedestrians and aircraft.

I hope this clarifies the current and future situation of Observation Point for user groups. If you or any members of BTYC have any questions please email me at rdakin@penguins.org.au or phone on 5951 2817.

Regards,

Richard Dakin
Environment Manager
Phillip Island Nature Parks