

Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands

Categories approved by Recommendation 4.7 of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

1. Date this sheet was completed/updated:

1998

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY.

DD	MM	YY

Designation date

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Site Reference Number

2. Country:

Australia

3. Name of wetland:

Lavinia Nature Reserve, Tasmania

4. Geographical coordinates:

Latitude: (approx) 39° 45'S; Longitude: (approx) 144° 05'E

5. Altitude:

Most area is less than 20 metres above sea level

6. Area:

7020ha

7. Overview:

The Lavinia Nature Reserve includes the Sea Elephant River estuary and associated samphire mud flats, areas of coastal swamp, lagoons and areas of drier marsh inland from the coast.

8. Wetland Type:

marine-coastal: A B C D E F G H I J K
inland: L M N O P Q R Sp Ss Tp Ts
U Va Vt W Xf Xp Y Zg Zk
man-made: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

9. Ramsar Criteria:

1a 1b 1c 1d 2a 2b 2c 2d | 3a 3b 3c | 4a 4b

Please specify the most significant criterion applicable to the site:

10. Map of site included? Please tick *yes* -or- *no*.

11. Name and address of the compiler of this form:

12. Justification of the criteria selected under point 9, on previous page.

13. General location:

Lavinia Nature Reserve is situated on the north east coast of King Island between Boulder Point and Cowper Point, approximately 12 kilometres north of Naracoopa. The northern section extends approximately 8km inland.

14. Physical features:

The Sea Elephant River, the largest on King Island, drains into Bass Strait midway along the east coast. The shifting sands of the river mouth have caused a substantial back-up of brackish water, creating the saltmarsh which extends up to five kilometres from the river mouth. The coastal strip of the area is sand dunes and beaches with Quaternary coastal calcareous sands. Further inland is Quaternary sand plains with mostly deep organic sandy soils. Outcrops of Precambrian granite occur west of Lake Martha Lavinia, on the coastline near Penny's Lagoon and near the junction of Sea Elephant River and Saltwater Creek.

The present landscape is the result of several distinct episodes of dune formation. The extensive Nook Swamps, which run roughly parallel to the coast along much of the reserve's length, occupy a flat depression which separates the new system of parallel dunes from the old parabolic dunes further inland.

The climate of King Island is a temperate maritime one and the average annual rainfall of the area is 750 - 1000 mm.

15. Hydrological values:

As a largely natural remnant of the island's previous vegetation the area is important for native wildlife.

16. Ecological features:

Much of King Island once consisted of massive eucalyptus forests. Wildfires and large scale clearing have meant that very few mature trees remain today, and the island is dominated by pasture and rapidly diminishing scrub/heathland. The Lavinia Nature Reserve is one of the few largely unaltered areas of the island and contains much of the remaining native vegetation on King Island.

The major wetlands in the reserve are the Sea Elephant River estuary area, Lake Martha Lavinia, Penny's Lagoon, and the Nook Swamps. There are also numerous smaller wetland areas, most of which are seasonally inundated.

The freshwater areas of the Nook Swamps are dominated by swamp forest, the closed canopy of which exceeds 30m in places.

The area surrounding the Sea Elephant River estuary remains for migrating Orange-bellied parrots (*Neophema chrysogaster*) between breeding and overwintering areas. About 200 hectares of quality feeding habitat is available here for Orange-bellied parrots and is dominated by dense *Juncus kraussii* which gives way in a patchwork formation to open areas densely carpeted with *Sarcocornia quinqueflora*.

17. Noteworthy flora:

The reserve protects largely undisturbed remnants of previously widespread natural communities. There are a number of important plant communities, one of particular interest being the closed swamp forest which dominates the freshwater regions of the Nook Swamps and locally elsewhere in the reserve. The dominant species of this community is *Melaleuca ericifolia*, and associated species include *Leptospermum scoparium*, *Acacia melanoxylon* and *Eucalyptus ovata*.

18. Noteworthy fauna:

The area provides a critical feeding site for Orange-bellied parrot *Neophema chrysogaster* during its annual migration between south-eastern Australia and Tasmania. The Orange-bellied parrot is an endangered species whose total population is presently between 100-200 birds. Flocks of up to 40 juveniles are heavily dependent upon the samphire plant (*Sarcocornia quinqueflora*) for food during migration. They also roost at night in the trees and scrub surrounding the Sea Elephant River estuary and south of it. Their movements during the day encompass areas north of the estuary, possibly as far as Nook Swamps.

The muttonbird or short-tailed shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) breeds on the island and there are at least two rookeries of the same with the reserve, (one at Lavinia Point, one at Cowper Point and another reported to be just south of Nook Swamps).

Other birds of interest include the dusky moorhen (*Gallinula tenebrosa*), the nankeen or Australian kestrel (*Falco canchroides*) nankeen or rufous night heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*) and the golden-headed cisticola (*Cisticola exilis*). These are among several species found here which are rarely observed on the Tasmanian mainland. The masked woodswallow (*Artamus personatus*) and rainbow lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haemotodus*) have bred on the island but are thought to have been vagrants.

19. Social and cultural values:

The largely unspoiled nature of this reserve and its variety of features of interest, makes it an important area for scientific study, and also for recreation and education. It is thought that there may be archaeological sites connected with colonial whaling and sealing operations in the area around Cowper's Point.

20. Land tenure/ownership:

The area within the present boundary was proclaimed a State reserve in 1988. This area includes the previously smaller Lavinia Nature Reserve and the Sea Elephant Nature Reserve, plus additional surrounding areas.

21. Current land use:

(a) the site: Nature conservation, recreation.

(b) the surrounding area: livestock grazing.

22. Factors (past, present or potential) adversely affecting the site's ecological character, including changes in land use and development projects:

(a) the site: Wildfire is a constant threat to the Nook swamp.

(b) the surrounding area: Large scale sand mining is to occur on land to the south of the Reserve. This was opposed by the Tasmanian Department of Environment and Land Management and a buffer zone has been negotiated in an attempt to protect the values of the Reserve.

23. Conservation measures taken:

Land south of the Sea Elephant River mouth has been added to the Nature Reserve, and some private land adjacent to the reserve has been acquired and incorporated into the Reserve.

Regular trapping of feral cats is undertaken.

24. Conservation measures proposed but not yet implemented:

It is proposed that the ranger employed by the Tasmanian Department of Environment and Land Management be better funded so that he is able to manage all areas under the Department's jurisdiction including Lavinia Nature Reserve.

A management plan has been written but not yet implemented. The draft plan will be revised following the submission of public comments, and the proposed final plan will then be forwarded to the State Minister.

25. Current scientific research and facilities:

There is ongoing monitoring of the Orange-bellied parrots and their habitat availability by staff of the Tasmanian Department of Environment and Land Management.

26. Current conservation education:

Information on Orange-bellied parrots and the area features in Tasmanian Department of Environment and Land Management's educational leaflets.

27. Current recreation and tourism:

Information signs have recently been erected in the Penny's Lagoon region and a picnic area and facilities in the same area. Also, roads in this and the Lake Martha Lavinia vicinity are presently being upgraded.

28. Jurisdiction:

Territorial: King Island Municipal Council

Functional: Tasmanian Department of Environment and Land Management

29. Management authority:

Tasmanian Department of Environment and Land Management, 134 Macquarie Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000

30. Bibliographical references:

Brown, P.B. and Wilson, R.J. 1984. Orange-bellied parrot recovery plan: Management recommendations to the Governments of Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania.
