

# Mount Chappell Island and Badger Island

Bass Strait, Tasmania



Found in the Bass Strait off the north-eastern tip of Tasmania, Mount Chappell Island and Badger Island form part of the Furneaux Group of islands.

The islands have long been regarded by Aboriginal people as an important part of the seasonal food-gathering cycle, and the Tasmanian Government handed them back to the Aboriginal community in 1995. The two small islands are now managed as Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.

The 350 hectares (3.5 square kilometres) of Chappell Island, as it is commonly known, are dominated by the sugarloaf-shaped Mount Chappell which rises 198 metres above narrow coastal plains. Low-growing shrublands and grasslands originally covered the island, with few large trees. In contrast, nearby Badger Island (1,244 hectares) was once well-wooded. Only small areas of the original species now

remain, including stands of sheoak, coastal teatree, and swamp paperbark.

Both islands experience a range of environmental problems, including land degradation and the loss of native animal and plant species. This has resulted from years of overgrazing and land clearing, the introduction of exotic plants and animals, and inappropriate burning regimes.

The intense exploitation of the islands for their natural resources started in the 1790s, following the exploration voyage of George Bass and Matthew Flinders through the Bass Strait on behalf of the colonial authorities. Sealers following in their wake had destroyed the seal colonies by 1838, and soon started to harvest mutton birds, particularly on Chappell Island.

Communities of Aboriginal families had been visiting Chappell Island regularly for

mutton-birding during the breeding season—archaeological evidence of occupation in the region dates to at least 20,500 years ago. By the 1850s many families were living permanently on nearby islands, earning a regular income from the mutton-bird industry up until the 1950s. Commercial mutton-birding declined after this time, with the last major season in 1975.

Sheep grazing, which was introduced by colonial settlers in the early 1860s and continued to 1995, contributed to the gradual decline of bird rookeries. Sheep trampled nesting birds and native vegetation (which gave the birds some protection) was cleared for pasture.

IPA funding is helping the Traditional Owners to turn this around. They are removing the highly invasive boxthorn by cutting, poisoning and burning it. On Chappell Island they are replacing it with coastal tussock and boobialla.

IPA funding also supports the regeneration of some of the island's native species such as island sea parsley, coastal bonefruit, pellitory and scrambling twin-leaf.

On Badger Island, IPA funding is helping to protect revegetation corridors and heritage sites from grazing animals, and supports a major revegetation program. Local seed is propagated in a small nursery on a nearby island, and the newly planted stock helps to stabilise the soil and prevent erosion.

IPA projects on both islands focus on feral animal control, cultural heritage management, and the development of jetties and shelters to allow easier access for work teams, land managers, and visits by the Traditional Owners. With Tasmania Parks and Wildlife assistance, the local community also hope to increase the mutton bird rookeries on Chappell Island.

The declaration of Mount Chappell and Badger Island IPAs in September 2000 was made under World Conservation Union (IUCN) *Category V – Protected Landscape/ Seascape: Protected Area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation.*



Mount Chappell and Badger Island IPA is part of Australia's National Reserve System, a nation-wide network of reserves especially set up to protect examples of Australia's unique landscapes, flora and fauna for current and future generations.

**For more information about Indigenous Protected Areas visit [www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa](http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa) or contact the Department of the Environment and Water Resources Community Information Unit. Email: [ciu@environment.gov.au](mailto:ciu@environment.gov.au) Freecall: 1800 803 772**



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