Entry for Airservices Australia En Route Supplement 28 June 2012

FN18 – Freycinet Peninsula

Areas Affected by the Fly Neighbourly Advice (FNA)

1.0 The Reserves

Administered by the Tasmanian Government’s Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS), the area includes Freycinet National Park, Coles Bay Conservation Area and Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve. Apsley Marshes which adjoins the Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve is private property.

1.1 Ramsar Sites

Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve and Apsley Marshes are both designated Ramsar sites.

1.2 Sensitive Environmental Areas (SEAs) associated with 1.0 and 1.1 above.

There are many SEAs due to the presence of wedge-tailed eagle and white-bellied sea-eagle nest sites, seabird, shorebird and water fowl breeding, feeding and roosting sites as well as seal haul-out areas.

2.0 Preferred Altitudes and Operation

The preferred minimum over-flight altitude for the Reserves and the Ramsar sites is 1,500FT above the ground or water.

The recommended over-flight altitude of the SEAs (at the centre of the SEA) is 3000FT above ground or water. See the PWS web site for details.

It is preferred that aircraft operate off-shore as much as possible, at the highest possible altitude and greatest lateral distance from features of scenic interest.

3.0 Landing

Except in an emergency, no flight is permitted to land at any location within

- the Reserves without approval from the PWS; or
- the Apsley Marshes Ramsar site without approval of the land owner.

Further information is available in the full version of the FNA on the PWS website.

All pilots operating in the affected areas are requested to adhere with the FNA.

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Introduction

1.1 Intent of the Advice

The aim of the Fly Neighbourly Advice (FNA) is to promote harmonious relationships between aviation activities, conservation and visitor enjoyment of the outstanding natural and cultural values of the Freycinet National Park, Coles Bay Conservation Area, Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve and Apsley Marshes.

The FNA makes recommendations for pilots operating in this area so that they can avoid disturbing wildlife and contribute toward maintaining visitor enjoyment. This FNA complements the mandatory aviation operating and safety regulations and air traffic management procedures applicable to the area.

1.2 Location

The area is readily accessible by air from regional airports at Hobart and Launceston with a number of aircraft operators running commercial scenic flights as well as transporting guests to a private landing area associated with accommodation in the area. Scenic flights also operate from a private airfield at nearby Friendly Beaches. These services provide opportunities for tourists to experience Freycinet’s spectacular landscape from the air.

1.3 Values of the area

Freycinet National Park is best known for its spectacular pink granite mountain peaks and cliffs and Wineglass Bay which has been ranked one of the top ten beaches in the world. Freycinet National Park has the highest number of visitors of all the reserves in Tasmania and is internationally renowned for its pristine coastline.

The area is a hotspot for nesting raptors, in particular the white-bellied sea-eagle (Haliaeetus leucogaster) and wedge-tailed eagle (Aquila audax fleayi). Other significant values include shorebirds, water birds and marine mammals such as seals and whales nearby in Great Oyster Bay.

The large wetland system of Moulting Lagoon and Apsley Marshes to the north-west of Freycinet Peninsula is Tasmania’s most important feeding and breeding habitat for black swan (Cygnus atrata). This wetland also regularly supports the largest known flocks of the migratory greenshank (Tringa nebularia) in Tasmania. Moulting Lagoon is also culturally important due to Aboriginal heritage and a tradition of duck hunting which continues today.
Whales are regularly sighted in Great Oyster Bay to the west of Freycinet Peninsula. Humpbacks travel northward to breeding areas off the coast of Queensland and Western Australia between May and July and return southward to their Antarctic feeding grounds between September and November. Southern right whales travel north from June to September to the waters of southern mainland Australia and return southward between September and late October.

Fly Neighbourly Advice

2.1 Administration of the areas covered by the FNA

Freycinet National Park, Coles Bay Conservation Area and Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve are administered by the Tasmanian Government, Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). Apsley Marshes is part of the “Apslawn” private property. Both Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve and the Apsley Marshes are designated as Ramsar sites. These areas are located in the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Municipality on the east coast of Tasmania.

2.2 Areas covered by the FNA

The FNA applies to:

- **Freycinet National Park** (16860ha) which extends from Schouten Island in the south to Cape Lodi in the north and includes most of the Freycinet Peninsula and nearby offshore islets. The mid-point of the reserve lies at approximately 42˚20’S, 148˚31’E.

- **Coles Bay Conservation Area** (2444ha) is adjacent to Coles Bay township and is also bounded by Freycinet National Park to the west and south and private land elsewhere. The midpoint of the reserve lies at approximately 42˚19’S, 148˚28’E.

- **Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve** (4780ha) is located to the north-west of Freycinet Peninsula. The midpoint of this reserve lies at approximately 42˚02’S, 148˚18’E.

- **Apsley Marshes** (880ha) which is private property that adjoins the north-west boundary of the Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve. The mid-point of the marshes is 41˚58’S, 148˚12’E.

2.3 Preferred minimum altitude and aircraft operation

The preferred minimum overfly altitude (terrain and weather permitting) for the Freycinet National Park, Coles Bay Conservation Area and the adjacent wetlands of Moulting Lagoon and Apsley Marshes (Ramsar sites) is not below 1500FT above ground or water.

In order to minimise noise and visual impact on wildlife and reserve visitors, pilots are requested to operate off-shore as much as possible, not circle coastal features or wildlife and avoid overflying any buildings or visitor facilities. It is preferred that aircraft operate at the highest possible altitude and greatest lateral distance from the scenic feature of interest that will allow satisfactory observation from the air.

When undertaking scenic flights along the coast (over water) the preferred minimum altitude:

- for helicopter, is not below 1500 FT above water. Where autorotation distance to ground requires pilots to transit a Sensitive Environmental Area (see below) then it is recommended that the flight altitude be increased in accordance with Figure 2, safety considerations, terrain and weather permitting.

- for fixed-wing, is not below 1500FT above water and the preferred general minimum lateral distance from the coast is 500metres. Please note that commercial operators generally fly the scenic route at 2500FT AMSL as this provides an optimum view of the coast for passengers.
2.4 Sensitive Environmental Areas (SEA)

A Sensitive Environmental Area (SEA) may be designated where loud or excessive noise is likely to interfere with a natural value such as wildlife. SEAs include eagle nest sites, swan and waterbird breeding, roosting and feeding areas as well as seal haul-outs. Refer to Appendix 1 for further guidelines for flying in the vicinity of eagle nests.

Seals and whales are particularly prone to disturbance from low-flying aircraft. Pilots are reminded that whale watching from aircraft is subject to national guidelines. These guidelines are provided in Appendix 2.

Black swan breed from July to December, inclusive and are subject to disturbance from noise and low-flying aircraft. Pilots are requested avoid over-flying swan and water-bird SEAs unless on takeoff or approach to landing.

Eagle nest and seal haul-out SEAs can be conceptualised as a cone to 3000FT above ground with the apex centred over the nest (see Figure 1) or seal haul-out. At 500 metres horizontal from the centre of the SEA, a minimum altitude of 1500FT above ground or water needs to be maintained (see Figure 2).

Many close encounters and collisions between eagles and helicopters and have been reported in Tasmania. Eagle territorial behaviour increases with the onset of the breeding season (July to January) and this may increase the likelihood of encounters.

Critical times are:
- white-bellied sea-eagles: July to December, inclusive; and
- wedge-tailed eagles: August to January, inclusive.

Pilots should particularly avoid entering eagle nest SEAs during eagle breeding season as this will prevent nest disturbance and also ensure the safety of aircraft passengers and crew. If SEAs are entered, avoid prolonged flight and sudden changes in engine management.

Pilots should avoid:
- flying within eagle nest SEAs particularly between July to January (inclusive)
- flying within seal haul-out SEAs (all year)
- repeated passes or circuits above the SEAs (all year)
- hovering helicopters above SEAs (all year)
2.5 Map of SEAs with flight path
2.6 Overriding provisions

All of the above provisions or advice should be disregarded if for any reason their observance would jeopardise the safety of a flight or put a pilot in conflict with any provision of the Civil Aviation Regulations.

2.6.1 Authority to land or airdrop

Under the provisions of the National Parks and Reserved Land Regulations (2009) an authority is required to land an aircraft in and take-off from any reserved land (except in emergency) or to drop an article from an aircraft onto reserved land.

Initial inquiries should be made to the Parks and Wildlife Service (see contact details below).

The Freycinet National Park and Wye River State Reserve Management Plan (2000) is a legally binding document that includes the following requirements:

- Airdrops within the Park or the Reserve will only be allowed for management or emergency purposes; and
- Any proposal to establish regular or frequent landing or taking off of aircraft, including helicopters and seaplanes, will be released for public comment before approval.

It is understood and agreed that within close proximity of the privately owned Friendly Beaches Aerodrome and other landing areas there will be a requirement to decrease altitude below the recommended minimum ranges during take-off and airfield approach. On occasion, these sub-minimum altitude incursions may occur directly above sections of the reserves to which this FNA applies.

2.6.2 Aerial Work Activities

Parties who may require access to low level airspace to conduct aerial work activities should contact the Parks and Wildlife Service (see contact details below).

These parties may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- transmission line inspectors
- natural value assessors
- government agencies
- film and television crews

2.6.3 Special terrain/weather conditions

Recommended operating altitudes over the area subject to this FNA do not apply if these altitudes jeopardise the safe conduct of the flight.

2.7 Adhering to the FNA

Where aviation activities are observed that are inconsistent with this advice, details of activities, along with aircraft registration number, description and accurate time and date should be directed to the Parks and Wildlife Service (see contact details below).

Further information

Advice on operating in the Freycinet National Park, Coles Bay Conservation Area and the adjacent Moulting Lagoon and Apsley Marshes (Ramsar Sites) can be found at the following sources:

- Airservices Australia En-Route Supplement:
  - https://www.airservicesaustralia.com/
- most Tasmanian flying schools
- charter operators based in Hobart, Launceston and regionally
- aeronautical charts (Hobart Visual Terminal Chart)
Copies of this *Additional Information for Pilots* can be downloaded from the PWS website at: parks.tas.gov.au/publications

**Contact Details**

Parks and Wildlife Service.
Parks and Reserves Manager (North-east Coast)
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**Organisations consulted**

The Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) developed the FNA in consultation with:
- commercial aircraft operators
- Australian Defence Force
- Tasmanian Regional Airspace & Procedures Advisory Committee
- Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS)
- Australian Federation of Air Pilots (AFAP)
- Saffire Resort
- Glamorgan – Spring Bay Council
- Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE)
Appendix 1 Guidelines for flying in the vicinity of eagle nests

If you are planning to fly over a forested area, for the safety of both you and the eagles it is worth regularly checking the locations of nearby wedge-tailed eagle nests and white-bellied sea-eagle nests. New nests are often recorded. The Natural Values Atlas (www.naturalvaluesatlas.tas.gov.au) stores the locations of all known eagle nests around the state, and is accessible to anyone but you will need to register via the website for a log-on name.

The excerpt below provides guidance about flying helicopters in the vicinity of eagle nests.

There have been reported cases of eagle collisions with helicopters in Tasmania; none have been fatal to humans but all have been fatal to the eagles. Many close encounters have been reported.

The Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle is generally a very timid nester (much more so than its counterpart on the Australian mainland). While timidity varies between individuals, an eagle may desert its egg or chick to predators, and even its nest for some years, if disturbed by highly noisy or visible activities up to 1 km from the nest during the breeding season. This issue presents a constraint on a range of human activities, although activities occurring above the nest are the most likely to cause such disturbance.

Eagles of both species are capable of attacking and striking aircraft. Helicopters are particularly prone to strikes because of the nature of their flight (i.e. relatively slow and often indirect). Eagles are territorial, particularly during the breeding season, and will aggressively defend their territories from intruders. Aggressive behaviour usually is signalled by steeply undulating flight displays (pot-hooking) and/or flying with extended feet and talons but an attack may occur suddenly and without warning.

Aircraft are perceived by eagles to be large birds and are therefore seen as a threat. The degree to which an eagle will be threatened by aircraft depends on several factors. They include:

A. Timing

The time of year when the encounter occurs will significantly influence the likelihood of an attack. Territorial behaviour increases with the onset of the breeding season July to December, inclusive, for white-bellied sea-eagles and August to January, inclusive, for wedge-tailed eagles. The timing of the eagle breeding season can vary from year to year.

B. Proximity to an active nest

The closer an aircraft is to an active nest, the greater is the likelihood of an attack. This applies both to horizontal and vertical distances. The zone of greatest risk is directly over the nest. Figure 1 illustrates the zone in which attacks are likely to take place. The altitude at which attacks will occur increases as a nest is approached, reaching a maximum over the nest.

C. Altitude

The altitude at which the aircraft is flying will determine the likelihood of an aggressive encounter. The lower an aircraft is flying, the greater the risk of a strike.

D. Speed/Time

Aircraft speed influences the time spent within a given distance of a nest and therefore the level of distress the eagles are subjected to. The longer an aircraft dwells in the zone of potential attack, the greater the risk.

Aircraft speed will influence the risk of a strike by affecting both the chance of an eagle catching the aircraft and the chance of an eagle misjudging the air speed of the aircraft.

A slow flying helicopter is easier to strike than a fast flying fixed-wing plane, if that is the birds’ intent. Conversely, an eagle is more likely to misjudge the speed of a fast moving aircraft, if its intent is to threaten and not to strike.

E. Flight path

Helicopters often fly in a circuitous path rather than in a direct line. The nature of this flight makes it more likely to aggravate an eagle and allow it to ‘catch’ the helicopter.
Appendix 2 Guidelines for whale watching

Aircraft may disturb whales and dolphins due to their speed, noise, shadow or downdraft in the case of helicopters. National standards apply for the operation of aircraft over dolphins and whales. (see http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/publications/pubs/whale-watching-guidelines-2005.pdf) These do not apply where general aviation rules do not allow for the requirements to be met (e.g. during take-off and landing).

National standards include;

HELICOPTERS (INCLUDING GYROCOPTERS)

A person operating a helicopter or gyrocopter in the vicinity of whales and dolphins must:
• not fly lower than 500m (1650 feet) within a 500m (1650 feet) radius of a whale or dolphin;
• not hover over the no fly zone;
• avoid approaching a whale or dolphin from head on;
• avoid flying directly over, or passing the shadow of the helicopter directly over a whale or dolphin; and
• cease the activity if the whale or dolphin shows signs of disturbance.

OTHER AIRCRAFT

As illustrated in the figure below, a person operating any other airborne craft including fixed wing, gliders, hang-gliders, hot air balloons and airships in the vicinity of whales and dolphins must:
• not fly lower than 300m (1000 feet) within a 300m (1000 feet) radius of a whale or dolphin;
• not approach a whale or dolphin from head on;
• not land on the water to observe whales or dolphins;
• avoid flying directly over, or passing the shadow of the aircraft directly over a whale or dolphin; and
• cease the activity if the whale or dolphin shows signs of disturbance.