

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 22

Boondelbah Island, New South Wales

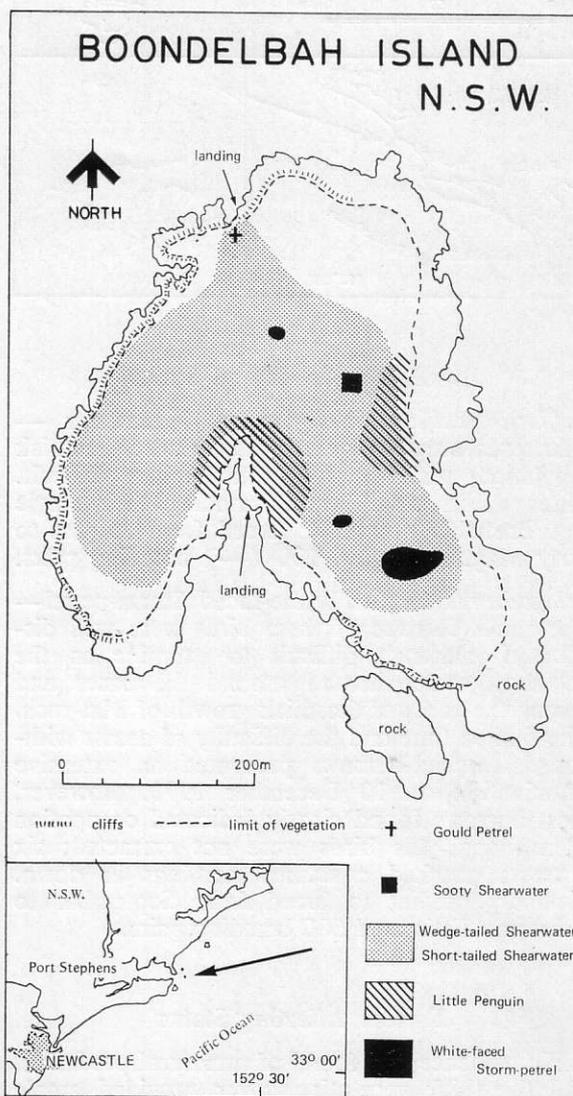
Location: 32°42' S., 152°14' E.; 4 km east of South Head, Port Stephens, N.S.W.

Status: Nature Reserve controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (N.S.W.): entry permit required.

Other Name: Big Island.

Description: 9.3 ha; in the form of a mesa, some 650 m long by 425 m at the widest part. On the north-west are porphyritic cliffs some 55 m high, while those to the east and south are broken and fretted. A dyke running north-south through the centre of the island has been much eroded at the southern end forming a deep embayment. The highly siliceous soil has a concentration of humic materials in the seepage areas on the lips of the central valley. The vegetation consists of sedge-tussocks, mainly *Lomandra longifolia* in the deeper sandy areas, with *Dianella sp.* and *Juncus sp.* in damper places. Coast Rosemary *Westringia rosmarinifolia* occurs in banks round the exposed rocky tops and edge, with the grasses *Cynodon dactylon*, *Sporobolus virginicus* and *Carpobrotus glaucescens* as lawns where thin veneers of soil overlie horizontal beds of rock. A short-grassed sod-meadow covers the seepage areas. The exposed sea-cliffs and ridges are extensively covered in Prickly Pear *Opuntia stricta* but only isolated plants are found elsewhere.

Landing: Difficult and only possible during calm seas, in the bay on the southern side of the island when there is a moderate north-easterly





● Boondelbah from the air (looking north).

Photo supplied by A. F. D'Ombraim

wind with little or no swell; or alternatively via the dyke in the north-west corner, but this entails a strenuous, difficult climb up a loose, rock-strewn slope.

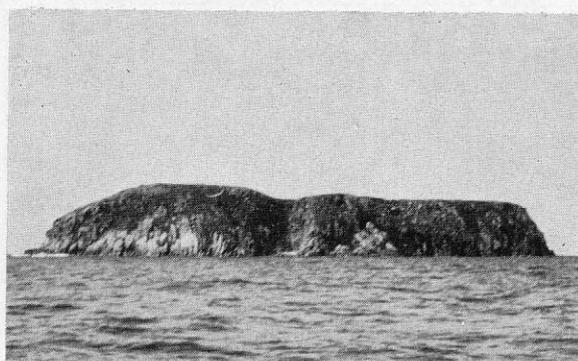
Ornithological History: A. F. Basset Hull³ landed on the island on 7 December 1910 as did T. P. Austin⁶ about the same time, but it is not known whether these were separate visits. Both reported only Wedge-tailed Shearwaters nesting there in "immense numbers". Hull reported taking an egg from under a Gould Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera* "under a mass of boulders not far from the waterline in the steep, rock-strewn gully on the western side of the island"². Between 1935 and 1974, A. F. D'Ombraim (pers. comm.) visited the island numerous times but no dates or details were recorded except that no Gould Petrels were found¹. S. G. Lane and Morris were on the island on 30 December 1967 for about twenty minutes; Lane, Morris, H. Battam and others on 5 Decem-

ber 1969 for about three hours; and Battam, A. E. F. Rogers and B. Jones for a similar period on 11 January 1970. Further attempts by these people to visit the island were thwarted by bad weather and rough seas. (This information was summarised previously by Morris *et al.*⁵)

About 1940, D'Ombraim and A. J. Gwynne (pers. comm.) found a White-faced Storm-petrel nesting on the island. During the 1969 and 1970 visits a small colony was found breeding and in December 1975 D'Ombraim found the species nesting in three places.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin—Nests are located throughout the lower parts in rocky crevices or burrows where there is easy access to the sea. Some burrows were also found in



● Boondelbah Island (looking east).

Photo: S. G. Lane



● Typical vegetation habitat on Boondelbah Island (looking north).

Photo: S. G. Lane

the middle of the plateau among the shearwaters. Estimated 1000 (+) breeding pairs.

Pterodroma leucoptera Gould Petrel—One record in 1910².

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater—The commonest shearwater nesting on the island. Burrows are located all over the plateau, with the greatest concentration on the slope from the north-eastern corner to the centre among the Mat-rush and sedges growing in the deep, friable soil. Estimated 3500 (+) breeding pairs.

Puffinus griseus Sooty Shearwater—Burrows are situated among those of the other shearwaters. Estimated 10 breeding pairs.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater—Burrows are located among those of *P. pacificus* particularly in the deep, friable soils in the centre of the island. Estimated 500 (+) breeding pairs.

Pelagodroma marina White-faced Storm-petrel—Breeds in several places in small numbers. Estimated 100 (+) breeding pairs.

Factors Affecting Status

No apparent unusual predation evident and no other vertebrates recorded. Prickly Pear may have nuisance value to burrowing petrels.

Other Seabirds Recorded

None recorded although cormorants *Phalacrocorax spp.*, Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae* and Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* no doubt visit the island.

Banding

First banding visit—30 December 1967.
Puffinus pacificus—131 adults; 3 recoveries at banding place.

Puffinus griseus—2 adults.

Puffinus tenuirostris—14 adults.

Pelagodroma marina—3 adults; 2 nestlings.

No recoveries have been reported away from the island.

Bibliography

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