

A Visit to the Skerries Rocks, Victoria

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On 26 January 1977 I landed by dinghy from the fishing trawler *Simon Barjona* on to the largest of the three small rocky islets comprising the Skerries Rocks. These are situated at the entrance of the Wigan River in north-eastern Victoria, about 30 km south-west of Mallacoota.

Apparently there is no previous ornithological record of a visit to these Rocks. Serventy *et al.* (1971) do not record it as a breeding location for any seabird species.

During the visit three species of seabird were found nesting on the centre islet. Seven nests of the Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor* contained well-developed chicks, four of which had almost finished moulting their down. There were fourteen nests of the Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae* with eggs and chicks; nine runners were nearby. Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* had 28 nests with eggs and chicks, while 12 runners were on the edge of the colony. Also, a small number of these birds was observed breeding on the south islet, but this islet was not visited.

The Rocks are obviously a roosting place for cormorants. Numerous Little Pied Cormorants *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* perched about the islets during the day and were joined by others at night, when the roost was estimated to contain some 200 of these birds. Twenty-eight Black Cormorants *P. carbo* were also perched about the islets during the day and roosted with the others on the north islet in the evening. Four Black-faced Cormorants *P. fuscescens* also came in to roost with the others in the evening.

Two pairs of Sooty Oystercatchers *Haematopus fuliginosus* were present on the centre islet, but there was no sign of breeding. They may breed on the islet earlier in the season. Likewise two pairs of Red-capped Dotterels *Charadrius ruficapillus* were seen feeding on the north end of the centre islet. The only other bird seen during the visit was a White-breasted Sea-eagle *Haliae-*

etus leucogaster, which circled the Rocks in the evening.

There is a seal colony, presumably *Arctocephalus pusillus*, on the southern islet, and probably this is the reason for the frequent sightings of White Sharks *Carcharodon carcharias* close inshore.

Acknowledgments

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Reference

Serventy, D. L., V. Serventy and J. Warham (1971), *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds*. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Sydney.

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