

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 1

Bird Island, New South Wales

Location: 33° 14' S., 151° 36' E.; 1.6 km offshore and 6.4 km north of Norah Head, N.S.W.

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

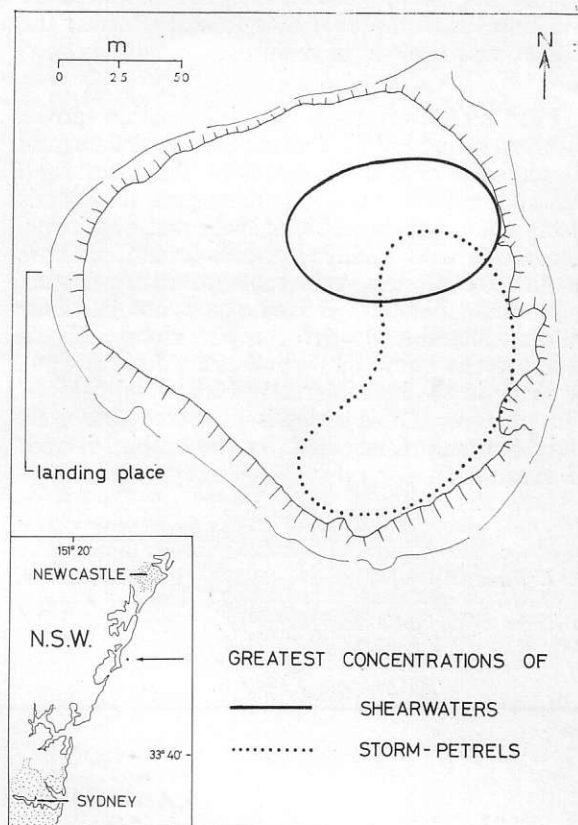
Description: 12 ha; 250 m diameter. A roughly circular, elevated plateau with precipitous shoreline for most of its circumference, rising from 15 m at the western end to 50 m at the eastern end.

A soil cap, shallow at the edges, covers the plateau. Some craters two to three metres deep are the result of practice bombing during World War II. The soil is friable, particularly after periods of dry weather; it is mostly covered with vegetation consisting mainly of grasses, tussocks and Pigface *Carpobrotus glaucescens* with a few stunted trees (*Acacia* sp. etc.) which grow to about two metres. The sprawling growth of these trees makes access to burrows difficult in the north-east corner.

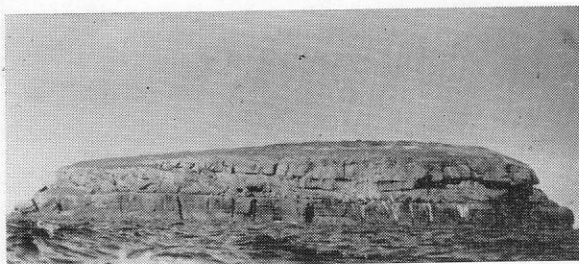
Landing: The only landing place is at the western end onto irregular rocks, some of which are completely covered at high tide. The surge usually makes landing difficult or dangerous even with a calm sea and often necessitates swimming from and to the launch.

Ornithological History: Period summarised—1912 to 30 June 1972.

In 1912, Hull² stated that Wedge-tailed Shearwaters bred on the Island. K. A. Hindwood¹ recorded that E. S. Rohu found the species very numerous during his visit on January 1914. The next recorded visit was by Hindwood¹ on 26 October 1947 when, in addition to Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, he found White-faced Storm-Petrels



“plentiful”. S. G. Lane made numerous attempts to land from 1958 to 1971, and succeeded in getting ashore for a few hours on 5 December 1958, 27 November 1960, 17 December 1961, 12 December 1963, 22 December 1965 and 27 December 1971. Birds were banded to study their breeding biology and dispersal. The soil was so friable that burrows, particularly the smaller burrows of the storm-petrels, were liable to constant damage. Because of this, visits to the Island should be restricted to the non-breeding season unless a specific study is planned.



- Bird Island from the south, showing the precipitous shore line. The landing place is at the extreme left.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

The following information is based on data obtained during short visits at irregular intervals.

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin—A few breeding pairs; the difficulty of climbing the steep rocks probably restricts the numbers which breed. Breeds probably from August to February.

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater—Nests extensively over most the island, and probably present to breed from about mid-August, the last young probably departing by early May.

Puffinus griseus Sooty Shearwater—First recorded breeding in December 1963¹. Probably only a few breeding pairs; the breeding season is likely to be similar to that of *P. pacificus* although arrival probably in September.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater—First recorded breeding in December 1963¹. Probably only a few breeding pairs; the breeding season is likely to be similar to that of *P. griseus*.

Pelagodroma marina White-faced Storm-Petrel—Not reported by Rohu but Hindwood¹ recorded that burrows were plentiful. Lane found burrows over most of the Island particularly under the Pigface. Breeding pairs could be well in excess of 500. Breeds probably from September to February.

Egretta sacra Reef Heron—A nest containing three eggs was found on 27 November 1960².

Factors Affecting Status

No mammals recorded and no apparent unusual predation.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Phalacrocorax carbo Black Cormorant
Phalacrocorax sulcirostris Little Black Cormorant
Phalacrocorax melanoleucos Little Pied Cormorant

Banding

P. pacificus—133 adults banded; four recoveries 40 to 142 km from banding place and four recoveries at banding place during subsequent breeding seasons.

P. griseus—3 adults banded.

P. tenuirostris—5 adults banded.

P. marina—333 adults and 77 nestlings banded; one (adult when banded) recovered at banding place.

E. sacra—1 'runner' banded.

Bibliography

1. Hindwood, K. A. (1958), 'Notes on the Sea-birds Breeding on the Coastal Islands of New South Wales', *Emu* 48:73-81.
2. Hull, A. F. Basset (1912), 'Avifauna of New South Wales Islands', Part II, *Emu* 11:202-207.
3. Lane, S. G. (1965), 'Breeding Sea-birds on Bird Island, Norah Head, N.S.W.', *Emu* 64:317-319.

Acknowledgement

The Secretary of the Australian Bird-banding Scheme kindly supplied banding data.

Date compiled:
24 October 1972

S. G. Lane,
65 Wood Street,
Lane Cove, N.S.W.



- The landing place. Despite the calm sea, the surge indicates the difficulties. Submerged and partly submerged rocks are evident.