

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 5

Cook Island, New South Wales

Location: 28° 12' S., 153° 35' E.; 1 km off Fingal Head and 4 km south-east of Tweed Heads.

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

Description: 500 m by 250 m; 4.7 ha; a rock platform partly surrounds a roughly oval-shaped plateau which rises to some 30 m; the eastern and south-eastern sides are mainly precipitous. Except for the rock platform the Island is well covered with vegetation. There are scattered clumps of 'Tuckeroo' *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* up to some three metres in height, and grasses, tussocks and creepers etc.; Wandering Jew *Tradescantia albiflora* predominates. Other plants include *Dianella caerulea*, *Parsonia straminea*, *Marsdenia rostrata*, *Lomandra longifolia* and *Carpobrotus glaucescens*.

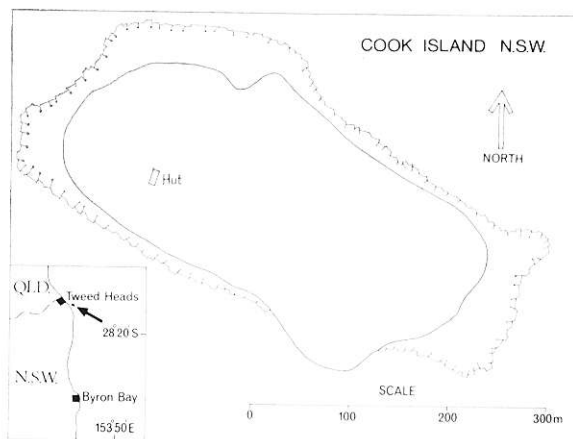
Landing: Onto rocks on the south-western side and difficult except in calm seas.

Ornithological History: A. J. North² recorded that eggs of the Crested Tern were taken on Cook Island in September 1890. No other visits by ornithologists were recorded until 8 December 1963, when H. Battam, S. G. Lane and J. Liddy¹ spent four hours on the Island and found Wedge-tailed Shearwaters breeding but no signs of nesting by terns or gulls. On 23 July 1967, F. K. Hersey found no shearwaters but saw a Reef Heron and flushed a Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* from a small swampy area on the lower part of the Island.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater—Breeds extensively over the Island; estimated that some 2000 (plus) pairs were breeding in 1963. Probably present to breed from August to early May.

Sterna bergii Crested Tern—Recorded breeding by North². Local fishermen stated that the terns nest 'some years but not others'. Breeds during spring and summer.



Factors Affecting Status

A hut built by fishermen prior to 1963 has been used at irregular intervals by fishing parties. The effect on the breeding seabirds is not known but is probably minimal.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

None recorded. (No record was made during the visit in 1963).

Other Seabirds Recorded

Phalacrocorax carbo Black Cormorant
Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull
Egretta sacra Reef Heron

Banding

P. pacificus—245 adults banded; one recovery 22 km south.

Bibliography

1. Liddy, J. (1964), 'A Visit to Cook Island, N.S.W.', *Aust. Bird Bander* 2: 93.
2. North, A. J. (1914), 'Nests and Eggs of Birds Found Breeding in Australia and Tasmania', 4: 320.

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