

# SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 7

## Moon Island, New South Wales

**Location:** 33° 05' S., 151° 41' E.; about 0.6 km east of Swansea Heads at entrance to Lake Macquarie; 21 km south of Newcastle.

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

**Other Name:** Green Island.

**Description:** 250 m by 90 m; 2.25 ha; lies NE to SW: mostly rock which is swept with spray in rough weather. On the eastern or seaward side the rocks slope steeply into the sea; on the western side, at the base of the plateau there is a small shingle beach behind a rock platform. The plateau, 90 m by 40 m, rises to about 6 m and is covered with soil of sufficient depth for shearwaters to burrow. Here coarse grasses, Pig-face *Carpobrotus glaucescens* and some clumps of Prickly Pear *Opuntia stricta* grow; there are no shrubs or trees.

**Landing:** Easy onto rock platform on north-west side, if little wind and less than moderate sea.

**Ornithological History:** Little had been reported until the discovery of breeding Dominican Gulls by Gwynne and Gray in 1958<sup>2</sup>, and subsequent involvement since 1959 in Silver Gull studies<sup>3</sup>.

### Breeding Seabirds and Status

The following data were collected during many visits from 1958 to 1970.

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin—Not abundant; usually 12-15 nests may be found under rock ledges and in burrows on plateau. Eggs are laid in August and chicks appear in mid-September. Adults commence to moult towards the end of January.

*Puffinus pacificus* Wedge-tailed Shearwater—Two burrows each with an egg were found in 1958, one adult with a chick in 1959, and in 1960 two burrows each with an egg were abandoned after heavy rain. No nesting has been recorded since.

*Sterna bergii* Crested Tern—Nesting usually commences mid-September and about 700 nests may be present by the end of October. No eggs have

been found after mid-December. Some years no nesting occurs.

*Larus novaehollandiae* Silver Gull—In some years nesting commenced in mid-August and by mid-October at least 1000 nesting pairs were present. A few occupied nests have been found in February. Some years gulls do not nest and this has coincided with the absence of the breeding terns. *Larus dominicanus* Dominican Gull—The first record of breeding of this gull in Australia was a nest with three eggs found on this Island on 20 December 1958<sup>2</sup>. A pair nested each year until 1966 when two nests were found; 16 eggs were located between 1958-1970 but only nine chicks survived to be banded.

*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher—One pair usually nests each year on the shingle between the plateau and rock platform to the west.

### Factors Affecting Status

Predation of gull runners by a White-breasted Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* was observed on one occasion. Interference and damage to eggs by youths has also been reported.

### OTHER VERTEBRATES

None recorded.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

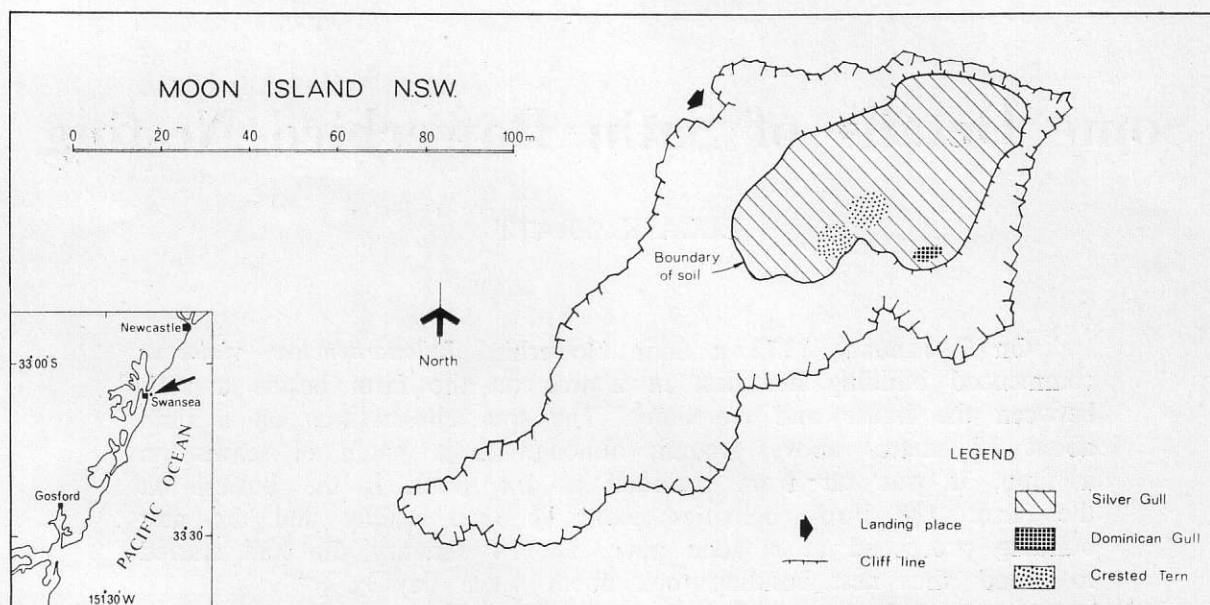
*Phalacrocorax carbo* Black Cormorant  
*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris* Little Black Cormorant  
*Phalacrocorax varius* Pied Cormorant  
*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* Little Pied Cormorant  
*Sterna striata* White-fronted Tern  
*Egretta sacra* Reef Heron

### Banding

Period covered 25 October 1959 to 30 June 1973.

*S. bergii*—1575 nestlings and 7 adults; 81 recoveries ranging along central and northern coast of N.S.W. and southern coast of Qld.

*L. novaehollandiae*—2592 nestlings and 132 adults; 101 recoveries ranging from Beachport, S.A. to Bundaberg, Qld, mostly within 160 km.



• Moon Island from the adjacent mainland, looking east.

Photo: M. D. Murray

*L. dominicus*—9 chicks banded; 2 recoveries, one near Fremantle, W.A. some 3 years 8 months after banding (3350 km W.), the other nearby at Stockton, N.S.W. (30 km NE.).

*novaehollandiae* Stephens, in South-eastern Australia', *CSIRO Wildl. Res.* 9: 160-188.

### Bibliography

1. Gray, D. F. (1967), 'Dominican Gull Movement', *Aust. Bird Bander* 5:18.
2. Gwynne, A. J. and Gray, D. F. (1959), 'Breeding of the Black-backed Gull on Moon Island, New South Wales', *Emu* 59: 141-142.
3. Murray, M. D. and Carrick, R. (1964), 'Seasonal Movements and Habitats of the Silver Gull, *Larus*

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