

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 10

South-West Solitary Island, New South Wales

Location: 30° 09' S., 153° 14' E.; 2 km off-shore from Bare Bluff and 18 km NNE from Coffs Harbour, N.S.W.

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

Other Name: Groper Island.

Description: 6.8 ha; roughly egg-shaped, about 500 m by 400 m, the much larger north-east portion being separated from the small south-west part by a shelly, stony gutter through which the sea passes at high tide. The soil development on the crown supports a thick vegetation of grasses, shrubs and vines including the following:

Variable Groundsel *Senecio lautus*, Blue Wandering Jew *Commelina cyanea*, New Zealand Spinach *Tetragonia tetragonioides*, Climbing Saltbush *Rhagodia nutans*, Stalked Doubah *Marsdenia rostrata*, 'Tuckeroo' *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, Prickly Couch *Zoisia macrantha*, Dusky Coral Pea *Kennedia rubicunda*, Pigface *Carpobrotus glaucescens*, *Sesuvium portulacastrum* and Shore Spleenwort *Asplenium obtusatum*.

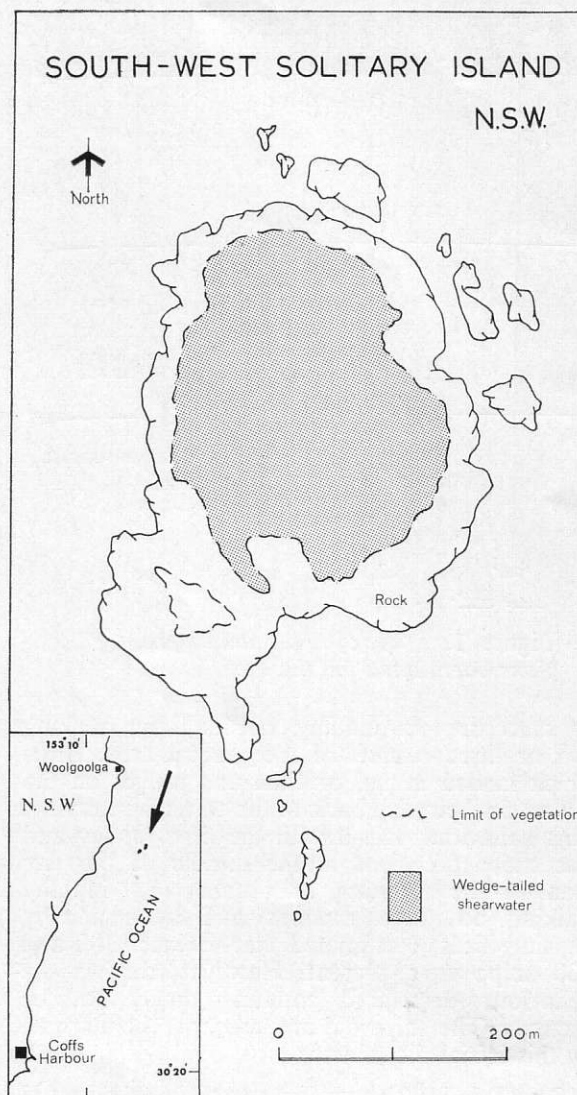
Landing: Onto rock at the south-west end and difficult except in calm weather.

Ornithological History: The first recorded visit by ornithologists was on 1 December 1969¹ when H. Battam, B. Jones and S. G. Lane were on the Island from 08:00 to 13:00. Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were found breeding in shallow burrows well dispersed throughout the vegetated area; most burrows contained an adult brooding a single egg.

During another visit by Lane, A. K. Morris and others from about 09:00 to 10:30 on 28 April 1974, 70 nestling Wedge-tailed Shearwaters were banded from some 200 burrows examined.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater—Breeds extensively over most of the large part of the island, more densely in some places than others depending on the soil and vegetation. A cursory check of the small south-west part indi-



cated shallow, rocky soil and no burrows. Estimated 1000-1500 pairs. Present to breed from August to early May.

Factors Affecting Status

Apparently fishermen have visited the island infrequently and local residents from the nearby

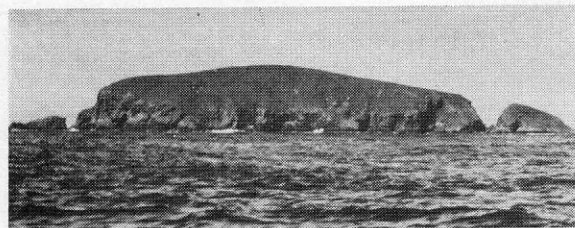
mainland have reported occasional fires. However, in January 1973 fishermen stranded on the island when their launch broke down, lit a fire to attract attention. The vegetation was particularly lush and green at the time and considerable effort was needed to get the fire started. When relief arrived, the fire was thought to be extinguished but it had penetrated the root system in the shallow soil, continued to smoulder underground, dried the surface vegetation, then broke out on a wide scale. Efforts to extinguish it were hampered by the smouldering below ground level and when finally successful, about 2000 square metres of the breeding area had been burnt. The fire fighters found many eggs scorched and destroyed, numerous adult birds and chicks burnt and dead, and others just outside the burnt areas, badly singed, crying pitifully and unable to fly.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

None recorded.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Ardea novaehollandiae White-faced Heron
Egretta sacra Reef Heron
Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher
Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull



• South-West Solitary Island from the north-west.

Banding

P. pacificus—199 adults; 70 nestlings: no recoveries to date.

Bibliography

1. Lane, S. G. (1972) 'Breeding Seabirds of the Solitary Islands, NSW', *Emu* 72: 182-184.

Acknowledgements

Mr A. G. Floyd kindly provided details of the vegetation and the burning.

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2 May 1974

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Nomenclature and Classification

The nomenclature and classification of species in this Journal has generally followed *The Official Checklist of the Birds of Australia* (Second Edition) 1926, and subsequent amendments.

However, in future the first part of the new RAOU Checklist which covers non-passerines will be used. Its publication is expected shortly. For the present, and probably until completion of the second part, the policy applying to passerines will be unchanged.

Hon. Editor

New Members

- ALSOP, C. C., 10 Birdwood Avenue, Warrnambool, Vic.
 CHURCH, R. J., 23 Brooklyn Street, South Strathfield, N.S.W.
 HUGHES, P. G., Hawkins Road, Widgee via Gympie, Qld.
 McCREA, J. S., 17 Onyx Road, Artarmon, N.S.W.
 RAYWARD, A., Skinners Shoot Road, Byron Bay, N.S.W.
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