

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 240

North Turtle Island, Pilbara Region, Western Australia

Location: 19°53'26"S, 118°53'45"E. Located about 22 km west-north-west of Larrey Point, Western Australia.

Status: Class A Reserve No. 34518 for the Conservation of Flora and Fauna, vested in the Western Australian National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority, and managed by the Western Australia Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Other Names: One of two 'Turtle Islands' until 1942 when current name applied.

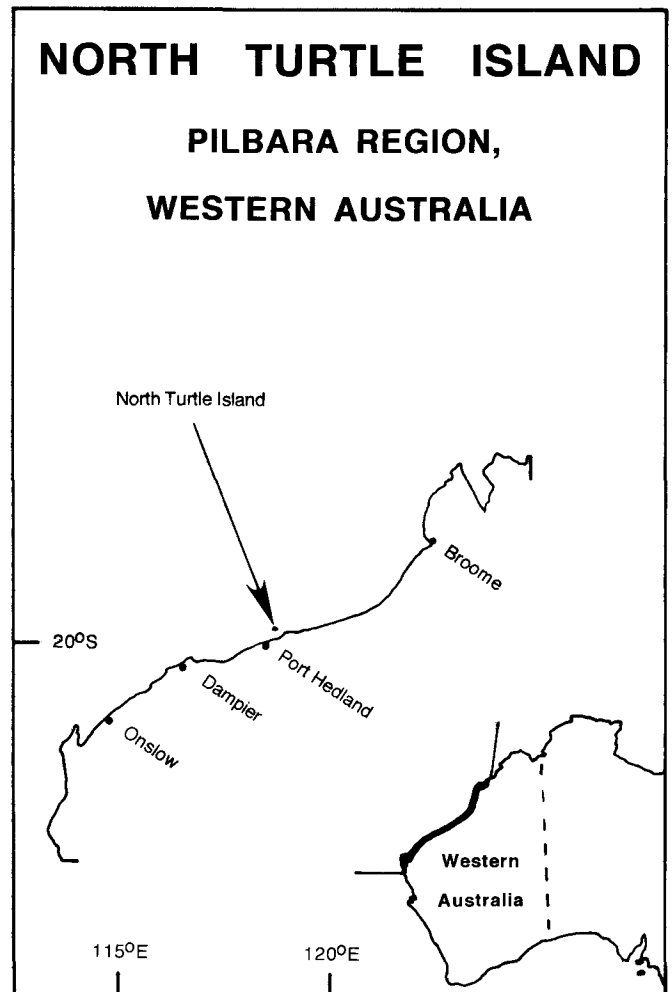
Description: A sand cay of about 50 ha, roughly rectangular in shape, with the long axis running north-west to south-east. Maximum height of 9 m. Densely vegetated with *Spinifex longifolius* grassland.

Landing: A shallow reef surrounds the island, making landing from a boat difficult. Landing by helicopter is simple, but care needs to be taken not to disturb the seabird breeding colonies.

Ornithological history: The island was first sighted on 30 July 1801 from the *Geographe* during the expedition led by Nicholas Baudin¹, but thought to be a point of the mainland. Recognized as an island by Freycinet on 2 April 1803, when he sailed the *Casuarina* between it and the mainland. Named 'Ilots des Tortues' because of the large number of these animals sighted in the area. P. P. King³, who explored the area in 1820–23 mentions the island but he did not land on it. Stokes⁸, in HMS *Beagle* also mentions Turtle Islands, but did not land on them. Ornithologists must have visited the island last century since Campbell² records the Australian Pelican as breeding on the island 'in April' (p. 999). Serventy, Serventy and Warham⁷ also mention it as a Pelican breeding island. Aerial surveys were conducted and landings were made by J. A. K. Lane and G. B. Pearson of the former Department of Fisheries and Wildlife during the 1970s, but their data are not published. N. Kolichis landed on 12 May 1975⁴. P. Fuller visited with R. E. S. Sokolowski on 1 October 1981, with A. A. Burbidge on 5 June 1982 and with K. D. Morris on 7 June 1984.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Phalacrocorax varius Pied Cormorant — A colony of about 1 500 breeding pairs all with eggs was present on 12 May 1975⁴. On 5 June 1982 the colony contained about 700 nests, some ready for eggs, some with eggs and most (about 90%) with chicks up to two weeks old. On 7 June 1984 there were about 500 nests, with eggs and small chicks.



Pelecanus conspicillatus Australian Pelican — Estimates of numbers are difficult because of the flighty nature of chicks. On 12 May 1975, three colonies were located⁴, two active and one abandoned. One colony had 200 pairs on eggs, one had 40 pairs either ready for eggs or with eggs and the third abandoned colony had 'a large number of addled eggs and dead young'. On 1 October 1981 about 600 nests were in use in the central part of the island; on 5 June 1982 there were two colonies, one with 300 abandoned nests with fresh eggs and the other with 600 to 700 nests with eggs or newly hatched chicks. On 7 June 1984 about 500 chicks of varying sizes were present.

Sterna caspia Caspian Tern. Kolichis⁴ reported an abandoned egg on 12 May 1975.

Factors Affecting Status

A pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster* nests on the island and would take seabirds for food. The island is seldom visited and there would be little disturbance of the nesting Pelicans in most seasons.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas* — Fresh nest and two on beach on 1 October 1981.

Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata* — One on beach on 7 June 1984.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Sula leucogaster</i>	Brown Booby
<i>Fregata ariel</i>	Lesser Frigatebird ⁴
<i>Egretta sacra</i>	Eastern Reef Egret
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Sterna nilotica</i>	Gull-billed Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern
<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Roseate Tern
<i>Sterna nereis</i>	Fairy Tern

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

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2. Campbell, A. J. (1901). Nests and eggs of Australian birds. (Pawson and Brailsford: Sheffield.)
3. King, P. P. (1827). Narrative of a survey of the inter-tropical and western coasts of Australia, performed between the years 1818 and 1822. 2 Vols. (John Murray: London.)
4. Kolichis, N. (1977). Birds of Bedout Island — a visit in May 1975. *West. Aust. Nat.* 13: 191–194.
5. Marchant, L. R. (1982). France Australe. (Artlook Books: Perth.)
6. Marchant, S. and Higgins, P. J. coord. (1990). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Vol. 1. (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne.)
7. Serventy, D. L., Serventy, V. and Warham, J. (1971). The handbook of Australian seabirds. (A. H. and A. W. Reed: Sydney.)
8. Stokes, J. L. (1846). Discoveries in Australia, etc. (T. and W. Boone: London.)

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Phillip J. Fuller and Andrew A. Burbidge, Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australian Wildlife Research Centre, P.O. Box 51, Wanneroo, Western Australia 6065.

ERRATUM

SEABIRD ISLAND No. 237
Cook Island, NSW — in *Corella* (1998) 22(2): 67–68
change to

SEABIRD ISLAND No. 5/1

The number given the islands in the Seabird Island Series is unique to the island. Any subsequent descriptions with new data are given the number of the island and a qualifying number that indicates the number of the 'up-date'.

The number for Cook Island was changed incorrectly from 5/1 to 237 during publication. **The number is 5/1** and indicates that this is the first revision of Cook Island since the original description in the *Australian Bird Bander* (1973) 5: 84.

The number 237 will not be used again in the series.

In over 25 years since the series commenced there have only been two revisions. It is hoped that there will be several 'up-dates' of islands in the future.