

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 246

Preservation Island, Furneaux Group, Tasmania

Location: 40°29'S, 148°03'E; at the western entrance to Armstrong Channel, 1.5 km south-west of Cape Barren Island and 5 km north-west of Clarke Island, in the Furneaux Group, Tasmania. It is separated from the nearest land, Rum Island (Corella 21: 92–93), by a 100 m wide channel.

Status: Part of the *Sydney Cove* Historic Site 8.4 ha; coastal Crown Reserve 3.8 ha; unallocated Crown Land 149.6 ha; private land 20.2 ha.

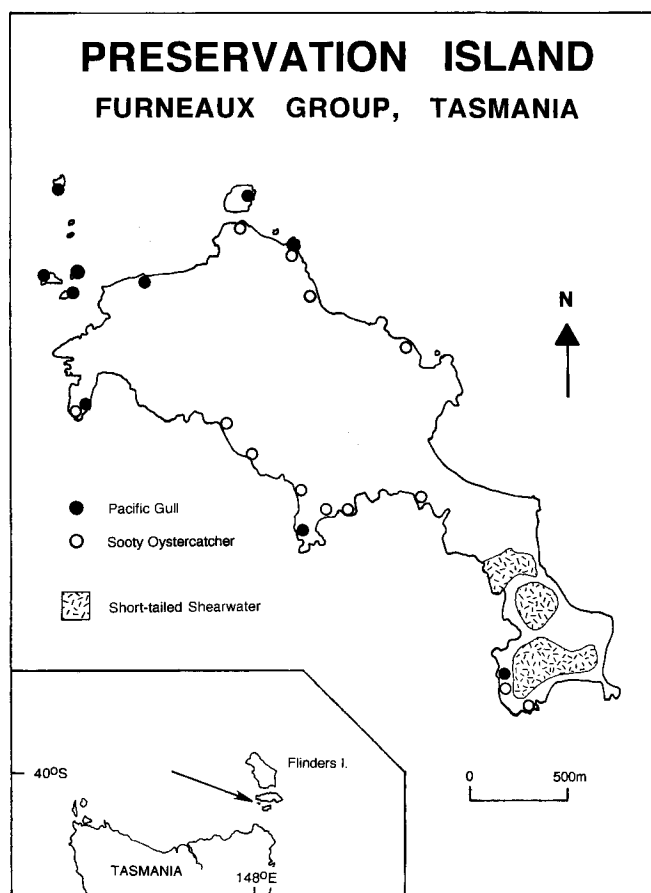
Description: 182 ha. A low and undulating island rising to 26 m above sea level on a granitic base and superficial and discontinuous occurrences of limestone. The rocky coastline is interspersed with several sheltered bays. A few shrubs of saltbush *Atriplex cineria* and *Senecio capillifolius* dominate the burrow-nesting bird colonies. Sheoak exists at the western end. Some succulent herbs such as ice plant, *Tetragonia implexicoma*, and *Rhagodia candolleana* occur. The vegetation was quickly altered by European occupation and consequent land management practices. Some 140 plant species including 46 introduced species have been recorded (Harris and McKenny 1999). Preservation Island has been, on the whole, continuously used for pasturing stock and intermittently occupied by people. Currently, about 60 head of cattle graze the island, and they have access to the whole coastline.

Landing: Easy anywhere around the island, particularly on the beaches.

Ornithological History: The island was first settled by the marooned crew of the *Sydney Cove* on 12 February 1797 for several months. Matthew Flinders who was involved in their rescue recorded the Little Penguin, Short-tailed Shearwater and 'speckled yellow snakes' (Tiger Snake *Notechis scutatus*) as occurring on the island (Flinders 1814). The island with its naturally occurring springs was soon settled by sealers who ran stock, including a large herd of goats (Scott 1828). According to Scott, 'the original name for the island was "Mutton Bird Island" from its being almost covered with these birds'. Scott also described how a small lagoon on the eastern side was 'generally covered with ducks and teal'. For many years the island was considered a shooter's realm for quail and the Cape Barren goose. The egg and bird collector, W. Armstrong of Victoria, visited on 15 November 1907 but did not state what he collected; it appears not to have been a profitable visit (Armstrong 1908). I. J. Skira visited on 6 December 1982, and N. P. Brothers on 27 November 1986.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Burrows scattered throughout the Short-tailed Shearwater colony and



occasional burrow present at the north end of Preservation Island. Breeding population estimated at approximately 300 pairs.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — Abundant over 5.1 ha. On 6 December 1982 burrow density calculated from 13 transects of varying length to 100 × 2 m covering a total of 898 × 2 m and placed at random was 0.42 ± 0.04 burrows/m² (at 95% confidence limits ± 2 S.E.). Burrow density estimated on 27 November by Brothers from 15 transects, each 30 × 1 m, was 0.58 ± 0.1 burrows/m². Density (0.42 ± 0.04) by area gives an estimated 21 450 burrows (range 19 000–23 000).

Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher — Brothers recorded 3 breeding pairs each with 2 eggs on the west coast, and a total of twelve pairs on the island.

Larus pacificus Pacific Gull — Brothers (November 1986) recorded 6 pairs with eggs, chicks or runners nesting all around the island.

Factors Affecting Status

Cattle wander over most of Preservation Island unfettered. Vegetation damage and soil loss by erosion, particularly in sections of the shearwater colony, is evident in localized areas of cattle activity. African boxthorn *Lycium ferocissimum* infests much of the island although some control has been undertaken in recent years. The island is still popular for hunting pursuits. There are no feral vertebrate species on the island.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	Diving Petrel (dead)
<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	Australian Pelican
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Pied Oystercatcher
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern
<i>Sterna nereis</i>	Fairy Tern
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

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3. Flinders, M. (1814). 'A Voyage to Terra Australis'. (G. and W. Nicol: London).
4. Harris, S. and McKenny, H. (1999). Preservation Island, Furneaux Group: Two hundred years of vegetation change. *Pap. Proc. Roy Soc. Tas.* 133 (in press).
5. Scott, T. (1828). Furneaux Isles. A short geographical memoir thereof. Mitchell Library. A606.

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• Aerial view of Preservation Island.

Photo: Land Information Services, Department of Environment and Land Management