

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 247

Little Chalky Island, Furneaux Group, Tasmania

Location: 40°07'S, 147°53'E; 10 km west of Whitemark on Flinders Island, and 3.5 km south of Chalky Island¹, in the Furneaux Group, Tasmania.

Status: Unallocated Crown Land.

Description: 4 ha. A low and rectangular island with frequent granite outcrops. Coastal saltbush *Atriplex cinerea*, covers three-quarters of the island. Tussock grassland *Poa poiformis*, and succulent herbs such as ice plant *Tetragonia implexicoma*, and *Rhagodia candolleana* occur over the remainder. Other species present include Austral hollyhock *Lavatera plebeia*, pigface *Carpobrotus rossii*, and sea parsley *Apium insulare*. There is a fine sandy beach on the eastern side. A pretty island that is relatively untouched by humans.

Landing: Easy anywhere around the island.

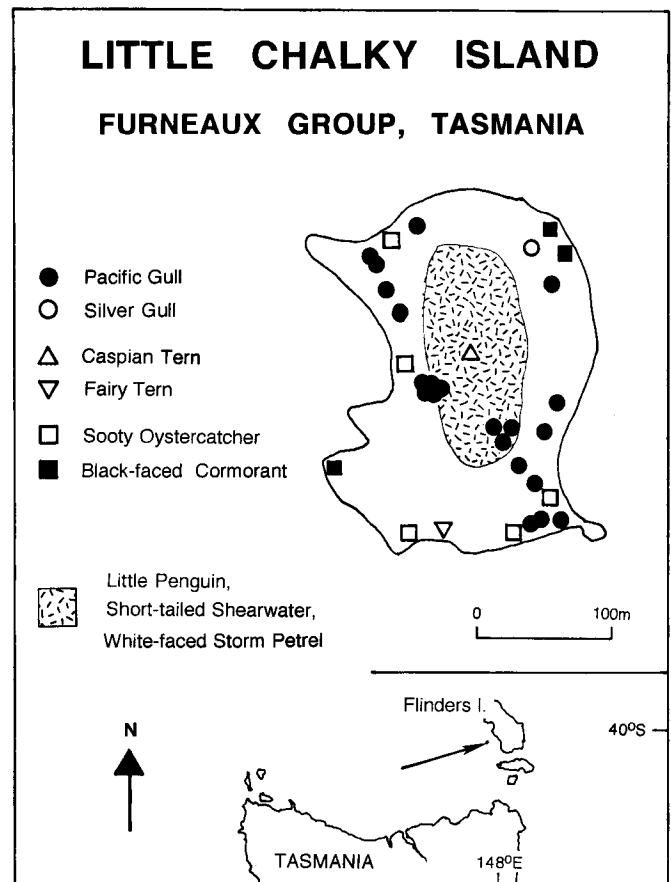
Ornithological History: None of the early Victorian Naturalist expeditions to the Furneaux Group mention landing on Little Chalky although they landed on others in the vicinity². John Whinray visited on 24 November 1976 and on several previous occasions³, I. J. Skira on 1 December 1977, 9 December 1987, and 22 October 1996; and N. P. Brothers on 11 December 1986. Each visit was just for a few hours.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Recorded by Whinray and Skira as breeding. Noted by Brothers (December 1986) as nesting all over the island in burrows under matted vegetation. Brothers (December 1986) who placed 16 transects, each 30 × 1 m at random, encountered penguins in 11 of them. Burrow density calculated from these 11 transects was 0.07 ± 0.02 burrows/m² (at 95% confidence limits ± 2 S.E.). Total number of burrows is estimated at 150.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — Noted as a breeding species with eggs by Skira where the soil was deep enough, principally among *Poa* vegetation in the central northern part of the island. Encountered by Brothers in 8 transects. Burrow density calculated from these 8 transects was 0.11 ± 0.08 burrows/m² (at 95% confidence limits ± 2 S.E.). Total number of burrows is estimated at 150.

Pelagodroma marina White-faced Storm Petrel — Distributed widely over the island with most burrows found under matted vegetation of *Tetragonia* and *Rhagodia*. Storm petrel burrows are difficult to locate, and on Little Chalky Island they were not regular in distribution. Encountered by Brothers in 10 transects. Burrow density calculated from these 10 transects was 0.08 ± 0.04 burrows/m² (at 95% confidence limits ± 2 S.E.). Total number of burrows is estimated at 800.



Phalacrocorax fuscescens Black-faced Cormorant — In December 1977 a large colony of 200 old nests was on the rocks facing south-west (photos in Seabirds of Australia, 1987). Whinray had counted 202 fully grown fledglings in the same area on his visit. In December 1987 Skira counted 430 nests. All chicks had fledged. Brothers on his visit counted 248 nests on the same rocks. He also noted 212 old nests on rocks in the north-east of the island, also where Whinray saw old nests.

Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher — Whinray recorded 2 nests, each with 2 eggs in November 1976; Skira in December 1987, 1 nest with 1 egg, and Brothers recorded 4 pairs with either eggs or runners in December 1986.

Larus pacificus Pacific Gull — Over 15 breeding pairs recorded by Skira in 1977, and one nest with 2 eggs on 22 October 1996. Brothers found 23 nests, either empty, with eggs or runners nearby.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — In November 1976 Whinray recorded 22 nests with eggs on the same spot that he found them in the 1975–76 breeding season. In October 1996 Skira recorded 12 nests on the western side of the black-faced cormorant colony; 6 had 2 eggs, 5 had 3 eggs and 1 nest contained a small chick.

Sterna caspia Caspian Tern — Skira recorded one nest with 1 egg and 2 tiny chicks chirping in December 1977, and 1 nest with 1 egg in December 1987 on a granite outcrop in the centre of the island. Brothers recorded a pair with 2 eggs in the same locality.

Sterna nereis Fairy Tern — Whinray (November 1976) recorded 2 empty nests and one nest with a single egg at the southern end of the eastern beach. Skira (December 1977) found 6 nests with 9 chicks in the same locality as Whinray. Fairy terns frequently change nesting localities, and nearly 10 years later on 11 December 1986, Brothers recorded them on nearby Chalky Island. There he counted 49 empty nests, 3 with 1 egg, 3 with 2 eggs, 17 solitary chicks, 3 dead solitaires, 14 double chicks, 2 chicks and 1 egg.

Factors Affecting Status

Little Chalky Island is far enough away from Flinders Island and surrounded by reefs, not to have many visitors.

There are no feral vertebrate species on the island. Several small bushes of African Boxthorn *Lycium ferocissimum* dot the coastline, but recent chemical spraying appears to have them under control.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	Diving Petrel (dead)
<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	Australian Pelican
<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	Pied Oystercatcher
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Robertson, B. I. (1981). Seabird Islands No. 102. Chalky Island, Furneaux Group, Tasmania. *Corella* 5: 49-52.
2. Gabriel, J. (1894). Report of expedition to Furneaux Group. *Vic. Nat.* 10: 166-180.
3. Whinray, J. (1977). Birds of Little Chalky Island, Tasmania. *Bird Observer* 551: 80.

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