

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 53

## Dangerous Reef, South Australia

**Location:** 34°49' S., 136°12' E.; 17 km offshore and east of Maclaren Point, 16 km offshore and north-east of Observatory Point, Thistle Island, and 32 km ESE of Port Lincoln, S.A.

**Status:** Under the control of the Australian Department of Transport (Lighthouse Service); entry permit required.

**Description:** 0.2 ha; the reef consists of several low rocks and islands. The main island is 760 m long, 30 m wide and 3 m high. The top of this island is fairly flat and covered by soil, guano and loose rocks. The long axis is east-west with shingle bars at both ends. There is a light-tower and two shelter huts.

Flora consists only of three small herbs: *Cakile maritima*, *Lepidium foliosum* and *Atriplex suberecta* all growing at bases of rocks.

**Landing:** Difficult, by row boat along the north shore rocks. A landing on the north shore is marked by triangular markers for LARC type amphibious landing craft. There is a helicopter landing pad west of the light-tower and huts.

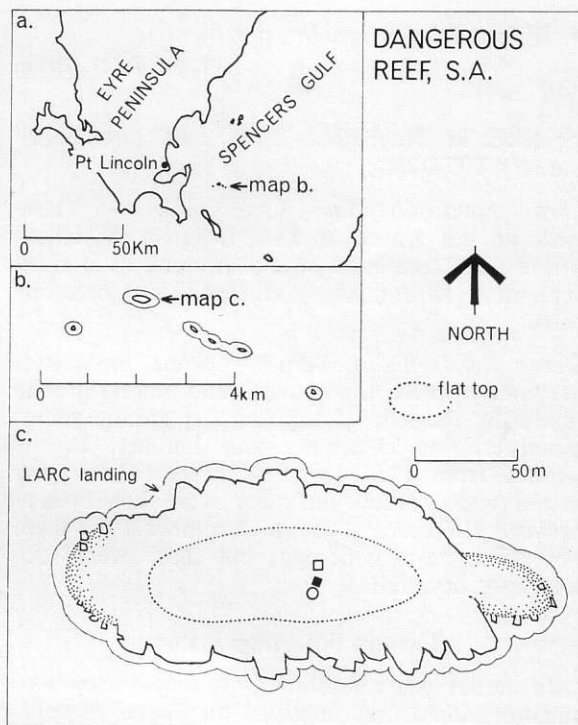
Care should be taken of aggressive territorial sealion bulls in spring (October).

**Ornithological History:** Since 1966 Dangerous Reef has been visited by M. H. Waterman, C. Gill and others to band Black-faced Cormorants; B. J. and J. Marlow to study Australian Sealions; and G. F. van Tets to study Black-faced Cormorants, Pacific Gulls and Silver Gulls.

## Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Edyptula minor* Little Penguin — January 1972 at least five were found moulting in cavities under rocks. It is possible that these cavities are also used for breeding.

*Phalacrocorax fuscescens* Black-faced Cormorant — Breeds August to February on the rocky

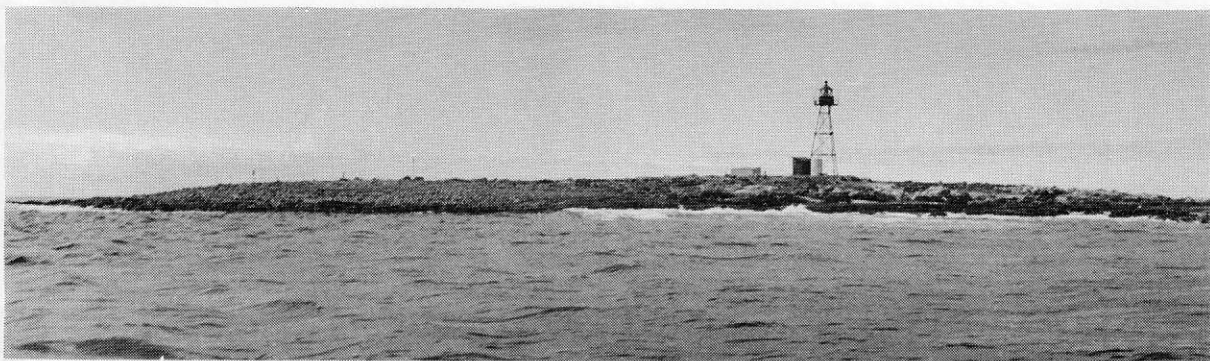


slopes of the main island. About 2 500 pairs bred in October 1970.

*Larus novaehollandiae* Silver Gull — October 1970 about 12 nests were scattered around the perimeter of the main island with no more than three together. All stages from fresh eggs to large chicks were seen.

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Breeds September to December. Seven pairs bred October 1970 and subdivided the main island into seven nesting territories of similar size.

*Sterna bergii* Crested Tern — Breeds November to February. Courting was observed in October.



- *Dangerous Reef (looking north-east). The triangular markers for the LARC landing on the north-west side of the island are just visible on the left.*

Photo: Howard Hughes, The Australian Museum.

### Factors Affecting Status

Occasionally when the sea is calm parties in small boats land for sight-seeing. Four times a year parties land to do maintenance work on the light-tower. The Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* and the White-breasted Sea-eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* are the main avian predators that visit the reef.

### OTHER VERTEBRATES

The reef is a major breeding station of the Australian Sealion *Neophoca cinerea*. Occasionally sub-adult male sealions blunder through the Black-faced Cormorant colonies and destroy several nests. The two species of gulls scavenge around the sealions and cormorants for food.

About 200 sealions are present during their breeding season. No other resident mammals are present.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

*Pelagodroma marina* White-faced Storm-petrel.  
*Phalacrocorax varius* Pied Cormorant.  
*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher.  
*Hydroprogne caspia* Caspian Tern.  
*Sterna nereis* Fairy Tern.

### Banding

Period — 27 February 1960 to 30 June 1975.

*P. fuscescens* — 3 adults; 2 422 nestlings banded; 74 recoveries away from the island up to 200 km. With the aid of a telescope and binoculars band numbers of 43 banded at Dangerous Reef and 15 banded elsewhere were read<sup>3</sup>.

*L. pacificus* — 3 adults banded. No recoveries to date.

*S. bergii* — 499 nestlings banded; 2 recoveries away from the island up to 640 km.

### Bibliography

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4. van Tets, G. F. (1976), 'Further observations on the taking of pebbles by Black-faced Cormorants', *Emu* 76: 151-152.

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