

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 13

North Rock, Solitary Islands, New South Wales

Location: 29° 59' S, 153° 15' E; 3 km north-east of the village of Red Rock and 2.4 km offshore.

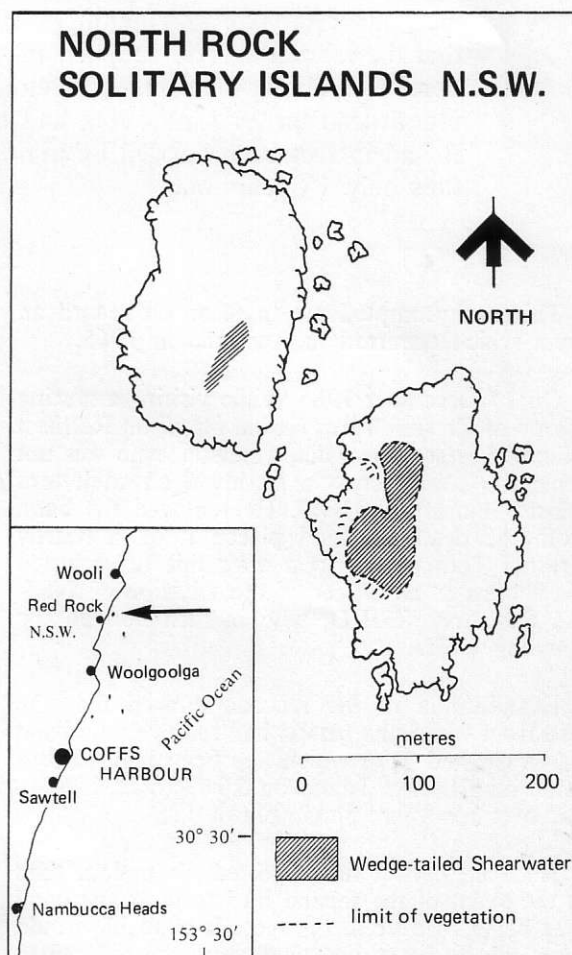
Status: Nature Reserve controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NSW); entry permit required.

Description: 4.0 ha; one of the smaller islands in the Solitary group, it is in two sections, the eastern portion being about 250 m by 200 m, the western section 250 m by 150 m. The western section has very little vegetation, as it consists of a rock shelf that is almost awash during rough seas. It has fault lines running NE-SW and the highest part is no more than 4 m. The eastern sector is highly metamorphic rock with a broad, wave-cut bench to the north-east protecting the island proper from the effects of cyclonic disturbances; the height is about 15 m.

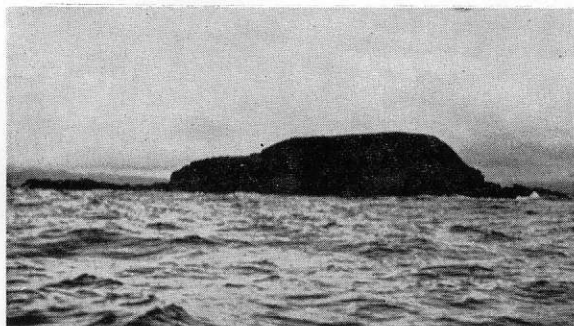
The vegetation on both parts in the storm zone consists of Rounded Pigface *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, Pigface *Carpobrotus glaucescens* and Prickly Couch *Zoisia macrantha*. On higher ground on the eastern section there is Variable Groundsel *Senecio lautus*, New Zealand Spinach *Tetragonia tetragonioides* and Prickly Couch with Wandering Jew *Commelina cyanea* in the more sheltered places.

The smaller western section where birds shelter in the lee of the more resistant bands of rocks is dominated by Pigweed *Portulaca oleracea*. The vegetation found on the main islet is less common here.

Landing: Difficult and only possible during very calm seas because of the bad surge.



Ornithological History: In the mid 1950s, at the instigation of Dr R. Carrick, the Fauna Protection Panel moved to protect all coastal islands of N.S.W. which were of value to nesting seabirds (A. A. Strom pers. comm.). No doubt North



● North Rock during a rain squall (looking south-west).

Photo: S. G. Lane

Rock was included because early Panel literature mentioned that Silver Gulls nested there.

S. G. Lane² was unable to find any record of visits by ornithologists to the Solitaires and initially indicated that North Rock and three other rocks in the group were "... very barren and devoid of, or almost devoid of, soil or vegetation". Subsequently he revised this description³ for North Rock and Stack Rock. Lane² also mentioned that Silver Gulls and Crested Terns may breed on these rocks; however, there is still no record of this occurring.

The first visit by ornithologists was made to North Rock by Lane, A. K. Morris, A. Floyd and officers of the NPWS on 27 April 1974. A vegetation survey was carried out by Floyd while Lane and Morris surveyed the seabirds. Of 50 burrows examined, 27 contained large young Wedge-tailed Shearwaters; no other seabirds were found nesting. W. R. Wheeler and I. Watson (*Emu* 63:99-173) in the list of Silver Gull nesting islands in New South Wales, did not include North Rock.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater—Burrows located throughout the grass slopes. Estimated 100 (+) breeding pairs.

Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher—A pair was present on 27 April 1974 and most likely they breed on the island.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull—Unconfirmed reports of breeding; they have not done so since 1972.



● Another view, from the air (looking east).

Photo: P. E. Roberts

Factors Affecting Status

No apparent unusual predation evident and no other vertebrates recorded.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Sterna bergii Crested Tern

Banding

One visit—27 April 1974.
P. pacificus—25 nestlings.

Bibliography

1. Hindwood, K. A. (1948), 'Notes on the Sea-birds Breeding on the Coastal Islands of New South Wales', *Emu* 48:73-81.
2. Lane, S. G. (1972), 'Breeding Seabirds of the Solitary Islands, N.S.W.', *Emu* 72:182-183.
3. Lane, S. G. (1975), 'Further Notes on the Sea-birds of the Solitary Islands, New South Wales', *Aust. Bird Bander* 13:56-57.

Acknowledgments

Ranger J. Winter (NPWS) provided the transport for the visit in April 1974 and Mr A. Floyd provided details of the vegetation.

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25 September 1974.

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