

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 17

Juan and Julia Rocks, New South Wales

Location: 28°37' S., 153°36'E.; 3 km north of Byron Bay, New South Wales.

Status: Nature Reserve controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (N.S.W.): entry permit required.

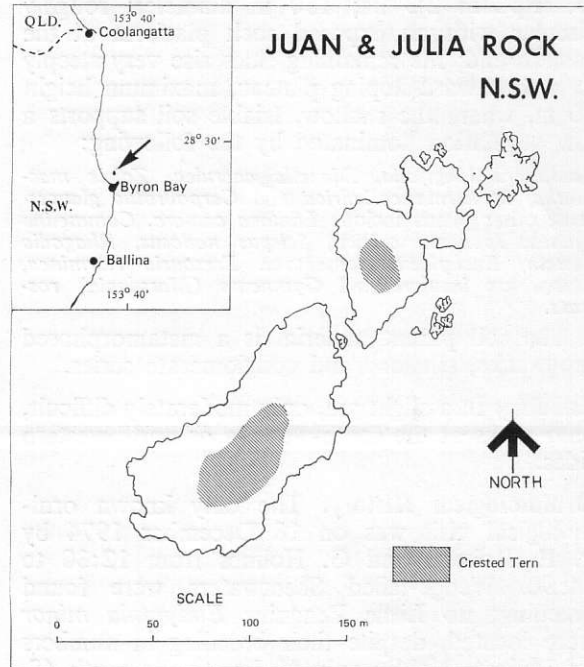
Other Name: Julian Rocks.

Description: This twin-rock outcrop rises steeply to some 17 m and is about 250 m by 75 m at the widest. In bad weather waves break over much of the surface and apparently the splash carries large quantities of sea water over even the highest points. Consequently the surface is mostly bare rock with very little soil and scanty vegetation growing in soil-pockets in small crevices. In December 1974 there was a patch of Prickly Couch *Zoisia macrantha* some 5m long and about 2 m wide growing in a soil depth of a few centimetres; it was some 20 cm high. Small pockets of *Portulaca oleracea* were growing on the rock slopes and a few Sow Thistles *Sonchus oleraceus* were found. Two seedling clumps of Crows-foot Grass *Eleusine indica* were growing in a very small patch of soil at the very top of the high rock.

A wooden survey (?) marker is situated on the highest point.

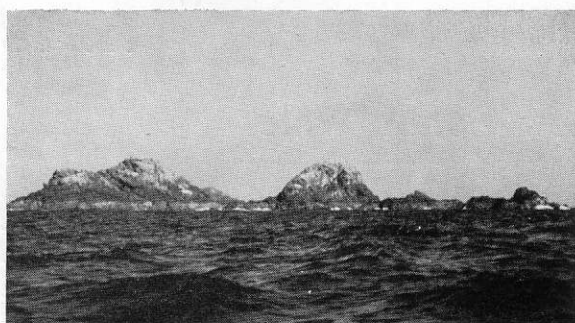
Landing: On to rocks and, due to any surge, difficult except in calm weather.

Ornithological History: S. W. Jackson¹ reported collecting eggs of the Wedge-tailed Shearwater on "Julian Rock off Byron Bay" on 18 November 1899. However, no further ornithological visits were recorded until M. A. Johnson and S. G. Lane spent some 30 minutes there on 7 December 1974. At that time there was no evidence of any nesting and certainly there was insufficient soil for any burrowing. Perhaps a shearwater could have tunnelled in the patch of Prickly Couch but this seems unlikely. If shearwaters

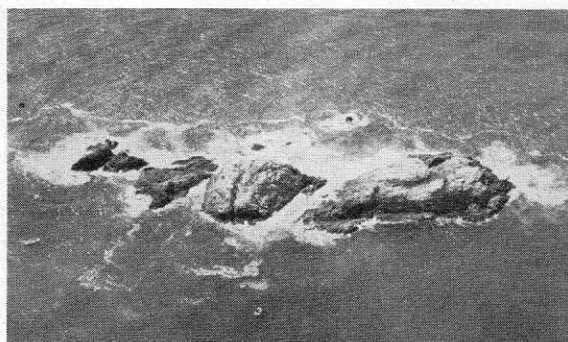


● Crested Terns nesting on the only patch of grass on the island.

Photo: J. T. Willows



● Juan and Julia Rocks (looking north-west).



● Another view from the air (looking south-east).

Photo: J. Wright

bred on the Rocks in 1899, the situation must have been quite different from the present. Prior to the 1974 visit there were unconfirmed reports that "gulls" nested on the island.

While fishing in the area on 31 December 1974, J. T. Willows noticed Crested Terns flying onto the Rocks. As he and his friends approached, they were able to observe that the birds appeared to be nesting. One of the party managed to get ashore and found some 150 eggs. Subsequently, Willows, A. Rayward, F. Schipp and M. Whicker visited the Rocks on 27 January 1975. They found a few eggs and chicks all sizes to flying stage, although none was seen flying. However, within the following few weeks birds in juvenile plumage were seen on nearby beaches being fed by adults.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater—The only record is that reported by Jackson in 1899.
Sterna bergii Crested Tern—Probably nests irregularly on the Rocks. In January 1975 there were an estimated 300 breeding pairs.

Factors Affecting Status

Exposure to heavy seas render the Rocks frequently unsuitable for nesting. Vandals were reported to have interfered with eggs in January 1975.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

None recorded.

Other Seabirds Recorded

None, although undoubtedly cormorants *Phalacrocorax spp.* and Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae* use the Rocks as a roosting place as indicated by the well white-washed condition visible in the accompanying photograph.

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Jackson, S. W. (1907), Catalogue and Data of Jacksonian Oological Collection, page 60.
2. Hindwood, K. A. (1948), 'Notes on the Sea-birds Breeding on the Coastal Islands of New South Wales', *Emu* 48: 73-81.

Acknowledgements

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