

# SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 22

## Boondelbah Island, New South Wales

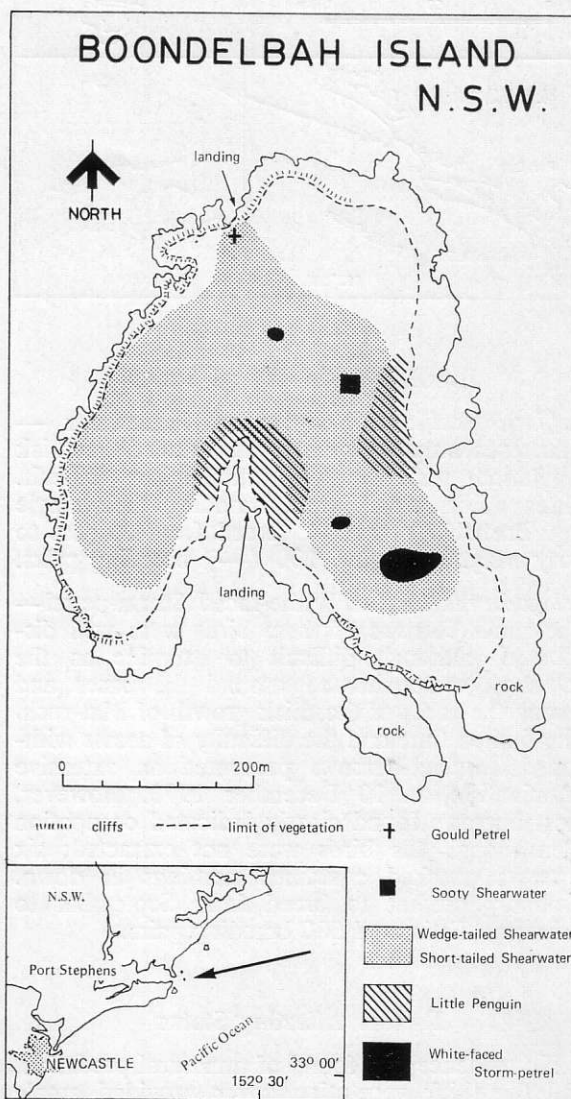
**Location:** 32°42' S., 152°14' E.; 4 km east of South Head, Port Stephens, N.S.W.

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

**Other Name:** Big Island.

**Description:** 9.3 ha; in the form of a mesa, some 650 m long by 425 m at the widest part. On the north-west are porphyritic cliffs some 55 m high, while those to the east and south are broken and fretted. A dyke running north-south through the centre of the island has been much eroded at the southern end forming a deep embayment. The highly siliceous soil has a concentration of humic materials in the seepage areas on the lips of the central valley. The vegetation consists of sedge-tussocks, mainly *Lomandra longifolia* in the deeper sandy areas, with *Dianella sp.* and *Juncus sp.* in damper places. Coast Rosemary *Westringia rosmarinifolia* occurs in banks round the exposed rocky tops and edge, with the grasses *Cynodon dactylon*, *Sporobolus virginicus* and *Carpobrotus glaucescens* as lawns where thin veneers of soil overlie horizontal beds of rock. A short-grassed sod-meadow covers the seepage areas. The exposed sea-cliffs and ridges are extensively covered in Prickly Pear *Opuntia stricta* but only isolated plants are found elsewhere.

**Landing:** Difficult and only possible during calm seas, in the bay on the southern side of the island when there is a moderate north-easterly





● Boondelbah from the air (looking north).

Photo supplied by A. F. D'Ombraim

wind with little or no swell; or alternatively via the dyke in the north-west corner, but this entails a strenuous, difficult climb up a loose, rock-strewn slope.

**Ornithological History:** A. F. Basset Hull<sup>3</sup> landed on the island on 7 December 1910 as did T. P. Austin<sup>6</sup> about the same time, but it is not known whether these were separate visits. Both reported only Wedge-tailed Shearwaters nesting there in "immense numbers". Hull reported taking an egg from under a Gould Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera* "under a mass of boulders not far from the waterline in the steep, rock-strewn gully on the western side of the island"<sup>2</sup>. Between 1935 and 1974, A. F. D'Ombraim (pers. comm.) visited the island numerous times but no dates or details were recorded except that no Gould Petrels were found<sup>1</sup>. S. G. Lane and Morris were on the island on 30 December 1967 for about twenty minutes; Lane, Morris, H. Battam and others on 5 Decem-

ber 1969 for about three hours; and Battam, A. E. F. Rogers and B. Jones for a similar period on 11 January 1970. Further attempts by these people to visit the island were thwarted by bad weather and rough seas. (This information was summarised previously by Morris *et al.*<sup>5</sup>)

About 1940, D'Ombraim and A. J. Gwynne (pers. comm.) found a White-faced Storm-petrel nesting on the island. During the 1969 and 1970 visits a small colony was found breeding and in December 1975 D'Ombraim found the species nesting in three places.

#### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin—Nests are located throughout the lower parts in rocky crevices or burrows where there is easy access to the sea. Some burrows were also found in