

# SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 22

## Boondelbah Island, New South Wales

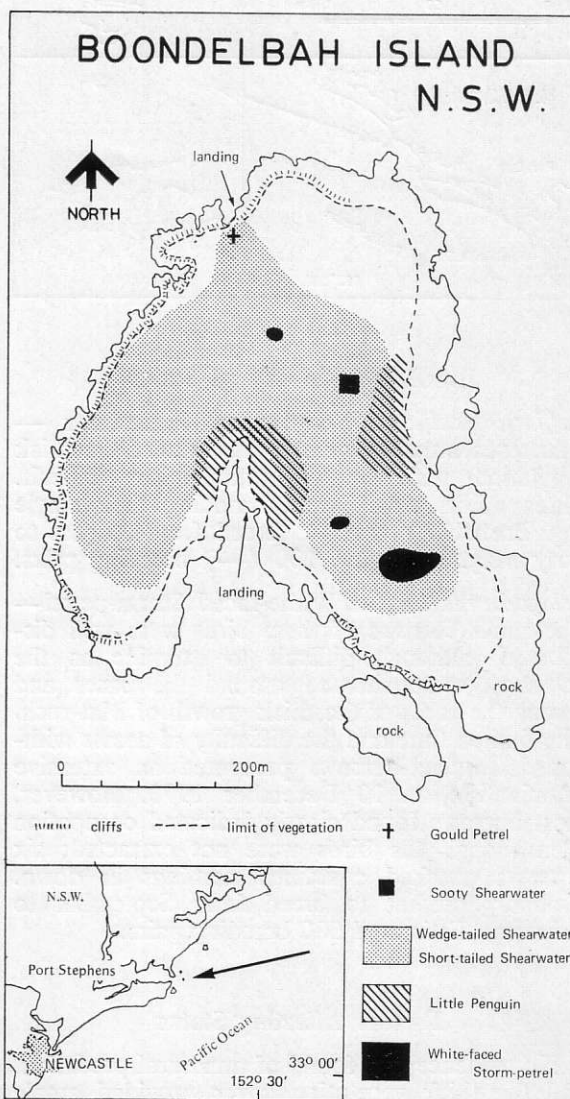
**Location:** 32°42' S., 152°14' E.; 4 km east of South Head, Port Stephens, N.S.W.

**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-

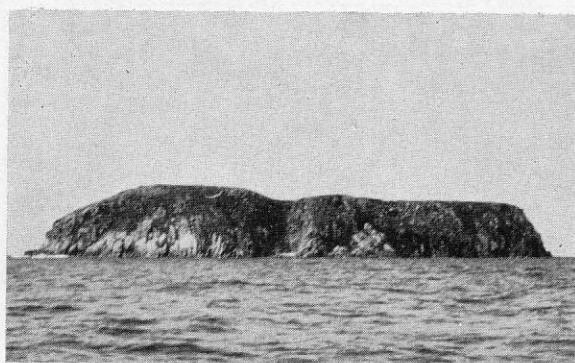
ber 1969 for about three hours; and Battam, A. E. F. Rogers and B. Jones for a similar period on 11 January 1970. Further attempts by these people to visit the island were thwarted by bad weather and rough seas. (This information was summarised previously by Morris *et al.*<sup>5</sup>)

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

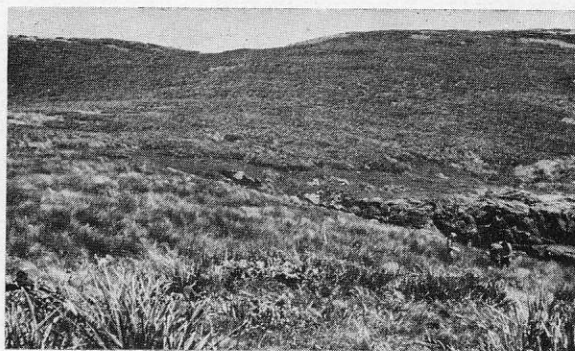
*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin—Nests are located throughout the lower parts in rocky crevices or burrows where there is easy access to the sea. Some burrows were also found in





● Boondelbah Island (looking east).

Photo: S. G. Lane



● Typical vegetation habitat on Boondelbah Island (looking north).

Photo: S. G. Lane

the middle of the plateau among the shearwaters. Estimated 1000 (+) breeding pairs.

*Pterodroma leucoptera* Gould Petrel—One record in 1910<sup>2</sup>.

*Puffinus pacificus* Wedge-tailed Shearwater—The commonest shearwater nesting on the island. Burrows are located all over the plateau, with the greatest concentration on the slope from the north-eastern corner to the centre among the Mat-rush and sedges growing in the deep, friable soil. Estimated 3500 (+) breeding pairs.

*Puffinus griseus* Sooty Shearwater—Burrows are situated among those of the other shearwaters. Estimated 10 breeding pairs.

*Puffinus tenuirostris* Short-tailed Shearwater—Burrows are located among those of *P. pacificus* particularly in the deep, friable soils in the centre of the island. Estimated 500 (+) breeding pairs.

*Pelagodroma marina* White-faced Storm-petrel—Breeds in several places in small numbers. Estimated 100 (+) breeding pairs.

#### Factors Affecting Status

No apparent unusual predation evident and no other vertebrates recorded. Prickly Pear may have nuisance value to burrowing petrels.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

None recorded although cormorants *Phalacrocorax spp.*, Silver Gulls *Larus novaehollandiae* and Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* no doubt visit the island.

#### Banding

First banding visit—30 December 1967.  
*Puffinus pacificus*—131 adults; 3 recoveries at banding place.

*Puffinus griseus*—2 adults.

*Puffinus tenuirostris*—14 adults.

*Pelagodroma marina*—3 adults; 2 nestlings.

No recoveries have been reported away from the island.

#### Bibliography

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2. Hindwood, K. A. and D. L. Serventy (1941), 'The Gould Petrel of Cabbage Tree Island', *Emu* 41: 1-21.
3. Hull, A. F. Basset (1911), 'Further Remarks on the Finding of the Nest and Egg of *Oestrelata leucoprera*', *Emu* 10: 253-258.
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5. Morris, A. K., S. G. Lane and H. Battam (1973), 'Breeding Seabirds of Boondelbah Island, N.S.W.', *Emu* 73: 136-137.
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#### Acknowledgements

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