

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 41

Martin Islet, Five Islands, New South Wales

Location: 34°29' S., 150°56' E.; 2.5 km south-east of Port Kembla, N.S.W., and 1 km offshore.

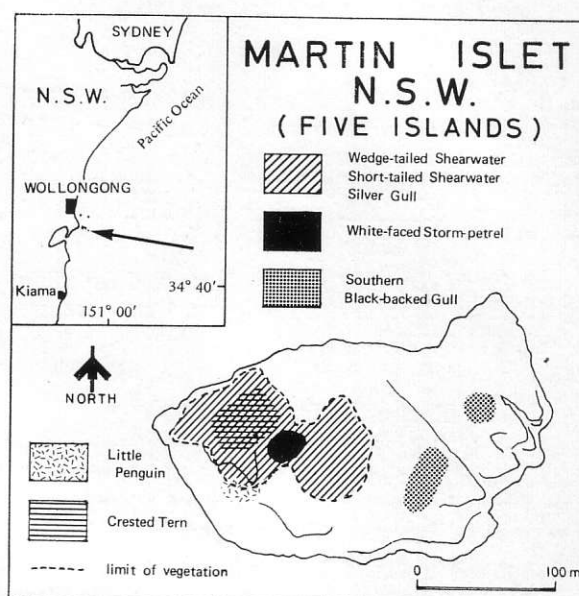
Status: Nature Reserve controlled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (N.S.W.); Entry permit required.

Other Name: Five Islands, No. 3.

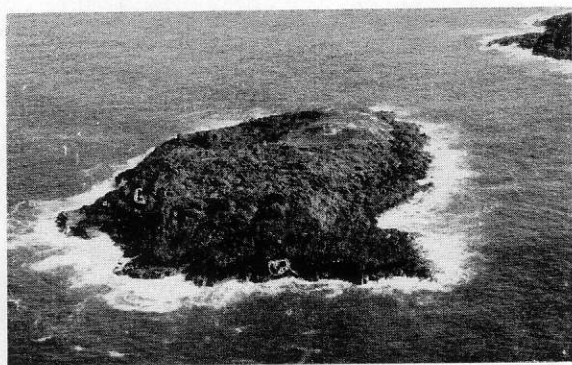
Description: 2.5 ha; roughly elliptical in shape with axes of 300 m by 150 m. The island is composed of heavily jointed Dapto dolerite and rises to 16 m. It is exposed to the prevailing strong southerlies and is vegetated only on the more sheltered north-west section, over an area of some 0.35 ha. Predominant is Prickly Couch *Zoisia macrantha*, with a small area of Pigface *Carpobrotus glaucescens*; Prickly Pear *Opuntia stricta* is well established on the edges of the north-west corner.

Landing: Difficult and possible only in calm seas as the sides are steep; a strong surge, which often breaks, occurs around the full perimeter. Swimming ashore is usually necessary.

Ornithological History: Hull⁵ reported Wedge-tailed Shearwaters being recorded by E. S. Rohu on 23 February 1913³ but gave no further details. Iredale and A. H. Chisholm visited Martin Islet in November 1927⁷ and recorded Silver Gulls and Crested Terns breeding. The island was visited on a number of occasions by Davis² over the period 1932-1941 but he did not make definite records of birds found. Keast⁸ made visits on 15 December 1940 and 6 June 1941. On the first visit, in addition to the gulls and terns he found Little Penguins breeding but did not find any shearwaters. No further ornithological visits were reported until M. D. Murray (pers. comm.)



spent some 15 minutes on the island in December 1959. Like Keast, he found a few Silver Gulls, Crested Terns and some Little Penguins nesting. In December 1969 Battam, P. J. Fullagar, B. Jones and D. Purchase found a flourishing mixed colony of Wedge-tailed and Short-tailed Shearwaters. The Southern Black-backed Gull also was found breeding on the island at that time. Further visits were made by Battam and Jones on 3 January 1970; Battam, Jones and S. G. Lane on 29 January 1972; Battam, Jones, Lane and M. Robson on 29 December 1972, when a nestling White-faced Storm-petrel was located; Battam, Lane and Leishman on 26 December 1975; and Battam and Lane on 31 January 1976. The visits invariably have been brief due to the adverse weather conditions.



● Martin Islet (looking south-west).

Photo: M. D. Murray

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Some probably breed regularly on the island, mostly from August to December. Estimated 30 breeding pairs.

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater — Present to breed probably from late-August to early-May. Burrows are situated in the deeper soil in the western part. Estimated 30(+) breeding pairs.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — Breeding season and location similar to *P. pacificus*. Estimated 40(+) breeding pairs.

Pelagodroma marina White-faced Storm-petrel — A few burrows were found in December 1972, and one nestling located. Probably some present to breed from October to February. Estimated 10(+) breeding pairs.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — Some irregular breeding on the island before 1968, but has bred every year since. Present to breed usually from September to February. Estimated 1 000 breeding pairs.

Larus dominicanus Southern Black-backed Gull — First recorded breeding on 9 December 1969¹ and has probably bred each year since. Estimated 4 breeding pairs.

Sterna bergii Crested Tern — Breeds irregularly on the island which is apparently an alternative site to No. 2 Island. Breeding season usually September to February. Estimated 500(+) breeding pairs.

● see location map of Five Islands, page 114.

Factors Affecting Status

Most probably the Southern Black-backed Gull, in addition to the Silver Gull, is a predator of Silver Gull and Crested Tern chicks.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

Skink *Sphenomorphus* sp.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Phalacrocorax carbo Black Cormorant

Phalacrocorax sulcirostris Little Black Cormorant

Banding

Period covered — 9 December 1969 to 31 January 1976.

P. pacificus — 6 adults.

P. tenuirostris — 9 adults.

P. marina — 1 nestling.

L. dominicanus — 6 runners.

Bibliography

1. Battam, H. (1970). 'The Dominican Gull on the Five Islands, New South Wales', *Aust. Bird Bander* 8: 32-33.
2. Davis, C., M. F. Day and D. F. Waterhouse (1938). 'Notes on the Terrestrial Ecology of the Five Islands', Part 1, *Proc. Linn. Soc. N.S.W.* 63: 358-388.
3. Hindwood, K. A. (1948). 'Notes on the Sea-birds Breeding on Coastal Islands of New South Wales', *Emu* 48: 73-81.
4. Hull, A. F. Basset (1911). 'Avifauna of the New South Wales Islands', Part 1, *Emu* 11: 99-104.
5. Hull, A. F. Basset (1916). 'Avifauna of the New South Wales Islands', Part 3, *Emu* 15: 207-216.
6. Hull, A. F. Basset (1922). 'The Islands of New South Wales and their Birds', *Aust. Mus. Mag.* 1: 139-146.
7. Iredale, T. (1928). 'A Wave-guarded Kingdom of Birds', *Emu* 27: 271-274.
8. Keast, J. A. (1942). 'Birds of the Five Islands', *Emu* 42: 133-140.

Acknowledgements

Messrs J. D. Gibson and A. R. Sefton kindly made available to me, much useful information from their personal files.

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Date compiled:
8 August 1976



● Little Muttonbird Island (looking east).

Photo: S. G. Lane

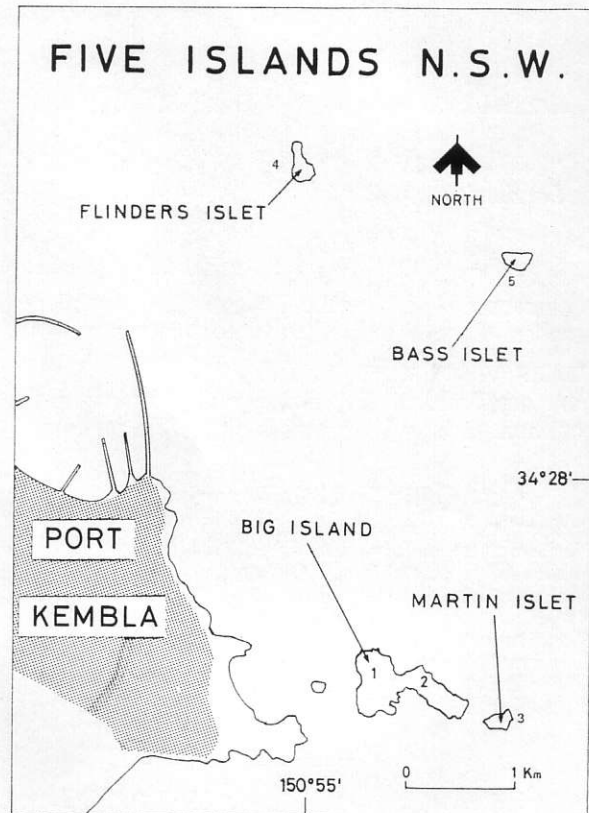
(see item no. 31, page 87)



● Sawtell Islet (looking east).

Photo: S. G. Lane

(see item no. 34, page 93)



● Location map of Five Islands, N.S.W. (see items 38-41).