

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 31

Little Muttonbird Island, New South Wales

Location: 30°18' S., 153°08' E.; 200 m offshore from Park Beach, Coffs Harbour, N.S.W. and about 1 km north-west of Mutton Bird Island.

Status: Crown Land, zoned Open Space under the Coffs Harbour Town Plan.

Other Names: North Islet, Muttonbird Islet.

Description: 150 m by 130 m at the widest; roughly oval in shape. Most of the surface is bare rock with the highest point 5 m. On the higher parts and in a small gully to the south, there is enough soil (covering about 12 per cent of the island) to sustain a cover of vegetation. Dominant is Prickly Couch *Zoisa macrantha*, but a dense, low thicket of Tuckeroo *Cupaniopsis anacardioides*, up to 1.8 m in height, grows along the spine of the island forming a dense canopy. Other plant species include *Carpobrotus glaucescens*, *Plectranthus parviflorus*, *Senecio lautus* and *Wedelia biflora*.

Access: A sand bar stretches from the island to the beach, and at low tide usually the water is less than a metre deep, permitting access by wading.

Ornithological History: Local residents have reported nesting of a small colony of Silver Gulls prior to 1970. Other reports indicate that 'muttonbirds' were nesting here before 1920, but the first published record of nesting by Wedge-tailed Shearwaters referred to the 1971-72 season¹.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

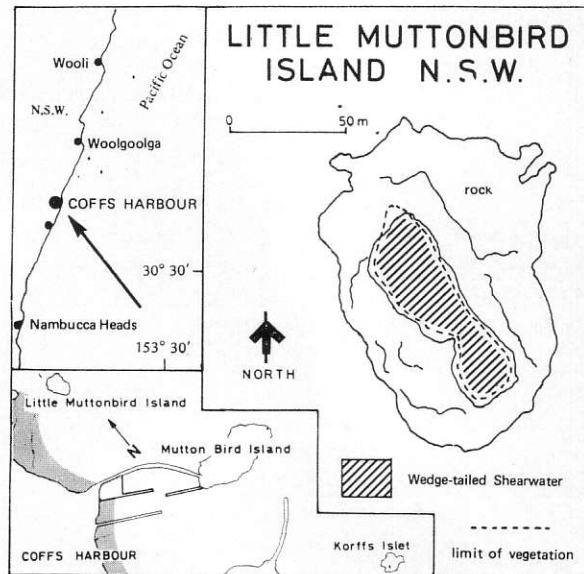
Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater — Probably present from mid-August until early May if breeding is successful. Some 20 breeding pairs.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — Some breeding has occurred but not during the past five years.

Factors Affecting Status

In summer, the island is visited frequently by tourists and this undoubtedly would interfere with nesting, particularly by gulls. Some shearwater chicks hatched in January 1972, but none in

● see photo, page 114.



1975 although 13 adults on eggs were present in December 1974. Nesting failure is probably a consequence of unsatisfactory nest sites.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Phalacrocorax melanoleucos Little Pied Cormorant
Phalacrocorax carbo Black Cormorant
Phalacrocorax sulcirostris Little Black Cormorant
Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher
Sterna albifrons Little Tern
Sterna bergii Crested Tern

Banding

P. pacificus — 13 adults banded December 1974.

Acknowledgements

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Bibliography

1. Roberts, P. E. (1973). 'Breeding Shearwaters on Little Muttonbird Island, Coffs Harbour', *Birds* 8: 8.

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 P. E. Roberts,
 26 Bayview Street,
 Mount Ku-ring-gai, N.S.W.