

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 34

Sawtell Islet, New South Wales

Location: 30°23' S., 153°06' E.; at the southern end of Sawtell Beach, 80 m off Bonville Head.

Status: Crown Land.

Description: 3.0 ha; 240 m by 200 m at the widest; mostly a low, rugged platform of highly metamorphosed rock with a limited area of shallow soil supporting a mainly herbaceous vegetation on the higher parts (about 5 m above msl), extending down to and stabilising part of the beach on the south-western side. The vegetation contains about 30 plant species, dominated by *Zoisia macrantha*, other grasses, *Leucopogon parviflorus*, *Wedelia biflora*, *Marsdenia flavescens*, *Ipomoea cairica*, *Carpobrotus glaucescens*, *Scirpus nodosus* and *Cyperus polystachyus*.

Access: Formerly by wading through strongly flowing waist-deep water at low tide only, but now easily accessible from the beach through about 10 cm depth of water at low tide.

Ornithological History: Visited frequently by G. Holmes since 5 December 1974, when Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Silver Gulls were found breeding. Mr. H. Boekenstein, a Sawtell resident since 1953, stated that the shearwaters were formerly much more abundant but that gulls did not breed on the island until late 1974.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater — Formerly 50-100 pairs nested under vegetation and rock outcrops on the southern and western sides; now only 5-10 pairs nest on the southern slope.

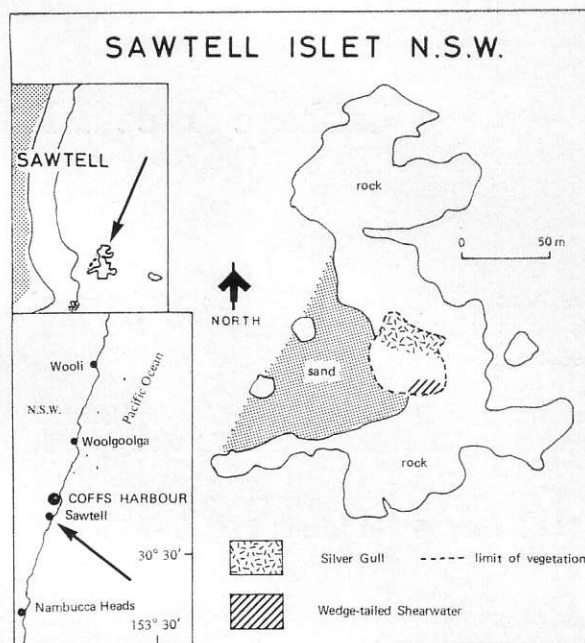
Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher — Often present; behaviour in December 1974 indicated breeding.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — Since 1953, gulls have bred only in late 1974 (about 10 pairs) and late in 1975 (100-120 pairs).

Factors Affecting Status

The shearwater colony has declined due to interference by people and dogs, with no chicks being reared in the last two seasons. In 1974, the

● see photo, page 114.



eggs of the few gulls were destroyed, but the size of the colony in 1975 allowed many chicks to fledge.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

None recorded.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Phalacrocorax varius Pied Cormorant
Phalacrocorax melanoleucos Little Pied Cormorant
Phalacrocorax carbo Black Cormorant
Phalacrocorax sulcirostris Little Black Cormorant
Sterna albifrons Little Tern
Sterna bergii Crested Tern

Banding

P. pacificus — 7 adults; one recovery at banding place the following season.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr A. Floyd for the identification of plant species.

Date compiled:
5 March 1976

N. G. Holmes,
P.O. Box 795,
Coffs Harbour, N.S.W.