

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 168

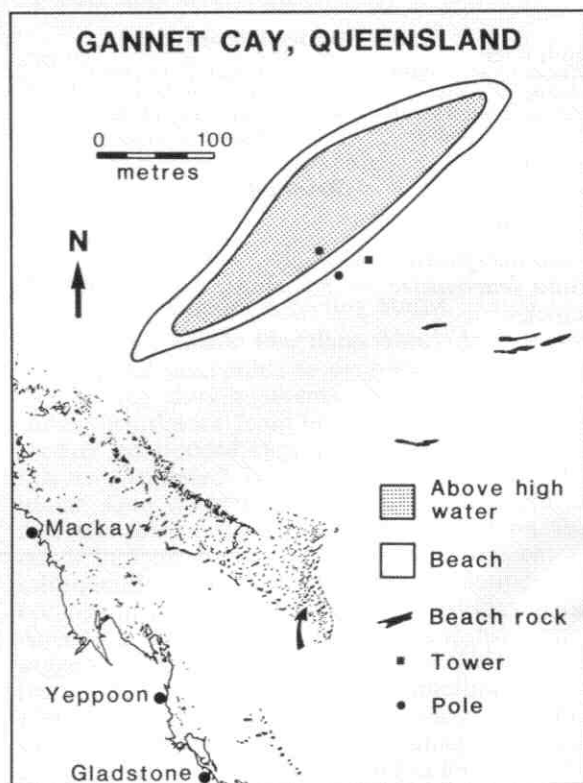
## Gannet Cay, Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

**Location:** 21°59' S., 152°28' E.; centrally situated in the Swain Reefs complex at the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef (GBRMPA reef code 21-566). The nearest mainland is about 180 kilometres west-south-west at Perforated Point (Port Clinton) and the nearest town is about 210 kilometres south-west at Yeppoon, Qld.

**Status:** Vacant Crown Land; Queensland Fauna Sanctuary.

**Other Name:** Poulson Cay is the name given by Gillett and McNeill<sup>2</sup> and referred to by some previous authors.

**Description:** 1.7 ha; 340 m x 75 m, with an elevation of less than 2 m (measurements above high water). This sand cay is sited at the north-western side of a platform reef of 1.3 km maximum diameter. A tower with an automatic meteorological station is situated beside the cay mid-way along on the south-eastern side. Beach-rock is exposed in areas previously covered by the cay 150 m to the south of the present position. Erosion and deposition of sand have caused large alterations in the position and shape of the cay over the last twenty years. These changes are described by Flood and Heatwole<sup>1</sup>. Only about 20% of the island (above high water, 1984) still covers an area on the reef that was



creases when people visit the island. Human visitation to the cay is low but is becoming more frequent. Nesting birds also suffer disturbance from nesting sea turtles. Gannet Cay is significant as the major nesting site for boobies in the Swain Reefs region.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Sula sula</i>	Red-footed Booby <sup>3</sup>
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common Tern <sup>3, 5</sup>
<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Roseate Tern
<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>	Black-naped Tern
<i>Sterna fuscata</i>	Sooty Tern <sup>3</sup>
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Little Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern
<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Lesser Crested Tern
<i>Anous minutus</i>	Black Noddy

#### Banding

Commenced January 1985.

*Sula dactylatra* — 178 adults, 1 juvenile, 59 chicks.

*Sula leucogaster* — 134 adults, 23 juveniles, 1 chick.

#### Bibliography

1. Flood, P. G. and H. Heatwole (in press). Coral cay instability and species-turnover of plants at Swain Reefs, southern Great Barrier Reef, Australia. *J. Coastal Res.*
2. Gillett, K. and F. McNeill (1962). The Great Barrier Reef and Adjacent Isles. Coral Press, Sydney.
3. Hill, L. (1984). Report on Coral Sea Nature Conservation Program 1979-1983: A Summary of the First Seven Surveys by ANPWS. Unpublished report, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service.

4. Limpus, C. J. and B. J. Lyon (1981). Seabirds breeding on the Swain Reefs, Queensland. *Corella* 5: 101-105.
5. Moverley, J. H. (1985). Winter bird observations for cays in the southern section of the Swain Reefs, Queensland. *Sunbird* 15: 73-79.

#### Acknowledgements

The 1985 and February 1986 surveys were carried out during expeditions funded by a Marine Sciences and Technology grant to H. Heatwole, P. Saenger, P. Flood and R. Simpson. The April 1986 survey was funded by Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service. We are grateful to the Director, Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service for permission to quote unpublished report data.

Date compiled: 20 April 1986

T. A. Walker, *Old National Parks & Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 1395, Rockhampton, Qld. 4700.*  
M. E. Jones, *Department of Ecosystem Management, University of New England, Armidale, N.S.W. 2351.*