

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 70

## Bird Island, Georges Rocks, Tasmania

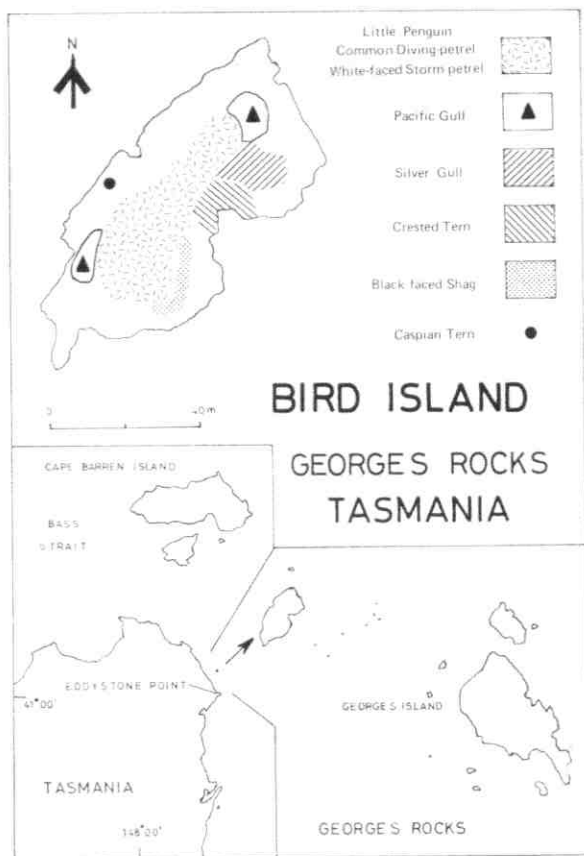
**Location:** 40° 55' S., 148° 20' E.; 8 km north-north-west of Eddystone Point in north-east Tasmania. It is one of a group of small islands known as Georges Rocks.

**Status:** State Reserve, included in Mt William National Park.

**Description:** 0.5 ha; about 120 m long by some 50 m wide, irregular in shape with a gulch on the eastern side. It is wholly granite with a patch of soil on the higher parts which are about 10 m above high water. Low vegetation consists chiefly of *Microsorium diversifolium*, *Tetragonia implexicoma*, *Crassula sieberiana*, *Pelargonium australe*, *Senecio capillifolius* and *Carpobrotus* sp.

**Landing:** Easy from a small boat in calm weather, the gulch on the eastern side providing the best shelter.

**Ornithological History:** J. R. Napier and T. A. Singline visited the island 14 times between 4 November 1970 and 16 November 1977. R. H. Green was also on the island in November 1977. These visits have provided the only ornithological records. Although most breeding species were recorded in the earlier visits, the Common Diving-Petrel was first recorded on 14 November 1975 when an almost fledged chick was found; however, this species may have been overlooked on previous visits.



### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — Nests on the upper part of the island in burrows or under rocks. Birds have been found on eggs in September and large chicks are present by the end of November. Estimated 20 breeding pairs.

*Pelagodroma marina* White-faced Storm-Petrel — Earliest egg laying was recorded on 4 November but usually laying occurs in the latter half of that month. Estimated 30 breeding pairs.

*Pelecanoides urinatrix* Common Diving-Petrel — Breeds in burrows or rock crevices on the higher parts. Eggs are laid in August and young are fledged before the end of the year. Estimated 50 breeding pairs.

*Leucocarbo fuscescens* Black-faced Shag — In 1973, six pairs bred on the island. They breed each year on nearby stacks with young fledging by November, sometimes earlier.

*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher — Two pairs nest each year, eggs being laid in early November.

*Larus novaehollandiae* Silver Gull — Usually about five pairs nest on the island but in 1973 some 200 pairs nested, most eggs were laid in September with some in October. None has bred since.

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Five pairs breed each year, laying late in October or early in November.

*Hydroprogne caspia* Caspian Tern — One pair nests each year on the highest spot on the island; eggs are laid early in November.

*Sterna bergii* Crested Tern — A small colony nests on the northern end of the island; laying commences late in November. Estimated 50 breeding pairs.

### Factors Affecting Status

In spite of the comparative ease of access, human interference seems to be negligible. The very limited area of soil restricts the size of the colonies of burrowing species and these now appear to be at maximum possible capacity. The Forest Raven *Corvus tasmanicus* is frequently seen on the island and takes exposed eggs.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant
<i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>	Little Pied Cormorant
<i>Sterna nereis</i>	Fairy Tern

### Banding

Nil.

### Bibliography

1. Napier, J. R. and T. A. Singline (1979), 'The Birds of George's Rocks, North East Tasmania', *Aust. Bird Watcher* 8(2).

### Acknowledgements

Mr T. A. Singline kindly provided material from his notes compiled over a period of 10 years, and has provided transport to the island on many occasions. Mr R. H. Green arranged identification of botanical specimens at the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston.

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