

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 75

## Louisa Island, Tasmania

**Location:** 43° 32' S., 146° 21' E.; joined to the mainland at Louisa Bay by a sand spit some 250 m in length. The spit is often wadeable at low tide.

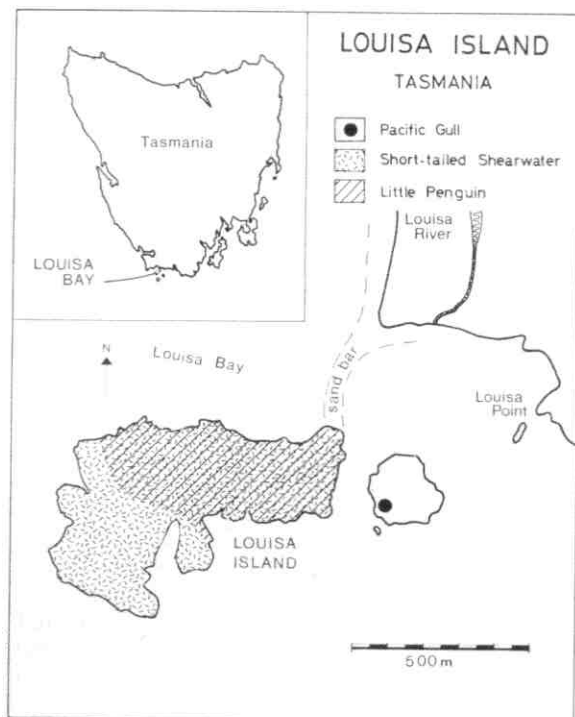
**Status:** Part of the South-west National Park, administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Tas.).

**Description:** 25 ha; 800 m long and about 500 m at the widest part, with the summit just over 80 m high, towards the western end. There is a small, deep hollow on the southern side of the island.

The vegetation is a typical of the coastal communities of south-western Tasmania but with the effects of fire apparent in many areas densely covered by *Pteridium esculentum*. Stinging Nettle *Urtica incisa* is prevalent across much of the island, while the central parts are lightly forested, *Eucalyptus nitida* and *E. ovata* being the dominant species in that area. Among the eucalypts and in other relatively sheltered situations *Leptospermum scoparium*, *Melaleuca squarrosa*, *Pimelea drupacea*, *Monotoca glauca*, *Cyathodes juniperina*, *Pittosporum bicolor* and *Pomaderris apetala* occur, along with ferns *Histiopteris incisa*, *Polystichum proliferum* and *Dicksonia antarctica*. Dwarf forms of many of the species listed above occur in more exposed parts together with *Acacia verticillata*, *Banksia marginata*, *Cyathodes abietina*, Tall Sedge *Carex appressa* and tussock grass *Poa poiformis*. *Leucopogon parviflorus*, *Acacia sophorae*, *Helichrysum paraliium*, *Correa backhousiana*, *Rhagodia bacata*, *Sonchus megalocarpus*, *Carpobrotus rossii* and *Tetragonia implexicoma* are common species near the shoreline.

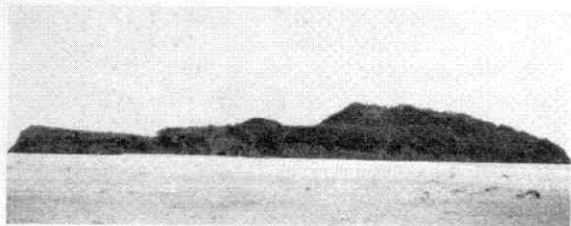
Adequate depth of soil for burrowing occurs over most of the island.

**Landing:** Landing onto a sandy beach on the northern side can be carried out even in relative-



ly adverse weather conditions. Access across the sandspit is possible at low tide, but the mainland approaches are only for experienced bushwalkers.

**Ornithological History:** Louisa Bay was visited briefly by R. H. Green in November 1959 on his return trip to Hobart from Port Davey, but no specific reference to the island was made in his ensuing report. A party led by R. Vanderwal visited Louisa Island briefly in February 1976 to do an archaeological study on behalf of the Tasmanian Museum, but the only known visits to the island to record ornithological data were made by G. White from 2-11 December 1976 and 8-21 November 1977.



• *Louisa Island (looking southward).*

### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — Nests mainly over the eastern half of the island, but burrows also extend across to the north-western parts. Breeding covered all stages in December 1976, from adults incubating eggs to chicks almost fully fledged; most chicks were unattended but still in full down. In November 1977 most adults were incubating eggs or guarding very young chicks. Estimated 650 breeding pairs.

*Puffinus tenuirostris* Short-tailed Shearwater — Breeds over most of the island but in fewer numbers in the lightly-forested parts, except near their fringes. Eggs were being incubated in December 1976, and a number, shielded by scrub, were on the surface deserted. In November 1977 the vast majority of birds were absent from the island after the first night of that visit which commenced just as mating ceremonies were concluding. Numbers rapidly built up again each night from 18 November with the first eggs for the season being found on 20 November. Estimated 90 000 breeding pairs.

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Recorded breeding in Louisa Bay in November 1959<sup>1</sup> and a pair was observed nesting on a high ledge on a small islet about 100 m east of Louisa Island in December 1976. This site was not in use in November 1977 but a pair was frequently seen near the island and they were probably breeding in the area.

### Factors Affecting Status

In November 1977, a rat, probably the Eastern Swamp-rat *Rattus lutreolus* was seen being evicted from a burrow by a penguin which had been brooding its eggs. This was the only sighting and apparently rats are not common on

the island, as many deserted shearwaters' eggs remained untouched in December 1976.

A very severe fire was lit on the island in recent years and burnt for several weeks extending over most parts and reportedly killing countless thousands of breeding shearwaters. In December 1976, heavy rain caused flooding of some burrows and numerous shearwaters deserted their eggs. The shearwaters were far less likely to persevere under such conditions than was the case with the penguins.

The White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* occurs on the island and may predate some seabirds.

### OTHER VERTEBRATES

Tasmanian Pademelon *Thylogale billardierii*, Southern Potoroo *Potorous apicalis* and Small-scaled Skink *Leiopisma pretiosa*.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant
<i>Ardea novaehollandiae</i>	White-faced Heron
<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	Pied Oystercatcher
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull

### Banding

Nil.

### Bibliography

1. Green, R. H. and B. C. Mollison (1961), 'Birds of Port Davey and South Coast of Tasmania', *Emu* 61: 223-236.
2. White, G. (in prep.), Islands of South West Tasmania.

### Acknowledgements

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