

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 81

The Skerries Rocks, Victoria

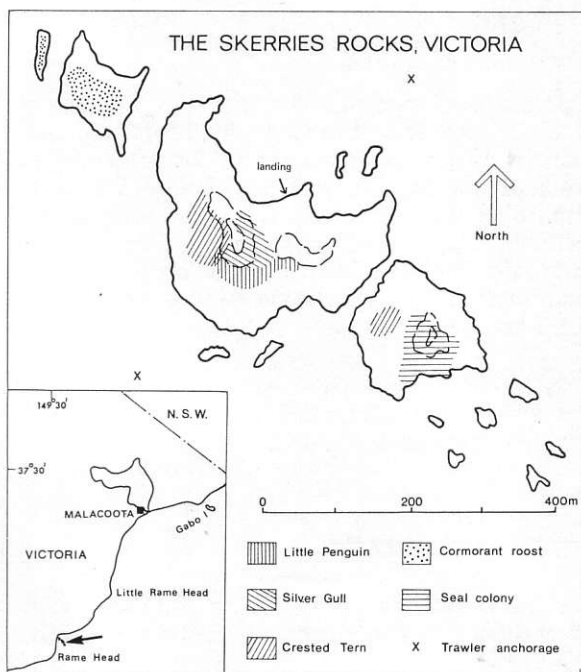
Location: 37°45'S., 149°30'E.; 100 m offshore from the mouth of the Wingan River, 32 km south-west of Mallacoota, Vic.

Status: Part of the Wingan Inlet National Park under the control of the National Parks Service (Vic.).

Description: The Skerries comprise three small, rocky islets with a north-west to south-east axis, and some adjoining rocks. The centre and largest islet is some 350 m by about 200 m at the widest and is dominated by a high pile of large granite boulders. At the base of these boulders is an accumulation of shellgrit and driftwood with a sparse covering of *Poa* sp. and *Pelargonium* sp. The smaller islets are mainly granite with little or no vegetation.

Landing: Possible in calm weather onto the northern end of the centre islet. Access by small boats from the Wingan River mouth is not advised due to the strong currents and rips between the mainland and the islets.

Ornithological History: G. Parkes (pers. comm.), the ranger in charge of the park, made a number of brief visits, the first in November 1976. He found a few Little Penguins on eggs and chicks, and some 500 Crested Terns nesting. On 26



January 1977, D. Barton visited the Skerries and in addition to penguins and terns, he recorded Silver Gulls nesting.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — A few pairs probably breed regularly on the Rocks. Eggs

and chicks were present in November 1976 and in January 1977, well-developed chicks were found in seven burrows. Some adults were present moulting in May 1978. About 10-12 breeding pairs.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — About 20 pairs were nesting in January 1977, nests contained eggs and chicks, while some runners were nearby.

Sterna bergii Crested Tern — About 500 nests were recorded in November 1976. About 30 pairs were nesting on the centre islet and a small number was breeding on the southern islet during January 1977, on the centre islet the birds were on eggs and chicks, and 12 runners were on the edge of the colony. Estimated 50-500 breeding pairs.

Factors Affecting Status

Because of access difficulties the Rocks are rarely visited except perhaps by fishermen. The Skerries is a popular anchorage for fishing boats from Eden, N.S.W. and the Lakes Entrance, Vic. as shelter is available from prevailing north-easterly or south-westerly winds. Some fishermen may land and interfere with breeding birds. In January 1978, three men were caught shooting Fur Seals.

A White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* has been observed circling the islets and may predate some seabirds.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

A small colony of Australian Fur Seals *Arctocephalus pusillus* is located on the south islet.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Leucocarbo fuscens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant
<i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>	Little Pied Cormorant
<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	Pied Oystercatcher
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern



• Part of the centre islet (looking north).

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Barton, D. (1978), 'A visit to the Skerries Rocks, Victoria', *Corella* 2:13.

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