

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 116

Ram Island, Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia

Location: 34°02'S., 122°09'E.; 28 km south-east of Esperance and about two km offshore from Cape Le Grande, W.A.

Status: Class A Reserve vested in the W.A. Wildlife Authority; entry permit required.

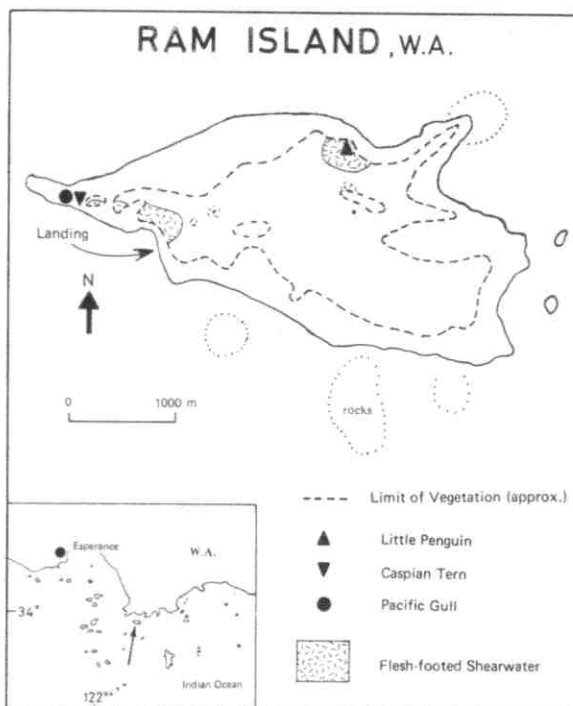
Description: 142 ha; 2.3 km long by about 1.2 km at the widest, this granite-gneiss island rises to a height of 133 m. There are large areas of bare rock folds around the shore line with boulders in the south-eastern bay. *Carpobrotus* and small plants occur around much of the vegetation edges, with thicker stunted plants in rocky parts. There are dense stands of *Melaleuca* and other plants to about two metres in the shallow rocky soil; these thickets are extremely difficult to penetrate. In depressions or gullies, vegetation reaches to about six or seven metres, often with grass or understorey of smaller plants.

Landing: Onto rock folds or boulders and difficult anywhere except in very calm weather. The location will depend on prevailing conditions.

Ornithological History: There is no previous record of any visits. S. G. Lane¹ and L. F. Lane spent 7.5 hours on the island on 11 November 1981. The following details refer to that visit.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Evidence of the presence of these birds was found in the



● Ram Island (looking east-south-east).

vicinity of the south-western bay and on the north side of the island. Near the centre of the north side, in a patch of taller *Melaleuca*, an adult penguin was found in a deep burrow while checking for shearwaters. An egg and a very small chick were also present. A few pairs probably breed regularly on the island.

Puffinus carneipes Flesh-footed Shearwater — Burrows of these birds were found in a number of places, in small pockets, wherever soil depth was adequate. The largest concentrations were in the slopes behind the south-western bay and in the *Melaleuca*/grass area on the northern side. A few burrows were found in a number of well dispersed places but not in the thickly vegetated areas. Some dense areas of *Melaleuca* scrub had deep layers of dead litter; an isolated burrow was found in a few of the clearer parts. Altogether 126 "shearwater" burrows were checked; they were "active" burrows and five birds were found singly in these. Large areas if not most of the vegetated parts of the island are unsuitable for burrows of these birds. Possibly 300-500 pairs may breed on the island.

Larus pacificus Pacific Gull — Five of these birds were counted during the visit and there were probably three pairs present. An empty nest was found near the western end.

Hydroprogne caspia Caspian Tern — One pair had a nest with two eggs near the western end.

Factors Affecting Status

The difficulty of access by humans no doubt restricts visits to this island. A pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster* had a large nest near the top of the island overlooking the south-western bay; they would take some toll of the breeding seabirds, and there was evidence of this. Two Australian Ravens *Corvus coronoides* and a King's Skink *Egernia kingii* were seen and these too would cause some interference to the breeding seabirds. Such predation would not seriously affect the breeding status.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

A small snake, small skinks and small lizards, probably the Ornate Dragon *Amphibolurus ornatus*, were seen.



• Part of the shearwater area behind the landing cove (looking north-west).

Other Seabirds Recorded

Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher (4)
Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull (2)

Banding

Puffinus carneipes — 5 adults (11 Nov. 81).

Bibliography

1. Lane, S. G. (1982), 'Avifauna of islands off Esperance, Western Australia', *Corella* 6: 37-39.

Acknowledgements

I thank Messrs N. Tromp and K. Penalurick for getting us onto and off the island and my wife for her assistance during the visit.

Date compiled: 12 November 1981

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