

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 123

## Cull Island, Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia

**Location:** 33°55'S., 121°54'E.; 6 km south of Esperance, W.A.

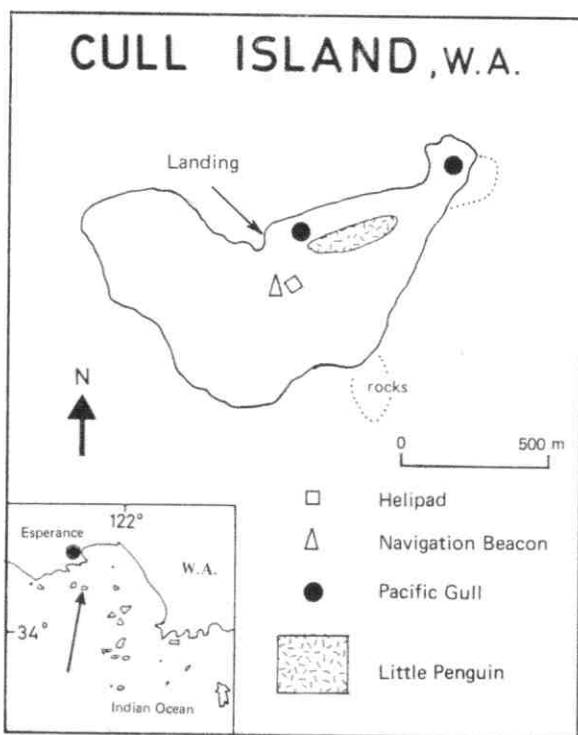
**Status:** Class A Reserve vested in the W.A. Wildlife Authority; entry permit required.

**Other Name:** Gull Island.

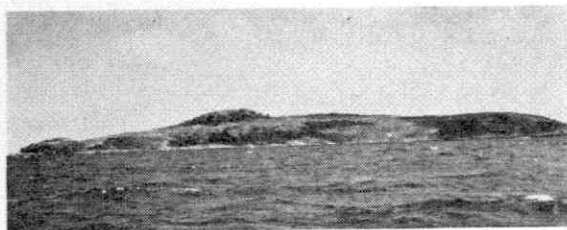
**Description:** 68 ha; about 1 200 m long by some 900 m at the widest, the island is roughly crescent-shaped and rises to 95 m. There is a navigation beacon on the highest point and a helicopter pad adjacent to it. The island is of granite-gneiss with large areas of exposed rock; the soil is mostly shallow and interspersed with boulders of varying sizes. Introduced African Boxthorn *Lycium ferocissimum* is well distributed over much of the vegetated areas. There are patches of sedge-type vegetation with a few old *Melaleuca* and *Leptospermum*, remnants of the former vegetation. Grasses occur in areas of shallow soil.

**Landing:** Onto rock, near the centre of the northern side and difficult except in calm conditions; a handrail assists considerably with the surge and slippery rock.

**Ornithological History:** The island is recorded as a breeding station for Little Penguins and Pacific Gulls<sup>2</sup> but no details are available. S. G.



Lane<sup>1</sup>, L. F. Lane and A. K. Daw spent four hours on the island on 4 November 1981. The following details were obtained during that visit.



• Cull Island (looking south-west).



• Part of the southern side (looking south-west). The rocky habitat is evident. The larger dark bushes are mostly African Boxthorn.

### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — Evidence of the presence of these birds was found mainly on and under rocks particularly along the eastern half of the northern shoreline. One adult was found incubating two fresh eggs and three large chicks were seen under a rock shelf. Isolated 'burrows' were found in other places. Probably 30-40 pairs breed regularly on the island.

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Two pairs were nesting; one nest contained one egg and the other two eggs.

*Ceropsis novaehollandiae* Cape Barren Goose At least 30 birds were present on the island of which not less than 12 birds were juveniles not quite at flying stage.

### Factors Affecting Status

Early in the history of Esperance the island was used for grazing culled sheep by the Dempster and Moir families but this practice was prohibited by the Fisheries and Wildlife Department in mid-1967 when the island was declared a Reserve. However, Goats *Capra hircus*, that were introduced to the island in 1935, were unable to be mustered at the time. As a result there is a resident population which fluctuates between about 14 and 30, depending on the seasonal conditions. Fresh droppings indicated that some were present at the time of the visit in 1981, but only two dried carcasses were found. A pair of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* was nesting near the top of the island; the nest contained three young birds and the remains of Silver Gulls and White-faced Storm-Petrels.

### OTHER VERTEBRATES

King's Skink *Egernia kingii*, small skinks and Ornate Dragons *Amphibolurus ornatus* were present.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	White-faced Storm-Petrel (remains)
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull

### Bibliography

1. Lane, S. G. (1982), 'Avifauna of islands off Esperance, Western Australia', *Corella* 6: 37-39.
2. Serventy D. L., V. N. Serventy and J. Warham (1971), *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds*. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Sydney.

### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Mr A. K. Daw for providing transport; he assisted with the survey as also did my wife. Mr I. C. Cooke (Department of Fisheries and Wildlife) kindly provided historical information on the goats and sheep.

Date compiled: 4 November 1981

S. G. Lane, 65 Wood Street, Lane Cove, N.S.W. 2066.