

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 124

Observatory Island, Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia

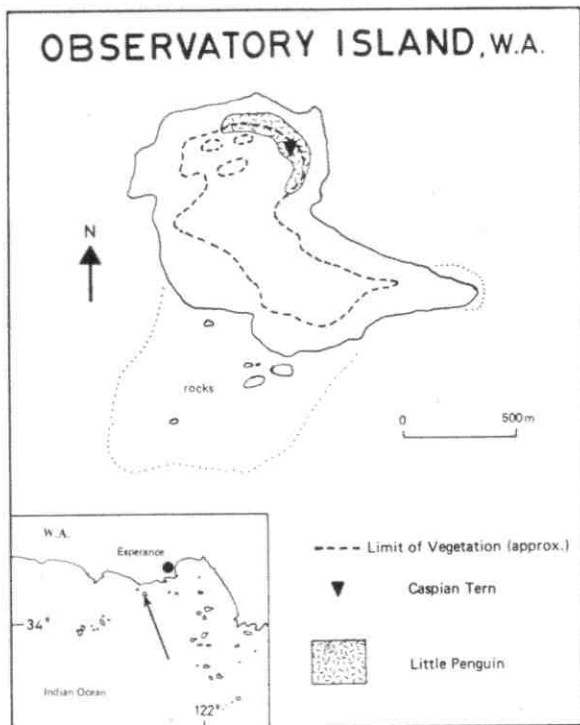
Location: 33°55'S., 121°48'E.; 11 km south-west of Esperance, WA and one km offshore from Observatory Point.

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

Description: 101 ha; about 1 600 m long by about 950 m at the widest, with the highest point 78 m, towards the southern end. A large part of the island consists of bare granite rock and much of the remaining area has shallow soil coverage. There is a small stand of Yate *Eucalyptus cornuta* near the centre, about five metres high. Much of the remaining vegetation is thick *Melaleuca* or *Hakea* from two to four metres high with smaller plants and pigface around the edges. The following more common species were identified: *Hakea suareolens*, *H. clarata*, *Pelagonium drummondiae*, *Disphyma clavellatum*, *Leucopogen revelutus*, *Pimilia ferruginia* and *Carpobrotus virescens*.

Landing: The slippery sloping rock shoreline and continual surges make landing difficult except in calm conditions.

Ornithological History: The only previous ornithological history recorded appears to be that by the French botanist, Labillardiere, in December 1792². He gave descriptions, among others, of the Cape Barren Goose, Pacific Gull



and Little Penguin. A. K. Daw (pers. comm.) recorded Little Penguins and found a pair of Caspian Terns nesting in January 1956. S. G. Lane¹ and L. F. Lane visited the island for three hours on 24 September 1981.



• *Observatory Island (looking south).*

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — On 24 September 1981, three "new" nests were found and seven others contained birds — one large nestling, an adult with two small chicks, two nests each with an adult on two fresh eggs, and two adults (separately) inaccessible. All nests were under rocks. Estimated 20-30 breeding pairs.

Hydroprogne caspia Caspian Tern — One pair had a nest containing three small chicks in January 1956 (A. K. Daw, pers. comm.).

Factors Affecting Status

The general inaccessibility of the island makes human interference rather unlikely. A pair of White-bellied Sea-Eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster* are reported to have a nest on the high part of the island and would have some effect on the breeding seabirds. The remains of a Silver Gull and the old remains of two White-faced Storm-Petrels were found during the 1981 visit.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

A large skink, possibly *Egernia kingii*, small skinks and small lizards were present. Two small snakes, probably White-lipped Snakes, were also seen in September 1981.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	White-faced Storm-Petrel (remains)
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	Flesh-footed Shearwater (derelict)
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Larus pacificus</i>	Pacific Gull



• *The eastern tip from near the centre of the eastern side (looking south-east).*

Banding

Eudyptula minor — 1 nestling banded (24 Sept. 81).

Bibliography

1. Lane, S. G. (1982), 'Avifauna of islands off Esperance, Western Australia', *Corella* 6: 37-39.
2. Serventy, D. L. (1947), 'Notes from the Recherche Archipelago, Western Australia', *Emu* 47: 44-49.

Acknowledgements

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