

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 185

Little Dog Island, Furneaux Group, Tasmania

Location: 40°15'S., 148°12'E.; 5 kilometres south-east of Lady Barron on Flinders Island and 1.5 kilometres west of Great Dog Island, Tasmania.

Status: Game Reserve (30 ha) and private property (70 ha).

Description: 100 ha; 1 km in length and width, the island is roughly square-shaped. It is low lying with a low ridge down the eastern side and extending into the centre of the island. There is a small, low stack about 0.5 km north of the island. The vegetation is dominated by *Poa poiformis* with Paper Daisy *Helichrysum papillosum* co-dominant. There is one stand of Daisy Bush *Olearia axillaris* on the eastern side. On the western side in low lying areas there are several small patches of pigface *Carpobrotus rossii* and *Tetragonia implexicoma*.

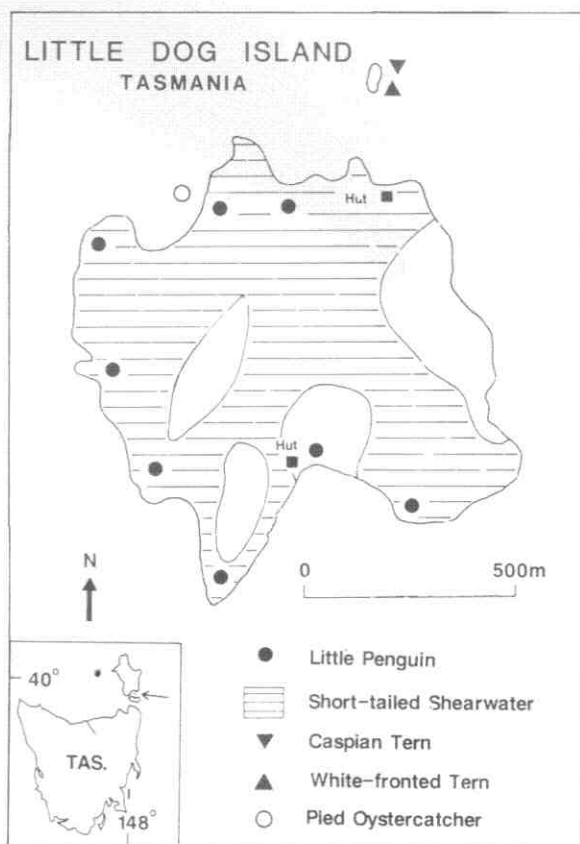
Landing: Easy anywhere depending on wind direction.

Ornithological History: There are no previous published accounts of the seabirds. N. P. Brothers surveyed breeding seabirds on 9 December 1986 and I. J. Skira visited the stack briefly a week later.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Burrows are infrequently scattered throughout the shearwater burrows all around the edge of the island. Estimated 100 breeding pairs.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — Abundant over some 75 ha. Burrow density calculated from 24 transects (5 of 100 × 2 m, and 19 of 30 × 1 m) and placed at random, was 0.46 ± 0.08 burrows/m² (at 95% confidence limits ± 2 S.E.). Density by area gives an estimated 352 000 burrows.



Haematopus longirostris Pied Oystercatcher — Brothers found a nest containing two eggs on the beach at the northern end of the island.

Hydroprogne caspia Caspian Tern — Brothers found one pair with one egg on the stack.

Sterna striata White-fronted Tern — On 9 December 1986 Brothers found three nest scrapes on the stack; they were being defended by six adult terns. A week later Skira found only one adult tern and the nests were empty.



• Little Dog Island (looking north) with an old muttonbirders' shed in the foreground.

Photo: I. J. Skira

Factors Affecting Status

Shearwaters were harvested commercially until 1970 with an annual harvest of about 30 000 chicks from four sheds. Lord¹ commented in 1908 that the "owners have not stocked for over 30 years, being of the opinion that the birds pay them better, and that stock destroys mutton-bird rookeries". Unfortunately, this management did not go hand in hand with fire management. Lord¹ noticed belts of what he termed fennel but it was, in fact, most likely a fire-weed *Senecio* sp. A Tasmanian native, *Senecio*, occupies areas that have been disturbed by fires, five to ten years ago. The natural process is for *Poa* tussocks to recolonize progressively the areas covered with *Senecio*. Firing only serves to open up the community and provide ideal conditions for further colonization by fire-weed. Little Dog Island was last burnt in March 1973.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

Black Rat *Rattus rattus*, House Mouse *Mus musculus* and Feral Cat *Felis catus* are present.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Cereopis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose

Banding

Period March 1947 to March 1970.

Puffinus tenuirostris — 5 238 fledglings. No figures on recoveries are available. The banding programme was to estimate the number of chicks harvested using the Lincoln Index Method.

Bibliography

1. Lord, J. E. C. (1908). Furneaux Islands: Report upon the state of the islands. Tasmanian house of Assembly Parl. Paper No. 57.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Neil Smith for taking one of us (NPB) to Little Dog Island in his vessel "Wild Wind".

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