

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 202

## Spences Reef, Furneaux Group, Tasmania

**Location:** 40°14'S, 148°14'E; 2 kilometres south of Lady Barron, Flinders Island, and 500 metres west of Little Green Island, Furneaux Group, Tasmania.

**Status:** Crown land.

**Description:** The reef consists of two islets about 50 m apart. REEF No. 1 — about 1 ha; it is divided at high tide by a 5 m wide channel. It is 210 m long, up to 40 m wide and rises to about 20 m above sea level. There are small beaches and low-lying areas on both sides of the channel. Vegetation is mainly *Rhagodia baccata* with large bushes of *Coprosma repens* and *Acacia sophorae*. *Poa poiformis* and *Stipa* sp. grow on the flats. REEF No. 2 — about 0.3 ha; it is 50 m long and 40 m wide, rising to 25 m above sea level. The vegetation is dominated by *Helychrysum papillosum*, *Poa poiformis* and *Geranium* sp. There are large bushes of *Coprosma repens*.

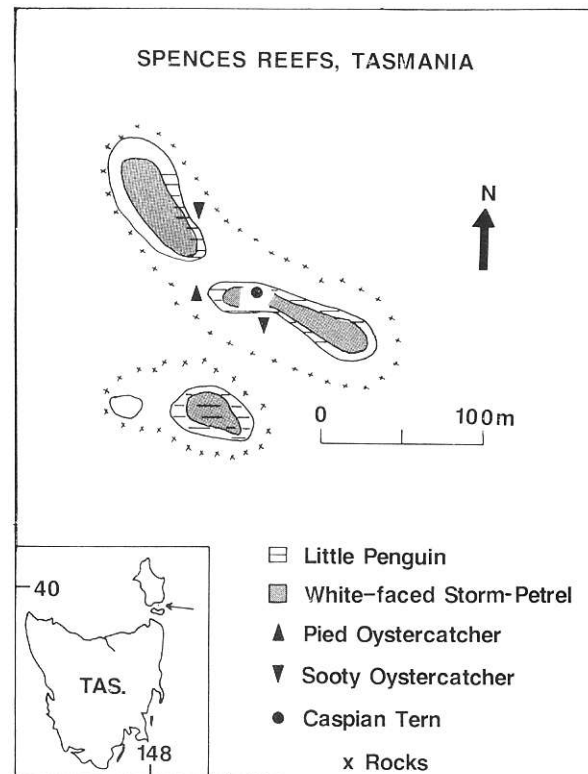
**Landing:** Easy anywhere depending on wind direction.

**Ornithological History:** Serventy *et al.*<sup>1</sup> listed Spences Reef as a breeding location for the Little Penguin, White-faced Storm-Petrel and Caspian Tern. Both I. J. Skira and N. P. Brothers visited on several occasions from 1970. S. G. Lane and L. F. Lane visited briefly with Skira on 1 December, 1985. N. P. Brothers visited on 7 December, 1986 as part of his Furneaux Group seabird island survey.

## Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — REEF No. 1: About 60 nests are scattered over the eastern section in rock crevices and under *Rhagodia baccata*. On the western section about 20 pairs are sited in burrows and under *Coprosma repens*. REEF No. 2: About 20 pairs are spread over the islet in rock crevices and burrows.

*Pelagodroma marina* White-faced Storm-Petrel — REEF No. 1: Nests are sited all over the eastern section in an area 100 m by 30 m; burrows are under *Poa poiformis*, *Senecio* sp. and *Tetragonia implexicoma* association. Burrows are also widespread in the western section, particularly under *Rhagodia baccata* in an area 90 m by 45 m. Burrow density, calculated from seven transects (two of 19 m × 1 m, two of 20 m × 1 m and three of 30 m × 1 m) and placed at random, was  $1.52 \pm 0.36$  burrows/m<sup>2</sup> (at 95% confidence limits  $\pm 2$  S.E.). Density by area gives an estimated 4 500 burrows in the eastern section and 5 600 in the western section. REEF No. 2: Breeds over the reef in an area about 60 m × 30 m. The soil for burrowing is soft and fragile and burrows are





● *Spences Reef (looking east).*

Photo: I. J. Skira

short. Burrow density, calculated from three transects each 30 m × 1 m and placed at random was  $1.42 \pm 0.40$  burrows/m<sup>2</sup> (at 95% confidence limits  $\pm 2$  S.E.). Density by area gives an estimated 1 900 burrows. Estimated total 12 000 burrows.

*Haematopus longirostris* Pied Oystercatcher — REEF No. 1: On 1 December, 1983 Skira found a nest with one egg on the beach of the eastern section. On 7 December, 1986 Brothers located a pair with two eggs in the same place.

*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher — REEF No. 1: On 9 November, 1985 Skira found a pair with one egg on the beach of the eastern section.

*Hydroprogne caspia* Caspian Tern — REEF No. 1: On 1 December, 1983 Skira located a nest with one egg on a rock in the eastern section. On 9 November, 1985 a nest with two eggs was located in the same place. On 7 December, 1986 a nest with two very small chicks was found, again in the same place.

#### Factors Affecting Status

The Black Rat *Rattus rattus* is present on both reefs and causes high mortality among White-faced Storm-Petrels. The introduced bush *Coprosma repens* is spreading and overtaking native vegetation. The reefs are not often visited and human disturbance to breeding seabirds is minimal.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	Australian Pelican
<i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Larus pacificus</i>	Pacific Gull
<i>Sterna striata</i>	White-fronted Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern

#### Banding

Period December 1980 to November 1987.

*Eudyptula minor* — 2 adults.

*Pelagodroma marina* — 104 adults, 192 chicks.

#### Bibliography

1. Serventy, D. L., Serventy, V. and Warham, J. (1971). 'The Handbook of Australian Seabirds'. (A. H. & A. W. Reed: Sydney.)

#### Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Neil Smith for taking one of us (NPB) to the reefs in his vessel 'Wild Wind'.

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