

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 143

## Trefoil Island, Tasmania

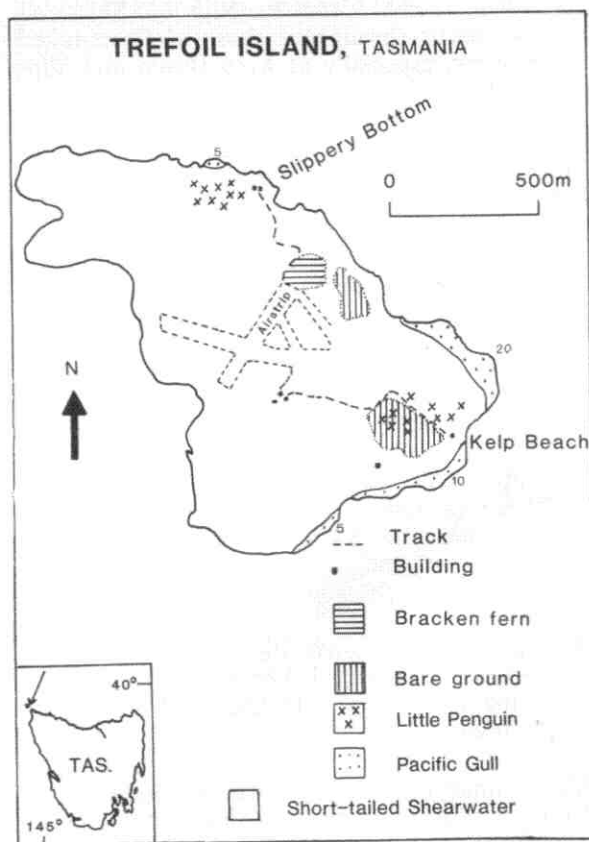
**Location:** 40°38'S., 144°41'E.; 2 km north-west offshore from Woolnorth Point, north-west Tasmania.

**Status:** Private property, owned by the Trefoil Island Aboriginal Co-operative. Approval required to visit.

**Description:** 140 ha; 1.8 km long by 1.1 km at the widest point. The island rises steeply from the sea to a height of 84 m in the south and East, and 60 m in the north and west. A layer of black sandy soil between one and two metres thick overlies the rocky sandstone formation. The shoreline is covered with pebbly rocks. The main vegetation is Silver Tussock *Poa poiformis* with a few small patches of Bracken Fern *Pteridium esculentum*. The only tree on the island are six specimens of *Cupressus macrocarpa*.

**Landing:** There is an airstrip, otherwise small boats can be used on calm days at Kelp Beach. Cliff face and reefs restrict access elsewhere.

**Ornithological History:** J. A. Naarding<sup>1</sup> researched the breeding status of Short-tailed Shearwaters in December 1978 and March 1979 during visits of one week each. G. Towney visited Trefoil Island with helpers for a week in December and February every year between 1980 and 1983.





•Trefoil Island (looking south-east). Woolnorth Point on the mainland is in the background.

Photo: The Mercury, Hobart, Tas.

### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — Scattered burrows occur throughout those of Short-tailed Shearwaters, especially at Kelp Beach and Slippery Bottom.

*Puffinus tenuirostris* Short-tailed Shearwater — Abundant over 100 ha; except for the airstrip and buildings the whole island is covered by burrows but only scattered burrows occur in bracken and bare ground. Burrow density, calculated from 15 transects each 100 x 2 m and placed at random, was  $1.53 \pm 0.24$  burrows/m<sup>2</sup> (at 95% confidence limits  $\pm 2$  S.E.). Density by area gives an estimated 1.54 million burrows, making this the second largest Short-tailed Shearwater colony after Babel Island.

*Cereopsis novaehollandiae* Cape Barren Goose — Three or four pairs breed each year; one pair nest near the airstrip, one or two pairs at the north-west end, one pair near Kelp Beach and one pair at the south end of the island.

*Haematopus longirostris* Pied Oystercatcher — Up to four pairs recorded breeding each year in the same areas as the Pacific Gulls; eggs and chicks present.

*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher — Up to 26 nests with eggs or chicks recorded each year in the same areas as the Pacific Gulls.

*Larus novaehollandiae* Silver Gull — Three or four pairs bred each year.

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Forty nests recorded each year with eggs or chicks. The number of nests found in each area is marked on the map.

### Factors Affecting Status

Trefoil Island is one of seven colonies of Short-tailed Shearwaters that is harvested annually. Less than 150 000 chicks have been harvested annually since the late 1970s compared with 190 000 in the early 1970s. Kelp *Macrocystis* sp. was once harvested for medicinal purposes but no kelp harvesting has occurred since 1980. About 100 sheep are grazed around the airstrip.

### OTHER VERTEBRATES

The House Mouse *Mus musculus* is very common, but the island is free of Feral Cats *Felis catus*. Tiger Snakes *Notechis ater humphreysi* are infrequently seen.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Eudyptes sclateri</i>	Erect-crested Penguin (derelict)
<i>Pachyptila desolata</i>	Fairy Prion (derelict)
<i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant

### Banding

Nil.

### Bibliography

1. Naarding, J. A. (1981), 'Study of the Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris* in Tasmania', National Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania, Technical Report 81/3.

### Acknowledgements

We wish to thank all National Parks and Wildlife Service personnel who helped with the shearwater surveys, and the Trefoil Island Aboriginal Co-operative who gave us permission to stay on the island.

Date compiled: 25 June 1984.

G. Towney and I. J. Skira, National Parks and Wildlife Service (Tas.), Sandy Bay, Tas. 7005.