

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 263

Snapper Island, New South Wales

Location: 35°43'54"S, 150°13'04"E: within Batemans Bay, four kilometres east of Batemans Bay township on the south coast of New South Wales (NSW).

Status: Crown Land.

Other Names: Schnapper Island.

Description: Snapper Island is an oval-shaped island five kilometres inside Batemans Bay and conspicuous to travellers looking east as they cross the Clyde River Bridge. The island was named by Lieutenant Robert Johnston after his ship, used to explore the Clyde River in 1821¹. The island is approximately 190 metres long, 130 metres wide and 1.0 hectares in area. It rises from a western beach to a forested knoll (0.8 ha.) at 26 metres above sea level. The northern and southern shores are connected by a large weathered tunnel accessible, after landing on rocks, from the southern shore. The eastern shore is precipitous. The island is composed of highly folded and eroded lower Ordovician rocks principally siliceous chert, basaltic lava and agglomerate. The plateau supports a tall forest of Blackbutt *Eucalyptus pilularis* with an understory dominated by stands of several *Acacia* species: *Acacia suaveolens*, *A. sophorae*, *A. longifolia* and *A. implexa*. In places, Bracken *Pteridium esculentum* and the exotic Turkey Rhubarb *Acetosa sagittata* dominate. Other plant species, including exotics (*), are:

Allocasuarina distyla, *Allocasuarina littoralis*, *Banksia integrifolia*, *Pittosporum undulatum*, *Elaeocarpus reticulatus*, *Exocarpos cupressiformis*, *Rhagodia candolleana*, *Monotoca elliptica*, *Notelaea longifolia*, *Myoporum boninense*, *Zieria smithii*, *Olearia viscidula*, *Dichondra repens*, *Calystegia soldanella*, *Actites megalocarpus*, **Chrysanthemoides monilifera*, *Myoporum* spp., **Solanum mauritianum*, *Tetragonia tetragonoides*, **Sonchus oleraceus*, *Cakile edentula*, *Senecio lautus*, *Plectranthus parviflorus*, **Asparagus aethiopicus*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Prostanthera* sp., *Centella asiatica*, *Pelargonium australe*, *Solanum* sp., *Goodenia* sp., *Bidens pilosa*, *Kennedia rubicunda*, *Ripogonum album*, *Parsonia straminea*, *Hibbertia scandens*, *Eustrephus latifolius*, *Themeda australis*, *Imperata cylindrica*, *Lomandra longifolia*, **Pennisetum clandestinum* and *Cynodon dactylon*.

Landing: Landing is possible onto the west-facing beach in most conditions.

Ornithological History: No previous ornithological visits to Snapper Island have been published. However, since 2000, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) staff have made multiple day-visits to the island to monitor the population of Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus* as part of the South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program (contact NPWS for annual reports). Carlile and others visited for 1½ hours on 23 September 2013 to search for signs of seabirds and to document vegetation.

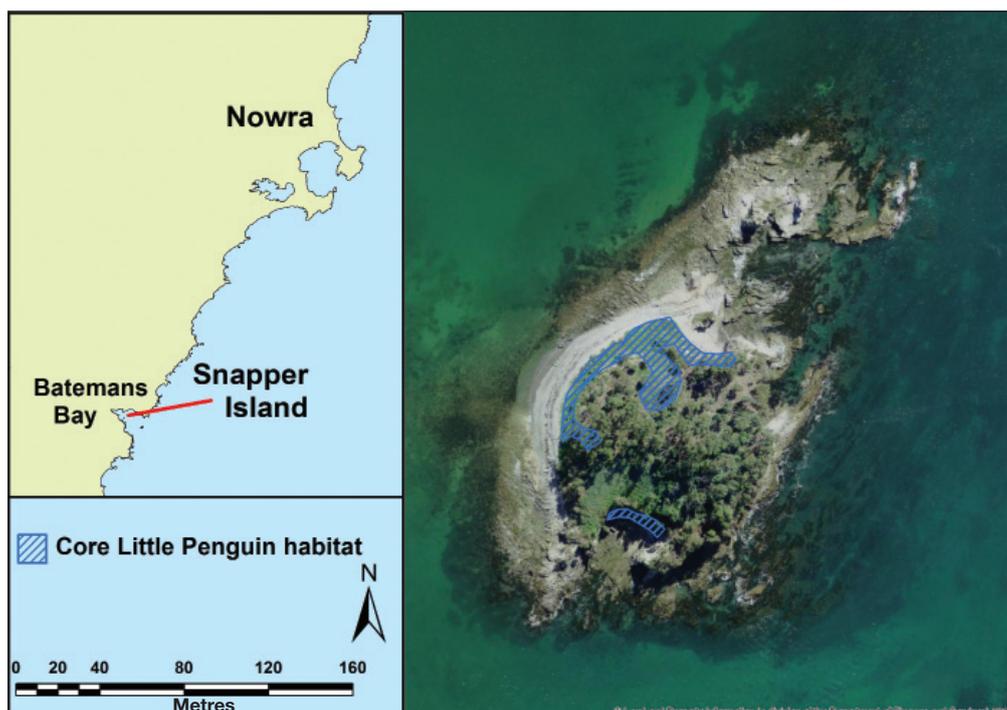


Figure 1. Snapper Island, New South Wales



• Snapper Island from the west. The main access path to the interior of the island is via the grassy slope on the right of the beach in this image.



• Snapper Island from the north. The sea tunnel entrance dominates the cliff base here.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin – Nests in rock cavities, soil burrows, hollow tree stumps, and under thick vegetation. Active nests were located by visual inspection of potential cavities, searching around guano deposits, and by following penguin access trails. We found 24 nests containing incubating adults or chicks (from newly hatched to 4 weeks of age). The highest concentration of nests was immediately above the strandline on the western beach.

Factors Affecting Status

Snapper Island supports approximately 15 percent of the total population of Little Penguin breeding in Batemans Bay, the remainder nest on the Tollgate Islands². The Eurobodalla Shire Council is currently considering a proposal to connect Snapper Island with the mainland to develop a deep-sea marina³. The impact of such a development on the penguins breeding on the island is likely to be substantial. The Office of Environment and Heritage has assessed the conservation significance of Snapper Island and prepared documentation⁴ for proposing its addition to the NSW reserve system as a Nature Reserve under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1967*.

Snapper Island is visited by the public and disturbance to nesting penguins is an ongoing threat. As Crown Land, the public is permitted to land on the island, bring domestic animals and light fires. The last wildfire on the island was in 1996 (Dave Cunningham NPWS, personal communication). The large tunnel through the island has long been attractive to visitors⁵ and substantial amounts of rubbish litter the sandy floor here.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher (breeding)

Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae Silver Gull

Other Vertebrates Recorded

The Southern Water-skink *Eulamprus tympanum* was common.

Banding

No banding has been undertaken on Snapper Island.

Bibliography

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3. Anon (2013). Councillors voice positions on deep sea marina. *Bay Post/Moruya Examiner* Saturday 22 November 2013, p. 5.
4. NPWS (2011). Snapper Island Nature Reserve New Reserve. Statement of Conservation Significance. August 2011.
5. Anon (1906). Interesting Islands near Batemans Bay. *The Bega Budget* Saturday 22 September 1906, p. 6.

Acknowledgements

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Nicholas Carlile and David Priddel, Office of Environment and Heritage, PO Box 1967, Hurstville BC, New South Wales 1481.

Email: Nicholas.Carlile@environment.nsw.gov.au