

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 253

Penguin Islet, Furneaux Group, Tasmania

Location: 40°15'S, 148°16'E. Approximately 4 kms off the township of Lady Barron on the south coast of Flinders Island in the Furneaux Group, Tasmania. Located 75 m off the south-east coast of Great Dog Island.

Status: Unallocated Crown Land

Other Name: South East Great Dog Island; Cook's Islet

Description: 0.6 ha: Measures approximately 200 m by 100 m (Fig. 1). The islet has a granite base with shallow, patchy soil. This islet consists of two portions separated by a low neck, which is covered by a Beaded Glasswort *Sarcocorina quinqueflora* subsp. *quinqueflora* salt marsh. Grey Saltbush *Atriplex cinerea* is found on the north-western side of this salt marsh. The southern half is covered by a dense Coastal Tussock *Poa poiformis* mat containing *Stipa teretifolia* on the windward side and Climbing Lignum *Muehlenbeckia adpressa* on the leeward side. Bower Spinach *Tetragonia implexicoma* is widespread and little else is able to compete in the dense growth. There is an extensive zone of Native Pig-face *Carpobrotus rossii* and Rounded Noon-flower *Disphyma crassifolium* herbfield fringing the southern and western shoreline. Dense stands of Mirror Bush *Coprosma*

repens are found in a number of locations on the centre and eastern side of the island. A single large African Boxthorn *Lycium ferocissimum* is located in the centre of the islet.

Landing: At high tide moderately easy depending on wind direction and tide rips. The shoreline consists of exposed rocky granite surfaces with a sandy beach on the north-eastern side of the island. Landing is usually made on the beach. At low tide it is possible to walk to the island from Great Dog Island.

Ornithological History: Mary Gillham¹ investigated the vegetation composition and breeding habitats of the White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* on Penguin Islet, and other islands in Franklin Sound. She concluded that Storm-petrel burrow density was highest in the *Carpobrotus/Disphyma* herbfield at one pair per square metre but gave no indication of total population size. Irynej Skira and Nigel Brothers² visited the island in December 1986 as part of a wider survey of seabirds breeding in the Furneaux Group. Since 2000, La Trobe University's Marine Ornithology Group has conducted research on the Pacific Gull's *Larus pacificus* breeding biology and ecology on Penguin Islet and the greater Furneaux Group^{3,4,5,6}.

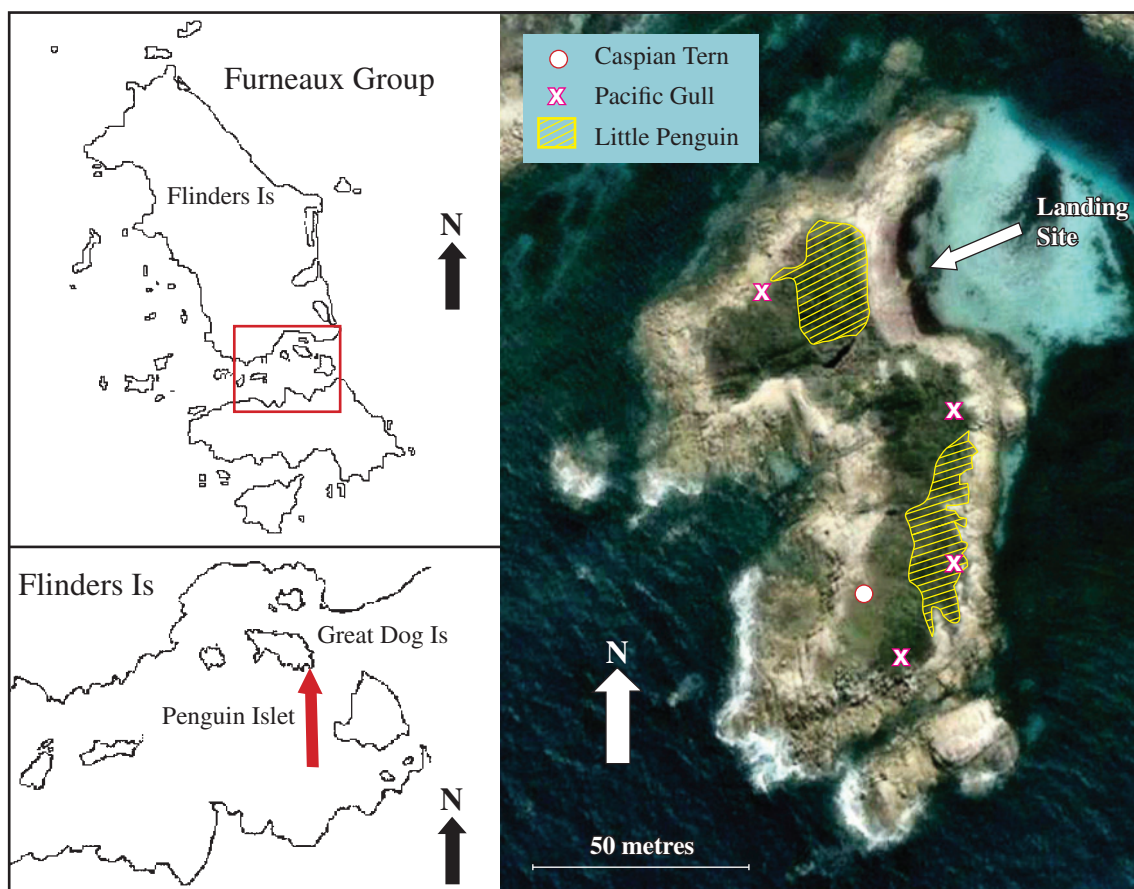


Figure 1. Penguin Islet, Furneaux Group, Tasmania.

Satellite image courtesy of Google Earth

M. J. Carey has visited and/or observed birds annually on the island from March 2004 to December 2009, most visits being between November – January.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Pelagodroma marina White-faced Storm-petrel – A single derelict was found on Great Dog Island opposite Penguin Islet in March 2004. Searches of the islet in December 2009 failed to find any burrows. Although found all over the islet in previous visits^{1,2,7}, researchers found highest densities in the *Carpobrotus/Disphyma* herbfield. A burrow estimate of White-faced Storm-petrels as 0.68 ± 0.74 per square metre was calculated which gave a total estimated 3 400 burrows for the islet². Other estimates suggest a population of 3 662 pairs of White-faced Storm-petrels⁷. Areas of succulent herbfield were devoid of any Storm-petrel burrows in 2009. Thus, there are significant discrepancies in observations on the breeding population for this species on Penguin Islet. Inside the dense thickets of *Coprosma repens* could not be searched on this occasion and may provide refuge for White-faced Storm-petrels from Pacific Gull predation.

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin – Less than 50 widely separated burrows located on the north and eastern sections of the island. Small numbers of birds were seen in burrows in 2009. Thirty pairs were observed in 1986².

Hydroprogne caspia Caspian Tern – A pair of Caspian Terns has bred every year on Penguin Islet since 2004. A single chick fledged in January 2005. In 2009 a single nest was found containing two eggs. It is assumed that the same pair has occupied the site each year since 2004. Mary Gillham¹ recorded an isolated nest.

Larus pacificus Pacific Gull – In 2009 four pairs were breeding, two nests with two eggs, and one nest with three eggs. One pair was provisioning a solitary runner. Recorded breeding by Mary Gillham¹ but no indication of numbers. One pair in 1986², six nests recorded in 2000³, four nests were found in 2003⁵ and five nests and chicks were observed in 2004/05⁶.

Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae Silver Gull – Mary Gillham¹ recorded six nests on Penguin Islet in 1958. Silver Gulls have been recorded at every visit since 2004 with a maximum count of 8 birds in December 2009. No breeding was recorded during that time.

Factors Affecting Status

Visitation by humans is rare and does not pose a threat to breeding seabirds. Dense thickets of *Coprosma repens* eliminate suitable habitat for breeding seabirds and removal of this invasive woody weed is recommended. Mary Gillham¹ noted a number of Storm-petrels were in Pacific Gull pellets and that they trample their burrows. Several other authors have highlighted the threat to Storm-petrels by Pacific Gulls on other islands in the Furneaux Group^{7,8,9}. Substantial numbers of White-faced Storm-petrels have been found in the diet of Pacific Gulls breeding on Briggs Island, less than 1.5 km away⁴. Concern had been raised about the continued persistence of this species on these islands where they co-exist with Pacific Gulls (I. Skira pers. comm.). Should Pacific Gull populations

increase, then White-faced Storm-petrels could be extirpated from these islands. An urgent reassessment of White-faced Storm-petrel populations is needed in the Furneaux Group since many of the islands have not been surveyed since the mid-80s. Black Rats *Rattus rattus* and House Mice *Mus musculus* are believed to predate White-faced Storm-petrel eggs and chicks elsewhere in the Furneaux Group¹⁰ but have not been observed on Penguin Islet. Black Rats were reported to occur on nearby Great Dog Island^{2,7}.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose – One pair seen irregularly on the islet on visits since 2004. None were seen in 2009.
<i>Ardeanna tenuirostris</i>	Short-tailed Shearwater – Several derelicts were found around the shore.
<i>Morus serrator</i>	Australasian Gannet – Between 6 – 8 seen offshore in 2004 and 2005.
<i>Phalacrocorax fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Cormorant – resident, several seen on each visit, with a maximum count of 17 in December 2004. There were no signs of breeding.
<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	Australian Pelican – Groups of two – four observed on most visits feeding at low tide between Penguin Islet and Great Dog Island.
<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	Australian Pied Oystercatcher – One pair seen on most occasions.
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher – One pair seen on Penguin Islet in 2009. Two pairs were observed in 1986 ⁷ .
<i>Sterna striata</i>	White-fronted Tern – Flocks of 20 – 40 seen feeding offshore in January 2006 and December 2009. Solitary birds or small flocks seen on most visits since 2004.
<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>	Crested Tern – Seen offshore on most visits since 2004.

Banding

<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	– 2 adults. No recoveries.
<i>Sterna striata</i>	– 1 adult. No recoveries.

All banded on 5 December 1985.

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RECOVERY ROUND-UP

This section is prepared with the co-operation of the Secretary, Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes, Australian Nature Conservation Agency. The recoveries are only a selection of the thousands received each year; they are not a complete list and should not be analysed in full or part without prior consent of the banders concerned. Longevity and distance records refer to the ABBBS unless otherwise stated. The distance is the shortest distance in kilometres along the direct line joining the place of banding and recovery; the compass direction refers to the same direct line. (There is no implication regarding the distance flown or the route followed by the bird). Where available ABBBS age codes have been included in the banding data.

Recovery, longevity migration or partial migration, items may be submitted directly to me whereupon their merits for inclusion will be considered.

Hon. Editor

The following abbreviations appear in this issue:

ABBBS – Australian Bird and Bat Banding Schemes.

AWSG - Australasian Wader Study Group.

BTO – British Trust for Ornithology

SOSSA – Southern Ocean Seadird Study Group.

VWSG – Victorian Wader Study Group

Longevity and Movement Records

Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*

- (a) 280-02277. Nestling banded by N.P. Brothers on Albatross Island, Tas. on 28 March 1983. Recovered dead, beach washed at Nora Creina Beach 20 km south of Robe, SA on 3 April 2011, over 28 years after banding. 536 km NW.
- (b) 280-03717. Nestling banded by N.P. Brothers on the Mewstone, Tas. on 10 March 1984. Recovered dead, beach washed at Fraser Beach, Lake Munmorah State Reserve, NSW on 9 Jan. 2011, over 26 years, 9 months after banding. 1256 NNE.

Northern Giant-Petrel *Macronectes halli*

- (a) 1437210*. Immature (1) banded on Bird Island, South Georgia, Antarctica (54°01'S 38°03'W) on 8 March 2010. Recovered dead on Sandy Hook Island, Esperance, WA (34°02'S 122°00'E) on 6 June 2010. 10 036 km SE.

*BTO Ringing and Migration band.

- (b) 1447508*. Immature (1) banded on Bird Island, South Georgia, Antarctica (54°01'S 38°03'W) on 7 March 2010. Recovered dead at Bales Beach, Kangaroo Island, SA (35°59'S 137°21'E) on 13 June 2010. 9997 km SE.

*BTO Ringing and Migration band.

- (c) 132-30800. Nestling banded by R.P. Gale on Macquarie Island, Tas. (54°30'S 158°55'E) on 19 Jan. 2010. Recovered dead at De Hoop Nature Reserve, Western Cape Province, South Africa (34°27'S 20°33'E) on 10 Nov. 2010. 9350 km SW.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*

- 131-42089. Nestling banded by B.R. King on Raine Island, Qld. on 5 Dec. 1986. Recaptured, released alive with band at banding place by S. Taylor on 9 Dec. 2010, over 24 years after banding.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

- 121-16747. Juvenile banded by B.R. King on Raine Island, Qld. on 2 Dec. 1986. Recaptured, released alive with band at banding place by S. Taylor on 30 Nov. 2010, over 23 years 11 months after banding.

Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*

- 101-01683. Nestling banded by SOSSA on Flinders Island, Five Islands Nature Reserve, NSW on 8 Dec. 1995. Recovered sick, later died at North Wollongong Beach, NSW on 5 Feb, 2011, over 15 years, 1 month after banding. 6 km N.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*

- 063-02123. Adult (3+) banded by AWSG on the Shores of the 80 Mile Beach, WA (19°15'S 121°20'E) on 18 Nov. 2007. Recovered dead, shot for food on sport at Chayvo Bay, Proliv Kleye, Noglikskiy District, Russia (52°20'N 143°11'E) on 13 Aug. 2010. 8234 km N.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*

Orange Leg Flag. One of a cohort of birds banded and colour flagged in southern Victoria (Lat. 38°, Long. 145°) since Jan. 1990. Colour marking sighted in field (cohort only) at northern Putorana Plateau, north-central Siberia, Russia (69°41'N 92°28'E) by A. Romanov on 17 July 2010. 12 702 km N.

(This is the longest movement recorded for the species.)

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii*

071-82538. Nestling banded by VWSG on Mud Island, Port Phillip Bay, Vic. on 13 Dec. 1987. Recaptured, released alive with band at banding place on 4 Nov. 2010, over 22 years 10 months after banding.

The bird was captured by members of the VWSG as part of an annual recapture of breeding adult Crested Terns on Mud Island.

Pacific Gull *Larus pacificus*

111-01374. Nestling banded on Curlew Island, D'Entrecasteaux Channel, Tas on 30 Dec. 1987. Recaptured twice:

- (1) South Arm Tas. on 11 Jan. 2007,
- (2) Recovered dead at Cape Deliverance, Fort Direction, South Arm, Tas on 11 Dec. 2010, over 22 years, 11 months after banding. 48 km NNE.

Rufous Treecreeper *Climacteris rufa*

041-89015. Immature (1) male banded by G. Marston at Marradong Timber Reserve near Boddington, WA on 20 March 2004. Recaptured released alive with band at banding place on 25 Feb. 2011, over 6 years 11 months after banding.

Singing Honeyeater *Lichenostomus virescens*

035-47836. Juvenile banded at Eyre Bird Observatory, WA on 29 Nov. 2000. Recovered dead (band returned to ABBBS) 16 km south of Mundrabilla Homestead, WA on 27 Apr. 2001. 153 km E.

(This is the longest movement recorded for the species.)

Flame Robin *Petroica phoenicea*

(a) 012-92639. Adult (1+) banded by R.G. Cameron at Cape Liptrap, Vic on 25 March 1989. Recaptured, released alive with band at Barooga, NSW by R.G. Thoday on 7 June 1992. 351 km NNW.

(This is the longest movement recorded for the species.)

(b) 013-64079. Banded by I.M. Batemen at Cobram, Vic. on 1 Aug. 1974. Recaptured, released alive with band at Cavagna, near Cobram, Vic. on 23 June 1985, over 10 years 10 months after banding. 4 km SSE.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

Pale-yellow Robin *Tregellasia capito*

014-99195. Adult (1+) banded by G.E. Heinsohn at Kirrama State Forest 28 km NW of Kennedy, Qld on 19 July 1992. Recaptured, released alive with band at banding place by R.W. Gegg on 25 Sep. 2005, over 13 years 2 months after banding.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

White-breasted Robin *Eopsaltria georgiana*

023-94925. Adult (1+) banded by R.J. Brown at Middlesex Field Study Centre, WA on 29 Nov. 1989. Recaptured, released alive with band at banding place on 30 March 2008, over 18 years 4 months after banding.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

Southern Scrub-robin *Drymodes brunneopygia*

042-26558. Adult (1+) male banded by W.L. Klau at Froggy Dam, Gluepot Station, SA on 20 Aug. 2002. Recaptured released alive with band at banding place on 13 May 2009, over 6 years, 8 months after banding.

(This is the oldest recorded for the species.)

Red-browed Finch *Neochmia temporalis*

019-34110. Juvenile banded by A.J. Leishman at Mount Annan Botanic Gardens, Campbelltown, NSW on 16 Feb. 2008. Recovered dead, collided with window on 7 Jan. 2011 at Orangeville, NSW. 19 km W.

Recovery Round-up has, for many years, recorded interesting data on the longevity and distances traversed by many species of Australian birds, particularly those seasoned global travellers. There is another aspect, most-times hidden within banding data, that to date hasn't been brought to the notice of our readers. What is alluded to here is the return of migratory or partially migratory species of bushbirds (e.g. Black-faced Monarchs, Sacred Kingfishers, Rufous Whistlers, Golden Whistlers etc.) to their banding place. Below are presented banding records that shed light on some of these species and help contribute to a better understanding of the movements of these species.

Banders are encouraged to search their data for any items that could be included in this new section (as well as the usual distance and longevity items) and submit them to me, whereupon their merits for inclusion will be considered.

Migratory and Partial Migratory Returns.**Black-faced Monarch** *Monarcha melanopsis*

033-99088. Adult (2+) male banded at Blue Gum Swamp Creek, Winmalee, NSW on 25 Oct. 2009 and subsequently retrapped at banding place on 31 Oct. 2010 the following season after banding.

At Agnes Banks Nature Reserve Golden Whistlers are generally present from April to October and are replaced by Rufous Whistlers from October to April.

Golden Whistler *Pachycephala pectoralis*

034-45268. Juvenile (later sexed as female) banded at Agnes Banks Nature Reserve, Agnes Banks, NSW on 11 April 1999 and subsequently retrapped on 21 May 2000, 11 June 2000 and 10 June 2001 a total of 2 seasons after banding.

Rufous Whistler *Pachycephala rufiventris*

(a) 034-45258. Adult (1+) (later sexed as female) banded at Agnes Banks Nature Reserve, Agnes Banks, NSW on 13 Dec. 1998 and subsequently retrapped on 14 Nov. 1999 and 15 Oct. 2000 a total of 2 seasons after banding.

(b) 034-61470. Adult (1+) (later sexed as male) banded at Agnes Banks Nature Reserve, Agnes Banks, NSW on 13 Dec. 1998 and subsequently retrapped on 10 Oct. 1999, 14 Nov. 1999, 19 Dec 1999, 12 Nov. 2000 and 10 Dec. 2000 a total of 2 seasons after banding.