

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 255

Gandja-baa, Broughton Group, New South Wales

Location: 32°37'S, 152°20'E. Located approximately 16 kilometres north-east of the entrance to Port Stephens, New South Wales (NSW). It is part of the Broughton Island Group, situated 90 metres east of Broughton Island and 25 metres west of Little Broughton Island.

Status: Crown land.

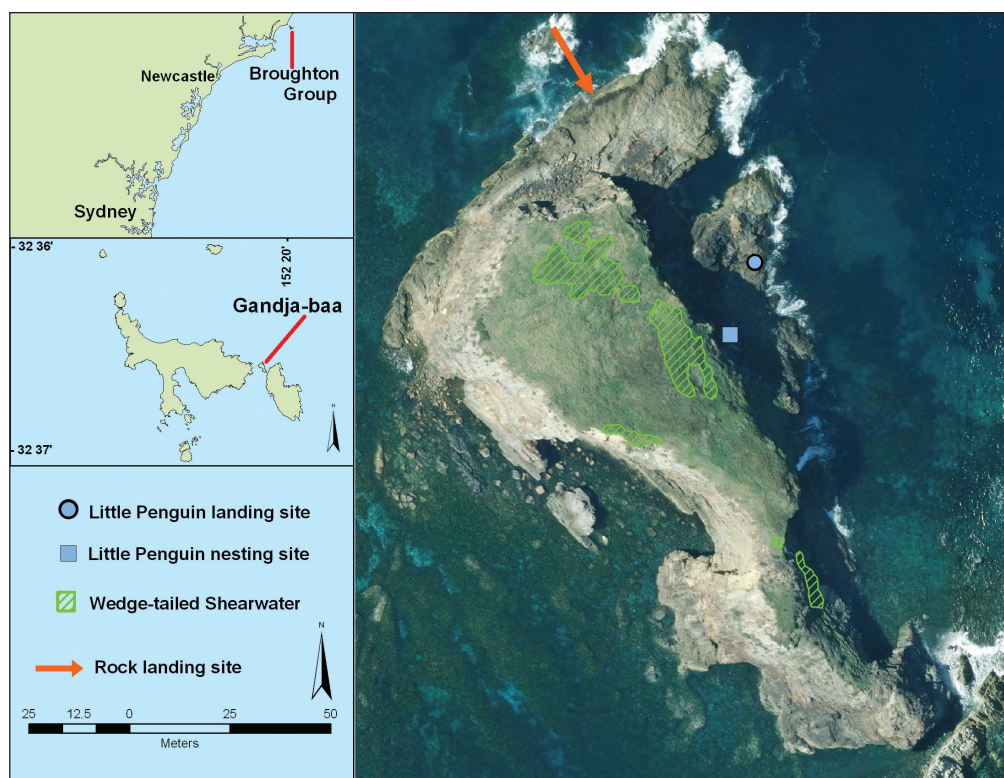
Description: Gandja-baa (Gathang language for 'place of nesting birds') is a recently named islet¹. It is an irregular-shaped island measuring approximately 175 metres by 100 metres at its widest point, with its longest axis aligned north-west to south-east. The rocky shoreline encompasses an area of 1.0 hectare with a vegetated area of 0.4 hectare rising to 31 metres. It is geologically similar to the surrounding larger islands, being composed of Carboniferous volcanic rhyolite. Cliffs of 10 to 30 metres occur on all but the north-east side, the steep slope here providing access to the plateau. Vegetation on the plateau is dominated by low stands of *Myoporum boninense* var. *australe* and White Correa *Correa alba* on the deeper soils and Blady Grass *Imperata cylindrica* var. *major* and other herbaceous plants on the shallower soils. Other species, including exotics (*) are:

Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia, *Carpobrotus glaucescens*, *Tetragonia tetragonioides*, *Senecio pinnatifolius* var. *pinnatifolius*, *Enchylaena tomentosa*, *Crassula sieberiana*, *Commelina cyanea*, *Dichondra repens*, *Isolepis nodosa*, *Histiopteris incisa*, *Monotoca elliptica*, *Kennedia rubicunda*, *Scaevola calendulacea*, *Lepidium pseudohyssopifolium*, *Lobelia gracilis*, *Oxalis perennans*, *Poa poiformis* var. *poiformis*, *Sporobolus virginicus*, *Dianella caerulea*, *Wikstroemia indica*, **Opuntia stricta* var. *stricta*, **Conyza* sp. and **Sonchus oleraceus*.

Landing: Onto rocks at the north end, depending on prevailing conditions.

Ornithological History: No previous ornithological visits have been recorded. Carlile and Callaghan visited for one hour on 2 September 2011 to search for signs of penguins and to document vegetation. The authors, with others, visited for 1.5 hours on 16 December 2011 to survey seabirds.

¹Gathang is a First Nations language group spoken by the Worimi Aboriginal people whose traditional territory takes in the Port Stephens area and extends south to Maitland and the Hunter River, to Forster–Tuncurry in the north, and as far west as Gloucester, New South Wales.



• Gandja-baa, Broughton Group, New South Wales



• *Gandja-baa from the north. The landing site is a wave-washed platform on the right of the islet in this image.*



• *Gandja-baa from the south. Viewed from Little Broughton Island.*

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin—In September 2011, a single nesting penguin was located in a deep rock overhang on the eastern side of the island. The contents of the nest could not be determined. However, breeding was confirmed in December 2011 when downy feathers and excrement were found, indicating the presence of young that, presumably, had recently fledged.

Ardenna pacifica Wedge-tailed Shearwater—Burrows are patchily distributed across the plateau, occurring only where the soil is of sufficient depth for burrowing. An hour-long search of all potential nesting areas by five persons counted 34 burrows. Of the 10 birds extracted, eight were incubating an egg. A further single burrow contained a cold egg. We estimate fewer than 20 breeding pairs.

Factors Affecting Status

Black Rats *Rattus rattus* were eradicated from the Broughton Island Group in 2009²; their removal allowing the White-faced Storm-petrel *Pelagodroma marina* that nests on nearby North and Inner rocks^{3,4} to potentially colonise (or recolonise) areas of shallow soil on Gandja-baa.

Shearwater remains on the ridges provide evidence of predation on seabirds by birds of prey, most likely the White-bellied Sea-eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* and Swamp Harrier *Circus approximans*, both of which were observed flying over the island.

Prickly Pear occurs in a single dense stand near the penguin nest site and should be eradicated before it spreads.

Other Seabirds Recorded

A pair of Sooty Oystercatchers *Haematopus fuliginosus* with a nestling, and an Eastern Reef Egret *Egretta sacra* were present in December 2011.

Other Vertebrates Recorded

Despite intensive although brief searches, no other vertebrates were recorded.

Banding

No banding has been undertaken on Gandja-baa.

Bibliography

1. New South Wales Government (2013). *Government Gazette*. No 4/2013.
2. Priddel, D., Carlile, N., Wilkinson, I. and Wheeler, R. (2011). Eradication of exotic mammals from offshore islands in New South Wales, Australia. Pp. 337–344. In 'Island Invasives: Eradication and Management'. (Eds C.R. Veitch, M.N. Clout and D.R. Towns.) (International Union for Conservation of Nature: Gland, Switzerland.)
3. Carlile, N., Priddel, D. and Callaghan, S. (2013). Seabird Islands No. 20/1: North Rock, Broughton Group, New South Wales. *Corella* 37: 44–46.
4. Carlile, N., Priddel, D. and Callaghan, S. (2013). Seabird Islands No. 21/1: Inner Rock, Broughton Group, New South Wales. *Corella* 37: 21–22.

Acknowledgements

Surveys of Gandja-baa would not have been possible without the assistance and support of the Hunter Region of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Broughton Island Conservation Society provided accommodation on nearby Broughton Island. Eleazar O'Connor (NatureFiji-MareqetiViti) and Yuna Kim (Australasian Seabird Group) assisted in the December survey. Andrew Hampstead (NPWS) provided assistance with landing. Yuna Kim kindly provided one of the images.

Date compiled: 11 February 2012

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

Susanne Callaghan, Office of Environment and Heritage, Locked bag 99, Nelson Bay, New South Wales 2315, Australia.

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