

INCREASING NUMBERS OF PIED CORMORANTS BREEDING ON THE ISLANDS OFF PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND CONSEQUENCES FOR THE VEGETATION

E. RIPPEY¹, J. J. RIPPEY² and J. N. DUNLOP³

¹Department of Geography, University of Western Australia

²Department of Pathology, University of Western Australia

³Department of Environmental Science, Murdoch University

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There has been an increase in the number of Pied Cormorants *Phalacrocorax varius* nesting on the small islands off the Perth coast, with larger nesting colonies and increased numbers of nesting sites being used simultaneously. Overall the number of nests has quadrupled in recent years when compared with previous decades. The great majority of birds now nest on the island plateaux, on succulents or on the ground rather than on the woody shrubs of the talus slopes that were formerly preferred. This has been associated with a marked change in the vegetation of the islands, particularly the very small islands where native plants are being replaced by annual or biennial invasive weeds. As a result the nesting habitats for burrowing birds such as Little Penguins *Eudyptula minor*, Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis* and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus* and for ground nesting birds such as Bridled Terns *Sterna anaethetus* and Crested Terns *Sterna bergii* are threatened. In addition the bare earth left after nesting episodes and when annual weeds die off during summer, is prone to erosion.