

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 208

Chapman Island, Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

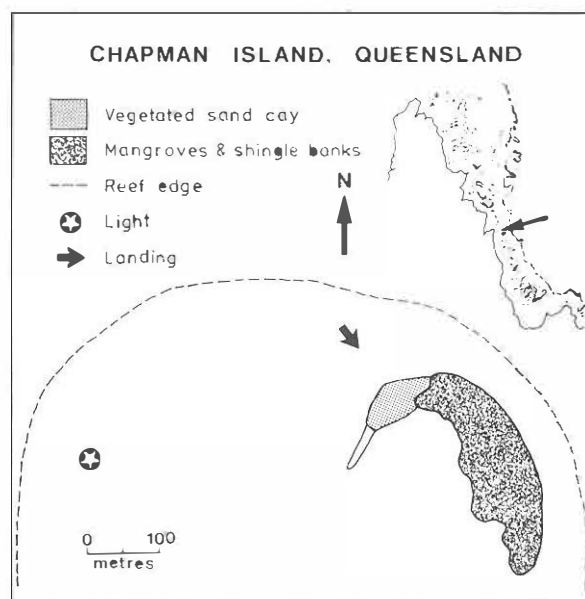
Location: 12°53'S, 143°36'E: 10 kilometres from Cape Direction, Queensland.

Status: Commonwealth Lighthouse Reserve.

Description: Cay 0.5 ha; 100 m × 50 m; height 1.0 m. Shingle bank and mangroves 2.4 ha; 300 m × 80 m; height 1.0 m. A low wooded island of the far northern Great Barrier Reef, consisting of a small inner coral reef with seaward (eastern) shingle ridges and mangroves, and a cay of shingle and sand at the north-western end of the shingle ridge. An unmanned navigation light stands near the north-western end of the reef. The cay is composed of coral sand and shingle and is sparsely vegetated with sand-binding species *Ipomea pes-caprae*, *Tribulus cistoides* and *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, grass *Lepturus repens*, and a few shrubs *Salsola kali*. The coral shingle bank has the succulent herb *Sesuvium portulacastrum*, and the adjacent mangroves *Rhizophora stylosa* and *Avicennia marina*.

Landing: From a dinghy on to the sand cay, from a vessel anchored at the north-western end of the reef. Local knowledge is necessary for navigation among the reefs of this area.

Ornithological History: In July 1936, J. A. Steers mapped the island¹. D. R. Stoddart² visited in October 1973 to also map the island, and to record vegetation and seabirds. J. Warham³ landed for three hours on 21 October 1958, and recorded Eastern Reef Egrets *Egretta sacra* and Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* nesting. Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service officers have made several recent visits: B. R. King for two hours on 17 December 1979 (to map, check vegetation and record seabirds); D. Reimer for one hour on 18 November 1984 (to record seabirds); and F. Muir and J. Cornelius for one hour on 25 November 1987 (to record seabirds).



Breeding Seabirds and Status

Sterna anaethetus Bridled Tern — Breeding in December 1979 (200 adults and at least 50 nests), November 1984 (not counted) and December 1987 (100+ nests, mostly with one egg). Nests are solitary, and are scrapes in the sand, well concealed under overhanging vegetation.

Sterna bergii Crested Tern — Breeding in December 1979, with over 700 adults present in two colonies, one of 150 and one of 100 nests, all with 1–2 eggs, and at least 100 runners. Nests are scrapes in the sand placed closely together (about 0.4 m apart) in dense colonies. The sand between the nests is covered with guano. Chicks form creches on the beach attended by adults.



• Chapman Island from the air (looking north).

Anous minutus Black Noddy — Breeds and roosts in a large colony in the mangroves. In December 1979 and November 1984, the numbers of nests were estimated at over 3 000. Numbers have not been assessed further. The nest is a small platform mainly of mangrove leaves, cemented to a branch with guano.

Factors Affecting Status

The island is an anchorage for fishing vessels and is visited occasionally by light maintenance crews resulting in some disturbance to seabirds.

Other Seabirds Recorded

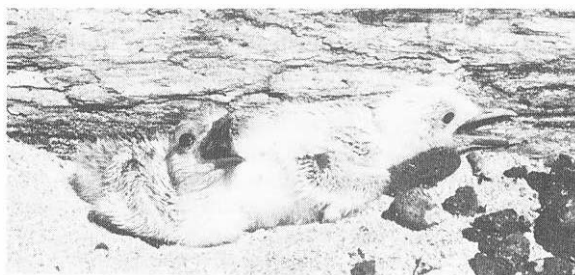
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>	Black-naped Tern
<i>Anous stolidus</i>	Common Noddy

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Steers, J. A. (1938). Detailed notes on the islands surveyed and examined by the geographical expedition to the Great Barrier Reef in 1936. *Repts Gt Barrier Reef Comm.* IV (III): 51-96.
2. Stoddart, D. R. (1978). The Great Barrier Reef and the Great Barrier Reef Expedition, 1973. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond.* A291: 5-22.
3. Warham, J. (1962). Bird islands of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait. *Emu* 62: 99-111.



• Crested Tern chicks sheltering by a log.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the support of the Raine Island Corporation and Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service, for the field assistance of D. Reimer and others, and for the use of the records of F. Muir and J. Cornelius.

Date compiled: 10 January 1989.

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