

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 209

Sherrard Island, Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

Location: 12°59'S, 143°37'E; 20 kilometres south-east of Cape Direction, Queensland.

Status: Vacant Crown Land; Queensland Fauna Sanctuary.

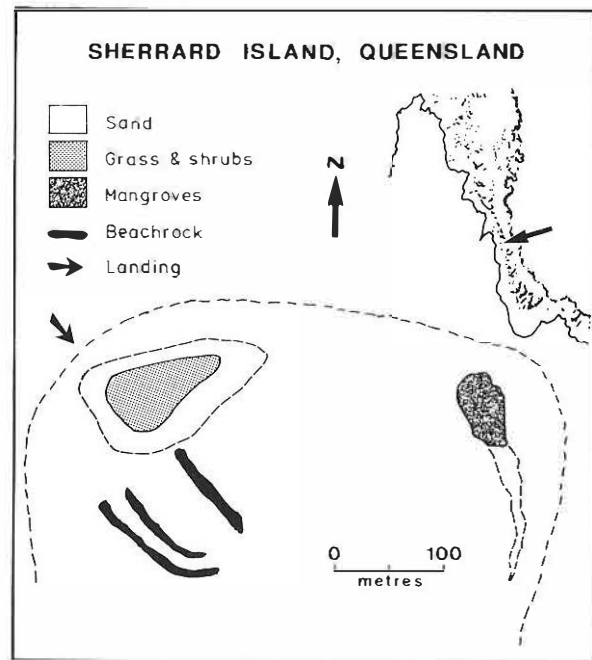
Description: A low wooded island of the inner reefs of the northern Great Barrier Reef, consisting of a small coral reef with seaward shingle ridges at the north-eastern end, a small sand cay at the north-western end and an area of mangroves in the lee of the shingle ridges. Three lines of beachrock lie on the reef flat near the southern edge of the cay.

THE SAND CAY: 0.5 ha; 100 m × 60 m; height 2.0 metres. It is composed of coral sand, with a ground cover of low vegetation, mainly the succulent *Sesuvium portulacastrum* and grass *Lepturus repens*, and a central thicket of shrubs, mainly *Pemphis acidula*. Other vegetation includes scramblers *Ipomea pes-caprae* and *Cassytha filiformis*, succulent *Suaeda australis* and low shrubs *Euphorbia tannensis*, *Salsola kali* *Chamaesyce atoto* and *Argussea argentea*.

THE SHINGLE BANK: 0.2 ha; 60 m × 40 m; height 1.0 metre. It is composed of ridges of coarse coral shingle with a community of succulent *Sesuvium portulacastrum* and grass *Sporobolus virginicus*, and adjacent mangrove *Rhizophora stylosa* and *Avicennia marina*. A spit of coral shingle extends south from the mangroves.

Landing: By dinghy, on to the cay from a vessel anchored at the north-western edge of the reef. Local knowledge is needed among the reefs in this area.

Ornithological History: J. A. Steers¹ mapped the island and recorded vegetation in July 1936, and in October 1973 D. R. Stoddart² mapped the island and recorded vegetation and birds. R. Buckley recorded vegetation and birds in October 1978. D. Reimer landed for two hours on 18 November 1984, and C. J. Limpus for one hour on 7 December 1987, both to record vegetation and seabirds.



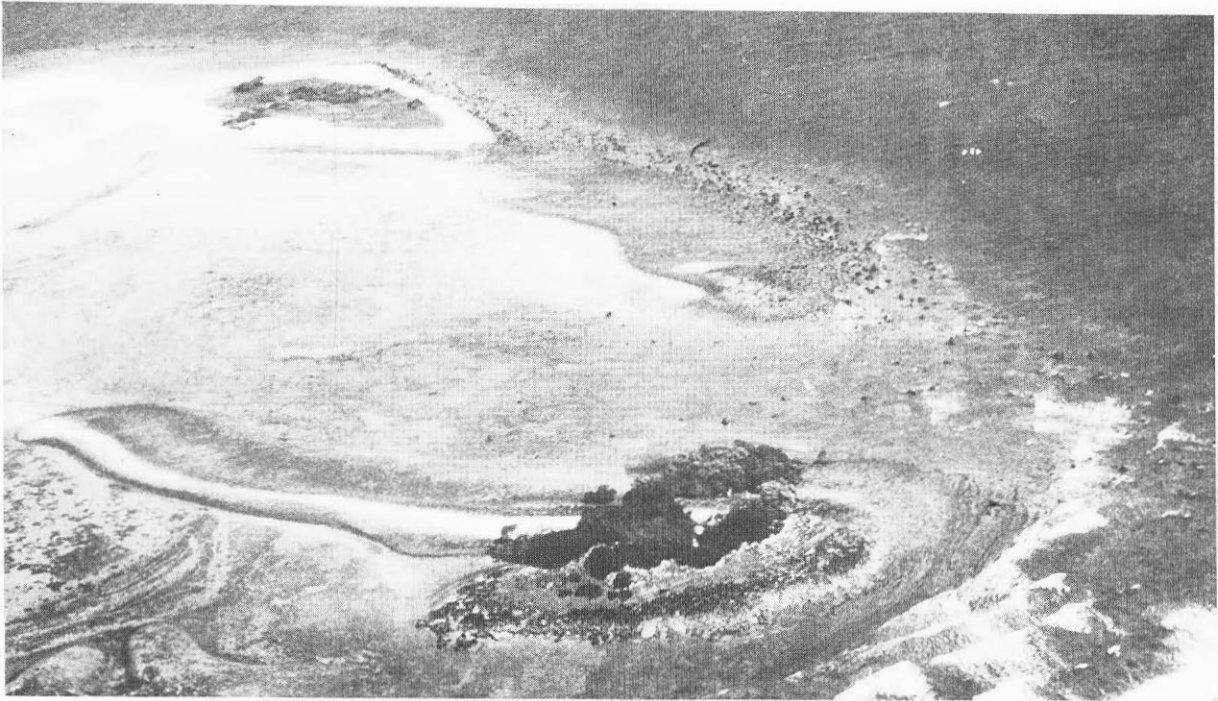
Breeding Seabirds and Status

Egretta sacra Eastern Reef Egret — Not recorded breeding on recent visits but in December 1987 there were two old nests in the mangroves. Over 100 birds were present in November 1984.

Sterna sumatrana Black-naped Tern — Breeding in November 1984 on the sand cay in a small colony of three nests with eggs and 14 adults. The nest is a scrape in the sand, in the rubble of high water level; from one to three eggs are laid.

Sterna anaethetus Bridled Tern — Present in November 1984 and breeding on the sand cay in December 1987 when about 100 nests were located in the vegetated area, each with one egg. Nests are scrapes in the sand, well concealed under vegetation.

Sterna bengalensis Lesser Crested Tern — Over 100 birds were present in November 1984. They



● *Sherrard Island (looking west).*

Photo: B. R. King

were breeding in December 1987 on the sand cay in two colonies, one of 250 nests and the other of 450 nests, each with one or two eggs. Nests are scrapes in the sand, closely spaced in dense colonies.

Anous minutus Black Noddy — Breeding in the mangroves in November 1984 and December 1987, in a colony of over 500 nests. In December 1987 there were over 2 000 birds resting on the island. Nests are small platforms of mangrove leaves on branches, cemented with guano. ● One or two eggs are laid.

Factors Affecting Status

The island is rarely visited and there were no indications of human interference. Nesting turtles may cause some interference to surface nesting seabirds.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

Green Turtle *Chelonia mydas*, Hawksbill Turtle *Eretmochelys imbricata*.

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.

Acknowledgments

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