

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 227

Elphick Nob, Pilbara Region, Western Australia

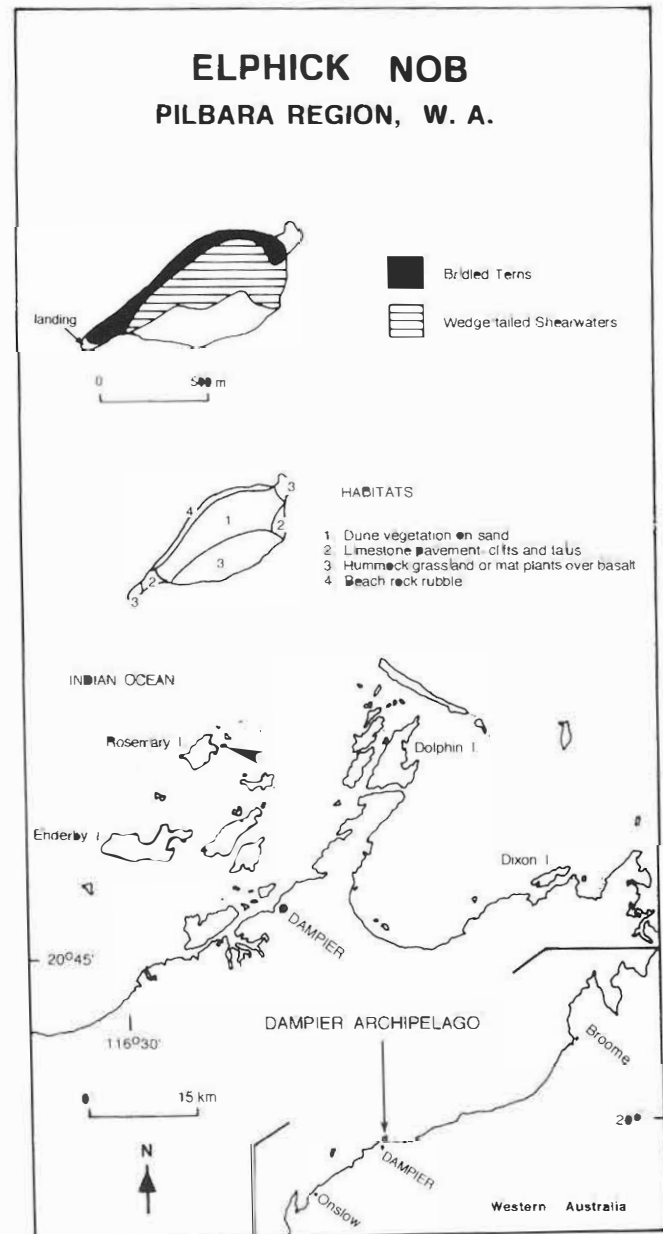
Location: 20°28'06"S, 116°37'16"E; separated by a narrow channel (Illingworth Passage) from the north-eastern extremity of Rosemary Island in the Dampier Archipelago. About 23 kilometres north-north-west of the town of Dampier, Western Australia.

Status: Class C Nature Reserve managed by the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management for the conservation of flora and fauna. The entire island has the designated use of 'Special Conservation'¹.

Description: 22 ha at highwater; maximal dimensions 100 m × 400 m; about 25 m maximum height. The island is composed of Proterozoic Mount Roe basalt outcropping steeply on the southern side and again as the nob on the north-eastern tip. There is some outcropping dune limestone in the south-western and western sectors. Dune sand overlies the central, western and north-western parts of the island. An extensive deposit of beach rock rubble occurs along the northern shoreline². The outcropping basalt is sparsely vegetated. In areas with a shallow mantle of soil there is hummock grassland of *Triodia wiseana* and low shrubs of *Acacia bivenosa* and *Capparis spinosa*. The sandy parts of the island are covered with low, mobile dune vegetation dominated by *Spinifex longifolius*. Other plants recorded on the mobile dunes include *A. coriacea*, *Scaevola spinescens*, *Olearia dampieri*, *Rhagodia eremaea* and *Enchylaena tomentosa*.

Patches of fine sand heavily undermined by Wedge-tailed Sheatwater burrows are typically marked by dense clumps of *Sarcostemma viminalis australe*. The limestone pavement and cliffs are sparsely vegetated and the long barrier of beach rock rubble is virtually devoid of plant growth due to the absence of soil.

Landing: The shoreline of Elphick Nob is mostly rocky but a landing from a small boat could be made almost anywhere at highwater. The easiest landing point is on the south-western tip which is separated from a beach on Rosemary Island by the narrow Illingworth Passage.



Ornithological History: K. D. Morris visited Elphick Nob on 15 February 1983 and recorded the Wedge-tailed Shearwater colony. G. Oliver observed Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and Bridled Terns during a visit on 24 November 1990. J. N. Dunlop conducted banding operations on the island between 2 and 5 December 1991.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Puffinus pacificus Wedge-tailed Shearwater — The nesting burrows of this species have not been counted but the numbers were probably between one and two hundred in December 1991. Burrows were observed over much of the sandy part of the island with the highest densities at the south-western end, above the beach rock along the north-eastern shoreline and in a swale in the central eastern part of the island.

Egretta sacra Eastern Reef Egret — A recently abandoned nest was observed in December 1991 amongst the broken limestone at the south-western end of the island. A dead adult or fledgling was found nearby.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — K. D. Morris recorded Silver Gulls as a breeding species on Elphick Nob¹ but there is no published information on numbers or seasonality.

Sterna anaethetus Bridled Tern — In early December 1991, several hundred Bridled Terns were in attendance at a colony but it was estimated during banding operations that no more than 150 pairs were occupying nest sites. Most nests were hidden under slabs of beach rock along the north-western shoreline with a few under nearby vegetation. A few nests were recorded amidst the limestone at the south-western and north-eastern ends of the island. All nests examined contained single eggs in early December 1991.

Factors Affecting Status

Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, with nests on Rosemary Island, take large numbers of Bridled Terns from Elphick Nob and other nearby islands. Human intrusion does not appear to be significant on Elphick Nob as it is not a preferred boat landing.



• The northern tip of Elphick Nob. In the foreground is the barrier of beach rock used by nesting Bridled Terns. Behind this is part of the dunal area used by Wedge-tailed Shearwaters.

Photo: J. N. Dunlop

OTHER VERTEBRATES¹

Eretmochelys imbricata Hawksbill Turtle, *Gehyra punctata* Spotted Dtella, *Heteronotia binoei* Bynoe's Gecko, *Oedura marmorata* Marbled Velvet Gecko, *Ctenotus saxatilis* Skink, *Egernia pilbarensis* Pilbara Egernia, *Lerista bipes* skink, *Sphenomorphus isolepis* skink and *Rhynchophthalmophaps diversus* Blind Snake.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Phalacrocorax varius</i>	Pied Cormorant
<i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>	Rufous Night Heron
<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	Pied Oystercatcher
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher

Banding

December 1991.

Sterna anaethetus — 41 adults.

Bibliography

1. CALM (1990). Dampier Archipelago Nature Reserves Management Plan 1990–2000. Department of Conservation and Land Management. Management Plan No. 18.
2. Geological Survey of Western Australia (1980). Dampier — Eaglehawk Island — Rosemary 1:50 000 Urban Geology Series. Department of Mines of Western Australia.

Acknowledgments

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