

Manowar Island, Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland

Location: 16°17'S., 139°16'E.; 45 kilometres north-north-east of Mornington Island Settlement, Qld.

Status: Vacant Crown Land: Queensland Fauna Sanctuary.

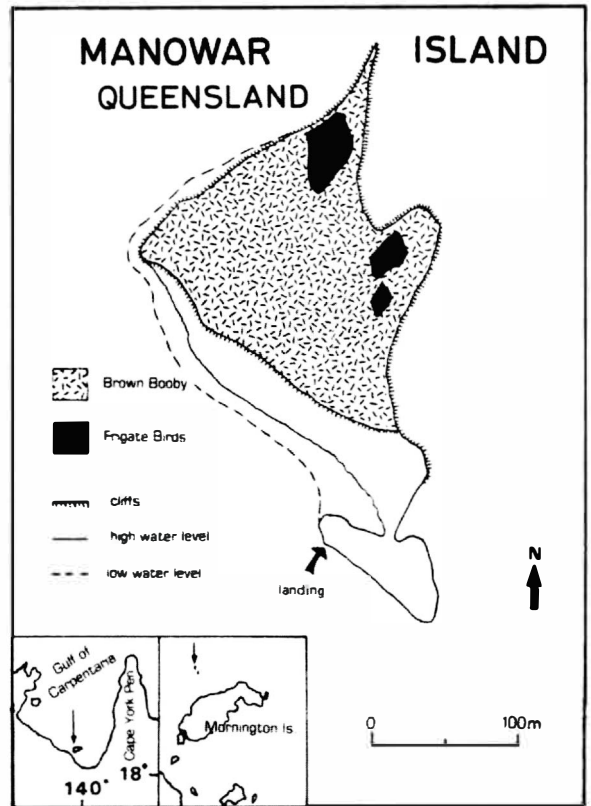
Description: 4.6 ha; the island is 350 m by 230 m, rising to 25 m at its two northerly points. It consists of conglomerate with cliffs of 20 m falling direct to the sea on the north-western and eastern sides. The plateau slopes to the south-west from where the island extends into an unstable shingle bank. On the two northerly points and along the top of the cliffs are groups of loose boulders up to 1.5 m high. A sparse sward of *Dactyloctenium radulans*, *Amaranthus interruptus* and *Sesuvium portulacastrum* occurs on the flatter part of the plateau, but most of the island is bare. On the southern shore, an abandoned 60 m Taiwanese fishing boat, beached by a cyclone in December 1974, was still present in 1986.

Landing: Onto the shingle bank at the south-eastern corner.

Ornithological History: None known before the visit by S. T. Garnett, G. M. Crowley, N. Goudberg and I. B. Carruthers from 10-12 July 1982. The following information, except where otherwise stated, was obtained during that visit.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Sula leucogaster Brown Booby—About 300 nests were scattered over the entire plateau except among the frigatebirds' colonies. Nesting was at all stages from eggs to almost fledged young. Of 18 clutches surveyed, all contained a single egg.



Measurements of adults (mm)—exposed culmen: ♀ 98.9 ± 3.3 ♂ 97.3 ± 3.1; wing ♀ 395 ± 12.7, ♂ 389 ± 9.5; tarsus ♀ 50.3 ± 2.2, ♂ 48.7 ± 2.4; tail: ♀ 195 ± 7.6, ♂ 196 ± 9.5; (n: ♀ 40, ♂ 31). Weights (g): ♀ 1400 ± 139, (n: 9); ♂ 1195 ± 102, (n: 9). Similar numbers of Brown

Booby nests were seen in aerial surveys in December 1981, and also in February and August 1982.

Fregata minor Great Frigatebird—One nest with an egg was located; three males were seen flying overhead, one in full display.

Fregata ariel Least Frigatebird—A total of 1049 nests was counted. There were three discrete colonies, all among rocks on the highest parts of the island. The two smaller colonies combined (containing 23 eggs, 1 naked chick, 21 downy young and 256 juveniles) appeared more advanced than the larger (containing 288 eggs, 109 naked chicks, 118 downy young and 233 juveniles). Similar numbers of nesting birds were seen from the air in February and August 1982, but only half as many in December 1981.

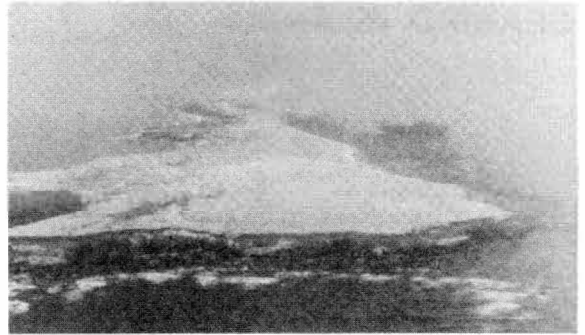
Egretta sacra Eastern Reef Egret—A nest with four cold eggs was found in the galley of the beach-washed boat. No birds were seen.

Factors Affecting Status

At the time of the visit the hold of the beach-washed boat was awash with oil and diesel. The hull was rusting; when breached, an oil slick can be expected which may affect breeding birds. The island is a sheltered anchorage for fishing boats and surrounding waters are becoming increasingly popular for game fishing, but few people go ashore. Visits from Mornington Island are infrequent.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

The gecko *Heteronotia binoei* is present among the rocks.



• Manowar Island from the air (looking south-east).

Photo: S. T. Garnett

Other Seabirds Recorded

Pelecanus conspicillatus
Larus novaehollandiae

Australian Pelican
Silver Gull

Banding

Sula leucogaster—71 chicks, 71 juveniles, 58 immatures, 100 adults (10 July 82). One recovery of an adult, 200 km SE (3 months).

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Ian Carruthers and Nicky Goudberg for their help and company, Curly Felton for his logistic support, Rob Draffan for organisation and the Council of Mornington Island for permission to visit their island.

Date compiled: 15 August 1986.

S. T. Garnett and G. M. Crowley, Garden of St Erth, Blackwood, Vic. 3458.