

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 179

Bellinger Island, Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia

Location: 33°53'S., 123°39'E.; 13.5 kilometres north-east of Cape Pasley, W.A. and 0.8 kilometres off shore.

Status: Class A Reserve vested in the W.A. Department of Conservation and Land Management.

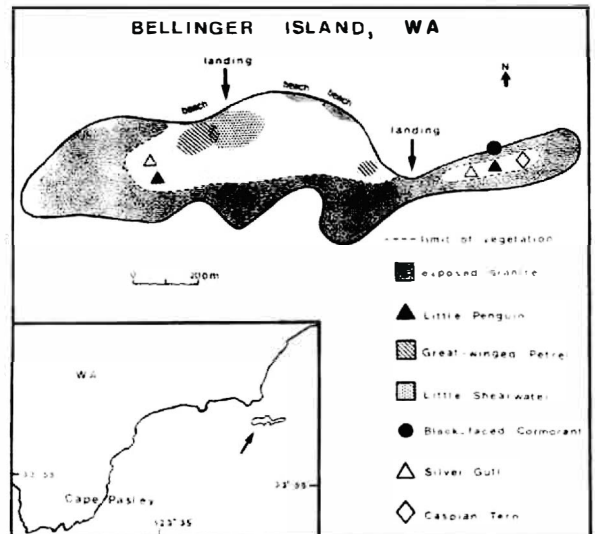
Description: 40 ha; 1 800 m long by up to 500 m wide with a maximum height of 18 m (western end); exposed granite extends over the entire southern side, the western end, and most of the island east of the rocky landing. Protected areas of granite are carpeted with *Carpobrotus* sp. and *Sporobolus virginicus*. A sandy beach on the mid-north coast is backed by a small dune system vegetated with *Spinifex hirsutus*. The dominant vegetation in the jumbled grey sandy gullies behind the foredunes comprises *Atriplex cinerea*, *Nitraria billardierei*, *Olearia* sp., *Frankenia paucifolia* and *Rhagodia baccata*.

Landing: Landing is difficult except in calm seas. Southerly swells break over the isthmus at the eastern landing cascading water into the shallow rocky mooring. With winds from the north-east the best landing is in the surf at the beach.

Ornithological History: There is no previous record. R. E. Johnstone, L. A. Smith and L. Spurr visited the island for four hours on 3 November 1985 and two hours on 18 April 1986.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — In November nine nests were found. Most were scrapes under granite slabs but several were burrows under domes of *Sporobolus*. Four nests contained an adult; one contained an adult incubating 2 eggs; two probably contained newly hatched young



(judging by fresh egg fragments at their entrances) and two contained feathered chicks. Estimated 20 breeding pairs.

Pterodroma macroptera Great-winged Petrel — In November about 50 burrows were found under *Nitraria* and *Atriplex* at the western end of the island. A feathered, mummified adult was found in the area of the burrows. In April about 40 of these burrows were active (fresh diggings and footprints). Two burrows were excavated; one was empty, the other contained two adults on a nest of leaves and twigs. The latter burrow had an entrance 18 cm wide and 10 cm high, was 175 cm long with a nest chamber 17 cm wide.

Puffinus assimilis Little Shearwater — In November about 300 burrows were found on grey sand under *Nitraria* and *Atriplex* near the western end of the island. Twenty burrows had fresh footprints near the entrance and one contained a fully fledged chick. It appeared that most young

had just recently left the colony. In April about 150 burrows had fresh diggings and footprints near their entrances. All four examined contained an adult. Another adult was found in what appeared to be a Great-winged Petrel burrow. Estimated 200 breeding pairs.

Pelagodroma marina White-faced Storm-Petrel — In November six old, empty burrows, possibly dug by this species, were found near the western end of the island.

Leucocarbo fuscescens Black-faced Shag — In November, 31 shags were perched on a granite ledge near the splash zone at the eastern end of the island. Four nests were found there; two were half built, one contained 2 fresh eggs, and the other 2 newly hatched nestlings. Only two birds were seen in April. Estimated 5-10 breeding pairs.

Cereopsis novaehollandiae Cape Barren Goose — In November 11 were counted on the island including a young bird with down on its back. In April 13 were counted and tracks, droppings and feathers were found all over the island. Estimated 3-5 breeding pairs.

Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher — One or two pairs probably breed on the island. In November two pairs were defending territory and attacking a Pacific Gull.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — In November there were 50 near the western end of the island and 10 near the eastern end. Six nests were found among granite slabs near the western end; five were empty and one contained a well-incubated egg. One runner was found. One brown, fledged juvenile was seen at the eastern end. Estimated 20-25 breeding pairs.

Hydroprogne caspia Caspian Tern — Two or three pairs breed on the island. In November six adults were seen and two nests were found on bare granite near the eastern end of the island. One nest contained a single chipping egg, the other a dead nestling.

Factors Affecting Status

Few people would visit the island due to its inaccessibility. It is about 160 km east of Esperance and the nearest place on the mainland



• Bellinger Island (eastern end).

suitable for launching a boat is at Point Malcolm, 15 km north-east of the island. The White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* nests on the island near the western end and apparently pre-dates some breeding seabirds. Two dead, fresh Little Penguins were found adjacent to the nest. The Australian Raven *Corvus coronoides* was present on both visits, one in November and two in April. They too, no doubt, would take seabirds' eggs and hatchlings.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

Three species of skink were collected, *Egernia multiscutata bos*, *E. napoleonis* and *Hemiergis peronii peronii*.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Larus pacificus</i>	Pacific Gull
<i>Sterna nereis</i>	Fairy Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern

Banding

Nil.

Acknowledgements

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