

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 185

## Little Dog Island, Furneaux Group, Tasmania

**Location:** 40°15'S., 148°12'E.; 5 kilometres south-east of Lady Barron on Flinders Island and 1.5 kilometres west of Great Dog Island, Tasmania.

**Status:** Game Reserve (30 ha) and private property (70 ha).

**Description:** 100 ha; 1 km in length and width, the island is roughly square-shaped. It is low lying with a low ridge down the eastern side and extending into the centre of the island. There is a small, low stack about 0.5 km north of the island. The vegetation is dominated by *Poa poiformis* with Paper Daisy *Helichrysum papillosum* co-dominant. There is one stand of Daisy Bush *Olearia axillaris* on the eastern side. On the western side in low lying areas there are several small patches of pigface *Carpobrotus rossii* and *Tetragonia implexicoma*.

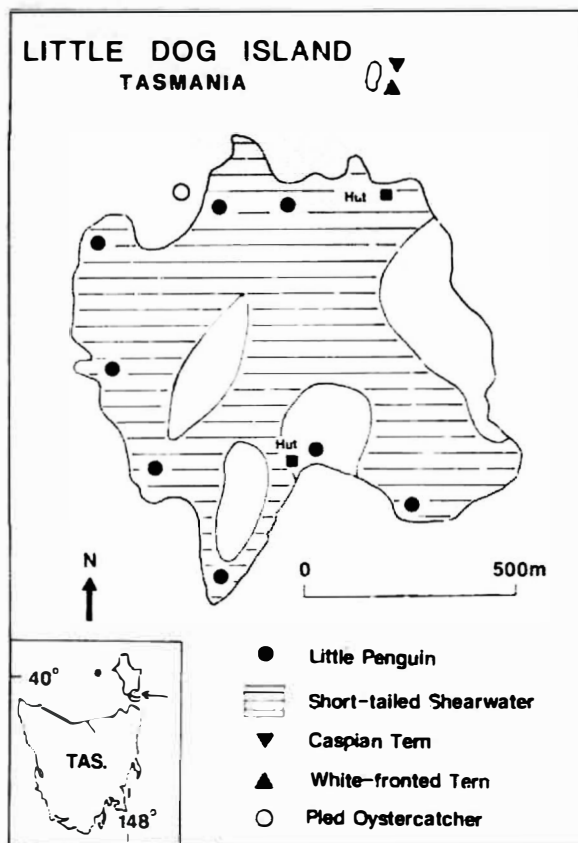
**Landing:** Easy anywhere depending on wind direction.

**Ornithological History:** There are no previous published accounts of the seabirds. N. P. Brothers surveyed breeding seabirds on 9 December 1986 and I. J. Skira visited the stack briefly a week later.

## Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — Burrows are infrequently scattered throughout the shearwater burrows all around the edge of the island. Estimated 100 breeding pairs.

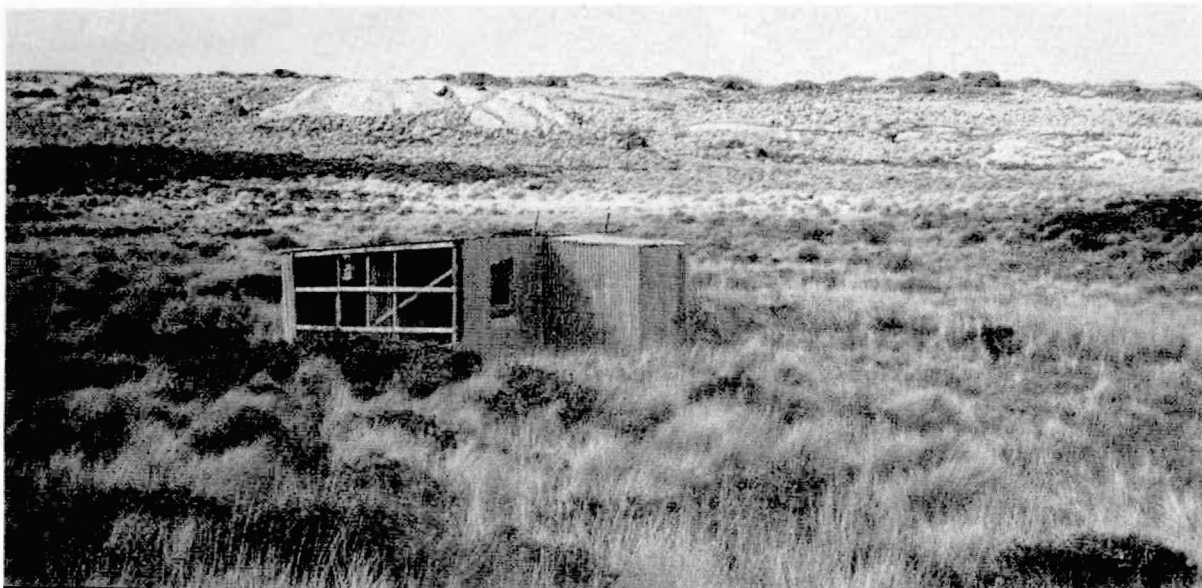
*Puffinus tenuirostris* Short-tailed Shearwater — Abundant over some 75 ha. Burrow density calculated from 24 transects (5 of 100 × 2 m, and 19 of 30 × 1 m) and placed at random, was  $0.46 \pm 0.08$  burrows/m<sup>2</sup> (at 95% confidence limits  $\pm 2$  S.E.). Density by area gives an estimated 352 000 burrows.



*Haematopus longirostris* Pied Oystercatcher — Brothers found a nest containing two eggs on the beach at the northern end of the island.

*Hydroprogne caspia* Caspian Tern — Brothers found one pair with one egg on the stack.

*Sterna striata* White-fronted Tern — On 9 December 1986 Brothers found three nest scrapes on the stack; they were being defended by six adult terns. A week later Skira found only one adult tern and the nests were empty.



● Little Dog Island (looking north) with an old muttonbirders' shed in the foreground.

Photo: I. J. Skira

#### Factors Affecting Status

Shearwaters were harvested commercially until 1970 with an annual harvest of about 30 000 chicks from four sheds. Lord<sup>1</sup> commented in 1908 that the "owners have not stocked for over 30 years, being of the opinion that the birds pay them better, and that stock destroys mutton-bird rookeries". Unfortunately, this management did not go hand in hand with fire management. Lord<sup>1</sup> noticed belts of what he termed fennel but it was, in fact, most likely a fire-weed *Senecio* sp. A Tasmanian native, *Senecio*, occupies areas that have been disturbed by fires, five to ten years ago. The natural process is for *Poa* tussocks to recolonize progressively the areas covered with *Senecio*. Firing only serves to open up the community and provide ideal conditions for further colonization by fire-weed. Little Dog Island was last burnt in March 1973.

#### OTHER VERTEBRATES

Black Rat *Rattus rattus*, House Mouse *Mus musculus* and Feral Cat *Felis catus* are present.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose

#### Banding

Period March 1947 to March 1970.

*Puffinus tenuirostris* — 5 238 fledglings. No figures on recoveries are available. The banding programme was to estimate the number of chicks harvested using the Lincoln Index Method.

#### Bibliography

1. Lord, J. E. C. (1908). Furneaux Islands: Report upon the state of the islands. Tasmanian House of Assembly Parl. Paper No. 57.

#### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Neil Smith for taking one of us (NPB) to Little Dog Island in his vessel "Wild Wind".

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