

Ben Island, Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia

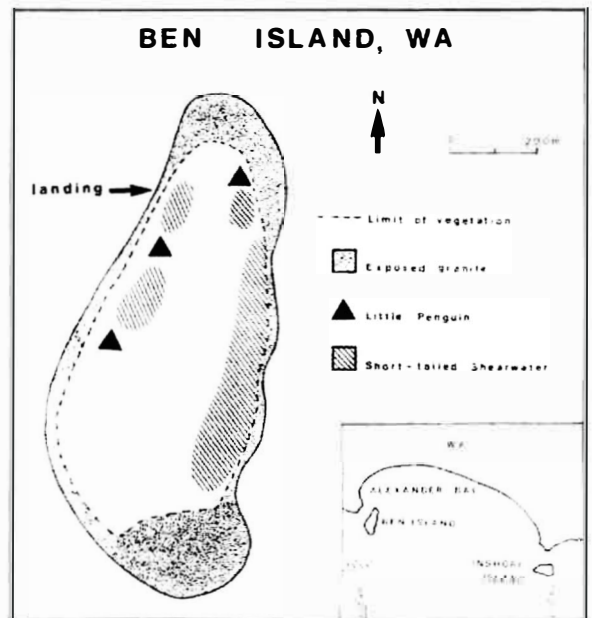
Location: 33°54'S., 122°45'E.; 500 metres off-shore in the western end of Alexander Bay, about 80 kilometres east of Esperance, W.A.

Status: Class "A" Reserve vested in the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management.

Description: 55 ha. height 59 m; a granite island about 1 200 m long by 500 m wide with much of the northern, eastern and southern parts exposed granite. The steep slopes of the eastern face are open and grassy (*Poa* sp.) with scattered low *Atriplex* sp. The protected western side has some tall *Hakea* sp. (up to 3 m), *Melaleuca lanceolata* and *Acacia cyclops* on the deeper sands; *Myoporum insulare*, *Olearia* sp., *Frankenia* sp. and other shrubs occur on the shallower soils.

Landing: An easy landing on to rocks on the sheltered western side.

Ornithological History: There is no previous ornithological history. R. E. Johnstone and L. A. Smith visited the island for two hours on 25 February and one hour on 21 April 1986. R. E. Johnstone, L. A. Smith, N. Klomp, M. Burke and A. Byrne visited the island for two and a half hours on 11 December 1987.



Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — In February one moulting adult was found in a burrow on the western side of the island. In December 31 nests



● Ben Island, eastern side (looking south).



● Another view of the eastern side (looking north) with mainland in the background.

Photos: L. A. Smith

were found; one contained an adult, one an adult with an eight-week old chick, six contained chicks ranging from 3-8 weeks old, 17 were empty but recently used and six were old nests. Estimated 30-50 breeding pairs.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — About 5 000 pairs breed on the island. Most burrows are on the steep, grassy south-eastern slope in an area some 600 m long and 60-100 m wide. In the centre of the colony 22 burrows were counted in an area 10 m square and near the northern end 45 burrows were counted in an area 10 m square. In February, 30 burrows were examined. Twenty contained downy young (weight of one 620 g) and one contained an adult male on an empty nest of leaves and twigs. In April burrows examined contained fully feathered young with traces of down on the neck and thighs. There was evidence that some young had already left the colony: three "paddlers" were seen on the water about 1 km off the south-eastern end of the island. In December five burrows were examined; four contained an adult incubating an egg and one contained two adults.

Factors Affecting Status

At present there is no indication of human interference. However, the island is very accessible and Alexander Bay is a popular recreation area. In April, 50 Australian Ravens *Corvus coronoides* were seen around the Short-tailed Shearwater colony. No doubt they would take some young birds and eggs.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

The following reptiles were recorded: *Phyllodactylus marmoratus marmoratus*, *Ctenopus labillardieri* and *Egernia napoleonis*.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus pacificus</i>	Pacific Gull
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern

Banding

Nil.

Acknowledgements

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