

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 154

Davie Cay, Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

Location: 13° 59' S., 144° 27' E.: 21 kilometres north-north-west of Cape Melville, Cape York Peninsula, Qld; on Davie Reef on the western side of Melville Passage and six kilometres west of Tydeman Cay.

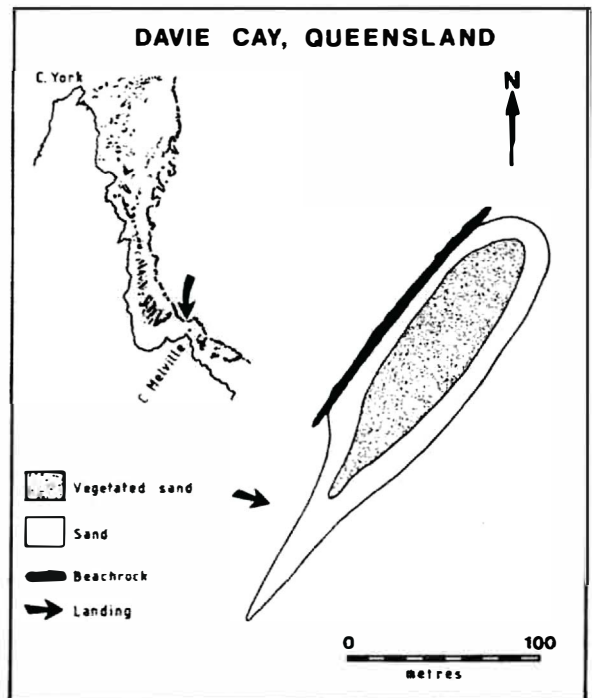
Status: Vacant Crown Land; Queensland Fauna Sanctuary. Because the cay is officially unnamed there is some uncertainty as to its status.

Other Name: Tydeman Reef Cay² (incorrectly). Here it is given the name of its reef.

Description: 1.0 ha; 260 m x 50 m and rising to two metres above high water level. A low sand cay, it is generally flat on top and sloping away steeply to the reef flat. A line of beachrock lies along the southern side. The cay has a central grass flat surrounded by a wide belt of open vegetation which gives way to bare sand on its outer circumference. The strand area is subjected to heavy turtle digging in the summer. The grass flat contains mostly the grass *Lepturus repens* with associated plants *Achyranthes aspera*, *Boerhavia repens*, *Tribulus cistoides* and *Portulaca oleracea*. The strand vegetation consists of clumps of low shrub *Salsola kali* with occasional *Tribulus*, *Boerhavia* and *Portulaca*, and also the vine *Ipomea* sp.

Landing: Onto the beach at the western end.

Ornithological History: There are no records prior to a visit by R. C. Buckley on 8 December, 1979, to note vegetation and birds. Groups with B. R. King have made two visits, on 27 June, 1981 and 13 December, 1982, each for 1.5 hours.



The cay was mapped and records made of vegetation and seabirds. Lavery and Grimes² and Kikkawa¹ referred to the cay as a breeding site for Sooty Terns.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Sula leucogaster Brown Booby — Present on all visits, breeding in a small colony in summer throughout the vegetated area with most nests in the central grassflat. In December, 1982, there

were 36 nests containing eggs and young at all stages to unfledged juveniles, and a further 100 non-breeding adults.

Sterna sumatrana Black-naped Tern — Present on most visits. Reported breeding in September, 1984, in a colony of some 250 pairs (A. Taplin, pers. comm.).

Sterna fuscata Sooty Tern — Breeding in June, 1981, throughout the vegetated area, with over 500 nests and at least 1 500 birds on the cay. The nest is a rudimentary scrape in the sand in which the single egg is laid.

Sterna anaethetus Bridled Tern — At least 10 pairs were in residence in December, 1982, but no nests were found. The behaviour of pairs suggested they were breeding.

Anous stolidus Common Noddy — Breeding in June, 1981, with about 400 nests throughout the vegetated area. Over 1 000 birds were present on the cay. Nests are mostly placed on clumps of *Lepturus* grass, but other vegetation is also used; some nests were on the ground. The nest is attractively lined with a layer of bleached coral chips and shells; a single egg is laid.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pelecanus conspicillatus</i>	Australian Pelican
<i>Fregata ariel</i>	Least Frigatebird
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Roseate Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern
<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Lesser Crested Tern
<i>Anous minutus</i>	Black Noddy (c500, December, 1982).

Factors Affecting Status

Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas*, Hawksbill *Eretmochelys imbricata* and possibly Flatback Turtles *C. depressa* nest on the cay from October to April. Turtle nest excavations and movements remove most of the strand vegetation and destroy numbers of seabird nests. Silver Gulls predate any unattended eggs and small chicks. Human disturbance on the cay is low.

Banding

Sula leucogaster — 15 chicks (13.12.82).

Bibliography

1. Kikkawa, J. (1976), The Birds of the Great Barrier Reef. Chapter 9 in Jones, C. A. and R. Endean (Eds). *Biology and Geology of Coral Reefs*, vol. III: 297-341. Academic Press, New York.
2. Lavery, H. J. and R. J. Grimes (1971), 'Seabirds of the Great Barrier Reef', *Qld. Agric. J.* 97: 106-113.

Acknowledgements

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