

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 155

## Tydeman Cay, Great Barrier Reef, Queensland

**Location:** 13° 59' S., 144° 30' E.: 20 kilometres north of Cape Melville, Cape York, Peninsula, Queensland. The cay is located on the western end of Tydeman Reef on the eastern side of Melville Passage.

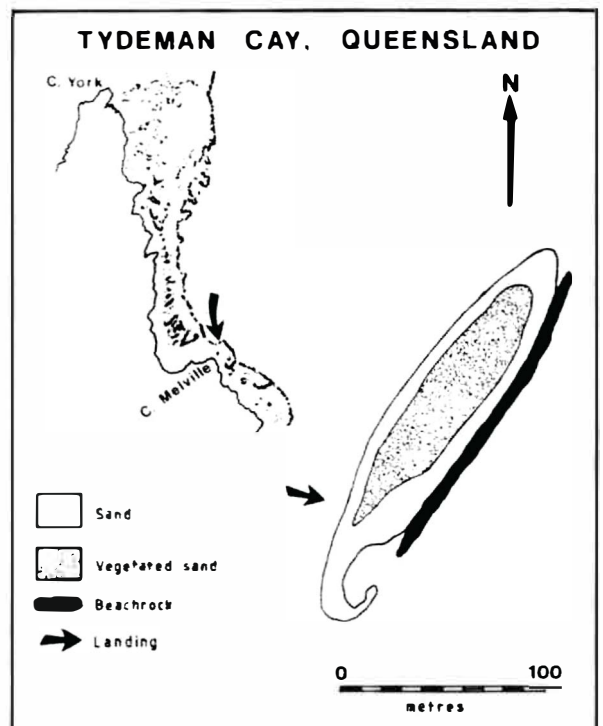
**Status:** Vacant Crown Land; a Fauna Sanctuary. Because the cay has never been officially named there is some doubt about its status.

**Other Names:** An unnamed cay for which the name of its reef is used here.

**Description:** 1.0 ha; 200 m x 40 m and rising to about two metres above the spring high tide level. A low sand cay of the outer Great Barrier Reef, the upper surface is generally flat with the outer edges sloping steeply towards the reef flat. A line of beachrock extends along the south-eastern side below high water level, enclosing a small lagoon at the southern end. The upper surface is sparsely vegetated. A central area of *Lepturus* grassflat is surrounded by a wide belt of sparse strandline vegetation with abundant turtle nest cavities in the summer months. The grassflat contains mostly the grass *Lepturus repens* with associated herbs *Boerhavia repens* and *Portulaca oleracea*. The strand community is sparsely vegetated with the shrub *Salsola kali*, the creeping plant *Tribulus cistoides* and some *Portulaca oleracea*.

**Landing:** Onto the beach at the south-western end.

**Ornithological History:** There have been no recorded visits to the cay prior to that by R. C. Buckley on 8 December, 1979, to record vegetation and seabirds. B. R. King visited the cay on



27 June, 1981 and 13 December, 1982, for nearly two hours each time; the cay was mapped, and vegetation and seabirds noted. Lavery and Grimes<sup>2</sup> and Kikkawa<sup>1</sup> referred to the Cay as a breeding site for Sooty Terns.

#### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Sula leucogaster* Brown Booby — Nesting throughout the year, with only eight active nests in June, 1981 and a maximum of 738 nests in

December, 1982. In winter the nests were located in an area of sparse *Portulaca* and *Boerhavia* in the central grassflat. In summer the nesting area covered the whole island with the majority of nests located in the central grassflat. Nests are built on the ground and are lined mainly with small driftwood sticks and other flotsam, with some vegetation from the island.

*Sterna fuscata* Sooty Tern — Breeds in mid-year. In June, 1981, there were about 200 juveniles and some 50 nests with eggs or small chicks, at the north-eastern end of the vegetated area.

*Sterna anaethetus* Bridled Tern — Breeds in summer. About 10 pairs were present in December, 1982, scattered through the vegetated area.

*Anous stolidus* Common Noddy — Breeds in mid-year with only a few birds present in December. In June, 1981, there were about 300 adult birds on the cay, with a large number of mainly juveniles and some younger chicks distributed amongst the vegetation. Nest were built on vegetation, and clumps of *Lepturus* grass are the preferred sites.

#### Factors Affecting Status

Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas* nest over much of the cay during summer. Their movements and digging affect both the vegetation and nesting

seabirds. Silver Gulls, with only a maximum of 12 recorded, heavily predate unattended eggs and small chicks.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Sterna dougallii</i>	Roseate Tern
<i>Sterna sumatrana</i>	Black-naped Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern
<i>Sterna bengalensis</i>	Lesser Crested Tern

#### Banding

Nil.

#### Bibliography

1. Kikkawa, J. (1976), The Birds of the Great Barrier Reef. Chapter 5 in Jones, C. A. and R. Endean (Eds), 1976. 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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## BIRD ISLANDS



• Upper-North Bird Isle; Lower-South Bird Isle (looking north).



• North Bird Isle.

Photos: D. Hopley