

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 62

Hamelin Island, Western Australia

Location: 34°13' S., 115°01' E.; about 25 km north-west of Cape Leeuwin, W.A. and 700 m offshore from White Cliff Point.

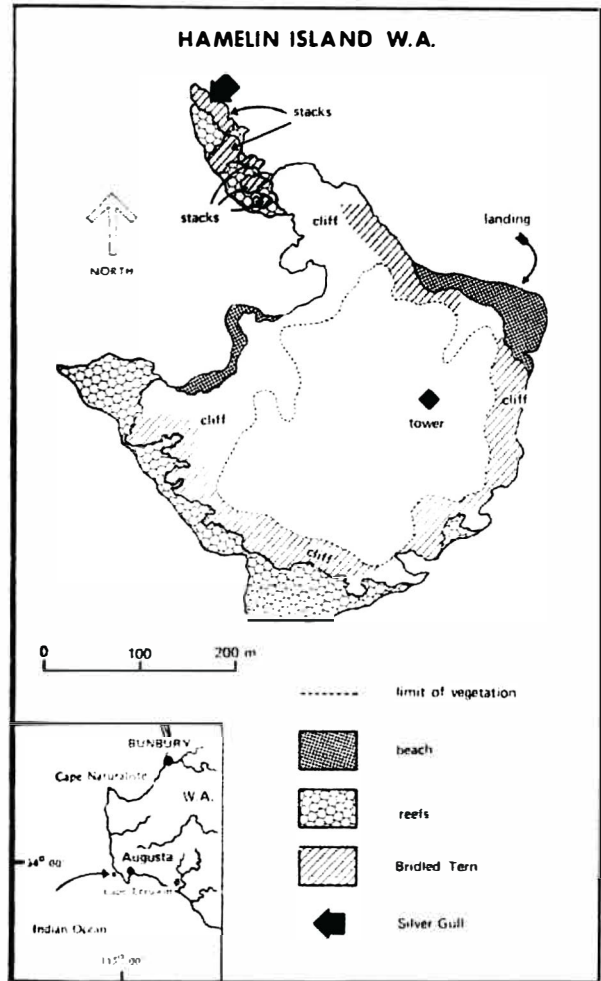
Status: Class A Reserve vested in the Western Australian Wildlife Authority.

Description: 10 ha; 400 m by 300 m, rising to 32 m at the highest point, on which stands a disused automatic navigation light-tower. The island consists of aeolianite limestone with a thick capping of dune sand over most of it. The north and west coasts have sandy beaches, but the rest of the perimeter is made up of scree and cliffs. The north-west corner is broken up into a series of limestone stacks.

The flora of the island consists of 44 plant species. Vegetation around the edge of the island, and much of the west (weather) side, consists of low (to 1 m), scattered bushes of *Acacia littorea*, *A. cyclops*, *Boronia alata*, *Acrotriche cordata*, *Scaevola crassifolia* and *Pimelea ferruginea*. *Carpobrotus virescens* is common there too. There are extensive areas of freshly exposed limestone and blow-outs on the west side. These are devoid of any plant species. In the centre of the island, dense thickets of Peppermint *Agonis flexuosa* (to 4 m), *Spyridium globulosum* (to 2 m) and *Leucopogon parviflorus* (to 2 m) are interlaced with the climber *Clematis pubescens*. The sedges *Lepidosperma gladiatum* and *L. angustatum*, the lily *Acanthocarpus preissii* and the grass *Poa australis* make up a widespread ground cover. The vegetation of the stacks off the north-western corner is dominated by *Carpobrotus*, *Salicornia blackiana* and *Calocephalus brownii*.

Landing: In suitable weather landing is no problem onto a sandy beach on the north side.

Ornithological History: Gillham¹, ² visited the island apparently for a few hours on 3 November 1959. She recorded only a few Silver Gulls breeding. Abbott spent from 31 January-5 February



1977 on the island. He found about ten holes, each some 10 cm diameter, under *Nitraria* bushes on the outer-most stack from the north-western corner. The burrows, not in use, were thought to belong to Little Shearwaters *Puffinus assimilis*; they may have belonged to White-faced Storm-



- Hamelin Island (looking south). The landing place is in the foreground, and the white patch near the centre of the island is the disused light-tower.



- View from the west side of the island (looking north-east) with the mainland in the background. Part of a disused flying fox and buildings are visible in the background. Vegetation in the foreground is low (to 1 m), the remainder higher to 4 m).

petrels *Pelagodroma marina* though they seemed larger in diameter than normal for that species. Warham² recorded the Bridled Tern breeding on one of the stacks in December 1955.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull—Gillham¹, ² found two small colonies, one of 70-80 birds with several almost fully fledged chicks at the south-eastern end of the island, and the other of 50 birds on a stack (not visited by her) off the north-western tip. Abbott saw 2-4 birds around the

island, and two old nests on the outermost stack. A few probably breed irregularly on the island.

Sterna anaetheta Bridled Tern—This species was not recorded by Gillham in 1959, though she found them breeding on Seal Island, Cape Leeuwin¹ at that time. In 1977 about 1 000 birds were present, around the cliffs and on the stacks, but never on the plateau. One nest contained an egg and three nests had chicks.

Sterna bergii Crested Tern—Recorded breeding on the island³ but no details are available.

Factors Affecting Status

As the island is only a few minutes' boat trip from Hamelin Bay Caravan Park, heavy usage by visitors probably occurs during holiday periods. During the visit in 1977, numerous people landed on the island and walked to the disused building along the access path of the old flying fox. That path is eroding badly. The bush on the plateau is thick enough to discourage people walking over most of the area. No large lizard species were seen by Abbott during his visit.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Haematopus ostralegus Pied Oystercatcher
Haematopus fuliginosus Sooty Oystercatcher

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Gillham, M. E. (1963), 'Association of Nesting Seabirds and Vegetation Types on Islands off Cape Leeuwin, South-western Australia', *West. Aust. Nat.* 9: 29-46.
2. Gillham, M. E. (Ms.), 'Hamelin Island, North of Cape Leeuwin' (unpublished).
3. Serventy, D. L., V. N. Serventy and J. Warham (1971). *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds*. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Sydney.

Acknowledgements

I thank Arthur Horner for transporting me to and from the island. Field expenses were met by a grant from A.R.G.C. Jim Lane kindly provided me with a copy of the unpublished manuscript by Dr M. E. Gillham.

Date compiled:
9 November 1977

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