

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 98

## Killarney Reef, Victoria

**Location:** 38°22'S., 142°20'E.; 11 km east-north-east from Port Fairy and 18 km west-north-west from Warrnambool, Victoria, 750 m offshore from Sisters Point, Killarney, between Killarney and Armstrong Bays.

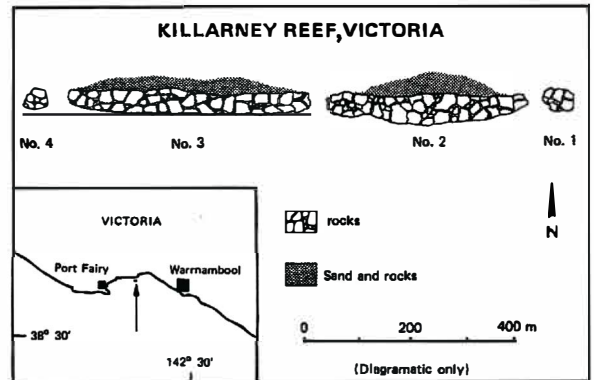
**Status:** Crown land.

**Other Names:** Gull Islands, Long Reef.

**Description:** There are four islands in this group, being the exposed parts of a reef locally known as "The Long Reef" that extends for some 8 km parallel to the shore. Each island comprises piled basalt boulders on the south and west tapering to sand on the shoreward side of the larger two islands. For convenience, in this description they are numbered 1 to 4 from east to west.

**No. 1** — small, boulder-strewn and often under water. It is not used for breeding.

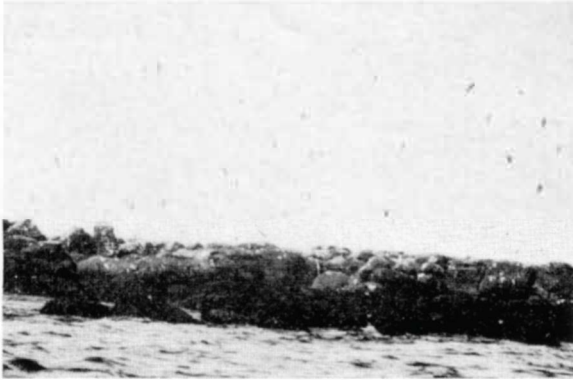
**No. 2** — about 33 ha, 90 m by 370 m, with boulders ranging from some 4 m high on the seaward side to low flat rocks interspersed with sand on the shoreward side. The only vegetation is sparse *Cakile maritima*. Kelp and seaweed surround the island.



**No. 3** — about 31 ha, 70 m by 450 m, with boulders ranging from about 2 m high on the seaward side to low flats rocks and sand on the shoreward side. There is no vegetation and it too is surrounded by kelp and seaweed.

**No. 4** — known as "Pelican Island" after the ship of an early explorer named Armstrong. It is composed of boulders, without sand or vegetation, and is not used for breeding.

**Landing:** Onto beaches (on No. 2 and No. 3) in calm weather only; underwater rocks are a hazard.



• *Gulls and terns over No. 1 Island.*

**Ornithological History:** There appear to be no published records of the early ornithological history. Misses Bowker and Brady regularly observed and visited the islands after 1950 and banded Silver Gulls and Crested Terns<sup>1,2</sup>.

#### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher — A pair has been known to nest on the reef for over 30 years. The nests are situated in thick black kelp just above the tide mark. Eggs are usually laid in October or November.

*Larus novaehollandiae* Silver Gull — The gulls breed on the lower shoreside of No. 2 and No. 3 islands from September to December. Nests are made of seaweed and Marram Grass from the mainland; they are sited on the sand and between rocks. Egg-laying usually commences in September, but many eggs laid in that month are washed away by the big seas. Estimated 500 breeding pairs.

*Sterna bergii* Crested Tern — The terns commence to breed after the gulls have left; the eggs are laid on the shell beds and no material is used in construction. Estimated 200 breeding pairs.

#### Factors Affecting Status

High seas in early spring usually wash over the rocks and many nests are destroyed. This has occurred as often as three times in one season but the gulls have persisted in re-nesting each time. The Crested Terns do not suffer such

hazards in December and January but the re-nesting of the gulls in such circumstances, prevents the terns nesting.

#### OTHER VERTEBRATES

None recorded.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

*Sterna striata* White-fronted Tern

#### Banding

Period — 16.12.56 to 30.6.77.

*Larus novaehollandiae* — 1 501 nestlings; 20 adults: 18 recoveries away from banding place.

*Sterna bergii* — 68 nestlings; no recoveries reported.

#### Bibliography

1. Carrick, R. C., W. R. Wheeler and M. D. Murray (1957), 'Seasonal Dispersal and Mortality in the Silver Gull, *Larus novaehollandiae* Stephens, and Crested Tern, *Sterna bergii* Lichtenstein', *CSIRO Wildl. Res.* 2:116-144.
2. Murray, M. D. and R. Carrick (1964), 'Seasonal Movements and Habits of the Silver Gull, *Larus novaehollandiae* Stephens., in South-eastern Australia', *CSIRO Wildl. Res.* 9:160-188.

#### Acknowledgements

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