

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 82

Seal Island, Seal Islands Group, Victoria

Location: 38°56'S., 146°39'E.; 15 km east of Wilsons Promontory, Vic.

Status: Crown land, reserved under the Lands Act, 1958.

Other Name: Direction Island.

Description: 18 ha; maximum length 600 m by 450 m wide; height 47 m. Most of this granite island is covered by *Poa poiiformis*, with some *Senecio lautus* and occasional stunted *Correa alba*. *Carpobrotus rossii* occurs around the coastline and over much of the northern promontory. The cliffs are steep and high on the eastern side only.

Landing: At a small cove on the northern side, where there is a safe anchorage.

Ornithological History: A reference to the "myriads of muttonbirds and penguins"³ and Dorward's¹ record of four pairs of Cape Barren Geese are the only previous ornithological information.

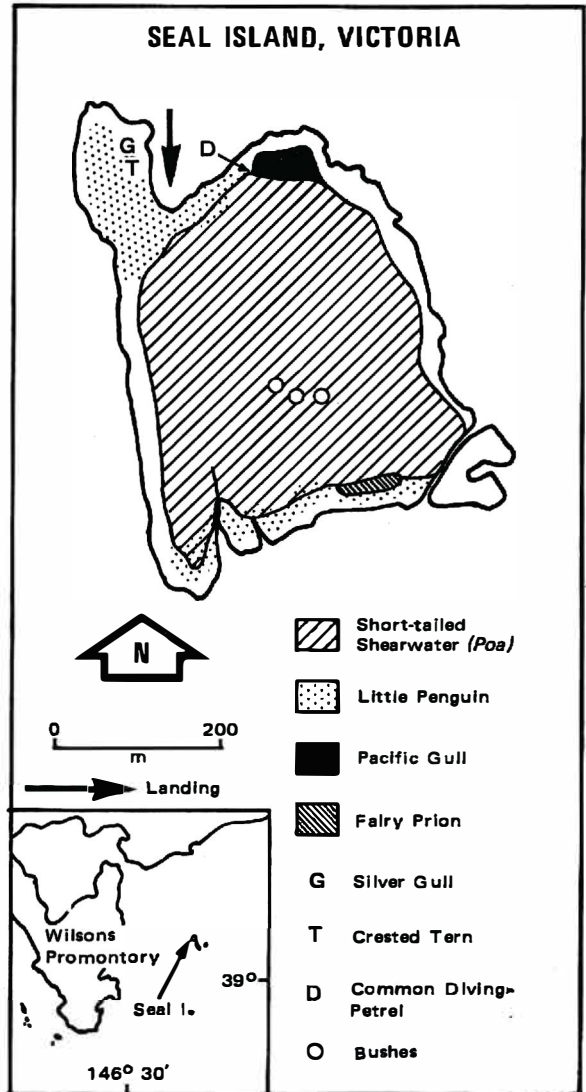
We visited the island for about 1.5 hours on 21 December 1978.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Burrows were found on the northern promontory, inland from the landing beach, and at the base of the southern cliffs. The burrows were not counted but the island's population is probably some hundreds of pairs.

Pachyptila turtur Fairy Prion — A colony, of perhaps several hundred burrows, was found on the top of the southern cliffs.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — Burrows occurred throughout the 11.3 ha of the *Poa* stand. The mean burrow density was



0.47/m² in thirty 20 m² quadrats and the population was estimated at 54 000 burrows (95% confidence interval 46 800-60 400) but, since burrows were often difficult to find in the dense



• Seal Island (looking south-west).

tussocks, the population may be higher. Forty-one of 60 burrows examined had an egg present on 21 December.

Pelecanoides urinatrix Common Diving-Petrel — In December 1978 one dead young and several dead adults were found near the landing beach; the species presumably breeds on the island.

Cereopsis novaehollandiae Cape Barren Goose — About 30 geese were seen, including 3 quarter-grown young.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — About 20 pairs were breeding on the northern promontory.

Larus pacificus Pacific Gull — A large colony of about 100 pairs, with many young and some eggs, was present on the northern side in December.

Sterna bergii Crested Tern — Six pairs each with a single egg were present within the Silver Gull colony.

Factors Affecting Status

Young shearwaters are taken by humans for food and several piles of wings and feathers left from such predation in the 1977 breeding season were on the landing beach. This predation may affect the population size, as could the soil erosion which is occurring on the southern side. Penguins may be taken for crayfish bait since this island provides a safe anchorage for fishing boats.

Other Seabirds Recorded

Phalacrocorax carbo Great Cormorant
Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*



• Prion nesting area on the south coast.



• View of the north-eastern corner.

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Dorward, D. F. (1967), 'The status of the Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*', *Bull. int. Comm. Bird Preserv.* 10:56-71.
2. Ports and Harbours (1959), *Sailing Directions Victoria including Bass Strait.* Dept. of Public Works, Melbourne. 6th Edition. (835 pp.).

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