

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 91

McHugh Island, Glennie Group, Victoria

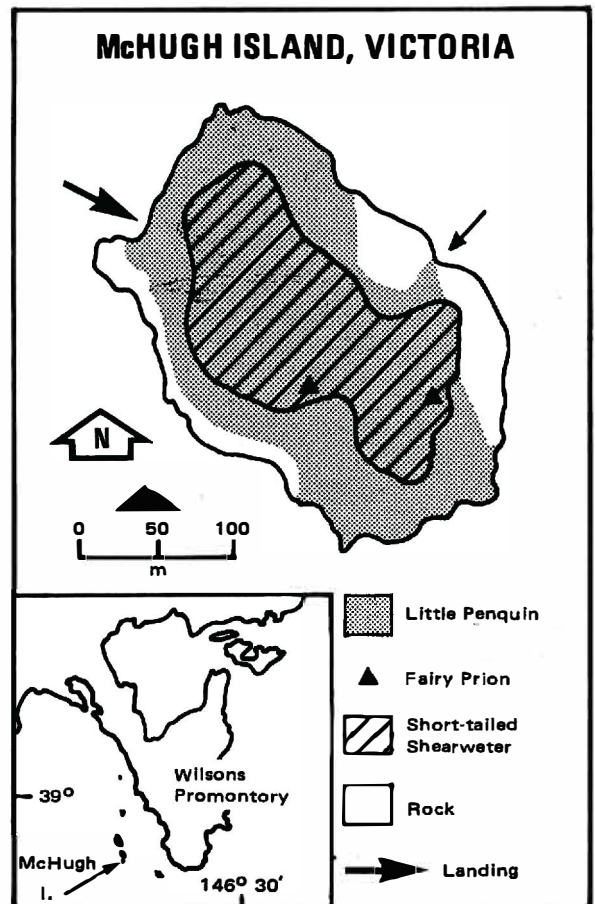
Location: 39°06'S., 146°14'E.; the southernmost island in the Glennie Group, 11.5 km south-west from Norman Bay and 8.5 km from the nearest mainland, Wilsons Promontory, Vic.

Status: Part of Wilsons Promontory National Park, controlled by the National Parks Service (Victoria); access restricted.

Description: 9.2 ha; this rocky granite island is about 425 m long, 270 m wide and 65 m high. Most of the vegetated area is covered with *Poa poiformis* tussock, and associated with it are *Lavatera plebeia*, *Pelargonium australe*, *Tetragonia implexicoma*, *Helichrysum bracteatum*. *Correa alba*, *Rhagodia baccata* and some *Acacia stricta* are also present. The vegetation was documented in detail by M. E. Gillham² in 1959. A large part of the overall area comprises boulders and exposed rock.

Landing: Onto rocks on the north-east or north-west sides depending on conditions; probably not possible in rough weather.

Ornithological History: Gillham² noted muttonbird, penguin and diving-petrel burrows, with evidence of Cape Barren Geese. D. F. Dorward¹ recorded one pair of the latter species in 1964. S. G. Lane and H. Battam⁴ made a brief visit to the island on 24 November 1978, recording Fairy Prions and Pacific Gulls breeding. We visited the island for an hour on 11 December 1978. Lane (pers. comm.) made a second visit with B. Robertson on 13 November 1979.



Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Eleven occupied burrows were found in 50 quadrats (20 m²) placed at about 10 m intervals on a transect of the whole island, giving an estimate of 1 000 burrows. Burrows were found among tussocks and under rocks, and many dead young were seen. In November 1979, Lane found adults incubating eggs or brooding small chicks; seven large, unattended nestlings were found.

Pachyptila turtur Fairy Prion — In November 1978 two prions were found, each incubating an egg⁴. A single smashed egg of this species (or of a Common Diving-Petrel) was found by us. Three adults were each incubating an egg in November 1979.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — The mean burrow density in 50 quadrats (20 m²) placed at about 10 m intervals on a transect of the *Poa* tussock area (3.9 ha) was 0.16/m², giving a population estimate of 6 200 burrows (95% confidence interval 4 500-7 900).

Pelecanoides urinatrix Common Diving-Petrel — Gillham^{2,3}, in 1959, reported hundreds of small burrows (in the *Poa* area, concentrated on the lower northern slopes), which she attributed to this species as a few dead birds were found. None was found in the visits in 1978 or 1979.

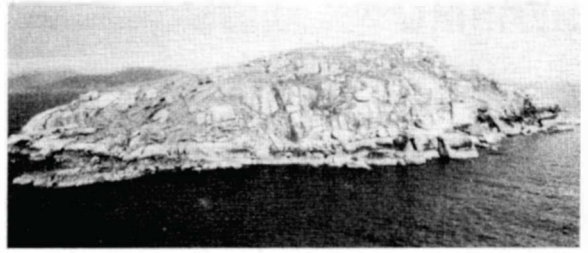
Larus pacificus Pacific Gull — Lane⁴ recorded one nest with and egg in November 1978. In November 1979, Robertson found two freshly built nests and two containing eggs; he also counted 10 adults.

Factors Affecting Status

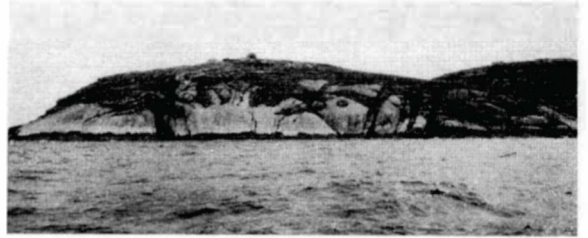
In 1959, Gillham² found that much of the vegetation had been destroyed by the birds and that soil erosion was occurring on the upper slopes. We saw little sign of this erosion and the breeding colonies appeared secure.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose (A pair in 1964 ¹ ; two on 11 Dec. '78)
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull



• McHugh Island (looking north-east).



• The north-eastern side of the island with Citadel Island in the background at right.

Banding

- E. minor* — 2 nestlings (13 Nov. 79).
P. turtur — 2 adults (24 Nov. 78).
P. tenuirostris — 1 adult (24 Nov. 78).

Bibliography

1. Dorward, D. F. (1967), 'The status of the Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*', *Bull. int. Comm. Bird Preserv.* 10:56-71.
2. Gillham, M. E. (1961), 'Plants and seabirds of granite islands in south-east Victoria', *Proc. R. Soc. Vict.* 74:21-35.
3. Gillham, M. E. (1962), 'Granite islands of south-east Victoria as a seabird habitat', *Proc. R. Soc. Vict.* 75:46-63.
4. Lane, S. G. (1979), 'A visit to islands of Wilsons Promontory, Victoria', *Corella* 3:29-30.

Date compiled: 20 February 1980.

M. P. Harris* and D. M. Deerson†.

* Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Banchory Research Station, Hill of Brathens, Banchory, Kincardineshire, AB3 4BY, U.K.

† Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research Fisheries and Wildlife Division, 123 Brown Street, Heidelberg, Vic., 3084.