

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 92

## Citadel Island, Glennie Group, Victoria

**Location:** 39°07'S., 146°14'E.; 7.75 km southwest from Tidal River, Wilsons Promontory, Victoria.

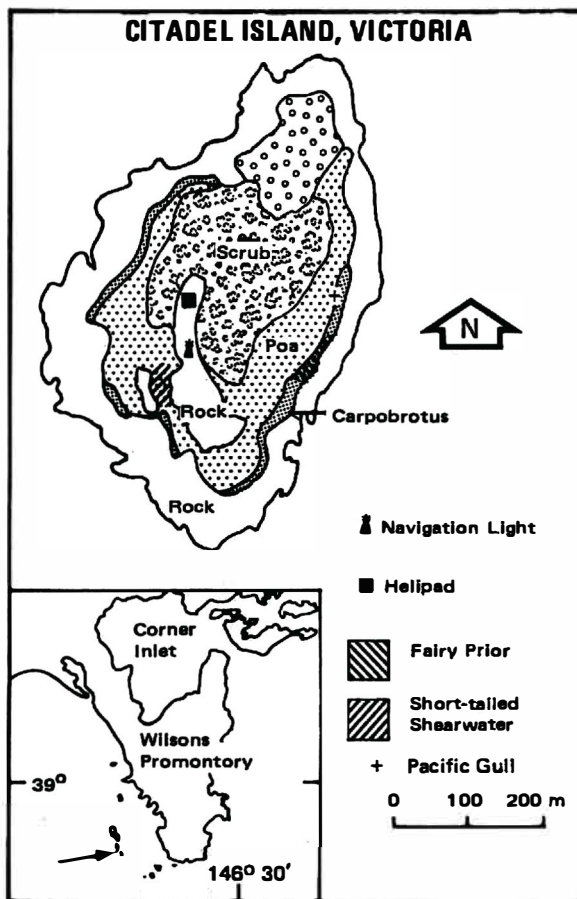
**Status:** Controlled by the Commonwealth Department of Transport (Surface Transport, Vic. Region); access restricted.

**Description:** A domed granite island of about 18 ha, some 675 m long by 415 m wide, rising to a flattened summit, 110 m above m.s.l., where there is an automatic navigation light and a concrete helipad. The island is exposed, primarily to westerlies, with only some shelter being provided by neighbouring Dannevig Island to the north and McHugh Island to the east. Much of the island's surface is bare rock, in sheets, blocks or boulders, and vegetation is restricted to three major communities: (a) *Poa poiformis* mainly on the more sheltered, eastern side, (b) *Disphyma australe*, growing in sheets above the splash zone, again mostly on the eastern side and (c) *Leptospermum laevigatum* scrub, which included *Correa alba* and *Albizia lophantha*<sup>5</sup>. Where soil occurs, it is generally shallow, but the vegetation is currently more extensive than that reported in 1959 by M. E. Gillham<sup>1,2,3</sup>. Further botanical details are given elsewhere<sup>1,2,3,5</sup>.

The coastline is entirely rock, either massive boulders or sheets sloping or shelving into deep water surrounding the island.

**Landing:** Onto rocks, the location depending on wind and swell. The eastern side is usually the most accessible.

**Ornithological History:** F. Wood Jones<sup>6</sup> apparently visited the island but Gillham<sup>2,3</sup> seems to have been the first to discuss the avifauna. She noted breeding Little Penguins and saw Cape Barren Geese and Pacific Gulls. In November 1978, H. Battam and S. G. Lane found nests of Pacific Gulls and Fairy Prions on the eastern side in the limited area covered by them during their brief visit.<sup>4</sup> We spent about one hour on



the island on 11 December 1978 and about four hours on 13 February 1979. Lane and Battam (pers. comm.) again visited the island for a short time with B. Robertson on 13 November 1979.

## Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — This species was reported to be numerous in 1959<sup>2</sup> but we found only 30 nests and a further 15 burrows occupied by moulting birds. These were scattered



• Citadel Island from the air (looking south-west).



• Another aerial view (looking north-east).

around the lower slopes, in *Poa* and under rocks. As this species also nests well under overhangs or in deep crevices, our count must be minimal.

*Pachyptila turtur* Fairy Prion — Lane<sup>4</sup> recorded nesting burrows, presumed to be this species, in November 1978 and we counted about 50 burrows, mostly under *Carpobrotus*; two burrows examined each contained a bird on an egg. Neither Gillham<sup>3</sup> nor Wood Jones<sup>6</sup> mentioned the species.

*Puffinus tenuirostris* Short-tailed Shearwater — Gillham found no shearwaters nesting on Citadel Island in 1959<sup>2</sup>, nor did Lane<sup>4</sup> in the area covered during his visit. We recorded the species nesting in December 1978 and February 1979; 111 burrows were counted and those examined in December generally contained a bird on egg. Most of the burrows were concentrated within *Poa* towards the southern end but others were found throughout the community.

*Pelecanoides urinatrix* Common Diving-Petrel — A dead bird was found in December 1978, and the island may be a breeding station.

*Cereopsis novaehollandiae* Cape Barren Goose — In November 1979, Lane (pers. comm.) saw five birds on the island and found a recently-used nest built over an old Pacific Gull's nest. We saw a pair of geese in December 1978, and a non-flying young (which was flying in February 1979).

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Lane<sup>4</sup> reported an old nest of this species near the disused derrick platform in November 1978 and two nests, each with an egg, in November 1979.

### Factors Affecting Status

The scarcity of soil of adequate depth for burrowing undoubtedly restricts the number of breeding shearwaters and possibly other species. Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus*, formerly recorded as depressing the island's vegetation and increasing erosion<sup>2,3</sup>, are presumed to be extinct<sup>5</sup>. The Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* takes prions and this may modify the population size. Illegal harvesting of shearwaters is unlikely on this island.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull

### Banding

*E. minor* — 2 nestlings (13 Nov. 79).

### Bibliography

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