

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 106

## Mondrain Island, Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia

**Location:** 34°09'S., 122°15'E.; 11 km from the mainland and about 42 km south-east of Esperance, W.A.

**Status:** Class A Reserve vested in the W.A. Wildlife Authority; entry permit required.

**Description:** 787 ha; 6.6 km long and 2.6 km at its widest, Mondrain Island is the second largest island off the south coast of Western Australia. The highest point (226 m) is near the south end. The island consists of a chain of eight coalesced granite-gneiss domes, with large areas of bare rock occurring. About 150 plant species have been recorded<sup>1,9</sup>. Main habitats are dominated by two *Melaleuca* species and two *Eucalyptus* species with tall heath in the centre of the island. *Carpobrotus* and *Poa* are extensive round the edges of the island<sup>1</sup>.

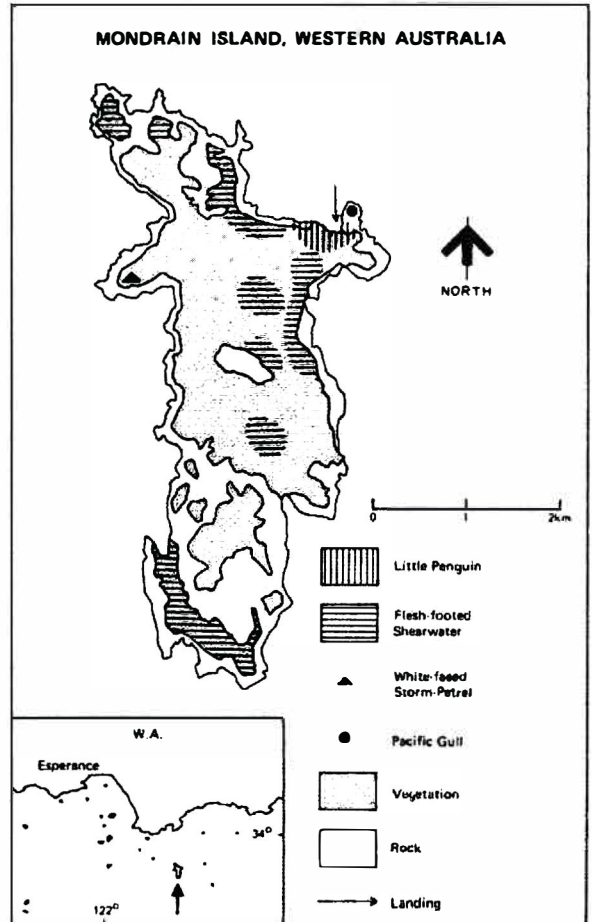
**Landing:** Fairly easy in coves on the north coast.

**Ornithological History:** J. T. Tunney<sup>8</sup> collected on Mondrain Island during two visits — 27 October to 4 November 1904 and 20 April to 2 May 1906. A. F. Basset Hull<sup>4</sup> spent two days on the island in December 1921, finding Flesh-footed Shearwaters on eggs; he briefly recorded some of the birds and other wildlife seen during the visit. V. N. Serventy<sup>11</sup> visited Mondrain from 12-18 November 1950. In addition to the Flesh-footed Shearwaters, he recorded Little Penguins and Pacific Gulls breeding. I. Abbott<sup>1</sup> visited the island from 16-29 February 1976 and 25-27 April 1977.

### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — Serventy<sup>11</sup> found a nest with two eggs in November 1950. They were common near the landing place used by Abbott but the number coming ashore fluctuated markedly from night to night.

*Puffinus carneipes* Flesh-footed Shearwater — Hull<sup>4</sup> found the colonies of this species extending over large areas. Serventy<sup>11</sup> recorded a "huge



and noisy rookery" in November 1950 but this was not the case during Abbott's visits. He found burrows of this species around the coast in *Poa* areas and under *Carpobrotus* opening in forest in the interior of the island. Specimens and an egg were collected during Hull's visit<sup>4</sup> in December. These birds usually return to their breeding island about the end of September and laying takes place at the end of November or early in December. The young leave their natal island



• View of the western half of the island (looking almost south) with the summit in the background.

by early May. No estimate of breeding numbers has been made for this large island.

*Pelagodroma marina* White-faced Storm-Petrel — In November 1950, Serventy<sup>6</sup> recorded a "small hole about two inches in diameter was commenced in the floor of one of the tents after an absence of several days". It was attributed to this species. In the 1977 visit, Abbott found a few burrows (< 10) with diameter of 10 cm on the south side of the peninsula on the west coast; these burrows were attributed to this species.

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Three pairs were present in November 1950<sup>6</sup>; one pair had two young and a nest was found with two eggs. In February 1976 two adults and two immature birds were often seen on the north-east point and an old nest was found there. Tunney collected a Pacific Gull on this island in 1904<sup>8</sup>. Two or three pairs probably breed regularly or irregularly on the island about November or December.

#### Factors Affecting Status

In January 1801, some of Flinders' crew started a fire which spread over the island<sup>2</sup>. A number of fires have been reported since, and probably these have had a serious effect on the breeding seabirds. Hull<sup>4</sup> said that "so many times have fires been put through the scrub that only possibly birds such as the Mutton Bird could survive." In January 1944, 60% of the island was burnt over<sup>3</sup> and many shearwaters were killed<sup>7</sup>. A further fire has occurred since then (D. Mackenzie, pers. comm.).

#### OTHER VERTEBRATES

King's Skink *Egernia kingii*, Carpet Snakes *Python spilotos* and the Southern Bush-Rat *Rattus fuscipes* are present and probably predate eggs. The Rock Wallaby *Petrogale penicillata* may cause some burrows to collapse.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	Great-winged Petrel*
<i>Phalacrocorax fuscescens</i>	Black-faced Shag
<i>Cereopsis novaehollandiae</i>	Cape Barren Goose
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher
<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	Caspian Tern
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern

\* From the campsite on 26 April 1977, heard calling once but no evidence of breeding obtained; the bird may have been feeding in the cove.

#### Banding

Nil.

#### Bibliography

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