

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 108

Bald Island, Western Australia

Location: 34°55'S., 118°27'E.: 1.2 km from the mainland at Channel Point and about 50 km north-north-east of Albany, W.A.

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

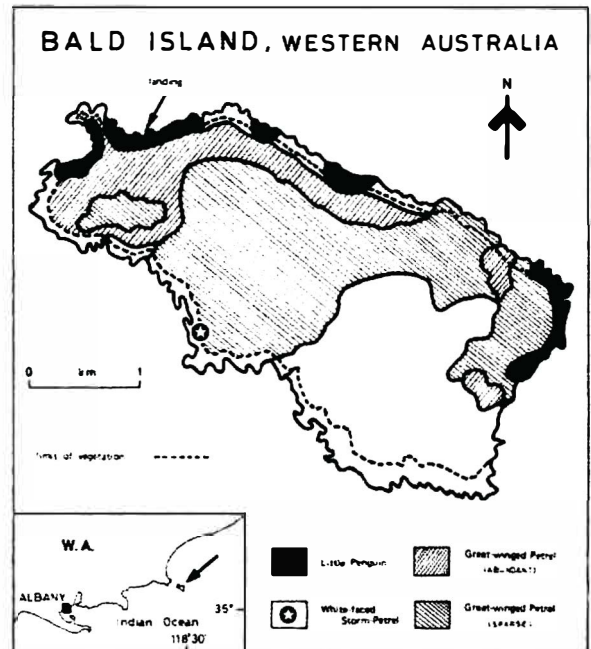
Description: 717 ha; 4.6 km long by 2.3 km at the widest. Bald Island is the third largest island off the southern coast of W.A. The highest point, near the south-east end, reaches 311 m. The island is granite-gneiss with eroded aeolianite limestone capping on the north-west corner. Good depths of soil cover most of the island apart from the rocky south-west corner. Over 100 species of plants have been recorded¹. The vegetation comprises seven fairly discrete communities dominated by the following genera: Succulent zone (*Carpobrotus*, *Maireana* and *Sarcocornia*), Moonah forest (*Melaleuca lanceolata* on limestone on the north-east side), tall heath (*Melaleuca microphylla*/*Darwinia vestita* mainly on the north-east side), Peppermint forest (*Agonis flexuosa*), stands of *Eucalyptus lehmannii*, open heath (on the south-west corner), and tussockland (*Poa australis*, *Scirpus nodosus* and *Lepidosperma gladiatum*).

Landing: Landing may be effected at various places on the north-west, north or north-east coasts, depending on weather conditions.

Ornithological History: The first recorded ornithological visit to the island was apparently by G. M. Storr¹ from 30 May to 4 June 1959. He found Great-winged Petrels nesting extensively, most birds incubating their single egg. G. T. Smith² made visits from 27-29 October 1971 and 29 April to 3 May 1976. I. Abbott visited the island from 13-26 May 1976.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Common, coming ashore at night on all accessible parts of the coastline (i.e. north-west, north and north-east sides) during May 1976. Breeding usually occurs from about August to December or January, though some young may not leave the island until February or March. Some birds may



• *Bald Island (looking north-west).*

Photo: A. R. Main

be ashore throughout the year, mostly at night. No estimate has been made of the number of penguins which breed on the island.

Pterodroma macroptera Great-winged Petrel — Common, burrows occurring from near sea level to an altitude on about 200 m. They were den-



• View of the north peninsula and adjacent parts of the island from the mainland at Look-out Point (looking south-east). Moonah forest and tussock-land are shown.

Photos: L. K. Abbott



• Another view from the mainland (looking south-east).

tice. However, the distance of the island from large settlements, the exposure of the waters around it to the full force of the swell, and the lack of a satisfactory anchorage at the island probably discourage unauthorised landings at present.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

King's Skink *Egernia kingii* is common and no doubt predated seabird eggs. It is possible that the Quokka *Setonix brachyurus* might cause the collapse of a few petrel burrows in eroding limestone areas, but this would be insignificant.

Other Seabirds Recorded

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|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> | Great Cormorant |
| <i>Haematopus juliginosus</i> | Sooty Oystercatcher |
| <i>Larus novaehollandiae</i> | Silver Gull |

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

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I. Abbott, Department of Zoology, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands, W.A. 6009.

nest in tussockland and Moonah forest, including the few stands near the south-east coast. Some burrows were in Peppermint forest, but none was noted in the open heath. The many skulls picked up on the island all proved to be of this species. These petrels probably return to the island to breed about the end of January or early in February. Egg laying had commenced during the May visits and young were "in down with the primary wing and tail pins just bursting" at the end of October 1971². The young probably leave about the end of November. Again, no estimate has been made of the number of breeding birds.

Pelagodroma marina White-faced Storm-Petrel — Several groups of four to six holes, about 100 mm in diameter, were found by Abbott in May 1976 on the coast under *Carpobrotus* on the west side of the island. They were presumed to belong to this species, which would not have been present on the island at that time of the year.

Factors Affecting Status

Years ago, pastoralists put their sheep on the island at certain times of the year to benefit from the lush growth. Skulls and remnants of old fences are the remaining evidence of this prac-