

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 126

## Figure of Eight Island, Archipelago of the Recherche, Western Australia

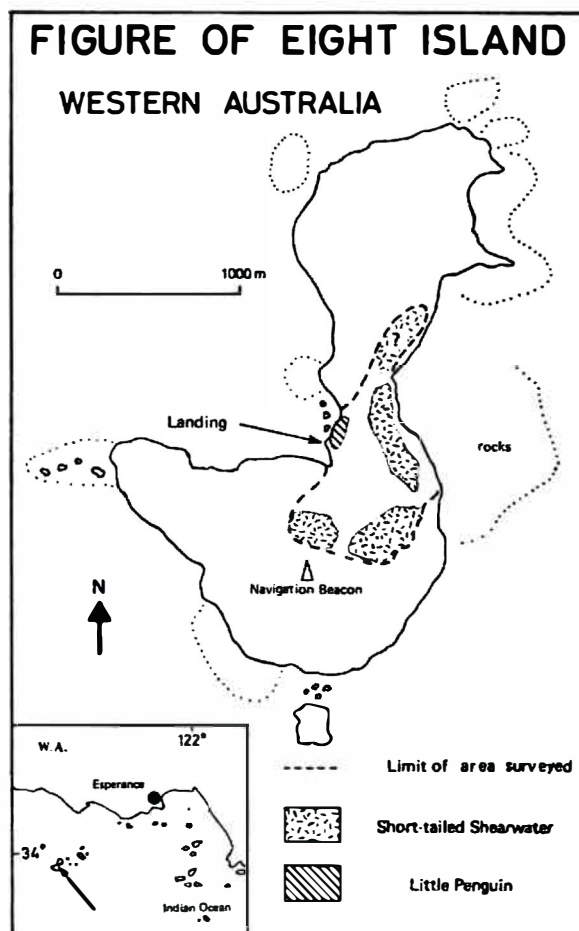
**Location:** 34°02'S., 121°36'E.; 33 km south-west from Esperance, WA and about 16 km offshore from the nearest mainland.

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

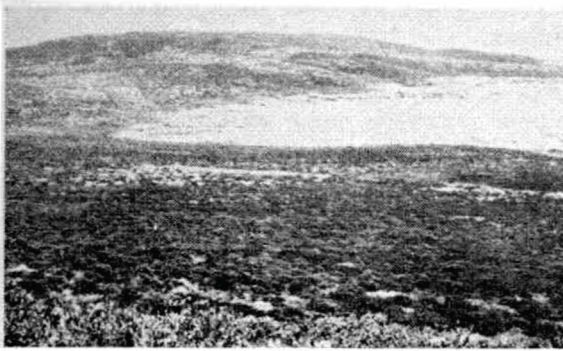
**Description:** 283 ha; about 3 000 m long by some 1 800 m wide at the southern end and 1 200 m wide at the northern end; a low isthmus about 400 m wide joins the two ends which rise, in the north, to 62 m and the south end to 113 m. There is a navigation beacon on the highest part (south end). The island is composed of granite-gneiss with a mainly rocky shoreline; small sandy beaches occur on the eastern side of the isthmus. Low vegetation from one to two metres high covers most of the island; dominant plants are *Nitraria billardieri* and *Olearia axularis* with Snow Bush *Calocephalus brownii*, *Carpobrotus* and *Poa* in some places.

**Landing:** The best landing site is at the south end of the bay on the western side; it is onto rocks from deep water. Beach landings near the centre of the eastern side are made difficult by the numerous reefs.

**Ornithological History:** V. N. Serventy<sup>3</sup> visited the island on 7 November 1950. He found Great-winged Petrels nesting, and fresh burrows attributed to Flesh-footed Shearwaters. S. G. Lane<sup>2</sup> and L. F. Lane visited the island on 1 November 1981 and recorded Cape Barren Geese and Short-tailed Shearwaters breeding<sup>2</sup>.



● Note: The breeding locations are those obtained during the visit in 1981. The area covered during that visit is outlined.



● Looking over the centre of the eastern side towards the northern end.

### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — Evidence of these birds was found in the area of the landing bay and a bird was seen under rocks (1981). A few may breed on the island.

*Pterodroma macroptera* Great-winged Petrel — "... found in burrows . . ." on 7 November 1950<sup>3</sup>.

*Puffinus tenuirostris* Short-tailed Shearwater — In November 1981, 19 birds were found in burrows<sup>2</sup>. Some 150 burrows were checked and no other species was found.

*Puffinus carneipes* Flesh-footed Shearwater — Burrows assumed to belong to this species were found in November 1950<sup>3</sup>, a number was searched but no birds were found. None was found during the visit in 1981 though "small feathers in or near some of the freshly-activated burrows were thought to belong to these birds"<sup>2</sup>, indicating that at least some of the burrows may have belonged to this species.

*Larus novaehollandiae* Silver Gull — In 1950, ten were seen "which appeared about to begin nesting"<sup>3</sup>. Only two were seen in 1981.

*Larus pacificus* Pacific Gull — Recorded nesting in 1950<sup>3</sup>. In 1981, two birds appeared to have a territory on the south-west headland but lack of time prevented confirmation of nesting.

*Cereopsis novaehollandiae* Cape Barren Goose — Two non-flying young and three "adults" were seen in 1981.



● Figure of Eight Island, south end (looking south-west).

### Factors Affecting Status

There was no evidence of human interference (1981) with the seabirds on the island. The navigation beacon is now serviced by helicopter, and because of its remoteness, few people would otherwise visit the island.

### OTHER VERTEBRATES

King's Skinks *Egernia kingii*, Dugites *Pseudonaja affinis* and Death Adders *Acanthopis antarcticus* are present.

### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	White-faced Storm-Petrel (remains)
<i>Sterna bergii</i>	Crested Tern

### Banding

*Puffinus tenuirostris* — 19 adults (1 Nov. 81)  
*Cereopsis novaehollandiae* — 1 "runner" (1 Nov. 81)

### Bibliography

1. Lane, S. G. (in press), 'Short-tailed Shearwater on Figure of Eight Island, Western Australia', *Emu*.
2. Lane, S. G. (1982), 'Avifauna of islands off Esperance, Western Australia', *Corella* 6: 37-39.
3. Serventy, V. N. (1952), The Archipelago of the Recherche, Part 2: Birds. *Aust. Geog. Soc. Rept.* 1(2): 1-24.
4. Willis, J. H. (1953), The Archipelago of the Recherche, Part 3a: Land Flora. *Aust. Geog. Soc. Rept.* 1(3): 1-35.

### Acknowledgements

I thank Messrs N. Tromp and K. Penalurick for providing transport, Dr I. Abbott for identifying plant species, and my wife for her help during the survey.

Date compiled: 3 November 1981

S. G. Lane, 65 Wood Street, Lane Cove, N.S.W. 2066.