

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 132

Hippolyte Rocks, Tasmania

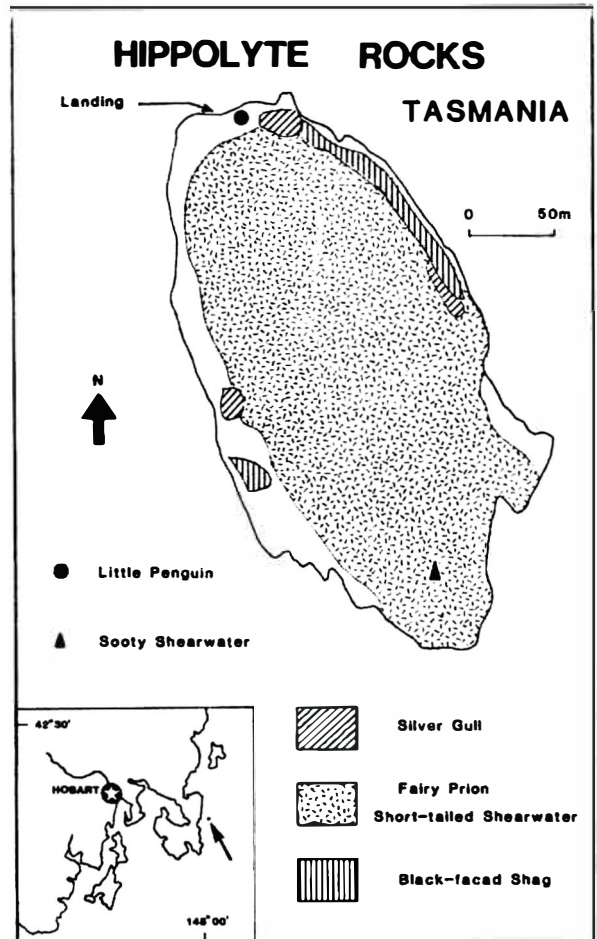
Location: 43°06'S., 148°04'E.; 15 km south-east from Eaglehawk Neck, Tasman Peninsula and 3.5 km from mainland at Cape Hauy, Tasmania.

Status: Nature Reserve administered by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (Tas.).

Description: 4.6 ha; 350 m long by 200 m wide, oval shaped and completely surrounded by sheer cliffs ranging in height from 25 m to 65 m, intersected by small ledges and crevices. The top of the island is flat with a gentle slope to the summit at the south-eastern end. Patches of shallow soil, covered in low vegetation, are broken by small bare parallel ridges or smooth slabs of rock. Ten species of plants were found by the authors in November 1980 including *Poa poiformis*, *Tetragonia implexicoma* and *Carpobrotus rossii*.

Landing: Very calm sea conditions are required to jump ashore on the north-western tip of the island; this is possibly the only place from which the cliff can be negotiated to reach the plateau. The nearest access to the island is 8 km away at Fortescue Bay.

Ornithological History: There are no previously published ornithological records. N. P. Brothers and I. J. Skira visited the island from 11:30 hrs to 15:00 hrs on 24 November 1980.



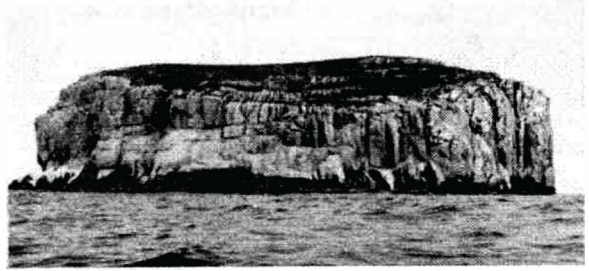
Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — The cliffs prevent this species from gaining access to suitable breeding locations on the plateau. A pair and one single bird were found in separate hollows near the base of the cliff at the northern end, 15 m above the sea. There was no evidence of breeding at the time of the visit but the hollow occupied by the pair appeared suitable. Similar sites may occur towards the southern end of the western side. A few pairs, possibly less than 10, may breed on the island.

Pachyptila turtur Fairy Prion — Found breeding all over the island in crevices around the cliffs to just above areas that are wave-washed; however, the majority breed on the plateau in crevices and burrows. Most nests were concentrated around the periphery of the plateau near the cliff edges, especially on the western, southern and south-eastern sides. Burrows in the soil were interspersed with those of Short-tailed Shearwaters and, due to the very shallow soil, tended to be less than 0.5 m long, running just below plant root systems. At the time of the visit all birds inspected in burrows were each on an egg. Owing to the proportion breeding in rock crevices, assessing the size of the colony was difficult. Estimated 3 000-5 000 breeding pairs.

Puffinus griseus Sooty Shearwater — Two birds, one of which was incubating an egg, were found together in a deep rock crevice beneath a large granite boulder at the southern extremity of the plateau. Close by, in the same crevice, a Short-tailed Shearwater was also incubating an egg. Random inspection of many shearwater burrows all over the island failed to reveal any more of these birds. A few pairs may breed on the island which is one of only three confirmed breeding islands in Tasmania¹.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — were incubating eggs on 24 November. A few pairs were breeding in rock crevices at the southern end of the island and burrows were found throughout the island. They were generally in very low density due to insufficient soil depth. Patches of higher density — greater than



• *Hippolyte Rocks* (looking south-east).

one burrow per m² — occurred in a few places towards the centre of the plateau among the *Poa*. Nearly all burrows were very short and shallow, with the occasional bird nesting concealed in the dense dry base of *Poa* tussocks. Estimated 1 000-2 000 breeding pairs.

Leucocarbo fuscescens Black-faced Shag — One hundred and ninety-four newly-constructed nests were found towards the southern end of the western cliffs; three contained one egg each. Nests were concentrated at the top of the cliff, extending downwards on the ledges for some 30 m. Nesting material comprised *Carpobrotus*, *Poa* and *Tetragonia*. On the east cliff, extending from the centre to almost the northern tip, 211 nests were counted; the majority contained either two or three eggs and some had one egg. The nests lined the bare narrow cliff ledges from the cliff top to within 20 m of the sea.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — Remains of eggs were found scattered all over the island where they had been carried probably by ravens. No occupied nests were located and no chicks or "runners" were seen. A total of 128 individuals was counted, the majority on ledges below the cliff top on the centre of the western side. Others were defending sites on the northern end with another group scattered along cliff ledges of the centre of the eastern side. Estimated 60-80 breeding pairs.

Factors Affecting Status

Access to the island is not particularly easy and it is seldom visited; however, Short-tailed

Shearwater chicks are harvested occasionally. Forest Ravens *Corvus tasmanicus* were very active all around the island during the visit and up to 11 were counted. Prion, shearwater and gull egg shells, presumed to have been robbed from nests by the ravens were common. Ravens would experience little difficulty in removing eggs or chicks from the generally short, shallow burrows. Surface-laid eggs of shearwaters would also have contributed to the numbers found during the visit.

Remains of adult prions were also found; they may have been taken in the same way or by Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus*. Two falcons were flying over the island as we arrived.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

Metallic Skinks *Leiopisma metallica* occur and Australian Fur Seals *Arctocephalus pusillus* have a small colony at the northern end.

Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Daption capense</i>	Cape Petrel (derelict — 2)
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	Common Diving-Petrel (derelict)
<i>Sterna</i> sp.	Remains — wings only (either <i>S. paradisaea</i> or <i>S. striata</i>) but age and condition of remains prevented positive determination.

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Lane, S. G. and G. White (1983), 'Nesting of the Sooty Shearwater in Australia', *Emu* 83(2): 117-118.

Acknowledgements

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