

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 134

Southport Island, Tasmania

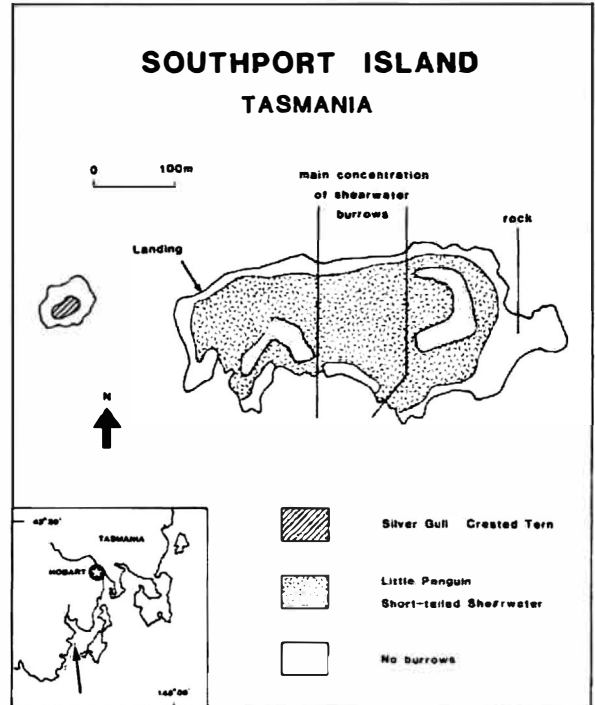
Location: 43°28'S., 147°00'E.: 5.5 km south-east of Southport on the south-east coast of Tasmania and 0.3 km from the nearest mainland at Southport Bluff.

Status: Crown Land.

Description: 7.3 ha; 490 m long by 165 m wide, the island rises gently from the northern shore to a flat area along the centre 26 m high. The gentle slope continues from the centre down towards the southern shore which is intersected by 15 m high cliffs towards the western end. The soil supports 67 species of plants with *Poa poiformis*, *Tetragonia implexicoma*, *Pteridium esculentum*, *Melaleuca squarrosa* and *Banksia marginata* being dominant in local areas.

Off the western end a low rocky islet, less than 0.5 ha, with little soil, supports 18 species of plants including *T. implexicoma*, *Leucopogon parviflorus* and *Carpobrotus rossii*.

Landing: Onto stony beaches or rocks in most weather conditions.



Ornithological History: W. V. Legge¹, in the report of his visit to the island in 1886, listed only the Little Penguin breeding there. The following information resulted from a visit by N. P. Brothers for two hours on 4 December 1980.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Burrows containing penguins were found scattered all over the island and those inspected contained adults and/or 600 gm-1 000 gm chicks. Investigations into the size of the breeding population were complicated by burrows being scattered irregularly among those of Short-tailed Shearwaters. On the islet off the western end one adult with a chick was found concealed by *Poa* and *Leucopogon*; no others were present and nesting would be restricted to such sites beneath vegetation. Estimated 500 breeding pairs.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — Burrows containing birds incubating freshly-laid eggs were found all over the island except where soil depth was insufficient, in patches of dense scrub, blackberry patches or thick bracken-covered areas. Areas of high density were small (< 1 ha) and mainly confined to patches of *Poa* and *Tetragonia*. The total area of the colony was about 4.6 ha. Estimated 21 000 breeding pairs.

Larus novaehollandiae Silver Gull — These were breeding only on the islet off the western end; a total of 210 active nests was found (46 with 1 egg, 108 with 2 eggs, 34 with 3 eggs, 5 with 1 chick, 13 with 2 chicks and 4 with 3 chicks).

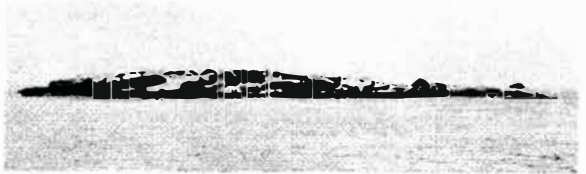
Sterna bergii Crested Tern — Nesting was confined to the islet off the western end where 137 nests were found (127 with 1 egg, 6 with 2 eggs and 4 with newly-hatched chicks). All nests were concentrated west of the islet's centre in an area of mainly bare ground.

Factors Affecting Status

Short-tailed Shearwater chicks are harvested annually, probably in large numbers. Frequent disturbance by pleasure boats passing close to the islet may affect the breeding success of gulls and terns. Any expansion of the blackberry patches may reduce the shearwater colony.

OTHER VERTEBRATES

Metallic Skink *Leiopisma metallica*. Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* occur but appeared to be in small numbers. Evidence of their grazing was



• Upper — Southport Island (looking south). Lower — The islet off the western end (looking south-east) with Blanche Rock in the background at right.

found in small areas on the western side. Two House Mice *Mus musculus* were seen in *Poa* amongst shearwater burrows.

Other Seabirds Recorded

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|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Leucocarbo fuscescens</i> | Black-faced Shag |
| <i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i> | Sooty Oystercatcher |
| <i>Larus pacificus</i> | Pacific Gull |

Banding

Nil.

Bibliography

1. Legg, W. V. (1887), 'On the breeding of some seabirds on the Actaeon and adjacent islets', *Soc. of Tas. Papers and Proceedings*, No. 28.

Acknowledgements

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