

## SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 137

## Sterile Island, Tasmania

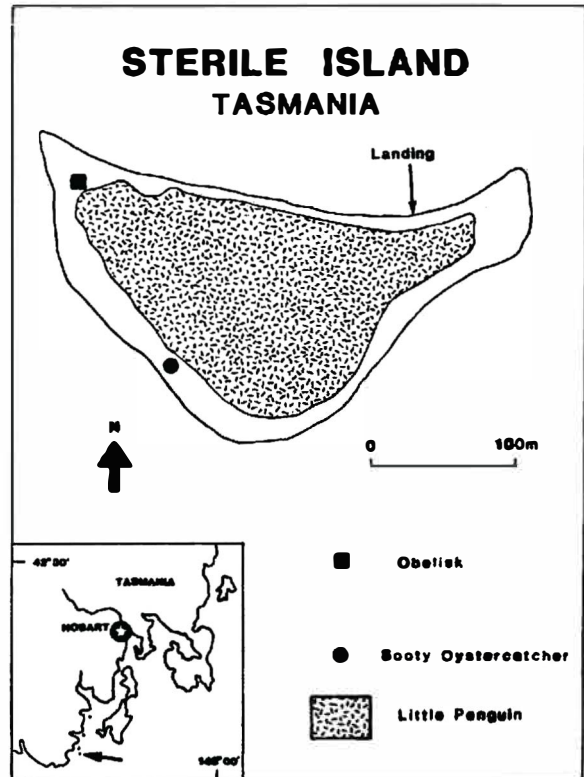
**Location:** 43°32'S., 147°00'E.; 3.5 km off the south-east coast of Tasmania at Eliza Point, with Actaeon Island lying 2 km north.

**Status:** Crown Land.

**Other Name:** Little Actaeon Island.

**Description:** 3.6 ha; 320 m long by 160 m wide and rising to a height of only 8.5 m. The island is very flat with a slight depression towards the centre. It appears to have been built up of small round boulders which form the beach surrounding it; even at the centre the boulders are covered by no more than a thin layer of soil. The centre area is dominated by *Poa poiiformis* which is surrounded by a strip of shrubs, mainly *Olearia phlogopappa*. There is an outer zone dominated by *Senecio* spp. which meets the stony beach. Creeping mats of *Tetragonia implexicoma* occur on the beach. At the west end there is a concrete obelisk 7 m high and towards the eastern end are several low, circular stone shelters, the origin of which is not known by the author.

**Landing:** Rocky reefs and shallow water restrict access as do rough seas but landing is possible at most places onto the boulder beach. The northern side is most suitable.





• Sterile Island, north side (looking south-east).

**Ornithological History:** W. V. Legge<sup>1</sup>, although prevented from landing by unfavourable conditions, reported that Crested Terns bred on the island; he made no specific reference to any other species. The following information was obtained during a 30-minute visit by N. P. Brothers on 4 December 1980.

#### Breeding Seabirds and Status

*Eudyptula minor* Little Penguin — The only "burrows" found were beneath *Poa* and *Tetragonia*. Elsewhere birds were breeding anywhere under vegetation that afforded sufficient concealment. The greatest numbers were breeding along the north shore and all nests inspected contained chicks weighing up to 600 gm. Estimated 300 breeding pairs.

*Haematopus fuliginosus* Sooty Oystercatcher — One pair was present with a nest at the edge of the vegetation and beach rocks on the southern side. The nest contained one egg that was being incubated; a second cold and badly cracked egg was 0.5 m from the nest.

*Sterna bergii* Crested Tern — Reported breeding by Legge<sup>1</sup> but no details were given.

#### Factors Affecting Status

Forest Raven *Corvus tasmanicus* visit islands in the area in large numbers; they may possibly predate penguin chicks and eggs due to the rather exposed breeding conditions on the island.

#### OTHER VERTEBRATES

Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* are said to occur; none was seen during the visit but several small patches of grass appeared to have been grazed. The Metallic Skink *Leiopisma metallica* was found but appeared to be present in only small numbers.

#### Other Seabirds Recorded

<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	Silver Gull (100 +, not breeding but were mildly territorial).
<i>Larus pacificus</i>	Pacific Gull (1 pair and 1 juvenile; may breed on the island).

#### Banding

Nil.

#### Bibliography

- Legge, 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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