

White-faced Storm-petrels on Belowla Island, N.S.W.

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On the night of 16/17 December 1976, Mr H. Battam and I made a second visit to Belowla Island, off Kioloa on the south coast of N.S.W. The first visit occurred during daylight on 17 December 1972. However, the recent visit was specifically for the purpose of mist-netting White-faced Storm-petrels *Pelagodroma marina* at night.

A landing was effected on the high tide about 16:30 hours on 16 December, but not without some problems considering the amount of equipment needed for the job. Five 20 m by 3 m wader nets (50 mm mesh) were set in the shape of an "L", covering only a small part of the four hectares.

The first arrivals were caught about 22:30 hours (summertime) and the catching continued until the nets were pulled down about 02:00 hours on 17 December. The cessation of catching was necessary to enable us to cope with the boat and equipment; an unpredicted southerly wind arose during the night and was expected to make our departure difficult or impossible on the dawn high tide. In the catching period 210 Storm-petrels,

one Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus* and three Short-tailed Shearwaters *P. tenuirostris* were caught and banded*.

Undoubtedly most, if not all, of the Storm-petrels caught were incoming birds, as the exodus usually occurs after 03:00 hours. In netting activities of this type only a small proportion of the birds is caught, and in this case only part of the area was netted. Accordingly, the number of Storm-petrels caught during this visit rather indicates that the breeding population is probably much greater than the "over 1 000" breeding pairs estimated from the previous visit (Lane 1973), which occurred during daylight.

Other birds seen on the island during the visit follow:

Little Penguin *Eudyptula minor*—A few were found; some adults were with chicks, but no specific attempt was made to search for these birds.

Black Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*—About 25 were roosting on the rocks.

Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*—12.

Masked Plover *Vanellus miles*—two.

Silver Gull *Larus novaehollandiae*—three.

Little Grassbird *Megalurus grammurus*—four, but more may have been present.

Skinks were numerous; these were probably *Sphenomorphus quoyi* and not *Ergernia* sp. as previously reported.

The departure from the island at 05:30 hours on 17 December 1976 was difficult; its success was due to patience, good judgment and the considerable experience of Harry Battam in similar circumstances.

Reference

Lane, S. G. (1973), 'Seabird Islands No. 3, Belowla Island, New South Wales', *Aust. Bird Bander* 11: 61.

* Bands used were provided by the Australian Bird-banding Scheme, Division of Wildlife Research, CSIRO.

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References

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