

SEABIRD ISLANDS

No. 46

Granite Island, Corner Inlet, Victoria

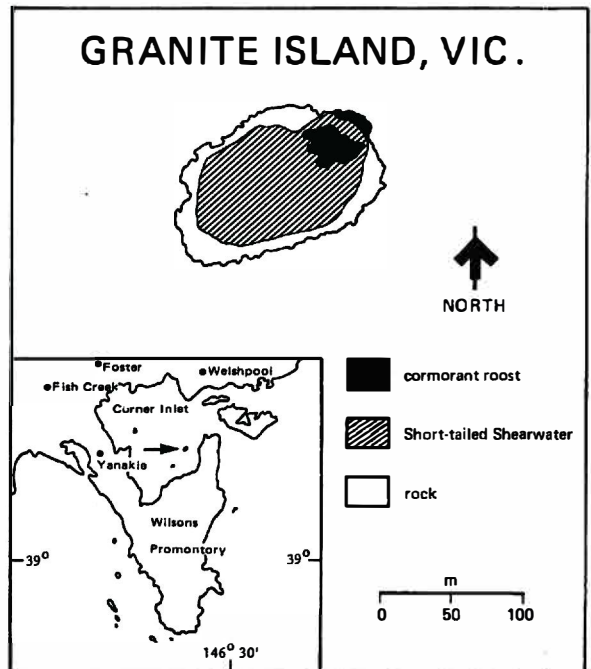
Location: 38°48' S., 146°24' E.; within Corner Inlet, N. of Wilsons Promontory National Park; 2.3 km to nearest mainland.

Status: Originally reserved under the Land Act, the island was incorporated into the Wilsons Promontory National Park in 1916 and is now controlled by the National Parks Service (Vic.); camping is not allowed.

Description: 1.4 ha; a dome-shaped granitic island some 90 m at the widest point, 150 m long and 30 m high; it is the most exposed of the three islands within Corner Inlet. Much of the surface is grey, porphyritic bedrock containing quartz crystals, or the derived coarse-grained soil which incorporates organic material. A single *Acacia longifolia* occurs near the summit but *Lavatera plebeia* is common, particularly on the eastern side. Whilst most of the island is dominated by *Poa poiformis*, particularly on and around the summit, other grasses (e.g. *Bromus diandrus* and *Vulpia bromoides*) show vigorous and luxuriant growth during winter and spring. *Carpobrotus rossii*, *Pelargonium australe*, *Rhagodia baccata* and *Lepidium foliosum* dominate small areas, particularly in and above the supra-littoral zone. Other species recorded for the island include *Pteridium esculentum*, *Bulbine semibarbata*, *Gnaphalium purpureum*, *Senecio lautus*, *Cirsium vulgare* and *Sonchus oleraceus*^{2, 3, 4}.

Although soil depth is minimal, even absent, over large areas of the island, it is deeper in rock crevices, up-hill of rock outcrops or in their lee, and reaches about 1 m near the summit, providing depths sufficient for burrowing. Guano-encrusted rocks and soils enriched with guano and fish remains are a feature of the south-eastern side.

Landing: Except in calm weather, landing is governed by prevailing winds and must be effected onto rocks.



Ornithological History: Though doubtless visited by others, the only published information is that given in M. E. Gillham^{3, 4} who recorded breeding Silver Gulls and Short-tailed Shearwaters, and Black-faced Cormorants using the island as a roost. Later visits by Norman in 1966 and 1976 added only Pacific Gull and White-faced Heron to the species list.

Breeding Seabirds and Status

Eudyptula minor Little Penguin — Barrett¹ remarked that 'a few penguins are said to build' on the island though no evidence of breeding has been found subsequently.

Puffinus tenuirostris Short-tailed Shearwater — Breeds extensively on the island wherever soil



● *Granite Island (looking south).*



● *Another view (looking east).*

depth is adequate, although some burrows are found under rocks and beneath *P. poiformis* tussocks. Population not determined but considered to exceed several thousand breeding pairs. *Larus novaehollandiae* Silver Gull — Gillham³,⁴ considered that more than 100 pairs were breeding on the southern slopes in 1959.

Phalacrocorax fuscescens Black-faced Cormorant — Norman⁵ gave Granite Island as a breeding site for this species, but apart from a broken egg found in August 1976, and the remarks of Barrett¹, who noted that cormorants (no species indicated) used to nest on the island in a rookery destroyed "by order of the authorities", no further information is available and the species' status requires determination.

Factors Affecting Status

Illegal harvesting of young shearwaters is presumed to occur, and breeding adults may die during heat-waves².

Other Seabirds Recorded

Ardea novaehollandiae White-faced Heron.
Larus pacificus Pacific Gull.

Banding

Nil.



● *A view along the summit.*

Bibliography

1. Barrett, J. W. (1918), *The Twin Ideals* (:) an Educated Commonwealth. Lewis and Co., London.
2. Gillham, M. E. (1960), 'Destruction of Indigenous Heath Vegetation in Victorian Sea-bird Colonies', *Aust. J. Bot.* 8: 277-317.
3. Gillham, M. E. (1961), 'Plants and Seabirds of Granite Islands in south-eastern Victoria', *Proc. R. Soc. Vict.* 74: 21-35.
4. Gillham, M. E. (1962), 'Granite Islands of south-east Victoria as a Sea-bird Habitat', *Proc. R. Soc. Vict.* 75: 45-63.
5. Norman, F. I. (1971), 'Problems affecting the Ecology of Islands in the west Gippsland region', *Proc. R. Soc. Vict.* 84: 7-18.

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F. I. Norman,
Fisheries and Wildlife Division,
Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental
Research,
123 Brown Street, Heidelberg, Vic.