Small North-East Islands

Management Plan

July 2002

#### **Small North-East Islands Management Plan 2002**

This draft management plan covers the following small islands of north-east Tasmania:

Little Waterhouse Island – Unallocated Crown Land Baynes Island – Unallocated Crown Land Little Swan Island – Unallocated Crown Land Bird Rock – Unallocated Crown Land George Rocks – Nature Reserve St. Helens Island – Part of the St. Helens Point Conservation Area Paddys Island – Unallocated Crown Land Diamond Island – Nature Reserve Governor Island – Nature Reserve Little Christmas Island – Unallocated Crown Land

For the four islands reserved under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, this draft management plan has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Part IV of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*. With respect to the unreserved islands, the management plan will not have statutory force.

Unless otherwise specified, this plan adopts the interpretation of terms given in Section 3 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*. The term 'Minister' when used in the plan means the Minister administering the Act.

In accordance with Section 23 (2) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*, the managing authority for the reserves, in this case the Director of National Parks and Wildlife, shall carry out his or her duties in relation to the islands for the purpose of giving effect to, and in accordance with, the provisions of, this management plan.

This plan may only be varied in accordance with procedures set out in Sections 19 and 20 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* and, in any case, will be reviewed ten years after approval of the plan by the Governor.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Research conducted by former Parks and Wildlife Service biologist, Nigel Brothers, forms the basis of much of the information on seabird distribution and abundance presented in the management plan. Representatives from Birds Australia (Tasmania) also provided valuable information. Many other people have assisted in the preparation of this plan by providing comments on earlier drafts. Their time and efforts are gratefully acknowledged.

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# Making a Representation - What do you think?

What do you think of the proposals in this draft management plan? This is your chance to have your say on how it is proposed to manage the north-east islands for the next 10 years.

Copies of the draft plan are available at Service Tasmania offices in Hobart, Launceston, Scottsdale, St. Helens and George Town and at the Hobart and Launceston offices of the Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment.

#### Making a Representation

Please make your representation concise and clear. It will help if you refer to the section numbers in the plan. Say whether you agree or disagree with the actions proposed in the areas which interest you. Wherever possible, give reasons and provide sources of information. Suggest alternatives if you disagree. Giving reasons, offering information and alternative suggestions will help improve the plan. Your representation should be addressed to:

Director National Parks and Wildlife 1 Franklin Wharf Hobart, Tasmania 7000

#### How is Your Representation Assessed?

As a general guide, and depending on all the circumstances, the draft plan may be amended if a representation:

- provides new information relevant to planning and management;
- indicates proposed policies and actions are misunderstood and need clarification;
- clarifies or proposes policies and actions that would better achieve the management objectives;
- identifies a lack of policies or actions for particular issues; or
- corrects errors, omissions or lack of clarity.

Similarly, the draft plan may not be amended if a representation:

- contradicts planning proposals for which there is widespread support;
- conflicts with government policy;
- is contrary to the intention of relevant legislation or national or international conventions and agreements;
- is among widely divergent viewpoints better handled or balanced by the proposed approach to policies or actions;
- addresses issues beyond the scope of the plan; or
- ignores or contradicts relevant established facts.

# **Review of Representations by the Resource Planning and Development Commission** (**RPDC**)

Recent amendments to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* have established a new process for review of public representations involving the RPDC to provide for greater transparency and accountability in finalising management plans.

The Director will review all representations received and prepare a report which includes a summary of all representations, the Director's opinion on the merit of each representation and whether modification of the management plan is required.

The Director will forward copies of all representations received, together with the Director's report, to the RPDC who will advertise the representations and the Director's report for public viewing. The RPDC may hold hearings on the representations. The RPDC will review the representations and the Director's report and the results of any public hearings held and will prepare a report to the Minister. The RPDC's report to the Minister will be published.

# Consideration of Representations by the Minister and Approval by the Governor of the Management Plan

The Minister will consider:

- public representations;
- the Director's report on public representations;
- the RPDC report on the Director's report on public representations;
- the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Committee advice; and
- the purposes of reservation and management objectives for the class of reserved land.

The Minister will make such alterations to the management plan considered appropriate and recommend the final management plan to the Governor for approval.

#### How Much Time Do You Have?

This draft management plan was released for public comment on August 12, 2002. Your comments should be submitted to the Director by close of business on September 20, 2002.

#### Confidentiality

Your representation will be made available for public viewing by the Resource Planning and Development Commission.

#### **Summary**

Many of Tasmania's small offshore islands in the north-east region are significant breeding sanctuaries for a diversity of seabird species. Because of their isolation and, in some cases, the absence of mammals, many may also harbour unique or endemic species of flora and fauna that are undergoing evolutionary radiation. Pressures on small islands world-wide, such as fisheries interaction, marine and terrestrial pollution and disturbance to breeding birds and their habitats, contribute to the importance and urgency of conserving these increasingly rare and endangered global natural assets. Small, isolated, discrete ecosystems are particularly vulnerable to damage and destruction caused by the introduction of feral plant and animal species, fire or direct human disturbance (Salm *et. al* 2000).

With Coastcare funding and the cooperation of the Marine and Coastal Community Network, the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment Nature Conservation Branch, Marine Resources Division and Parks and Wildlife Service and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, management plans for Tasmania's significant small offshore islands are being developed.

This Small North-East Islands Draft Management Plan details information and management aims and prescriptions to ensure the long-term viability of the following islands as significant seabird breeding sites:

Little Waterhouse Island Baynes Island Little Swan Island Bird Rock George Rocks Nature Reserve St. Helens Island (part of St. Helens Point Conservation Area) Paddys Island Diamond Island Nature Reserve Governor Island Nature Reserve Little Christmas Island

Other significant small islands off the north-east coast of Tasmania – The Nuggets, Refuge Island, Taillefer Rocks and Schouten Island – are encompassed by the Freycinet National Park, Wye River Reserve Management Plan 2000 (see Appendix 2). Picnic Island of the north-west of Freycinet Peninsula is private property.

#### **Natural Values**

Tasmania's north-east islands are important for their diversity of seabird species (Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, Little Swan Island, St. Helens Island, Paddys Island and Governor Island) and for their abundance of particular species (Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, Little Swan Island, George Rocks, St. Helens Island, Paddys Island, Diamond Island, Governor Island and Little Christmas Island). With its mild maritime climate, the region is an important Tasmanian breeding stronghold for the Australian pelican, Caspian tern and white-fronted tern – all relatively uncommon species in Tasmania. Fairy terns, listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*, were recorded breeding on Baynes Island in the 1998/99 season. The section below "North-east islands' breeding seabirds – global perspective" provides information on the distribution and abundance of the seabirds recorded on the north-east islands. Many also provide "baseline" information about soils, animals and vegetation, which have evolved relatively free from human interference . As such, they are potentially important sources of information for geologists, zoologists and botanists.

#### Management Issues

Most seabird species, because of their adaptation to remote areas, are susceptible to human disturbance, which includes direct human contact with the birds and their habitat, disruption to offshore foraging areas and noise from nearby activities. When surface-nesting birds are directly disturbed or constantly disrupted by noise or activity, they will desert nests and nesting sites, in some instances, never returning. Their breeding success can be interrupted for years. Burrow-nesting birds are put at risk by trampling of their burrows and disturbance to vegetation. Breeding seabirds generally forage closer to the shore where, particularly if diving, they can be susceptible to entanglement in set nets. Nearby recreational activities such as diving, jet ski-ing and motor boat use may have an adverse impact through the generation of noise. The challenge is the management of visitor access while protecting the islands' significant natural values.

#### **Cultural Values**

Four islands have evidence of Aboriginal use in the form of either small artefact scatters or shell middens. Whaling stations were located on two of the islands.

#### Management Issues

As several of the islands have never been surveyed, it is possible that more comprehensive research could reveal signs of Aboriginal use. Sites of Aboriginal and historic heritage need to be protected.

#### **Educational Issues**

The draft management plan highlights the need for greater education about the values of offshore islands. It recommends that the feasibility of developing Diamond Island as an educational, ecotourism model be explored.

#### **Management Initiatives**

The draft management plan recommends the involvement of community groups and industry in an island care network and the development and promotion of minimal impact codes of conduct for visiting sensitive islands. The sea kayaking community has led the way with its code, which can be viewed at <u>www.coastview.com.au</u>. It is hoped that greater community involvement in managing these special remote places will help to ensure their long-term protection.

While acknowledging that some islands can support low levels of visitation, many island visits will require permits as a mechanism to gauge and monitor visitor levels and to ensure that potential visitors understand and respect the islands' values.

#### North-east islands' breeding seabirds - global perspective

Most of the seabird species recorded on the north-east islands have a relatively restricted breeding range, usually small isolated islands, which provide them with a refuge free from human activity. The following summary provides an overview of the global distribution and abundance of these species and rates their susceptibility to habitat destruction and direct human disturbance. Burrow-nesting birds are particularly prone to habitat disturbance, while direct human disturbance impacts more on the surface-nesting species. The following information is adapted from Brothers *et.al.* (2001).

KEY	highly susceptible to habitat destruction
000	moderately susceptible to habitat destruction
00	susceptible in some circumstances to habitat destruction
0	rarely susceptible to habitat destruction
*** ** *	species highly susceptible to human disturbance species moderately susceptible to human disturbance species susceptible to human disturbance in some circumstances rarely susceptible to human disturbance

#### Little penguin (Eudyptula minor) \*\*\*

Little penguins breed mainly on islands in temperate seas off the south coast of Australia and around the coast of New Zealand. This species' Australian stronghold is in the Tasmanian region with birds nesting on many islands either in burrows or rock crevices, where it is possible for them to gain access to the sea. They are largely extinct from mainland Australia due to the impact from dogs, cats, foxes and coastal development. Threats to their Tasmanian island breeding sites include oil spills, fire and drowning in gill nets.

#### Short-tailed shearwater (Puffinus tenuirostris) \*\*\*

The most abundant and widespread seabird species in the region, they breed primarily in south-eastern Australia, with Tasmania being their most important stronghold world-wide. They breed on islands with adequate soil depth for burrowing. Livestock grazing and fire are considered their greatest onshore threats, while offshore, vast numbers are likely to be killed in various fisheries particularly in the northern hemisphere during their annual migration to and from the Bering Sea and north Pacific region. They are also at considerable risk from entanglement in gill nets.

#### Fairy prion (Pachyptila turtur) \*\*\*

Globally, fairy prions breed on subtropical and subantarctic islands and rock stacks in the southern hemisphere. In north-east Tasmania, they breed on The Nuggets and Taillefer Rocks, which are typical prion islands – small rocky and steep. They seem to favour the more remote inaccessible islands.

#### Common diving-petrel (Pelecanoides urinatrix) °°°

This species breeds usually between 35° and 55° on islands off southern Australia, New Zealand, South America and islands in the Southern Ocean. In the north-east region, common diving-petrels are found on only four islands – Bird Rock, St. Helens Island, The Nuggets and Taillefer Rocks all of which have steep vegetated ledges favoured by this species for breeding. The Tasmanian south coast islands are its regional stronghold with very few breeding in other places in Australia.

#### White-faced storm-petrel (Pelagodroma marina) °°°

This species breeds on islands in the temperate and subtropical regions of the Atlantic, Indian and south Pacific Oceans, primarily around New Zealand and southern Australia. St. Helens

Island and Little Swan Island have large populations of white-faced storm-petrels, whose major stronghold in Tasmania is the Furneaux islands. There are fewer than 300 pairs on The Nuggets and there are no records of the species breeding further south then Visscher Island. White-faced storm-petrels prefer low granite islands with soft sandy soil for easy burrow excavation – a habitat that is fragile and vulnerable to trampling and destruction.

#### Pacific gull (Larus pacificus)\*\*\* °°

Pacific gulls are endemic to Australia, confined to the south-east and south-west coasts. Bass Strait Islands are their breeding stronghold. Although widespread throughout the Tasmanian region, they usually occur on islands in one or two pairs. They generally prefer breeding on rocky islands. Despite the perception that they are a widespread species, there are fewer than 1500 breeding pairs in the Tasmanian region, probably fewer at other Australian breeding sites, due to disturbance of habitat. They are easily disturbed by human activity when breeding. Paddys Island, with up to 60 pairs, is believed to be the third largest breeding site in the state (W.Wakefield pers. comm 2001).

#### Kelp gull (Larus dominicanus)

This species is arrived in the Tasmanian region in the late 1950s and established breeding sites probably in the early 1960s. Kelp gulls nest colonially and are now well-established and increasing in distribution and abundance, a tribute to their ability to exploit urban food sources. In the north-east region, they breed only on Paddys Island.

#### Silver gull (Larus novaehollandiae)

Breeding on rocks, islands and small peninsulas, silver gulls are the most abundant of the gull species. They often nest in association with crested terns, which seems to be a mutually beneficial. They breed on four islands in the north-east.

#### Sooty oystercatcher (Haematopus fuliginosus) \*\*\* °

Endemic to Australia, the sooty oystercatcher's breeding stronghold in the Tasmanian region is offshore islands with rocky shorelines. Generally, fewer than 5 pairs nest on most islands, although there are exceptions. In the north-east, sooty oystercatchers breed in very low numbers on Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, Little Swan Island, St. Helens Island, Paddys Island, Diamond Island, Governor Island, Refuge Island and Little Christmas Island. There are fewer than 750 pairs in total breeding on Tasmania's offshore islands.

#### Caspian tern (Sterna caspia)\*\*\* °

Widespread in North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia, this species has a nesting preference for small isolated islands, where it generally breeds in single pairs adjacent to shorelines or on poorly-vegetated areas or bare rock. Caspian terns remain faithful to nesting sites and defend them noisily and aggressively. There are only approximately 70 pairs breeding on Tasmanian offshore islands. In the north-east their breeding range is restricted to Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, Little Swan Island, Bird Rock, St. Helens Island and Paddys Island.

#### Crested tern (Sterna bergii)\*\*\* °

Widespread in East Africa, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans, this species nests in dense colonies and is the most abundant tern species of the region. However, fewer than about 15 breeding colonies exist on Tasmania's offshore islands in any season. In the north-east region, crested terns breed on only five islands – Little Swan Island, Baynes Island, George Rocks, Paddys Island and Governor Island, the latter harbouring 2200 pairs, the largest population on the east coast (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). The Furneaux Group is the species' Tasmanian stronghold. In Tasmania, crested terns have only been recorded forming breeding colonies where there are established silver gull populations.

#### White-fronted tern (Sterna striata) \*\*\* \*\*\*

Believed to be a very recent coloniser of Australian shores, having come from New Zealand in the 1960s, their regional stronghold seems to be in the southern sector of the Furneaux group where 35 - 40 pairs are known to breed at up to six or seven different island locations. Because of their limited range and small population, they are listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. Colonies are small with a maximum of 20 pairs known for any one location. The only north-east island on which white-fronted terns are recorded is Little Swan Island (J. Harris pers. comm. 2001).

#### Fairy tern (Sterna nereis)\*\*\* 000

Fairy terns are not usually associated with offshore islands, preferring nest sites on sandy beaches and spits often adjacent to a river or creek outflow. Their Australian stronghold is the southern Western Australian coast with smaller populations on the south coasts of South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania. This makes them particularly vulnerable to the summer surge of beach-going holiday-makers, off-road vehicles and dogs. Because of the species' limited range and population in Tasmania, it is listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. There are considered to be fewer than 2000 breeding pairs of fairy terns in Australia. Six pairs were recorded breeding on Baynes Island during the 1998/99 season.

#### Black-faced cormorant (Phalacrocorax fuscescens)\*\*\* °°

Considering that this species is Australia's only endemic "oceanic" species of cormorant and is confined to the southern Australian coast, it is probable that the Tasmanian region is its global stronghold. Colonies are widespread in most parts of the region, but in each there is generally only up to three nest sites. In the north-east district breeding occurs on Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, George Rocks and The Nuggets. Individuals have a low fidelity to their breeding sites and will desert eggs and chicks if disturbed. The species is also at considerable risk from entanglement and drowning in gill nets particularly in areas adjacent to population centres where net use is common.

#### Australian pelican (Pelecanus conspicillatus) \*\*\* °°°

This species' global breeding range is limited to Australia, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Fiji, where it prefers large open areas with low grassy vegetation, particularly lakes and wetlands. Although it is an icon of Tasmania's north-east coastal resorts, its breeding range in Tasmania is very limited. There are fewer than 100 breeding pairs recorded on only four islands off the north coast of Tasmania. Little Swan Island possibly harbours the largest population with 40 pairs. Of all the species that breed in Tasmania the Australian pelican is the most sensitive to disturbance and as a consequence is the least studied.

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# Section 1 Overview

#### 1.1 Location and Access

The 10 islands included in this plan are located off the north-east coast of Tasmania in the Dorset, Break O' Day and Glamorgan-Spring Bay Municipal areas (see Appendix 1, Map1).

Accessibility to the islands varies and is covered in greater detail in Section 2. The far northeast islands are often subjected to rough sea conditions caused by the interaction of the tides and winds.

#### 1.2 Regional Context

The north-east islands are used primarily by bird enthusiasts, sea kayakers, fishers and recreational divers, with the latter two groups usually restricting their visits to the sea around the islands. There are occasional day visitors who access the islands by dinghies. Fishers and yachtspeople use the harbours of several of the islands, particularly George Rocks and St. Helens Island, for shelter. Most visits occur in the summer months and are of short duration, usually less than 2 days.

#### 1.3 Reservation

The boundaries of reserved islands extend to low water level.

Island	Status	Date of	Reason for
		Reservation	reservation
Little Waterhouse	Unallocated Crown Land	Draft application *	Application based on
Island			seablind diversity.
Baynes Island	Unallocated Crown Land	Draft application*	Application based on seabird diversity and
			presence of fairy terms
Little Swan Island	Unallocated Crown Land	Draft application*	Application based on
			seabird abundance and
			diversity and presence
			of Australian pelican
Bird Rock	Unallocated Crown Land	Not applicable	Not applicable
George Rocks	Nature Reserve	2 April, 1975	Seabird diversity
St. Helens Island	Conservation Area (part of	10 April, 1980	Seabird diversity and
	St. Helens Point		abundance
	Conservation Area)		
Paddys Island	Unallocated Crown Land	Not applicable	Not applicable
Diamond Island	Nature Reserve	28 December, 1977	Regionally important
			little penguin breeding
			site
Governor Island	Nature Reserve	18 September 1991	Seabird diversity and
			crested tern population
Little Christmas	Unallocated Crown Land	Not applicable	Not applicable
Island			
*Applications have been made from Birds Australia, Tasmania for the upgrading of status.			

#### Table 1. Small North-east Islands' Reservation Status

Other significant small islands off the north-east coast of Tasmania – The Nuggets, Refuge Island, Taillefer Rocks and Schouten Island – are National Parks covered by the Freycinet National Park, Wye River Reserve Management Plan 2000. Information about the values of these islands is included in Appendix 2.

#### 1.4 Climate

The north-east area experiences a mild maritime climate with frequent windy conditions. North-easterly winds are common during the summer months. The rainfall is generally less than 800 mm.

In some seasons the region's climatic variations can impact significantly on the breeding success of some species. For example, untimely brief heavy rainstorms occasionally occur during the summer, resulting in widespread mortality of seabirds in burrows and young surface-nesting species such as gulls and terns. Frequent strong winds in the area can combine with typical hot dry summers to precipitate habitat loss due to erosion, a phenomenon aggravated by the proliferation of introduced annual plants such as thistles.

# Section 2 Values and Management Issues of the Islands

Within this section the values and management issues of each island are described, with significant values highlighted under "Special Significance". Unless otherwise stated, all bird population estimates are based on surveys conducted for the Parks and Wildlife Service between 1985 and 1991. The management issues are discussed in greater detail in section 4 of the plan. The summary provides further information about the global and national significance of the seabirds breeding on the north-east islands. The vegetation condition of each island is described under "Condition" with reference to specific island vegetation condition condition categories listed in Appendix 3. Refer to Appendix 1 for maps of the islands.

#### 2.1 Little Waterhouse Island

Location:	40°49'S, 147°38'E to the south-east of Waterhouse Island		
Area:	2.5 hectares		
Tenure:	Unallocated Crown Land		
Access:	The major access points are from Blizzard's and Herbie's landings in the		
	Waterhouse Conservation Area. Accessibility is erratic due to the		
	changeability of the sea conditions and the rocky nature of the island's		
	coastline		

#### **Natural Values**

The island supports breeding populations of little penguins (20 pairs), Pacific gulls (50 pairs), silver gulls (40 pairs), sooty oystercatchers (6 pairs), black-faced cormorants (173 pairs) and Caspian terns (1 pair). Crested terns may intermittently breed here (R.Cooper pers. comm. 2001). It is a roosting site for Australian pelicans, and if it remained undisturbed, it would almost certainly act as an occasional alternative breeding location for this species (W. Wakefield pers. comm 2001).

Due to its larger neighbour, Waterhouse Island, having been grazed by sheep for many years, Little Waterhouse Island is considered to be an important refugial breeding site for a range of seabirds in the region. Its vegetation is dominated by *Poa poiformis*, *Rhagodia candolleana* and *Disphyma crassifolium*.

#### **Cultural Values**

The region has significant Aboriginal heritage values, with Furneaux first describing Aboriginal occupation in 1773, commenting on the "continual fire along shore as we sailed" (Beaglehole 1961). There is evidence that some of the north-east islands were used by Aboriginal people, but there is no particular reference to Little Waterhouse Island. The territory of the North East Tribe extended along the coast from east of the Tamar River to Cape Portland and it is believed that the Ben Lomond Tribe also had access to the north-east coast (Kee 1991).

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

There is boating and fishing activity in the area, particularly during the summer months. Sea kayakers make infrequent visits. Recreational diving takes place around the island.

#### Condition

The island is in relatively pristine condition, however common starlings breed here, increasing the risk of weed infestation. Vegetation category 1 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

Little Waterhouse Island is particularly significant for its large Pacific gull and black-faced cormorant populations. Refer to the summary for further information.

#### **Management Issues**

Being relatively close to the recreational camping sites of the Waterhouse Conservation Area and en route to Waterhouse Island, Little Waterhouse Island is susceptible to disturbance through incidental visitation and boating activity. There is little awareness and understanding amongst the north-east coast residents and holiday-makers about the significance of offshore islands and the role they play as seabird breeding sites.

Location:	40°46'S, 147°56'E, approximately 600metres from Petal Point, south of Cape Portland
Area:	1.6 hectares
Tenure:	Unallocated Crown Land, however a proposal for upgrading the status to nature reserve is currently being drafted.
Access:	Accessible from boat ramps at Petal Point and Little Musselroe Bay, although the stretch of water between Baynes Island and mainland Tasmania can be quite hazardous

#### 2.2 Baynes Island

#### **Natural Values**

The island supports breeding populations of little penguins (up to 50 pairs), Pacific gulls (8 pairs), silver gulls (90 pairs), sooty oystercatchers (2 pairs), Caspian terns (1 pair) and black-faced cormorants (9 pairs). A maximum of 27 pairs of Pacific gulls and 5 pairs of sooty oystercatchers were recorded in 1997. Approximately 250 pairs of crested terns have also bred on the island in the past two to three years (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). Black-faced cormorants are believed to primarily use the island as a roost site, breeding only occasionally. Fairy terns (6 pairs) were recorded breeding on the island in 1998/1999 (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). The island also acts as a high tide refuge for small waders including ruddy turnstones, curlews, sandpipers and red-necked stints (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). Geological deposits include chalcedony, quartzite, quartz and silcrete. *Poa poiformis* and *Stipa stipoides* dominate the vegetation with some *Bulbine* species present.

#### **Cultural Values**

A small artefact scatter on Baynes Island provides evidence of Aboriginal use.

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

The island has been relatively regularly visited by bird-watchers conducting bird counts. Recreational fishing has taken place in the area for many years.

#### Condition

The island is in a relatively pristine condition. Vegetation category 1 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

Fairy terns are listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. Given that this species' more traditional known breeding sites on adjacent mainland Tasmania, are subjected to considerable disturbance, the relative inaccessibility of this island makes it a vital breeding sanctuary. The crested tern population is also significant for this region. There is a possibility of *Lepidium hyssopifolium*, an endangered plant of the Brassicaceae family, being present on the island (S. Harris pers. comm. 2001).

#### **Management Issues**

Baynes Island's proximity to the Petal Point boat ramp creates potential problems of disturbance to its diversity of breeding seabirds. The crested tern and fairy tern breeding sites and the Aboriginal artefact scatter on the island require special protection.

#### 2.3 Little Swan Island

Location:	40°43'S, 148°05'E, 1.4 kilometres to the north-west of Swan Island
Area:	12.6 hectares
Tenure:	Unallocated Crown Land, however a proposal for upgrading the status to
	nature reserve is currently being drafted.
Access:	It can be accessed from either Swan Island or the boat ramps at Petal Point,
	Little Musselroe Bay and Musselroe Bay.

#### **Natural Values**

The island supports breeding populations of little penguins (300 pairs), short-tailed shearwaters (2400 pairs), possibly common diving-petrels, white-faced storm-petrels (5000 pairs), Pacific gulls (7 pairs), sooty oystercatchers (3 pairs) and Australian pelicans (4 pairs). 40 pairs of Australian pelicans bred on the island between 1991 and 1996 and the island still supports a large breeding colony (J. Harris pers. comm. 2001). The geology is dolerite overlain by sand. Its vegetation is mainly native tussock grassland including *Poa poiformis*, *Tetragonia implexicoma* and *Stipa stipoides*.

#### **Cultural Values**

The long history of occupation and use of Swan Island, with the building of the lighthouse in 1845 suggests that Little Swan Island may have been incidentally visited by Swan Island occupants. There are no records of Aboriginal visitation to the island.

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

Recreational and commercial fishing and recreational diving and sea kayaking occur around Little Swan Island.

#### Condition

The island's vegetation is in good condition with no signs of interference. Vegetation category 1 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

With ten seabird species, Little Swan Island has the largest seabird diversity of any of the north-east islands and one of the largest in the Tasmanian region. The island is considered integral to the conservation of the Australian pelican in Tasmanian waters and is possibly the largest breeding site of the four in Tasmania. Breeding populations of Caspian terns, crested terns and white-fronted terns (listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*) regularly use the island (J. Harris pers comm. 2001). Refer to the summary for more information.

#### **Management Issues**

The island's breeding seabirds, especially the Australian pelicans, are particularly susceptible to disturbance by short-tailed shearwater harvesters, visitors and fishers. The existence of white-fronted terns, which are listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* should also be factored into management prescriptions.

#### 2.4 Bird Rock

Location:	40°56'S, 148°20'E, to the north-west of George Rocks
Area:	0.9 hectares
Tenure:	Unallocated Crown Land, although is commonly associated with George
	Rocks, which is a nature reserve.
Access:	It is accessible from Musselroe Bay, Ansons Bay and Mt. William National
	Park.

#### **Natural Values**

The island supports breeding populations of little penguins (up to 50 pairs), common divingpetrels (50–100 pairs), Pacific gulls (3 pairs) and Caspian terns (1 pair). It is also a roosting site for black-faced cormorants and great cormorants. Vegetation is dominated by *Tetragonia implexicoma* and *Poa poiformis*.

#### **Cultural Values**

None known

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

The area around Bird Rock and George Rocks is regularly used for commercial and recreational fishing. Recreational and commercial diving takes place around the Bird Rock.

#### Condition

Unlike its neighbour, George Rocks, its environment is in relatively pristine condition. Vegetation category 1 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Signficance**

Bird Rock provides an example of a pristine seabird breeding environment.

#### **Management Issues**

Bird Rock should be incorporated into the George Rocks Nature Reserve.

#### 2.5 George Rocks

Location:	40°55′S, 148°20′E
Area:	7 hectares comprising 3 islands
Tenure:	Nature Reserve
Access:	Ansons Bay, Musselroe Bay, Eddystone Point and Mt. William National Park
	are the major access points.

#### **Natural Values**

There are breeding populations of little penguins (100 pairs), short-tailed shearwaters (approx. 100 pairs), silver gulls (100 pairs) and black-faced cormorants (15 pairs). Napier (1978) recorded 200 pairs of white-faced storm-petrels and breeding crested terns but neither of these species was recorded by Brothers in his survey of 1985. The possibility that rats are responsible for this decline cannot be discounted. The island is also a roosting site for great cormorants. Seals are often seen off the eastern shore and in the small inlet of the south-eastern corner of the largest island (M. Cuthbertson pers. comm. 2002). During May to December often as many as 50 Australian pelicans are seen in the area (M. Cuthbertson pers. comm. 2002). The vegetation is dominated by *Poa poiformis* and *Carpobrotus rossii* with *Tetragonia implexicoma* scattered amongst boulders and slabs of granite. George Rocks is composed of granite, similar to much of the adjacent Tasmanian mainland coastline.

#### **Cultural Values**

George Island, the largest of the three islands comprising George Rocks, has a small Aboriginal artefact scatter of predominantly quartz flakes. Sealing occurred on the island from 1816 until at least 1827. Captain James Kelly is reported to have taken 172 seal skins in 9 days in 1816. His journal entries indicate that seal skins were traded with the adjacent Tasmanian mainland Aborigines in return for protection, kangaroo skins and meat and for skilled Aboriginal women, who were used in subsequent sealing operations on George Rocks (Kostoglou 1996). James Kelly later made an application for a lease to use George Rocks as a whaling station, but it appears not to have been realised (Kostoglou 1996).

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

The existence of a number of safe anchorages on the island makes it popular with fishing boats and yachts. It is a regular occurrence for two or more boats to anchor on the western shore of the island during both daylight hours and overnight (M. Cuthbertson pers. comm. 2002). Recreational and commercial diving takes place around George Rocks. Rock lobster, abalone and banded morwong fishers work in the area, generally between May and December.

#### Condition

There are rats and rabbits on the island. Mirror bush (*Coprosma repens*) and other garden weed species possibly transferred by birds, are found on the Rocks. Vegetation category 2 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

The black-faced cormorant breeding colony is significant. Refer to the summary for more details.

#### **Management Issues**

The poaching of short-tailed shearwaters, damage by rabbits and rats and weed invasion are the major threats to George Rocks. Fishers and yachtspeople use several of the island's bays as safe anchorage sites and should continue to have access. The existence of an Aboriginal artefact site and the diversity of breeding seabirds warrant appropriate management prescriptions.

#### 2.6 St. Helens Island

Location:	41°21′S, 148°20′E
Area:	51 hectares
Tenure:	Part of the St. Helens Point Conservation Area
Access:	St. Helens is the closest port. The island is also accessed from Burns Bay
	Beach at St. Helens Point and Diana's Beach at Beaumaris.

#### **Natural Values**

Resident seabirds include little penguins (over 5000 pairs), short-tailed shearwaters (over 3000 pairs), common diving-petrels (approx. 10 pairs), white-faced storm-petrels (an estimated 10,000 pairs) and Pacific gulls (2 pairs). Other species known to breed on the island are Caspian terns and sooty oystercatchers. Black-faced cormorants and great cormorants use the island as a roosting site (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). Other breeding birds include brown quail, swamp harrier, brown goshawk, Lewin's rail and silvereye. Seals have been recorded off the eastern and northern shores, sea eagles off the western shore and humpback and southern right whales off the southern shore (M. Cuthbertson pers. comm. 2002). The vegetation varies from *Poa poiformis* dominated coastal areas to areas of dense shrub. The island may harbour indigenous mammals (N. Brothers pers. comm. 2002).

#### **Cultural Values**

In 1841 George Watson applied for a 3 acre whaling station lease on St. Helens Island but it appears not to have been developed (P. Kostoglou 1995).

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

Recreational and commercial fishing takes place around the island. Abalone diving takes place all year and rock lobster fishing takes place from the first Saturday in November until the end of April (for females) and the end of August (for males). The netting of live banded morwong fishing occurs around the island between May and December. Warehou fishing occasionally occurs off the southern shore and jackass and trumpeter fishing occurs off the eastern shore (M. Cuthbertson pers. comm. 2002). The south-west corner of the gulch is used as a safe haven for the boating community. Recreational diving takes place around the island.

#### Condition

The island's seabird habitat has been burnt in the past and is subjected to severe rabbit grazing. The poaching of short-tailed shearwaters takes place. Large flocks of common starlings roost on the island at night (D.Binns pers. comm. 2001). Vegetation category 2 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

The diversity of the breeding seabird population, the existence of a Capsian tern colony and the abundance of white-faced storm-petrels, one of the largest populations in Tasmania, are of particular significance. Refer to the summary for more details.

#### **Management Issues**

The importance of the diverse seabird population and particularly the abundance of whitefaced storm-petrels justifies the introduction of management mechanisms to ensure their protection. The sensitive habitat of the white-faced storm-petrel needs to be appropriately managed. The boating and fishing communities should continue to have access to the safe anchorages on the island.

#### 2.7 Paddys Island

Location:	41°24′S, 148°18′E
Area:	4.6 hectares
Tenure:	Unallocated Crown Land
Access:	St. Helens and Scamander are the closest ports. Access is also possible from
	Diana's Beach, Beaumaris.

#### **Natural Values**

There are breeding populations of little penguins (40 pairs), Pacific gulls (39 pairs), silver gulls (54 pairs), kelp gulls (2 pairs), sooty oystercatchers (2 pairs) and Caspian terns (up to 3 pairs) Crested terns have also been recorded breeding on the island. The Pacific gull colony has up to 60 pairs. The island is also a roosting site for black-faced cormorants. Vegetation is dominated by *Poa poiformis* with scattered *Disphyma crassifolium* and *Atriplex cinerea*. *Acacia sophorae* also grows on the island (D.Binns pers. comm 2001).

#### **Cultural Values**

None known

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

Recreational and commercial fishing takes place around the island. Netting for banded morwong occurs north of the island. However it is more common for fishers to use the reefs east of the island (M. Cuthbertson pers.comm. 2002).

#### Conditon

There are introduced grasses on the island. Starlings, which regularly roost in shrubs are likely to introduce other invasive vegetation species. Vegetation category 2 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

The Pacific gull colony, with up to 60 pairs, is the third largest in the state (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001).

#### **Management Issues**

The importance of the Pacific gull colony warrants appropriate management prescriptions. The effect of the kelp gulls on the Pacific gulls should be monitored. A net is set along the western shore of the island most of the time (M. Cuthbertson pers. comm. 2002).

#### 2.8 Diamond Island

Location:	41°51′S, 148°17′E
Area:	6.7 hectares
Tenure:	Nature Reserve
Access:	It is very close to Bicheno and at low tide, one can wade across the sand spit.

#### Natural values

There are breeding populations of little penguins (approx. 200 pairs), short-tailed shearwaters and sooty oystercatchers (1 pair). The dominant vegetation is *Rhagodia candolleana* and there are scattered casuarinas in the central to northern part of the island.

#### **Cultural values**

There is a small scatter of stone artefacts on the island (Brown 1991).

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

Being close to the popular coastal town of Bicheno, Diamond Island is relatively frequently visited. Little penguin tours operate on the mainland areas adjacent to the island. Recreational fishing takes place around the island and recreational diving takes place off the east coast.

#### Condition

Because of its proximity to mainland Tasmania, it is subjected to extensive weed invasions and has a stand of radiata pines. Vegetation category 2 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

There is a possibility of the rare plant *Zieria cytisoides* being present on the island (S. Harrris pers. comm 2001).

#### **Management Issues**

Due to its proximity to Bicheno, the island has the potential to be an educational island model with controlled tourist access to encourage increased understanding of the vital function of Tasmania's offshore islands.

2.9	Governor	Island
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Location:	41°52′S, 148°18′E
Area:	1.9 hectares (two islands)
Tenure:	Marine Nature Reserve, which encompasses the island itself, Alligator Rock
	and all waters 400 metres eastward from the shoreline of Governor Island.
Access:	Lying less than 50 metres from Bicheno, it is separated from mainland
	Tasmania by Waubs Gulch.

#### **Natural Values**

The island supports breeding populations of little penguins (10 pairs), silver gulls (130 pairs) and sooty oystercatchers (1 pair). There are up to 2200 pairs of crested terns. (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). There are also kelp gulls (2 pairs) and red-capped plovers (1 pair) recorded breeding on the island, with hooded plovers suspected to breed here in some years (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). It is also an important roosting site for white-fronted terns, black-faced cormorants and great cormorants. Australian fur seals occasionally haul out on the eastern side of the island (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). The island is 95% bare, smooth granite, with small patches of vegetation which include *Disphyma crassifolium*, *Geranium* sp. and *Poa poiformis*. Its surrounding marine environment with vertical granite walls, overhanging rock faces, caves and deep fissures, harbours an unusually diverse array of flora and fauna and is protected by its no-take reserve status.

#### **Cultural Values**

None known

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

The marine environment around the island is used regularly by recreational divers, tourist operators and marine scientists. It is abundant with invertebrates, fish, seaweeds, sea grasses and spectacular underwater geological formations. The area of the marine reserve, being a no-take zone, is also of educational and scientific value.

#### Condition

The island has African boxthorn (*Lycium ferocissimum*), thistle species and introduced grasses. Vegetation category 2 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

There are up to 2200 pairs of crested terns, making this the most important breeding location for this species on the east coast (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001). Refer to the summary for more information. There is a possibility of the rare plant *Zieria cytisoides* being present on the island (S. Harris pers. comm. 2001).

#### **Management Issues**

A lack of understanding exists about the importance of the island's marine nature reserve status. Considering the possible existence of a rare plant and the susceptibility of the island to weed invasion, the flora needs to be more appropriately managed. The intermittent breeding of crested terns and hooded plovers is an important management issue.

#### 2.10 Little Christmas Island

Location:	42°15′S, 148°01′E
Area:	2.2 hectares
Tenure:	Unallocated Crown Land
Access:	Swansea is its closest port.

#### **Natural Values**

Approximately 250 pairs of little penguins breed on the island. Short-tailed shearwaters have also been recorded breeding here. At low tide, two pairs of hooded plovers use the beach between the island and the mainland. Sooty oystercatchers may also breed here occasionally. Dolerite rock shore platforms surround the island.

#### **Cultural Values**

Two shell middens with stone artefacts are present on the island (Brown 1991). There is no documentary information relating to whaling or sealing activities on the island. However, there is a series of at least fifteen stacked stone features situated parallel to the shoreline on the north-west side of the island covering an area of about 150 metres. There is no historical evidence to indicate what this site was used for (P. Kostoglou 1995).

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

The island is occasionally used by day visitors.

#### Condition

Rabbits have impacted on the island. Vegetation category 3 (refer to Appendix 3).

#### **Special Significance**

Given the modification of the adjacent mainland environment, Little Christmas Island's little penguin colonies are important, as is its potential as a breeding site for hooded plovers.

#### **Management Issues**

Being joined to mainland Tasmania at low tide by a narrow sand spit, access by people, dogs and cats is an issue. The Aboriginal middens should be protected.

# Section 3 Management Objectives, Zones and Outcomes

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* provides for different management objectives for different categories of reserves. Under the Act a nature reserve is an area with unique, important or representative natural values. This class of reserve is deemed to require maximum protection. George Rocks, Diamond Island and Governor Island are nature reserves. Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island and Little Swan Island are considered to be worthy of nature reserve status, but have not yet been formally recognised. A conservation area has significant natural and/or cultural values. This class of reserve is deemed to require the protection of the significant natural and/or cultural sites while allowing for sustainable use of its natural resources. St. Helens Island as part of the St. Helens Point Conservation Area, is a conservation area.

#### 3.1 Purposes and Management Objectives of Nature Reserves

Nature reserves are a class of reserved land under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*. Nature reserves are areas of land that contain natural values that contribute to the natural biological diversity or geological diversity of the area of land or both; and are unique, important or have representative value.

#### Purposes

The purposes of reservation of nature reserves are the conservation of the natural biological diversity or geological diversity of the area of land, or both, and the conservation of the natural values of that area of land that are unique, important or have representative value.

George Rocks, Diamond Island and Governor Island Nature Reserves are reserved for the purpose of conserving their biological diversity, particularly their seabird populations.

#### **Management Objectives**

The management objectives of nature reserves are set out in *the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970.* All of the objectives below apply to George Rocks, Diamond Island and Governor Island Nature Reserves. The management plan as a whole specifies the reasons these objectives apply and the manner in which they are to be achieved. The sections of the management plan which primarily deal with each management objective are shown in brackets below. The management objectives for nature reserves are:

- a) to conserve natural biological diversity (Sections 4.2, 4.3, 5, 6, 7 and 8);
- b) to conserve geological diversity (Sections 4.1 and 7);
- c) to preserve the quality of water and protect catchments;
- d) to conserve sites or areas of cultural significance (Sections 4.4, 4.5 and 7);
- e) to encourage education based on the purposes of reservation and the natural or cultural values of the nature reserve or both (Sections 5, 6 and 8);
- f) to encourage research, particularly that which furthers the purposes of reservation (Sections 5,6, 7 and 8);
- g) to protect the nature reserve against, and rehabilitate the nature reserve following adverse impacts such as those of fire, introduced species, diseases and soil erosion on the nature reserve's natural and cultural values and on assets within and adjacent to the nature reserve (Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8); and

h) to encourage cooperative management programs with Aboriginal people in areas of significance to them in a manner consistent with the purposes of reservation and the other management (Section 4.4, 7 and 8).

All the objectives are relevant to George Rocks, Diamond Island and Governor Island Nature Reserves.

#### 3.2 Purposes and Management Objectives of Conservation Areas

Conservation areas are a class of reserved land under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*. They are areas of land predominantly in a natural state.

#### Purposes

The purposes of reservation of conservation areas, as set out in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*, are the protection and maintenance of the natural and cultural values of the area of land and the sustainable use of the natural resources of that area of land. As part of the St. Helens Point Conservation Area, St. Helens Island is reserved for these purposes.

#### **Management Objectives**

The management objectives of conservation areas are set out in the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970*. The management plan as a whole specifies the reasons these objectives apply and the manner in which they are to be achieved. The sections of the management plan which primarily deal with each management objective are shown in brackets below. The following management objectives of conservation areas apply to St. Helens Island:

- a) to conserve natural biological diversity (Sections 4.2, 4.3, 5, 6, 7 and 8);
- b) to conserve geological diversity (Sections 4.1 and 7);
- c) to preserve the quality of water and protect catchments;
- d) to conserve sites or areas of cultural significance (Sections 4.4, 4.5 and 7);
- e) to encourage education based on the purposes of reservation and the natural or cultural values of the conservation area or both (Sections 5, 6 and 8);
- f) to encourage research, particularly that which furthers the purposes of reservation (Sections 5,6, 7 and 8);
- g) to protect the conservation area against, and rehabilitate the conservation area following adverse impacts such as those of fire, introduced species, diseases and soil erosion on the nature reserve's natural and cultural values and on assets within and adjacent to the conservation area (Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8);
- h) to encourage appropriate tourism, recreational use and enjoyment consistent with the conservation of the area's natural and cultural values (Sections 5, 6 and 8); and
- i) to encourage cooperative management programs with Aboriginal people in areas of significance to them in a manner consistent with the purposes of reservation and the other management (Section 4.4, 7 and 8).

The following management objectives for conservation areas are inappropriate for this part of the St. Helens Point Conservation Area and will not apply:

- j) to provide for the controlled use of natural resources;
- k) to provide for exploration activities and utilisation of mineral resources subject to appropriate controls;
- 1) to provide for the taking, on an ecologically sustainable basis, of designated game species for commercial or private purposes, or both; and

m) to provide for the controlled use of natural resources including as an adjunct to utilisation of marine resources.

#### 3.3 Purposes and Management Objectives of Islands of Unallocated Crown Land Tenure

No legislative management objectives exist for unallocated crown land. However, because Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, Little Swan Island, Bird Rock, Paddys Island and Little Christmas Island have significant seabird breeding populations which justify protection, the following objectives for these islands have been developed for the purpose of this management plan.

#### Objectives

- a) to conserve natural biological diversity (Sections 4.2, 4.3, 5, 6, 7 and 8);
- b) to conserve geological diversity (Sections 4.1 and 7);
- c) to preserve the quality of water and protect catchments;
- d) to conserve sites or areas of cultural significance (Sections 4.4, 4.5 and 7);
- e) to encourage education based on the islands' natural or cultural values (Sections 5, 6 and 8);
- f) to encourage research, particularly that which furthers the protection of their values (Sections 5,6, 7 and 8);
- a) to protect the islands against, and rehabilitate them following adverse impacts such as those of fire, introduced species, diseases and soil erosion on the islands' natural and cultural values (Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8);
- b) to encourage appropriate tourism, recreational use and enjoyment consistent with the conservation of the area's natural and cultural values (Sections 5, 6 and 8); and
- c) to encourage cooperative management programs with Aboriginal people in areas of significance to them (Section 4.4, 7 and 8).

#### 3.4 Management Zones

Zoning is a tool used in reserve management planning to delineate areas to ensure their most appropriate management. The three commonly used zones are Visitor Services Zone, Recreation Zone and Natural Zone. In special circumstances other types of zones may be defined.

The aims of zoning are to:

- take account of localised features, conditions and values;
- ensure substantial areas are undisturbed;
- protect and enhance values by concentrating and directing tourism and recreational development to designated locations; and
- provide a range of recreational and tourism opportunities consistent with reserve values.

Because of their relatively pristine environments and low levels of use, all but one of the north-east islands fall into the Natural Zone category consistent with the following aims:

- to conserve the natural integrity
- to protect, maintain and monitor the diversity of plant and animal species and communities;
- to conserve heritage values; and
- to maintain the character of naturalness, tranquility and isolation.

Due to the focus on nature-based tourism in the adjacent resort town of Bicheno and the island's potential to highlight several of the unique qualities of offshore islands, Diamond Island is zoned an Educational Zone. This would provide for future development for educational day use purposes consistent with the management objectives for Nature Reserves.

# Section 4 Conservation and Protection

#### 4.1 Geodiversity

Some of the islands such as Little Swan Island, Little Waterhouse Island and Little Christmas Island are composed of Jurassic age dolerite. Devonian granite occurs extensively throughout the remainder of the north-east islands.

From a geological and geomorphological processes perspective, which include marine, aeolian and soil processes, the islands are highly significant because they continue to evolve naturally without any major human influences. The complex nature of soil formation in association with seabird activity, including physical and chemical soil development, is quite different from these processes in other areas. These interrelationships are relatively poorly understood.

The reason that no sites of geoconservation significance on islands are listed is that no reconnaissance or systematic surveys have been conducted to identify them. (Dixon 1996 and the Tasmanian Geoconservation Database). See Section 7.1.

#### Aims

• Significant geological, geomorphological or soil features should be protected, maintained and monitored.

#### Prescriptions

- Management practices and development will avoid or otherwise minimise impacts on the integrity of sites of geoconservation significance.
- Potential adverse impacts on geodiversity and earth processes will be assessed when planning any development or action, including land rehabilitation and stabilisation.
- Scientific research will be conducted in a way that avoids impacts on geodiversity, sites of geoconservation significance or the aesthetics of significant exposures. Geoscientific research must be consistent with nature conservation values of the islands or with the reservation status of the islands and should be justified within this context.
- The use of coring devices and other mechanical sampling devices for geoscientific research will not be permitted unless special permission is provided by the Parks and Wildlife Service in consultation with the Senior Earth Scientist in the Nature Conservation Branch of DPIWE.

#### 4.2 Flora

The dominant vegetation for most of the islands is *Poa poiformis, Carpobrotus rossii* and *Tetragonia implexicoma*. There is a possibility that the rare plants *Zieria cytisoides* and *Lepidium hyssopifolium* occur on some of the islands (S. Harris pers. comm.). Islands have the potential to be used for ex-situ plantings of flora, which may be threatened by the destruction of habitat or the spread of diseases such as *Phytophthora cinnamomi* on mainland Tasmania.

#### 4.2.1 Introduced Flora

Mirror bush (*Coprosma repens*) and other garden species associated with the Eddystone Point lighthouse have invaded George Rocks Nature Reserve (T. Rudman pers. comm. 2001). *Coprosma* provides habitat for breeding starlings and blackbirds. Those islands closest to

mainland Tasmania are most likely to have problems associated with the colonisation of garden plants. Weeds have the potential to destroy ecosystems of small islands in a relatively short period by reducing the suitable habitat available for breeding seabirds.

#### 4.2.2 Plant Diseases

*Phytophthora cinnamomi* is a microscopic fungus that lives in the soil and roots and causes severe dieback and death in many native plant species. Although prevalent on Schouten Island, it has not been recorded on other north-east islands.

#### Aims

- The aims of flora conservation on the islands are to:
  - conserve and maintain natural diversity and natural ecosystems;
  - conserve and protect threatened flora species;
  - conserve and protect plant communities of high conservation value: and
  - minimise harmful impacts on native vegetation.

#### Prescriptions

- Disturbance of vegetation will be minimised to protect indigenous flora values and limit the risk of introducing pests, weeds or pathogens.
- Islands most susceptible to garden plant invasions, particularly George Rocks, Governor Island and Little Christmas Island, will be monitored.
- Where possible, vegetation surveys will be conducted on the north-east islands to gain important management information. Survey data and related management guidelines will be used to inform existing district weed management plans.
- Where feasible, long-term monitoring programs will be established for threatened species. *Phytophthora* and threatened species recovery plans, where they exist, will be followed.
- Where feasible, established weeds and pathogens will be eradicated.
- Only local provenance species will be used in rehabilitation unless special approval is given.
- Threatened species will be managed according to the listing statements in the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*.
- Before any ex-situ plantings are conducted on islands, thorough fauna, flora and geomorphological surveys need to be conducted and potential impacts assessed.
- Improve the existing flora inventory for all islands.

#### 4.3 Fauna

The north-east islands harbour 16 species of seabirds. (See Table 2). Refer to the summary for more information about the significance of the north-east island seabird species. Little penguins occur on all islands, ranging in abundance from 20 pairs on Governor Island to over 500 pairs on St. Helens Island. Little Swan Island supports breeding populations of Australian pelicans and white-fronted terns, which are both uncommon species in Tasmania and are particularly susceptible to disturbance. White-fronted terns are listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*. Fairy terns, also listed as rare under the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*, have been recorded on Baynes Island. White-faced storm-petrels, which prefer soft, sandy easily disturbed soils for burrow excavation, occur on St. Helens Island and George Rocks.

While breeding, many seabirds are particularly sensitive to disturbance and may desert their nests, leaving eggs or chicks vulnerable to predation or damage by extreme weather conditions. Surface-nesting birds, particularly those with a low fidelity to their breeding sites,

are most vulnerable (see Table 3). The breeding seasons and attendance patterns of seabirds using the south-east islands are recorded in Table 3.

#### 4.3.1 Introduced Fauna

Rats and rabbits occur on George Rocks and rabbits occur on St. Helens Island, Diamond Island and Little Christmas Island. Blackbirds and starlings roost on St. Helens Island, and starlings roost on Paddys Island. Starlings were also recorded breeding on Little Waterhouse Island.

#### Aims

- The aims of fauna conservation on the islands are to:
  - ensure maximum protection of rare and vulnerable fauna species
  - maintain viable populations of indigenous fauna
  - maintain the diversity and viability of seabird populations
  - maintain the integrity of natural habitats of indigenous fauna.

#### Prescriptions

- Where possible, instigate eradication programs for rats and rabbits on George Rocks and rabbits on St. Helens Island, Diamond Island and Little Christmas Island. Because of the possibility of reintroduction on the latter two islands, a strict control program would also be essential.
- Link with existing education programs to highlight the dangers to natural values of feral animal introduction, particularly in relation to the most accessible islands Diamond Island, Governor Island and Little Christmas Island.
- Develop control programs, where feasible, for introduced bird species, particularly starlings and blackbirds, which have colonised islands. This will initially involve eradicating birds' roosting habitats, which are usually weed species.
- Minimise disturbance to breeding seabirds by managing visitation (see 5.1). Refer to Appendix 4 for guidelines for visiting seabird breeding sites.
- Protect the habitat of breeding seabirds by managing visitation and controlling the infestation of weeds, especially in relation to white-faced storm-petrels.
- Implement the management requirements for the white-fronted tern and fairy tern in the listing statements for the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*.
- Improve the existing fauna inventory for all islands.

Island	Breeding seabird species	Reptiles	Mammals
Little	Little penguin, black-faced cormorant,	None	None
Waterhouse	Pacific gull, silver gull, sooty		
Island	oystercatcher and Caspian tern		
Baynes Island	Little penguin, black-faced cormorant,	None	None
	Pacific gull, silver gull, sooty		
	oystercatcher, Caspian tern, fairy tern*		
Little Swan	Little penguin, short-tailed shearwater,	Metallic skink	None
Island	Australian pelican, common diving-petrel,		
	white-faced storm-petrel, Pacific gull,		
	sooty oystercatcher, Caspian tern, crested		
	tern, white-fronted tern*		
Bird Rock	Little penguin, common diving-petrel,	None	None
	Pacific gull, Caspian tern		
George Rocks	Little penguin, short-tailed shearwater,	Metallic skink	Rabbit, rat
	white-faced storm-petrel, silver gull,		
	black-faced cormorant, crested tern		
St. Helens	Little penguin, short-tailed shearwater,	Metallic skink	Rabbit,
Island	Pacific gull, common diving-petrel, white-		possibly
	faced storm-petrel, sooty oystercatcher,		native
	Caspian tern		mammals
Paddys Island	Little penguin, Pacific gull, kelp gull,	None	None
	sooty oystercatcher, Capsian tern, crested		
	tern		
Diamond	Little penguin, short-tailed shearwater,	None	Rabbit
Island	sooty oystercatcher		
Governor	Little penguin, silver gull, crested tern,	None	None
Island	sooty oytstercatcher		
Little	Little penguin, short-tailed shearwater,	None	Rabbit
Christmas	sooty oystercatcher		
Island			

Table 2Seabirds, Reptiles and Mammals on the Small North-East Islands

\* Listed as rare under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995

Table 3Breeding and Attendance Patterns of Seabird Species Recorded on Small<br/>Offshore Islands in North-East Tasmania (Adapted from the Minimal<br/>Impact Seakayaking Code of Conduct for visiting sensitive coastal areas<br/>2001)

Seabird species	Nest type	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Little penguin	Burrow	В	В	А	А	А	А	A	В	В	В	В	В
Short-tailed shearwater	Burrow	В	В	В	В	В				В	В	В	В
Fairy prion	Burrow	В	В	А	А	Α	А	А	Α	В	В	В	В
Common diving-petrel	Burrow	В	В	А	А	А	А	А	В	В	В	В	В
White-faced storm-petrel	Burrow	В	В							В	В	В	В
Australian pelican*	Surface	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В	В
Black-faced cormorant*	Surface	В	В					В	В	В	В	В	В
Silver gull	Surface	В	В						В	В	В	В	В
Kelp gull	Surface	В	В						В	В	В	В	В
Pacific gull	Surface	В								В	В	В	В
White-fronted tern*	Surface	В									В	В	В
Caspian tern*	Surface	В							В	В	В	В	В
Crested tern*	Surface	В	В						В	В	В	В	В
Fairy tern*	Surface	В	В								В	В	В
Pied oystercatcher	Surface									В	В	В	В
Sooty oystercatcher	Surface	В	В								В	В	B

A indicates the months adult birds attend their nests.

B indicates the months of breeding

\* Species considered to have low fidelity to one nest site, readily deserting it, if disturbed.

#### 4.4 Aboriginal Heritage

Of the ten islands covered by this plan, four have evidence of Aboriginal use in the form of either small artefact scatters or shell middens. Several of the islands have never been surveyed, and surveys that have been conducted were often incomplete. There is strong evidence that the far north-east was a significant area for Aboriginal people and it is likely that the more accessible islands were used. Aboriginal places and landscapes have a strong and continuing significance to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and require maximum protection. All Aboriginal relics and sites are protected under the *Aboriginal Relics Act 1975*. The *State Coastal Policy 1996* also states that Aboriginal sites are protected by law.

#### Aims

- In cooperation with the Aboriginal community, the aims of Aboriginal heritage management for the islands are:
  - identify and record places of Aboriginal heritage
  - protect and conserve Aboriginal heritage sites

#### Prescriptions

- Where possible, Aboriginal heritage values will be assessed in greater detail. Sites will be protected in accordance with agreed national or state charters or guidelines for Aboriginal places.
- The Aboriginal community will be consulted on any undertaking or development that may impinge on Aboriginal places.
- Aboriginal heritage will not be deliberately disturbed for management, development or research purposes unless the Director determines there is no practicable alternative and a written authority has been issued under the *Aboriginal Relics Act 1975*.

#### 4.5 Historic Heritage

Whaling stations were located on Governor Island and Diamond Island (Evans 1993).

#### Aims

- The aims of historic management are to:
  - identify and record historic heritage sites
  - protect and conserve all remaining significant heritage features
  - maintain the integrity and authenticity of historic remains
  - where feasible, interpret historic heritage.

#### Prescriptions

- Conservation and management of historic heritage on the islands will adhere to the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS (Marquis-Kyle & Walker, 1992) and its associated guidelines
- A conservation policy statement or conservation plan, including specific assessment of significance will be prepared before any decisions are made about major works, use, removal or interpretation relating to the heritage sites or remains.

# Section 5 Visitor Management

#### 5.1 Visitation - general

Uncontrolled visitor access to seabird breeding islands is their biggest threat. If nesting seabirds are disturbed for a prolonged period, they will desert their nests, leaving their chicks and eggs susceptible to severe weather conditions or to predation from other birds and animals. Some species such as Australian pelicans, terns and black-faced cormorants may regularly move in response to disturbance. The tern and oystercatcher species are less likely to breed if regularly disturbed. Refer to the summary for more information about seabirds.

Visitor disturbance can have an adverse impact through:

- direct disruption of seabirds and/or their habitat;
- noise from nearby fishing, diving, jet ski, boating or aircraft activity;
- interference with seabirds' foraging habits through activity in the immediate surrounding marine environment;
- introduction of unplanned tracks or pads which could potentially lead to erosion;
- introduction or transfer of weeds, feral pests or pathogens to previously undamaged areas; and
- increased risk of fire.

See Table 3 for the schedule of seabird attendance on islands. Appendix 4 provides guidelines for people visiting seabird breeding islands.

Current visitor levels to most of the islands are low with the more accessible islands of Diamond Island, Governor Island and Little Christmas Island being the most vulnerable especially to day visitation during the summer months. There is little known about the levels of visitation that small offshore islands are able to sustain. St. Helens Island and George Rocks are visited by yachtspeople and fishers, generally for one or two night stays to shelter from poor weather. Many of the far north-east island are regularly visited by Birds Tasmania researchers conducting bird counts. Diamond Island and Little Christmas Island have been visited by DPIWE biologists conducting little penguin counts. Recreational divers use the marine environment around Little Swan Island, Governor Island, Diamond Island, Bird Rock, Little Waterhouse Island and St. Helens Island. They rarely land on the islands, but there may be some interference to bird breeding patterns if they anchor too close to primary breeding sites. Sea kayakers paddle around most of the islands.

#### Aims

- To protect the islands' important natural and cultural values through:
  - education and awareness-raising activities about their significance,
  - increased involvement of community groups who currently responsibly use the islands and surrounding environment in their management
  - access requirements for some areas.

#### Prescriptions

- Develop educational material and erect signage, where appropriate, to promote a greater understanding of:
  - the susceptibility of breeding seabirds and their habitats;
  - the islands' other natural values such as significant vegetation, geological features and reptile diversity;

- the significance of Aboriginal and historical sites on some of the islands and
- the prescriptions contained within this management plan for the protection of islands.
- Assist user groups to develop their own minimal impact codes for visiting small offshore islands and their environs in line with the requirements of this plan.
- Establish an Island Care Network for people who responsibly visit islands and encourage their participation in island management and their contribution to an island care intranet site, which can be used to store relevant information and guide future management decisions.
- Regularly liaise with regional Parks and Wildlife Service staff to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the prescriptions contained within this management plan and to assist them in implementation opportunities.
- Enhance opportunities for regional Parks and Wildlife Service staff to promote the prescriptions contained within this management plan to their local communities.
- Protect the islands of high conservation value through implementing access requirements (see Appendix 5).

#### 5.2 Access Management

The level and type of access will be the main influence on how well the natural and cultural values of the islands can be maintained in the future. Based on the nature, condition and significance of the islands' values outlined in Section 2, the following different levels of access management are proposed:

- Level 1 Ecological education model island, where access is based on providing educational experiences and training. Applies to Diamond Island.
- Level 2 No specific access management arrangements. Promotion of seabird island visitor guidelines (Appendix 4). Applies to Bird Rock and Little Christmas Island.
- Level 3 Seasonally restricted area with access requirements during the seabird breeding seasons August 1 to March 31 (refer to Table 3). Applies to George Rocks Nature Reserve, St. Helens Island (part of St. Helens Island Conservation Area), Governor Island Nature Reserve and Paddys Island, when reserved.
- Level 4 Restricted area with access requirements all year to protect the highly vulnerable breeding Australian pelicans and tern species. Will apply to Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island and Little Swan Island, when reserved.

See Appendix 5 for details of access requirements.

#### 5.3 Camping

No islands have designated camping areas.

#### Aims

• To allow for responsible visits while maintaining the integrity of the natural and cultural values of the islands.

#### Prescriptions

- Camping on islands should be avoided.
- If overnight stays are unavoidable, camping should be restricted to areas where burrows, surface nesting sites and Aboriginal and historical heritage sites will not be disturbed. No fires should be lit.
- The guidelines set out in Appendix 5 should be followed by both day and overnight visitors to islands, on which seabirds breed. See Section 5.2 for islands which have access requirements. See Appendix 5 for access requirements.

#### 5.4 Diving

Recreational and commercial diving takes place around Little Swan Island, Governor Island, Diamond Island, Bird Rock, Little Waterhouse Island and St. Helens Island. Divers rarely land on the islands. There may be some interference to bird breeding patterns, however, if divers generate undue compressor noise close to primary breeding sites.

#### Aims

• To allow for responsible diving around the north-east islands while maintaining the integrity of their natural and cultural values

#### Prescriptions

- Work with the Tasmanian diving community to develop and promote a minimal impact recreational diving code for sensitive areas, based on the prescriptions of this management plan.
- Encourage the Australian Underwater Federation to create a database to which divers can contribute information about underwater flora and fauna and which can be used to inform and guide marine management decisions.

#### 5.5 Sea kayaking

Sea kayaking is an increasingly popular recreational activity, which enables kayakers to visit remote islands. Kayakers, because of the nature of the activity, are more likely to stay overnight on islands than other boat users. To address some of the issues associated with this, a Minimal Impact Sea Kayaking Code and brochure based on the prescriptions in this management plan, have been developed by the sea kayaking community in Tasmania. This can be viewed at <u>www.coastview.com.au</u>. Because sea kayakers, along with other responsible island users, are becoming more involved with island management, an island care network

will be formed as a way of engaging and focussing interested groups in helping to participate in management and educational strategies to conserve islands. As part of this network, an intranet site is proposed as a means of storing and sharing information gained by island users.

#### Aims

To allow for responsible sea kayaking around the north-east islands while maintaining the integrity of their natural and cultural values.

#### Prescriptions

- Work with the sea kayaking community, both recreational and commercial, to disseminate and promote its Minimal Impact Sea Kayaking Code as widely as possible.
- Promote an island care network of people interested in island conservation to assist with island education and management programs.
- Develop and promote an intranet site for the cooperative storage of relevant island information for educational and management purposes.

#### 5.6 Boating

Boating encompasses yachting and motor boat use. During the summer months the more accessible islands are visited by coastal holiday-makers in motor-powered runabouts, generally for day trips. The sheltered bays of St. Helens Island and George Rocks are popular anchorage sites for yachtspeople. With Coastcare funding, A Minimal Impact Boating Strategy and brochure "Afloat and Aware" have been developed and disseminated through Marine and Safety Tasmania and Tasmanian yachting associations.

#### Aims

• To allow for responsible boating around the north-east islands while maintaining the integrity of their natural and cultural values.

#### Prescriptions

- Incorporate prescriptions from this management plan into the Minimal Impact Boating Strategy.
- Work with the boating community and Marine and Safety Tasmania to widely disseminate and promote the prescriptions contained within this management plan, the Minimal Impact Boating Strategy and related educational material.
- Promote an island care network to assist with island education and management programs.
- Develop and promote an intranet site for the cooperative storage of relevant island information for educational and management purposes.
- Support the development and promotion of a Charter Boat Operators Code of Conduct, which incorporates the prescriptions contained within this plan and other minimal impact principles.

#### 5.7 Recreational and Commercial Fishing

Recreational and commercial fishing occurs around many of the islands particularly George Rocks, St. Helens Island and within the Great Oyster Bay area. The main forms of recreational fishing are line fishing, diving for abalone, diving for rock lobster and netting. The main forms of commercial fishing are diving for abalone, potting for rock lobster and netting for live banded morwong. The potential impacts associated with fishing are:

- disturbance to breeding seabirds from fishing activity (this is mainly associated with compressor noise)
- disturbance or death to foraging seabirds and disturbance to seals in the form of set nets in their foraging zones.
- disturbance to breeding seabirds and other natural and cultural values through visits to the islands by fishers.

Commercial fishing, mainly for abalone, rock lobster and banded morwong occurs in the vicinity of George Rocks, St. Helens Island and Paddys Island. Commercial fishers are not likely to land on islands for extended periods, unless to shelter from bad weather.

#### Aims

• To allow for responsible fishing around the north-east islands while maintaining the integrity of their natural and cultural values.

#### Prescriptions

- Work with the commercial and recreational fishing community and Fishcare volunteers to promote education about the significance of offshore islands and appropriate visitor behaviour.
- Promote and facilitate collaboration between the Recreational Fisheries Advisory Council, the Scalefish Fishery Advisory Committee, industry, DPIWE (Marine Resources, Nature Conservation Branch, Parks and Wildlife Service) and Birds Tasmania to review options and make recommendations to reduce interactions between seabirds and net fishing in response to the information and prescriptions provided in this management plan. Recommendations from this review will form part of a submission to the 2003 review of the "Tasmanian Scalefish Management Plan August 2001".
- Promote the DPIWE "Net Smarter December 2000" and "Recreational Scalefishing (sea fishing) 2001" brochures.

#### 5.8 Bird watching

The participation of local bird enthusiast groups in the monitoring and recording of bird populations and behaviours contributes greatly to the knowledge that informs and guides management decisions. Bird counts have been conducted on most of the north-east islands by Birds Tasmania members. Bird populations on Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, Little Swan Island, St. Helens Island, Diamond Island, Governor Island, Paddys Island and Little Christmas Island have been relatively regularly monitored.

#### Aims

To encourage continued monitoring and recording of bird populations on the small north-east islands by responsible community organisations while maintaining the islands' integrity and natural and cultural values.

#### Prescriptions

- Establish mechanisms to enhance the flow of information between community groups undertaking recording and monitoring work and nature conservation and management agencies.
- Encourage the participation of bird enthusiasts in education programs.

#### 5.9 Education and Interpretation

There is currently very little educational material specifically designed to raise people's understanding of the significance of Tasmania's offshore islands. There is an interpretive sign and brochure about Governor Island Marine Nature Reserve. The Minimal Impact Sea Kayakers Code of Conduct and "Leave No Wake" brochure are informative and educative tools developed and disseminated by sea kayaking networks for sea kayakers visiting sensitive coastal environments in Tasmania. They provide useful information and recommendations for visiting sensitive seabird islands, seal colonies and seal haul-outs. The Minimal Impact Boating Strategy and "Afloat and Aware" brochure developed by Coastcare for small boat users provide information and guidance on ecologically sustainable practices.

#### Aims

• To promote the significance and value of offshore islands and the need for their protection from human disturbance.

#### Prescriptions

- Develop educational material and appropriate interpretive signage to help people to understand the value of offshore island seabird breeding sites.
- Develop and promote educational training programs for tourist operators and recreational club members to assist them to improve their local knowledge of the diversity and significance of seabirds and marine mammals.
- Investigate the feasibility of Diamond Island as an island "ecomodel" to help educate and train those involved in the environmental tourist industry about the significance of Tasmania's offshore seabird breeding islands.

# Section 6 Partnerships

#### 6.1 Community and Industry Partnerships

Over the past few years there has been a greater realisation that successful management of natural resources relies on partnerships between management agencies, community and industry. A mutual understanding of and respect for the rationale for conserving seabird breeding islands and willingness to cooperate with management processes and activities will help to ensure their long-term viability.

#### Aims

- The aims of fostering community and industry support are to:
  - develop community appreciation of and support for island values;
  - promote a positive image of the islands into the wider community; and
  - encourage government, community and industry partnerships to enhance ownership and resources for island management and education.

#### Prescriptions

- Encourage community groups such as Coastcare, Fishcare, Bushcare, Wildcare, diving clubs and Birds Tasmania to become involved with island education and protection programs.
- Develop an island care network of responsible island users to act in a guardian role to help oversee the management of islands and undertake local education and awareness-raising activities.
- Develop an intranet system whereby island care groups, biologists and managers can exchange information, as a basis for informing and guiding future management decisions.
- Encourage recreational fishers, yachtspeople and divers to develop minimal impact codes of conduct for visiting sensitive coastal areas (see Minimal Impact Seakayaking Code at <u>www.coastview.com.au</u>).
- Establish a process that encourages interested stakeholders to have input into the review of the Tasmanian Scalefish Management Plan 2001, the development and review of Marine Farming Development Plans and any other relevant marine resources legislation to ensure that impacts on the natural and cultural values of islands are minimised.
- Establish an on-going partnership between DPIWE (Parks and Wildlife Service and Nature Conservation Branch), Tasmanian University and Tourism Tasmania to develop a code for ecologically sustainable tourism in Tasmania, particularly regarding the use of islands.
- Encourage the implementation of a consultative, comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment process for any development such as tourist boardwalks or aquaculture infrastructure which may impact on islands.

• Encourage nature-based tourism operators to develop and implement minimal impact codes of conduct for visiting islands which harbour significant wildlife (see Minimal Impact Seakayaking Code at <a href="http://www.coastview.com.au">www.coastview.com.au</a>).

## Section 7 Research, Monitoring and Evaluation

#### 7.1 Research

Much of the information regarding the fauna and flora on the north-east islands is older than 10 years and surveys that have been conducted were often limited by lack of time and resources. Geoconservation and Aboriginal inventories are also incomplete. Research on little penguin populations is conducted by the Nature Conservation Branch of DPIWE on Diamond Island and Little Christmas Island.

#### Aims

- To enhance the conservation of the significant islands included in this management plan, by enabling better informed management decisions through:
  - increasing the inventory and understanding of natural and cultural features and processes
  - improving the knowledge and assessment of rates and magnitudes of change.

#### Prescriptions

- To ensure the effective management of these islands, more comprehensive and integrated research of their fauna, flora and geodiversity is needed and should be undertaken by the DPIWE Nature Conservation Branch in partnership with other agencies and organisations.
- In collaboration with the relevant Tasmanian Aboriginal communities further investigate Aboriginal heritage values on the north-east islands.
- All research is to be done within the framework of the formal DPIWE processes.
- Information gained from research is to be widely disseminated to island interest groups.

#### 7.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

#### Aims

• To establish an on-going monitoring program to evaluate the effectiveness of management under the plan. The performance indicators listed in the Implementation Table in Section 8 will form the basis for evaluation

# Implementation of Management Actions Section 8

The implementation of many of the following actions will be largely dependent on the time and resources of the PWS district staff who are responsible for the daily management of reserves and significant areas in their districts.

Action	Location	Responsibility * indicates lead group	Performance Indicators
Apply access requirements to monitor and control visitor levels all year	Baynes Is., Little Waterhouse Is., Little Swan Is, when reserved.	PWS*, NCB	Reliable records of numbers and types of visitors to islands. Reduction in levels of disturbance on islands.
Apply access requirements to monitor and control visitor levels from August 1 – March 31 during the critical seabird breeding season	George Rocks, St. Helens Island, Governor Island and Paddys Island	PWS*, NCB	Reliable records of numbers and types of visitors to islands. Reduction in levels of disturbance on islands.
Form island care groups	All islands	PWS*, Birds Tas, Sea kayak clubs, yacht clubs, diving clubs, fishers, Coastcare groups, Wildcare groups, Marine and Coastal Community Network (MCCN)	The number and activity levels of island care groups in helping with management issues.
Develop and implement Minimal Impact Codes of Conduct	All islands	Yacht clubs, fishers, Birds Tas., diving clubs, PWS, NCB, ecotourist operators, MCCN.	The number and peer acceptance of minimal impact codes of conduct.
Have input into educational programs about the values of offshore islands.	All islands	PWS*, NCB, Island Care groups, MCCN, Tourism Tas.	Increased awareness and understanding of the values of offshore islands. Number of groups helping with educational programs.
Work towards the eradication of feral animals	George Rocks, St.Helens Island	PWS*, NCB	Eradication of rats and rabbits and efficiency of eradication methods.
Work towards the control of feral animals	Diamond Island, Little Christmas Island	PWS*, NCB	Initial eradication of rabbits and on-going limitation of numbers.
Work towards the control of weeds both on the islands and at nearby mainland Tasmania seed sources sites.	George Rocks, Diamond Island, Governor Island, Little Christmas Island	PWS*, NCB, Coastcare and wildcare groups	Significant reduction in diversity and extent of weeds.
I Work towards the control and monitoring of	All susceptible islands	PWS, NCB*	Number of susceptible islands without

Phytophthora cinnamomi			Phytophthera cinnamomi
Monitor and maintain threatened flora species	Baynes Island, Diamond Island, Governor	NCB*, PWS	Number and health of threatened flora
	Island,		species
Monitor and maintain threatened fauna species.	Little Swan Island, Baynes Island	NCB*, PWS	Number and viability of white-fronted
Develop a research program to build on the knowledge	All islands	NCB*, PWS, Cultural	Improved information base regarding the
of the natural and cultural values of islands.		Heritage Branch,	natural and cultural values of islands.
		Aboriginal communities	
Develop and encourage use of an island care intranet site	All islands	PWS, NCB, MCCN*,	Contributions of new information to the
		Island care groups	site.
			Number of organisations using the site.
			Actions emanating from the use of the
			site.
Liaise with Marine Resources, industry and the fishing	Little Swan Island, Paddys Island, Diamond	PWS, NCB, Marine	Policy change regarding the setting of
community to review options to reduce interactions	Island	Resources*	recreational nets around significant
between seabirds and nets.			seabird islands.
Install signage to alert visitors to management	Little Christmas Island	PWS*	Signage installed on Little Christmas
requirements			Island.
Investigate the development of appropriate islands as	Diamond Island	PWS*, TMAG, NCB,	Feasibility study into the potential of
training venues to promote education and training		Marine Resources,	Diamond Island as an "ecomodel".
focussing on the significance of Tasmania's offshore		MCCN, Aboriginal	
islands.		communities, Tourism	
		Tas., Island Care groups	
Ensuring tenure classification matches conservation	Baynes Island, Little Waterhouse Island,	PWS*	Upgrading of status of Baynes Island,
significance	Little Swan Island		Little Waterhouse Island, Paddys Island
			and Little Swan Island to nature reserve
			status.

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Maps of the small north-east islands

- Map 1 Location of Small North-East Islands
- Map 2 Little Waterhouse Island
- Map 3 Baynes Island
- Map 4 Little Swan Island
- Map 5 Bird Rock
- Map 6George Rocks
- Map 7 St. Helens Island
- Map 8 Paddys Island
- Map 9 Diamond Island
- Map 10 Governor Island
- Map 11Little Christmas Island























#### Summary of north-east islands governed by the Freycinet National Park, Wye River State Reserve Management Plan 2000

#### The Nuggets

Location:	42°07′S, 148°22′E
Area:	6.7 hectares (4 islets)
Tenure:	National Park (part of the Freycinet National Park.
Access:	Lying to the north-east of Freycinet Peninsula, the closest port is Bicheno.

#### **Cultural Values**

None known

#### **Natural Values**

The islets harbour breeding populations of little penguins (approximately 100 pairs), shorttailed shearwaters (50 pairs), fairy prions (10 pairs), common diving-petrels (7 pairs), Pacific gulls (14 pairs), white-faced storm-petrels (approximately 250 pairs), black-faced cormorants (5 pairs) and Caspian terns (10-15 pairs). The largest colony of Caspian terns in the state is located on the southern islet , with up to 56 adults recorded in most years over the past 10 years or more. (W. Wakefield pers. comm. 2001) They also provide roosting sites for great cormorants, silver gulls, and kelp gulls.

Other birds recorded here are white-bellied sea-eagles, swamp harriers, peregrine falcons and forest ravens. The dominant vegetation on the west islet is *Carpobrotus rossii, Tetragonia implexicoma, Poa poiformis, Leucopogon parviflorus* and *Allocasuarina parviflorus*. The east islet has similar vegetation with *Acacia sophorae* and no casuarinas. All the islets are granite.

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

Recreational fishing takes place in this area.

#### **Management Issues**

The diversity of breeding seabirds, in particular the Caspian tern colony, are of particular value.

#### **Schouten Island**

Location:	42°32′S, 148°20′E
Area:	3439 hectares
Tenure:	National Park (part of the Freycinet National Park)
Access:	Coles Bay is its closest port

#### **Cultural Values**

The Freycinet Peninsula/Schouten Island area was part of the territory of the Oyster Bay Tribe, which consisted of 600-700 people. In 1816 Captain James Kelly recorded a party of Aborigines on Schouten Island. Eleven sites (shell middens and artefact scatters) exist on the island (Brown 1991).

Schouten Island was named by Abel Tasman in 1642. The Frenchman Nicolas Baudin extensively surveyed the area in 1802, with members from his expedition landing on Schouten Island. A sealer, Joseph Stacey was recorded living on the island in 1809. A whaling station was established at Trumpeter Bay in 1821 prior to the settlement of the east coast. Whaling took place on the island until 1844. Whales were apparently very numerous

for there were reports that an almost continuous stream of whales were travelling through Schouten Passage during August and September (Evans 1993). Coal was discovered in 1809 and mining took place for a short time in the 1840s, replacing whaling as the major industry, from 1888-1892 and in 1924. Alluvial tin was mined by Chinese prospectors north of Mt. Story between 1840 and 1880. The only remnants of mining on the island are old embankments and cuttings, alluvial workings on Chinese Creek, ruins and coal adits. Farming on the island began in 1850, when Edward Crockett began grazing sheep. A hut and timber house were built, remnants of which still remain. Other remains include a sheep dip and farm machinery. Grazing leases were held until 1969.

Freycinet National Park, including Schouten Island, is one of Tasmania's first national parks being gazetted on 29 August 1916 under the *Scenery Preservation Act 1915*.

#### **Natural Values**

There are breeding populations of little penguins (up to 50 pairs) and short-tailed shearwaters (about 500 pairs). Back-faced cormorants, little cormorants, Pacific gulls, kelp gulls, silver gulls and crested terns occasionally roost on the island. It also supports an extensive variety of terrestrial birds. The eastern side provides a haul-out site for Australian fur seals. The she-oak skink Cyclodomorphus casuarinae, grass skink Pseudemoia entrecasteauxii, Tasmanian tree skink *Niveoscincus pretiosus* and three-lined skink *Bassiana duperrey* have been recorded on the island. Native fish species recorded on the island include *Atherinidae* sp hardyhead, Galaxias truttaceus spotted galaxias, an Anguilla sp. eel and Neochanna cleaveri Tasmanian mudfish, which is of particular significance as it has not previously been recorded on the east coast between Flinders Island and Prosser River (Jackson and Harvey 2000). Significant invertebrates include the tree-climbing land snail Bothriembryon tasmanicus and the freshwater crayfish Astacopsis franklinii, which was recorded in the dry bed of Chinese Creek. A major fault on the easterm boundary of the Oyster Bay graben bisects the island north to south. Dolerite and Permian sediments occur to the west and granite to the east, and this underlying geology is the basis of the graphic contrast in landscape, soils and vegetation between the eastern and western halves of the island. A large approximately 1 km<sup>2</sup> faultcontrolled landslip exists on the south coast. This is considered a representative and outstanding feature at a State level (Dixon 1996). The endangered plant Epacris barbata, which lives on the island, is currently severely threatened by *Phytophthera cinnamomi*.

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

The island is regularly used by yachtspeople, day visitors and sea kayakers, particularly between December and April. The most popular anchorages are Crocketts Bay, Moreys Bay and Passage Bay with up to 12 boats per day visiting during January and February (P. Lingard pers. comm.). There are two established camping areas – at Moreys Bay and Crocketts Bay and a hut at Moreys Bay. Ecotourist operations from Freycinet Peninsula which observe the seal haul-outs on the eastern side occasionally land on the island for short periods.

#### Condition

Gorse is a major problem in the previously pastured areas of the island, but is currently being effectively controlled. Other weed species include mallow, blue periwinkle, Californian thistle, other thistle species, introduced grasses and Sodom's apple. *Phytophthera cinnamomi*, possibly introduced during the tin mining era, has run its course and extends throughout the high granite country, threatening the island's communities of *Epacris barbata*. There is evidence of rabbits in the disturbed areas behind Moreys hut and at western Sandspit Point.

#### **Management Issues**

The successful gorse control program which has been in place over the past 12 years, needs to be sustained. *Phytophthera cinnamomi* has run its course and there are no current means of managing its impact, because of its large scale. A monitoring program conducted by the Threatened Species Unit in DPIWE is in place to monitor the effects of *Phytophthera cinnamomi* on *Epacris barbata*. Rabbits need to be eradicated. Visitor activity should be

restricted to areas away from the major seabird breeding colonies and seal haul-out sites. The island could be used to enhance awareness and understanding of the flora and fauna values associated with islands through greater interpretation, especially at the Moreys Bay hut site. The walking track to Bear Hill needs upgrading. The pit toilets at Crocketts Bay and Moreys Bay require regular maintenance. Rubbish is often left on the island and dogs are sometimes taken ashore. Signage indicating the fuel stove only status of the island needs replacing. The Aboriginal sites require protection and management.

#### **Taillefer Rocks**

Location:	42°22′S, 148°19′E
Area:	14.8 hectares
Tenure:	National Park (part of the Freycinet National Park)
Access:	Coles Bay is its closest port.

#### **Cultural values**

None known

#### **Natural Values**

Taillefer Rocks support breeding populations of little penguins (120 pairs), short-tailed shearwaters (770 pairs), fairy prions (about 100 pairs) and common diving-petrels (up to 300 pairs). A diversity of skinks including the metallic skink *Niveoscincus metallica*, White's skink *Egernia whitii*, ocellated skink *Niveoscincus ocellata* and the mountain dragon *Tympanocryptis diemensis*, inhabits the Rocks The latter is rarely found on offshore islands. Taillefer Rocks also provide roost sites for black-faced cormorants and haul-out sites for small numbers of Australian fur seals. There are relict stands of Oyster Bay pines *Callitris rhomboidea*.

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

Boating and sea kayaking tours from Coles Bay go via the seal haul-out sites but do not land on them.

#### **Management Issues**

The popularity of Freycinet Peninsula as a tourist destination could be utilised to increase education about the significant values of the immediate offshore islands of the area. Increased information flow between nature-based tour operators and the Parks and Wildlife Service regarding the natural values of the area would enhance the tourist experience and assist with the management of those values. The Oyster Bay Pines should be protected.

#### **Refuge Island**

Location:	42°16′S, 148°16′E
Area:	5.7 hectares
Tenure:	National Park (part of the Freycinet National Park)
Access:	Coles Bay is its closest port.

#### **Cultural Values**

None known

#### **Natural Values**

Breeding populations of little penguins (500 pairs) and short-tailed shearwaters (200 pairs) live on this low, flat granite island. Sooty oystercatchers may sometimes breed here. (W. Wakefield 1998)

#### **Recreational and Social Values**

Sea kayakers often paddle around the island and recreational netting occurs.

#### **Management Issues**

Because of its proximity to Coles Bay, the island could be used in an educational capacity to increase awareness and understanding of issues confronting little penguin and short-tailed shearwater habitat. Increased information flow between tour operators and the Parks and Wildlife Service regarding the natural values of the area would enhance the tourist experience and assist with the management of those values. Because the island provides a breeding refuge for little penguins and short-tailed shearwaters, recreational netting in Great Oyster Bay should be restricted to outside the major breeding period (September to January) to protect foraging birds.

Category	Description	Protection	Management
1	Mostly or wholly native vegetation undisturbed by human activities. Few or no exotics apart from some species associated with seabird rookeries.	Requires protection from potential adverse impacts such as clearing, grazing, inappropriate fire regimes and the transfer of environmental weeds.	Should be observed and monitored at a low level
2	Mostly native vegetation but with visible, human- induced disturbance.	Requires protection from potential adverse impacts such as clearing, grazing, inappropriate fire regimes and the transfer of environmental weeds.	Should be some active intervention to ensure disturbance does not spread and that impacts are mitigated.
3	Some native plant species, but extensively modified with a high number of exotic plants. There may be remnants of intact native vegetation that may have nature conservation value that need to be considered.	Remnants require protection	May need significant expenditure of resources for protection and monitoring.
4	Few native plant species and extensive habitat modification.	It would be preferable to take targeted action, if resources were available, to prevent the risk of weed invasion to nearby islands. Such a targeted activity may for example include eliminating dense stands of coprosma that may be spread by birds to adjacent islands.	Will need on-going and significant resources.

#### Categories of vegetation condition for offshore islands\*

\*Adapted from Harris S. and Lazarus E, 2001 Assessing Condition of Offshore Islands V. 1

#### Guidelines for visiting a seabird colony

When visiting a seabird colony the following actions will minimise your impact on the breeding birds and their habitat:

- Always report your visit to the Parks and Wildlife Service and obtain the relevant permit.
- Leave your pets at home.
- Plan for a day trip with no overnight camping.
- If an overnight stay is unavoidable, preferably stay on your boat or set up camp as far away as possible from the bird colonies and significant cultural sites.
- Ensure that there are no feral pests such as rats and mice aboard your boat. They could destroy a seabird colony by eating or destroying the eggs and carrying ticks, fleas and other harmful parasites.
- Prior to arrival, thoroughly wash your shoes, tent pegs and other soil-contacted equipment in salty water to avoid transporting *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and potentially damaging weed seeds or fungal spores.
- Where possible, walk on the rocky shoreline to ensure that you do not trample on burrows and nests.
- Be aware of birds displaying disturbed behaviour such as flying in circles or squawking. Ensure that you keep well away, if they are displaying any agitated behaviour.
- Watch out for small nesting birds and their eggs and nests, particularly between October and March. Some birds, like terns, are often difficult to see, so stay alert.
- Do not light fires. Smoke can distress some birds and there is always a risk of escape, no matter how careful you are. Always carry a fuel stove.
- Avoid setting nets within 500 metres of a seabird colony and in particular along shorelines frequented by penguins. Many diving birds are killed in nets, especially during their breeding season, when they forage closer to their colony.
- Record in as much detail as possible information about dead wildlife and unusual occurrences you may witness during your visit. Report them to the Parks and Wildlife Service officers on your return.
- Take all your rubbish home with you. Seabirds can be killed by swallowing or becoming entangled in plastic debris.

#### Access requirements

In accordance with Section 25 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* and by virtue of this Management Plan, George Rocks, St. Helens Island and Governor Island are declared to be reserves to which the public has not a general right of access. Section 25 of the Act will also apply to Little Waterhouse Island, Baynes Island, Little Swan Island and Paddys Island when they are declared reserves. Reserves which are the subject of such a declaration are termed "restricted areas". Pursuant to Regulation 11 of the *National Parks and Reserved Land Regulations 1999*, these islands should not be visited without the written authority of the Director of Parks and Wildlife Service with the exception that the visitor/s are accompanied by a Ranger or another person authorised by the Director or that the visit is for emergency purposes.

Permission for visitor access to the islands listed above may be granted on the basis that the applicant:

- is an acknowledged researcher who has the approval of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment (DPIWE) Animal Ethics Committee for proposed wildlife research or is an acknowledged researcher in other relevant fields such as botany and geology; or
- belongs to an organisation which has its own minimal impact code or has demonstrated its responsibility in its previous use of the islands; or
- is an individual with justifiable reasons for visiting the island;

with the proviso that he/she fulfills the following criteria:

- has read the management plan and is prepared to comply with the conservation strategies within it;
- is prepared to comply with the guidelines for visiting seabird breeding islands or seal haul-outs;
- is prepared to comply with the visitor group size and time constraints which may apply;
- is briefed by the Aboriginal heritage officer of DPIWE, if visiting an island with significant Aboriginal sites;
- is briefed about appropriate visitor behaviour either in writing or verbally by a relevant employee of the Marine Conservation section of the Nature Conservation Branch of DPIWE or is accompanied by a Parks and Wildlife Service guide.