

Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*)**Description**

Small shearwater to 20cm with black upperparts and white underparts. Bill short, slender and grey-black; legs bright blue with black markings; feet pale bluish.

Conservation Status

Listed as Vulnerable under the NSW TSC Act 1995.

Distribution

A widespread species of the subtropical Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans. The Lord Howe Island breeding colony is one of the larger colonies in the Australian region. Also breeds on islands off the Western Australian coast.

On the Lord Howe Island Group, the main breeding colony is on Roach Island, with smaller colonies on Blackburn and Muttonbird Islands. The only colony on the main island is on Muttonbird Point, although isolated pairs have been found on Transit Hill.

Ecology

Breeding: Winter breeding species coming ashore at Lord Howe between February and October. A single white egg is laid in July. Incubation is 52 to 58 days. The chick fledges in about 70-75 days. Adults share nest building, incubation and care of young. Occasionally in October and early November, small numbers of juveniles are found wandering the Island roads at night (Hutton 1990).

Nest: At night they come ashore to court and prepare their nests. They dig a narrow burrow up to one metre long, markedly smaller in width than that excavated by the other shearwaters (Hutton 1990).

Diet: Cephalopods, krill and small fish.

Foraging Behaviour: Food captured mainly by surface-diving, pursuit-plunging and pursuit-diving; also by surface-seizing and surface-plunging (Marchant *et al.* 1990).

Population Data/Health

Population estimated at 1 000 – 10 000 pairs (Hutton 1990).

Habitat

Marine, pelagic, breed on subtropical and subantarctic islands, where soft soil suitable for burrowing; in tussock grassland, shrubland, woodland, or under mats of succulents, or among loose rocks in talus (Marchant *et al.* 1990).

Threats

Susceptible to predation by Kestrels on main Island and possibly black rats.

Impacts Upon Other Species

Not known.



Photo: Ian Hutton

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References

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