

# WILDLIFE SURVEY OF THE BEAGLE ISLANDS

On the 16th and 17th of October, 1974, an inspection of the Beagle Islands was carried out by Warden R. Gardiner in the company of Honorary Warden A. Hobbs of Green Head, Inspector J. Williams from Jurien Bay and Assistant Warden K. May from Moora. The islands are approximately 14 km from the mainland and, at low tide, are completely surrounded by exposed reef and covered with roosting and feeding seabirds.

A large colony of Australian Sea Lions (*Neophoca cinerea*) was widespread throughout the whole of the Beagle Island group. Altogether some 50-60 were observed on the islands with other seals constantly coming and going from the rocky shores. Fifteen to twenty young cubs were observed and most of these appeared to be only a week old. Copulation was observed taking place between the bulls and cows, which were already suckling cubs. The largest harem observed was 15 cows; the bull was particularly aggressive and great caution was shown when in his vicinity. Most seals were very wary of human presence, (not like those on the Fishermans Islands).

Numerous Terns, Silver Gulls, Pied Cormorants and several Oyster catchers were observed roosting and feeding on the exposed reef. A White Breasted Sea Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), a pair of Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), numerous rock parrots (*Neophema petrophila*) and Welcome Swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*) were also observed throughout the island.

Because of the large amount of reef surrounding the islands the area forms a natural sanctuary which would be inhabited with a large number of seabirds during the nesting season.