

Tasmanian Threatened Native Vegetation Communities

SEABIRD ROOKERY COMPLEX

Conservation status

Threatened: Community 35 - Schedule 3A *Nature Conservation Act 2002*

What is Seabird rookery complex?

Seabird rookery complex mainly occurs on Tasmanian offshore islands around the Tasmanian coast, especially in the Furneaux Group, less commonly on the Tasmanian mainland. The community is a complex of low vegetation that may include succulent herbfield, fernland, shrubland, tussock grassland and some combinations of these. The defining feature is the use of the area by nesting or foraging seabirds for at least part of the year, as evidenced by the presence of the birds or by, e.g., burrows, runs, or bioturbaceous soils.

Grasses are commonly *Poa poiformis* (coastal tussockgrass) or, in more exposed areas, *Austrostipa stipoides* (coast spargrass). Tussocks may be inter-grown or form mosaics with succulent species such as *Carpobrotus rossii* (native pigface), *Tetragonia implexicoma* (bower spinach) and *Rhagodia candolleana* subsp. *candolleana* (coastal saltbush) that often form large mats amongst the bird burrows. *Atriplex cinerea* (grey saltbush) may dominate some rookery communities, particularly in the Furneaux Islands, as may *Pteridium esculentum* (bracken) and/or *Lomandra longifolia* (sagg). On some remote islands, such as Maatsuyker Island in the south-west and Rodondo Island in Bass Strait, seabird burrows occur under shrubby windrows and tall scrubland.

Examples can be found at: The Neck on Bruny Island, Ocean Beach near Strahan, Red Hut Point on southern King Island, and Betsey Island near Hobart.

To help you decide if this Threatened Native Vegetation Community is on your site, a decision tree is provided further below. This is a guide only. Assessment by a qualified ecologist is needed to confirm the presence (or absence) of a listed threatened community.



An example of the Seabird rookery complex community on Sloping Island.
Felicity Hargraves

Distribution, extent and reservation status



Indicative Seabird rookery complex distribution from TNVC 2020. Note that for this distribution image the symbology has been emphasised to improve visibility of community distribution.

The Threatened Native Vegetation Communities 2020 (TNVC 2020) distribution of Seabird rookery complex is principally derived from the TNVC 2014 dataset updated with TASVEG 4.0 mapping where this contained better information (refer to the metadata statement for TNVC 2020).

Seabird rookery complex has an approximate Tasmania-wide extent of 1000 hectares. Of this, 96% is mapped within the Tasmanian Reserve Estate, all within the secure National Reserve System.

A snapshot of the reservation status of Seabird rookery complex for Local Government is available on the [Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania website](#) and via the 'By Council Area' tab at this [link](#).

Why is Seabird rookery complex important and what are its management issues?

Seabird rookery complex is important for the breeding success of migratory bird species, such as shearwaters. Some non-migratory species such as *Larus pacificus* (pacific gull) and *Sterna nereis* (fairy tern) also utilise Seabird rookery complex for foraging and breeding.

Management issues for Seabird rookery complex are land clearance through urbanisation of coastal areas, damage from stock and vehicle use (mostly through recreational activities), the illegal taking of birds (which may cause damage to the burrows and surrounding vegetation) and the inappropriate use of fire. Direct impacts to the seabirds themselves include predation by cats and dogs, with indications that heat waves due to global warming may also pose a threat to these birds.

How can the condition of the vegetation be assessed?

To help you to assess the condition of Seabird rookery complex, the following [TASVEG VCA benchmarks](#) are recommended:

- ❖ GHC Coastal grass and herbfield: rookery facies
- ❖ SCH Coastal heathland
- ❖ SRH Rookery halophytic hermland

What does it mean if you have a Threatened Native Vegetation Community?

If you are planning an activity that will potentially impact a Threatened Native Vegetation Community you should seek advice from the authority responsible for regulating this

activity. The authority responsible will depend upon the nature of the planned activity (see *Further information*).

In the first instance you can check the [Information for landowners](#) on the Forest Practices Authority (FPA) website for comprehensive advice on when a Forest Practices Plan may be required.

Some vegetation communities can represent important habitat for threatened species. This may have implications when development applications are assessed or for land use.

Matters of National Environmental Significance as listed under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBCA) should also be considered to determine if the proposal will need to be assessed under that Act.

Further information

For further detail about the possible variation within Seabird rookery complex refer to the relevant sections within the description of the TASVEG mapping units SRH and SCH (Scrub, heathland and coastal complexes section) and GHC (Native grassland section) in the online publication [From Forest to Fjaeldmark \(Edition 2\)](#) and to the description of the now discontinued SRC (Scrub, heathland and coastal complexes section) in [From Forest to Fjaeldmark \(Edition 1\)](#).

Further information to assist developers and their representatives in assessing the impacts of proposed developments on natural values is provided in NRE Tasmania's [Guidelines for Natural Values Surveys – Terrestrial Development Proposals](#) and the [Threatened Species Link - Activity Advice](#).

Contact details

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Is Seabird rookery complex present at your site?



Is the vegetation at your site the threatened community Seabird rookery complex?

