

## RECOVERY OUTLINE

# Antarctic Tern (New Zealand)

1	Family	Laridae
2	Scientific name	<i>Sterna vittata bethunei</i> Buller, 1896
3	Common name	Antarctic Tern (New Zealand)
4	Conservation status	Endangered: D

### 5 Reasons for listing

The Australian population contains only 50-250 mature adults (Endangered: D), but the subspecies' persistence suggests stability despite high rate of nest failure. Global status of the subspecies is Near Threatened: d. As extralimital populations are probably only vagrant to Australian waters, it is assumed that there is little genetic interchange between islands. Australian breeding populations are therefore assessed independently of the global status (as per Gärdenfors *et al.*, 1999).

Australian breeding colonies	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	20 km <sup>2</sup>	high
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	3 km <sup>2</sup>	high
trend	stable	low
No. of breeding birds	100	medium
trend	stable	medium
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	10 years	low
Global population share	< 1 %	high
Level of genetic exchange	low	low

### 6 Intraspecific taxa

The Australian population of *S. v. vittata* (Heard I., subantarctic islands of Indian Ocean) is also Endangered. There are three other subspecies in the South Atlantic, and global status of species is Least Concern.

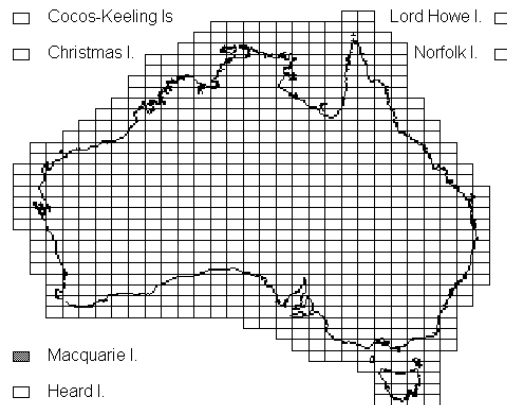
### 7 Past range and abundance

In Australian territory, breeding on offshore stacks of Macquarie I. Extraliminally, breeding on Stewart I., N. Z. and New Zealand's subantarctic islands (CCOSNZ, 1990). Some individuals from the Macquarie I. population remain in area throughout the year, others may disperse as far north as Australia and New Zealand, (G. Copson). Otherwise, little known outside breeding season. No estimates of population size before exotic predators introduced, but population apparently small in early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hamilton 1894, Falla, 1937).

### 8 Present range and abundance

As above. Most recent population estimate in 1979 when 40 pairs recorded on Macquarie I. (Rounsevell

and Brothers, 1984). Up to 1,000 birds breeds on New Zealand's subantarctic islands (Higgins and Davies, 1996).



### 9 Ecology

Breeding on Macquarie I. is confined to offshore stacks along both eastern and western coasts (N. Brothers). The nests are usually on live vegetation, though occasionally in unvegetated crevices. During summer, Antarctic Terns feed on fish, crustaceans and other marine invertebrates in kelp beds in waters close to the island (Higgins and Davies, 1996), where the area of feeding habitat may be limited by extent of the continental shelf and weather conditions (N. P. Brothers). During winter, they feed at the edge of ice and in patches of unfrozen inshore water (Higgins and Davies, 1996).

### 10 Threats

The absence of nesting terns from the main island of Macquarie I. suggests that predation by feral cats and Wekas *Gallirallus australis* reduced the population size. Eggs and young of the terns are still vulnerable to predation by exotic Black Rats *Rattus rattus* (N. Brothers). Given the small size of the remaining population and high rates of nesting failure from natural causes (N. Brothers), the persistence of the population must be considered tenuous.

### 11 Information required

None.

### 12 Recovery objectives

12.1 Maintain or increase existing population.

