

The status of the Jackass Penguin

Spheniscus demersus

on Halifax

Island off South West Africa

by

H. H. Berry

Senior Professional Officer (Biology)
P.O. Okaukuejo
South West Africa

M. K. Seely

Director, Desert Ecological Research Unit
P.O. Box 953
Walvis Bay, South West Africa

R. E. Fryer

Senior Nature Conservator
Private Bag 2050
Keetmanshoop, South West Africa
(Received January 1973.)

1. INTRODUCTION

The very noticeable decline of the Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus* (Linnaeus) on the Southern African coastline is a cause for serious concern (Kolberg unpubl. MS, Westphal and Rowan, 1970). For this reason a census of the total penguin population was undertaken on Halifax Island near Lüderitz, South West Africa. In addition to the islands off the South African Cape Province, *Spheniscus demersus* breeds on Possession, Pomona, Halifax, Plum Pudding, Ichaboe, Sinclair and Mercury Islands off the South West African coast (Matthews, 1961) with the largest colonies to be found on the first three islands (Rand, 1963). Halifax Island was chosen for survey because it is close to the shore and easy to reach. Aerial photographs of the island and estimates of the numbers of penguins were made in 1956 (Rand, 1963), allowing comparison with present counts.

2. DESCRIPTION OF AREA

Halifax Island ($26^{\circ} 39' S$, $15^{\circ} 04' E$) is less than 100 m from the mainland. Approximately 380 m (north-south) by 400 m (east-west), it occupies about 8 ha. It is inhabited by humans for a few weeks at a time when guano is collected. The island is bare and wind-swept, with rocky outcrops predominantly on the western side where they reach

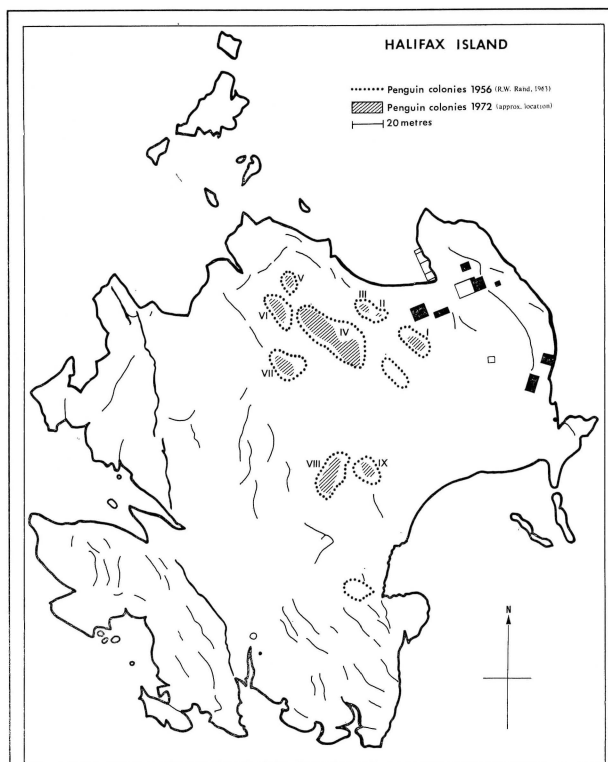


Figure 1. Halifax Island ($26^{\circ} 39' S$, $15^{\circ} 04' E$) is situated near Diaz Point at the south-western entrance to Lüderitz Bay on the south Atlantic coast of South West Africa. Penguins, nesting in the colonies indicated, are the most common and only guano producing avian residents.