

Shorebirds

Identification booklet



birds are in our nature


birdlife
AUSTRALIA

Shorebird Identification Guide

Shorebirds are a diverse group of over 200 species worldwide belonging to the order Charadriiformes. They are usually found near intertidal habitats or inland wetlands, and feed by wading in shallow water, probing wet mud or sand with their bills.

Australia is home to 18 species of resident shorebirds. Every summer, a further 36 shorebird species regularly migrate to Australia from their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere.

Australia's coastal and freshwater wetlands provide critical habitat for these migratory shorebirds to rest and feed, enabling them to build the energy reserves they need to travel the long distance back to their breeding grounds. Sadly, these birds and their wetland habitats are under pressure in Australia and in their staging and breeding grounds in East Asia and the Arctic, and populations are declining.

To protect shorebirds and their habitats, we need to monitor their populations and identify the threats causing their declines. We do this through Birdlife Australia's National Shorebird Monitoring Program.

Contact Us

If you would like to get involved in our shorebird monitoring program or order further copies of this booklet get in touch with us:

T (03) 9347 0757

E shorebirds@birdlife.org.au

W www.birdlife.org.au/sb-monitoring

F facebook.com/groups/Shorebirds2020

Shorebird Identification

This booklet covers all 54 shorebird species that occur regularly in Australia. For easier identification we have included ID tips for each species and maps of where you are most likely to encounter them.

The shorebirds are split into ten groups of similar species to make navigating the pages a little faster. The groups are:

1. Plovers (pp. 6–11)

Birds with short, straight, strong bills. They feed in a stop-and-run motion. Size between a Willie Wagtail and a Magpie.



2. Lapwings (p. 12)

These birds are of a similar build to plovers but have colourful facial skin. Often found on pastures. About Magpie size.



3. Stone-curlews (p. 13)

Larger than a Silver Gull. Active at night. Brown with short, straight strong bills.



4. Small Sandpipers and Allies (pp. 14–18)

Birds with medium to long straight or down-curved bills and medium-length legs. Mostly grey-brown plumage when in Australia. Most show white rump with central black line in flight. Size between Willie Wagtail and Magpie-lark.



5. Large Sandpipers and 'Shanks' (pp. 19–21)

Mostly long-legged, grey-and-white birds with medium to long straight or up-turned bills. Up to Magpie size. Some similarities with birds in group 4.



6. Tattlers (p. 22)

Stout, uniformly grey birds with medium-length legs and bill. Size about Magpie-lark.



7. Curlews and Godwits (pp. 23–25)

Large brown or reddish (in breeding plumage) birds with long down- or up-curved bills and long legs. Size from Magpie-lark to bigger than Silver Gull.



8. Snipes (pp. 26–27)

Medium sized, well-camouflaged birds with long bills and medium legs. About Magpie-lark size.



9. Pratincoles (p. 29)

Short-billed, brown birds. Seen flying more often than on the ground. Size of Fairy or Little Tern.

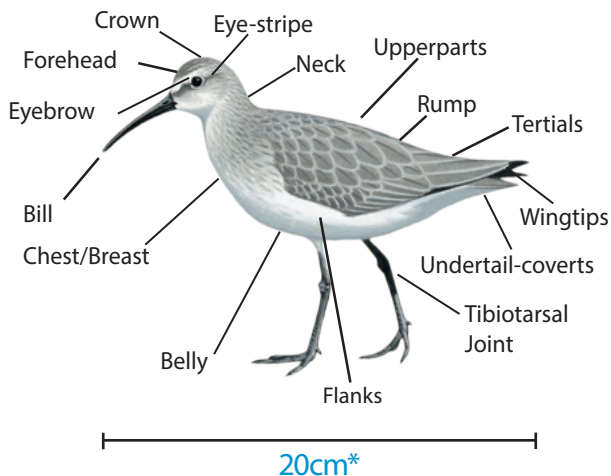


10. Oystercatchers, Stilts, Avocet and Jacana (pp. 31–33)

Large, long-legged, long-billed largely black-and-white (or plain black) birds.



Key To Descriptions



* Measurements shown for each species are from tip of bill to end of tail, not height.



Migrant: Breeds outside Australia



Resident: Breeds in Australia



Habitat description



Identification tips

bp

Breeding plumage

Threatened species status under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) as of May 2019.

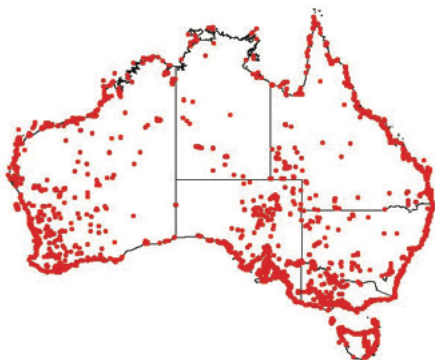
National Monitoring Program

Volunteers from the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) and BirdLife Australia have monitored key shorebird areas in Australia since 1981. Shorebird count data aids conservation by highlighting population trends and identifying threats to shorebirds.

Volunteers across Australia now survey 530 key shorebird sites each year. The main shorebird count is held between November and February, when migratory shorebird numbers are at their peak.

Regardless of whether you are a beginner or an expert birdwatcher, we welcome your help in collecting these valuable data.

If you would like to volunteer, even if you can only spare one day a year, contact us at shorebirds@birdlife.org.au.



Red dots indicate verified shorebird sightings, held in BirdLife Australia's Birddata portal. We would like to thank all of our volunteers for this fantastic effort in collecting the data for the distribution maps used in this booklet.

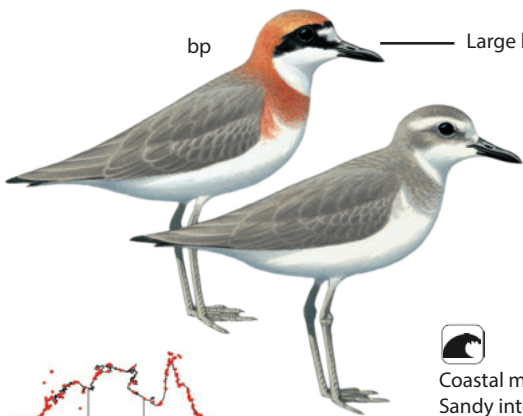
Plovers

GREATER SAND PLOVER 21cm *Charadrius leschenaultii*

VULNERABLE

bp

Large bill



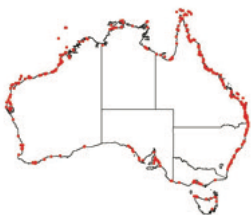
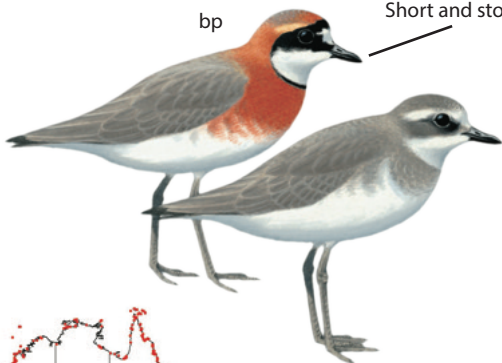
Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones

LESSER SAND PLOVER 19cm *Charadrius mongolus*

ENDANGERED

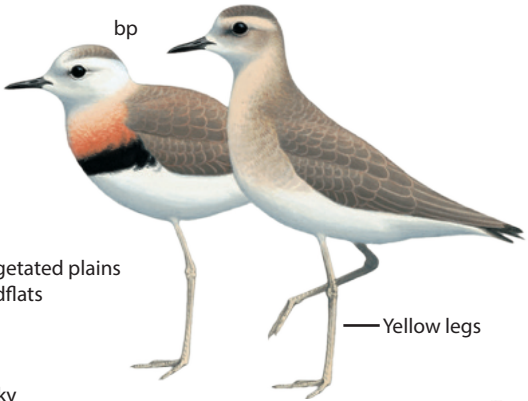
bp

Short and stout bill



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones

ORIENTAL PLOVER 25cm *Charadrius veredus*



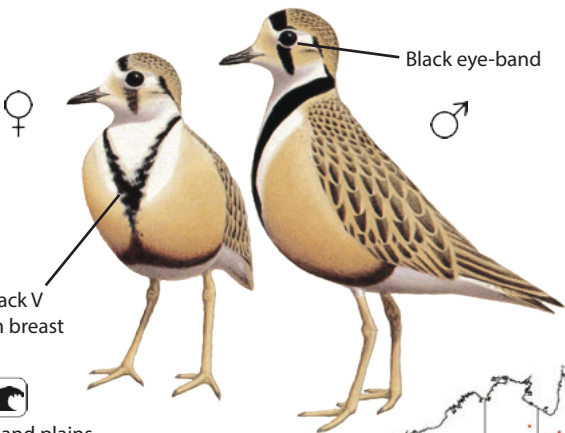
Sparsely vegetated plains
Coastal mudflats
Beaches



Tall and lanky



INLAND DOTTEREL 25cm *Charadrius australis*



Black V
on breast



Inland plains



Most active at night

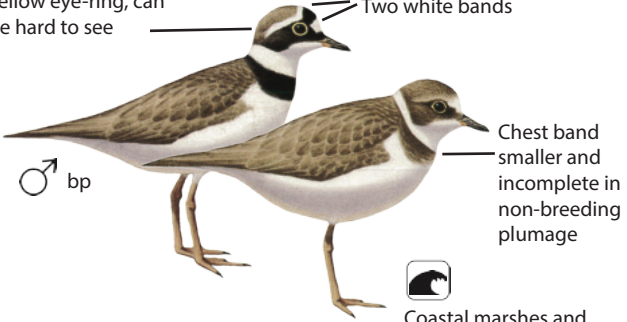


Plovers

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER 15cm *Charadrius dubius*

Yellow eye-ring, can be hard to see

Two white bands



Chest band smaller and incomplete in non-breeding plumage



Coastal marshes and sandy intertidal zones



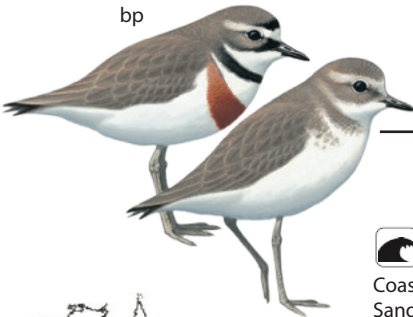
Most observations from north and north-west Australia



DOUBLE-BANDED PLOVER 19cm *Charadrius bicinctus*

bp

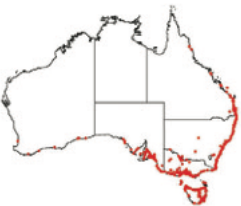
Double bands still evident in non-breeding plumage



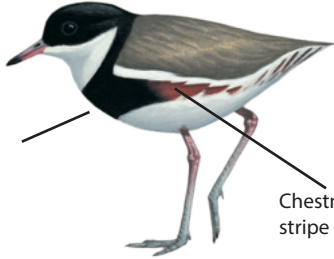
Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones
Bare margins of inland and coastal wetlands
Wet pastures



Species occurs in Australia between February and August



RED-KNEED DOTTEREL 18cm *Erythrogonys cinctus*

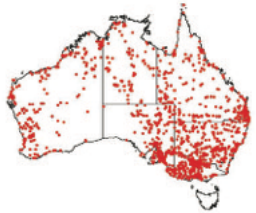


Black breast-band and head with distinctive white throat

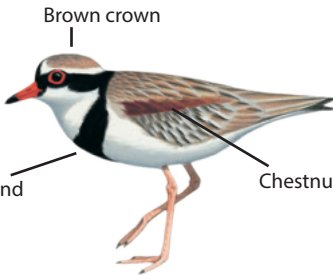
Chestnut racing stripe



Margins of inland freshwater wetlands including temporary shallows after rain



BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL 17cm *Elseyonis melanops*



Brown crown

Black breast-band

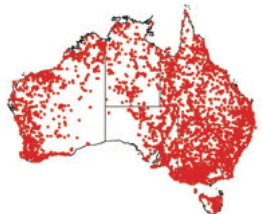
Chestnut line



Dry margins of freshwater wetlands
Farm dams



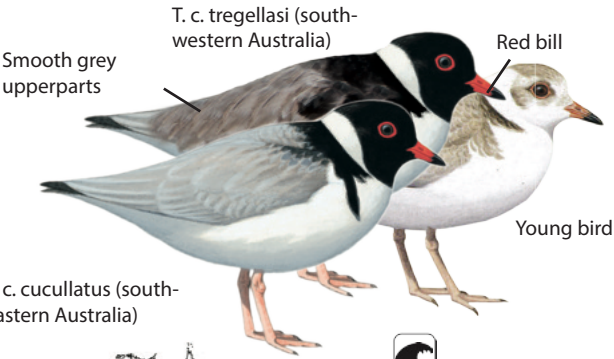
Often in pairs or family groups



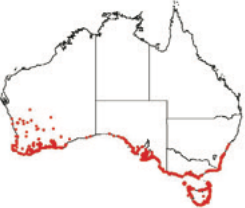
Plovers

HOODED PLOVER 21cm *Thinornis cucullatus*

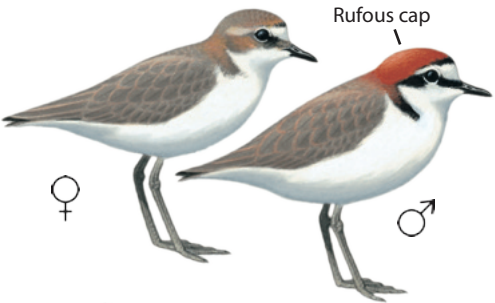
VULNERABLE (*T. c. cucullatus*)



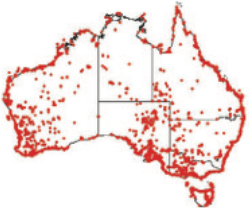
Sandy ocean beaches
Open edges of salt lakes
in Western Australia



RED-CAPPED PLOVER 15cm *Charadrius ruficapillus*



Sandy beaches
Bare margins of inland
and coastal wetlands



PACIFIC GOLDEN PLOVER 25cm *Pluvialis fulva*



Grey

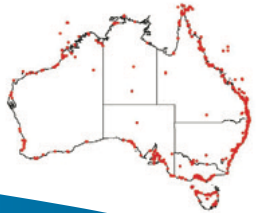
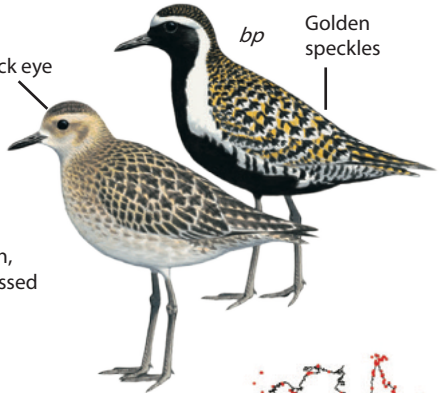
Big, black eye



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones
Roost in short saltmarsh,
herb fields or short-grassed
pastures



Grey 'armpits' in flight



GREY PLOVER 29cm *Pluvialis squatarola*



Black

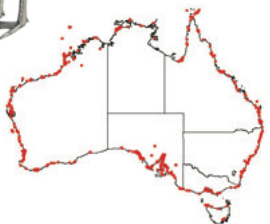
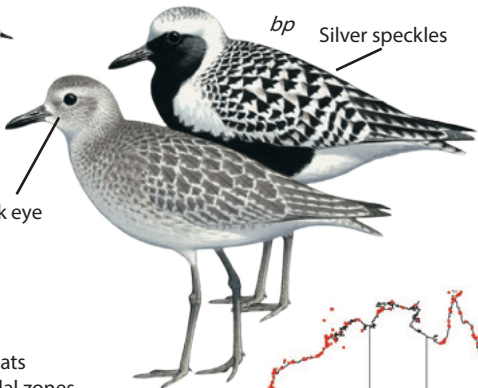
Big, black eye



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones

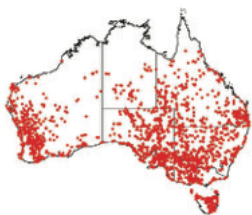
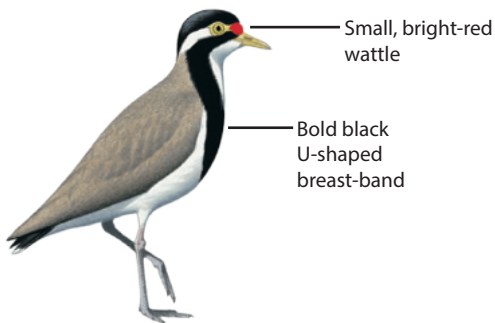


Black 'armpits' in flight



Lapwings

BANDED LAPWING 27cm *Vanellus tricolor*

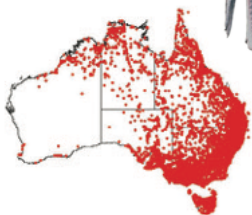
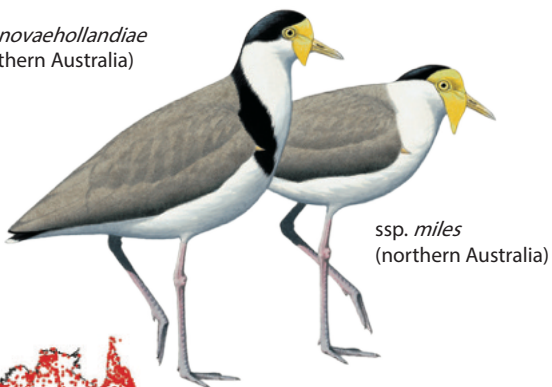


Open short grasslands
Semi-arid rangelands



MASKED LAPWING 34cm *Vanellus miles*

ssp. novaehollandiae
(southern Australia)



Short-grassed habitats
Wetland edges
Urban environments



Stone-Curlews

BUSH STONE-CURLEW 55cm *Burhinus grallarius*

Large yellow eye

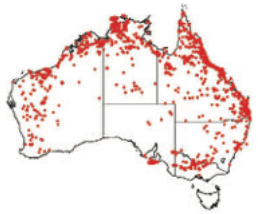
Streaky upperparts



Woodlands



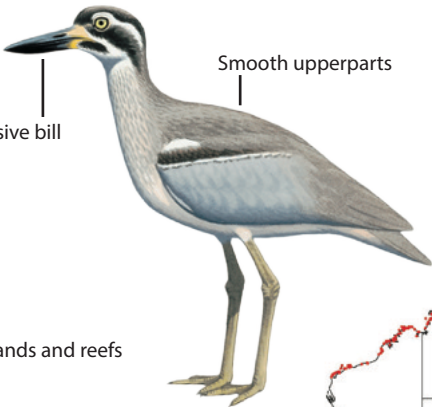
Nocturnal



BEACH STONE-CURLEW 55cm *Esacus magnirostris*

Massive bill

Smooth upperparts



Beaches
Mudflats
Small islands and reefs

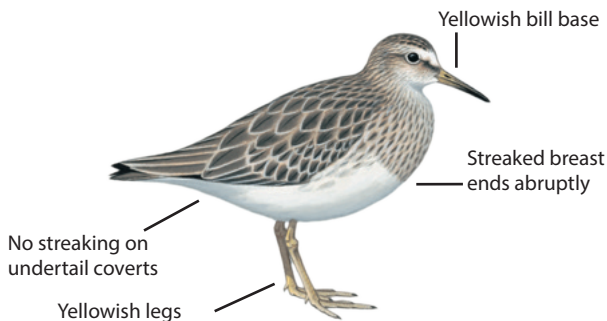


Mainly nocturnal



Small Sandpipers & Allies

PECTORAL SANDPIPER 21cm *Calidris melanotos*



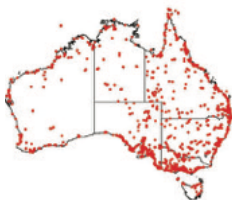
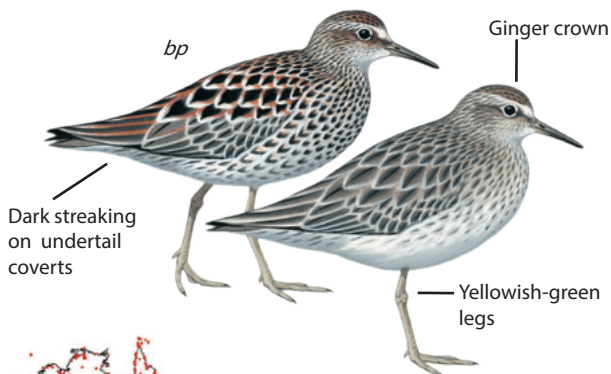
Saline and freshwater marshes



Uncommon



SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER 20cm *Calidris acuminata*

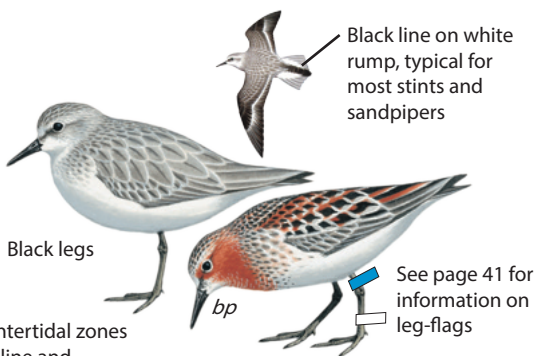


Coastal intertidal zones
Inland saline and freshwater marshes



Small Sandpipers & Allies

RED-NECKED STINT 15cm *Calidris ruficollis*



Black legs

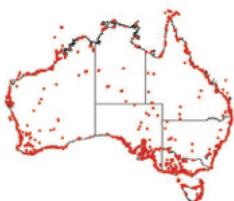
See page 41 for information on leg-flags



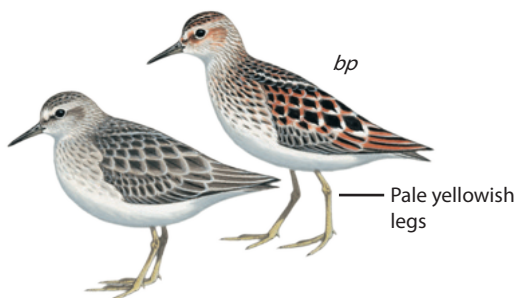
Coastal intertidal zones
Inland saline and freshwater marshes



Often in large flocks.
Common and widespread



LONG-TOED STINT 14cm *Calidris subminuta*



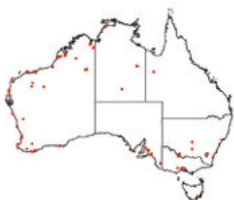
Pale yellowish legs



Well-vegetated brackish and freshwater marshes



Uncommon
Rarely in groups

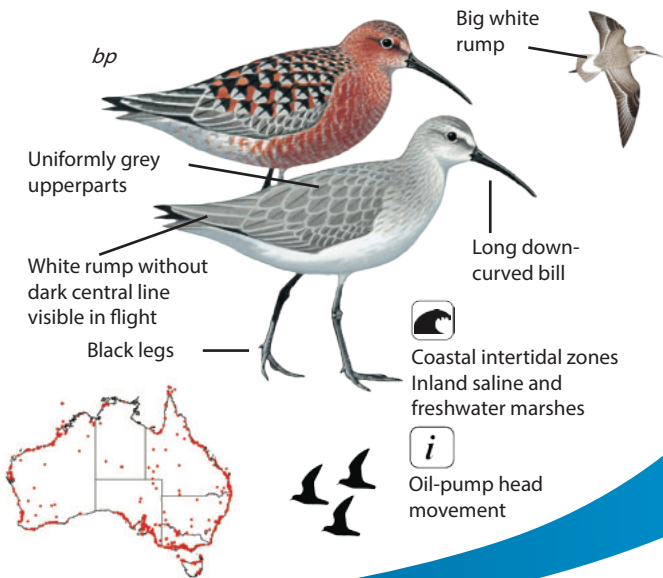


Small Sandpipers & Allies

CURLEW SANDPIPER 20cm

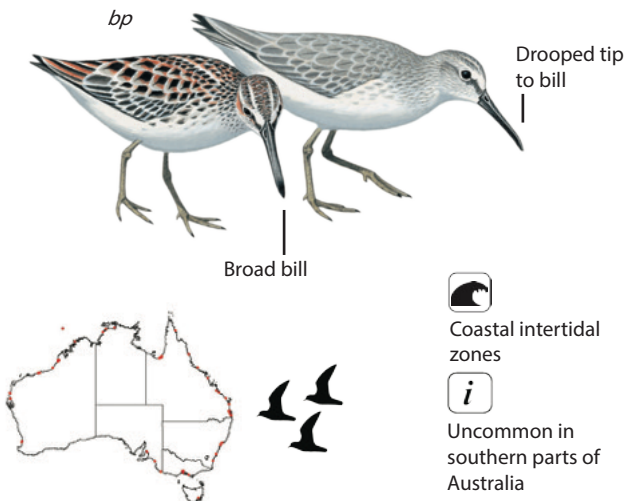
Calidris ferruginea

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



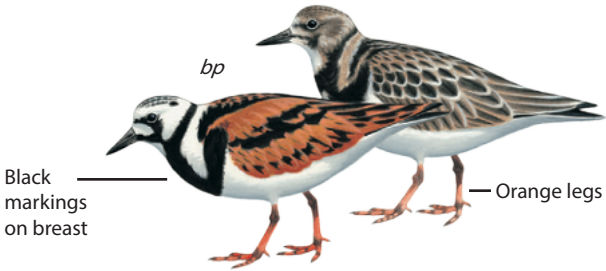
BROAD-BILLED SANDPIPER 17cm

Limicola falcinellus



Small Sandpipers & Allies

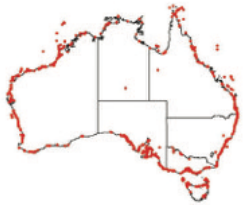
RUDDY TURNSTONE 23cm *Arenaria interpres*



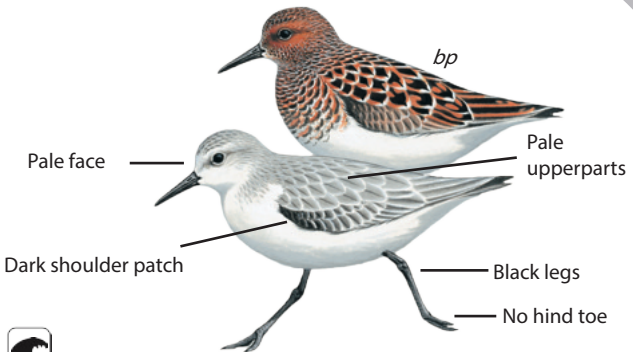
Rock platforms and reefs
Sandy and cobble beaches



Uses stout wedge-shaped bill to flip stones, shells, seaweed and driftwood



SANDERLING 21cm *Calidris alba*



Sandy ocean beaches
Sandbars, mudflats



Feed along the surf, running up and down the beach with the waves



Small Sandpipers & Allies

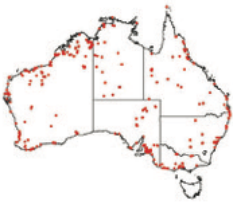
WOOD SANDPIPER 21cm *Tringa glareola*

Dark, spotted upperparts

Broad white eye-stripe

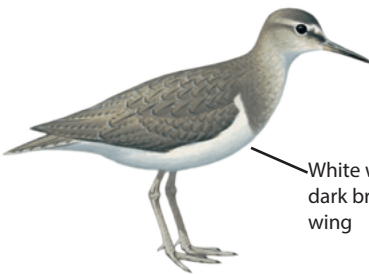


Shallow freshwater marshes with abundant aquatic vegetation



COMMON SANDPIPER 20cm *Actitis hypoleucos*

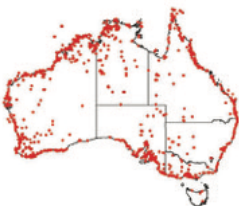
White wedge separates dark breast and folded wing



Margins of coastal or inland wetlands



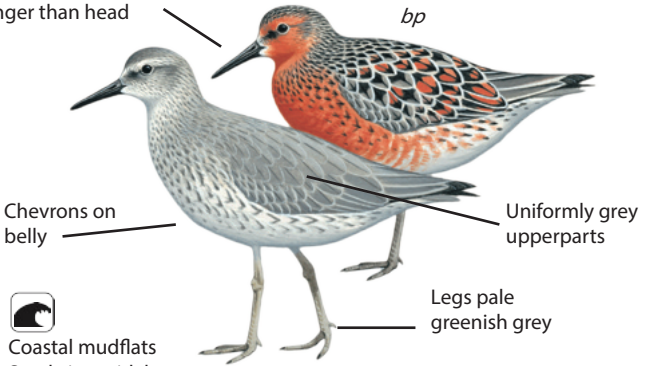
Found singly
Bobs tail constantly



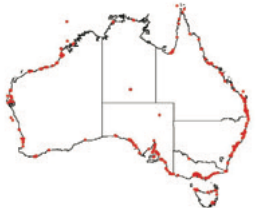
Large Sandpipers & Shanks

RED KNOT 24cm *Calidris canutus* ENDANGERED

Near-straight bill, not longer than head



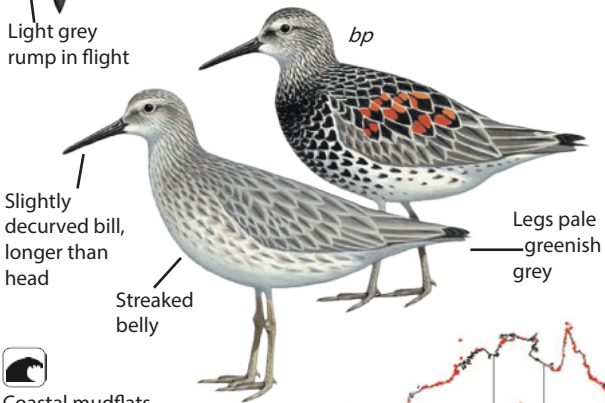
Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones



GREAT KNOT 27cm *Calidris tenuirostris* CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



Light grey rump in flight

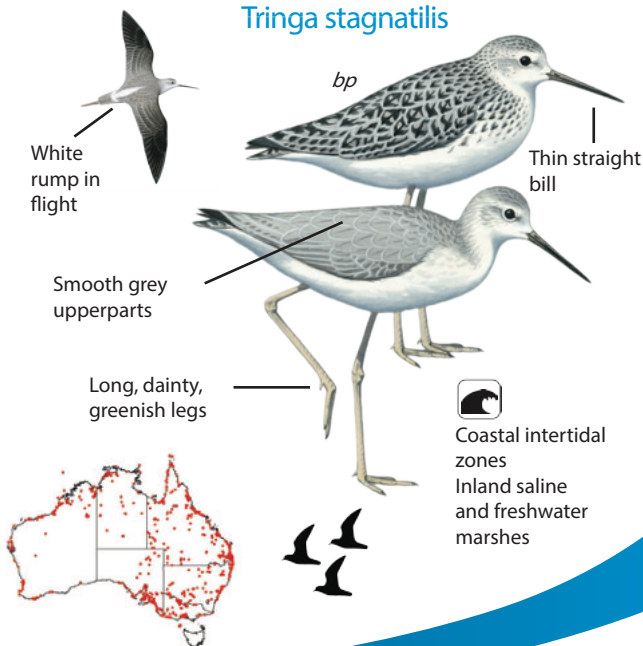


Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones

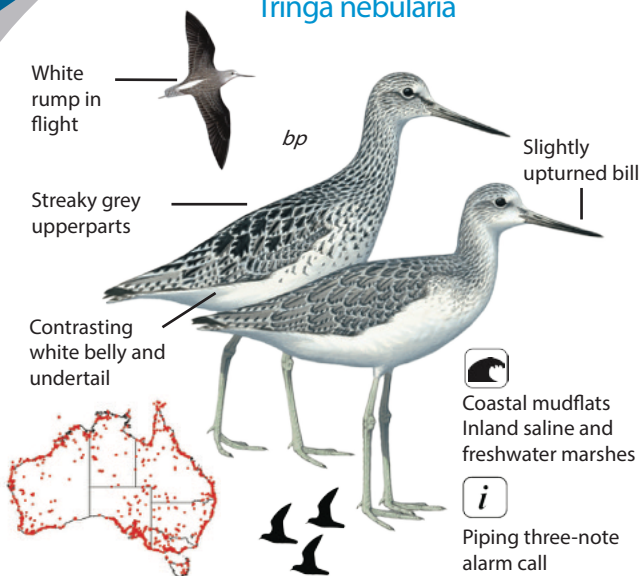


Large Sandpipers & Shanks

MARSH SANDPIPER 24cm *Tringa stagnatilis*

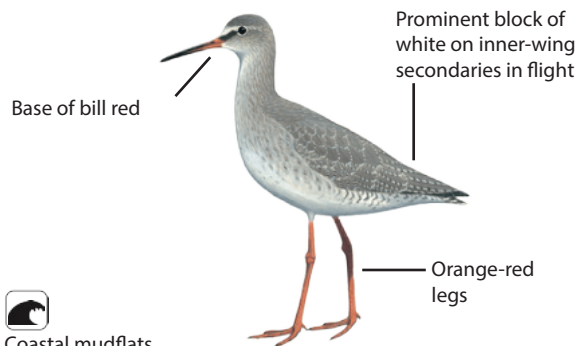


COMMON GREENSHANK 33cm *Tringa nebularia*



Large Sandpipers & Shanks

COMMON REDSHANK 28cm *Tringa totanus*



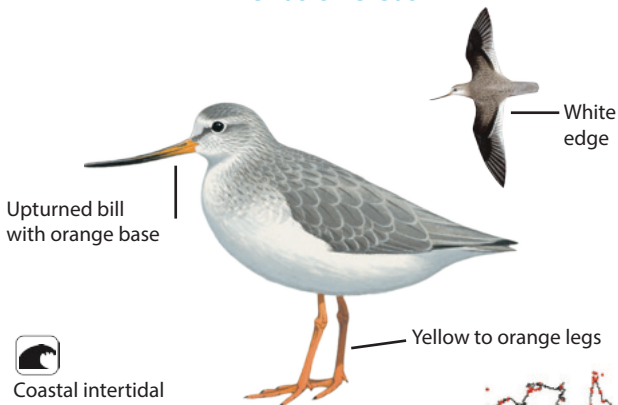
Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal
zones



Rare



TEREK SANDPIPER 23cm *Xenus cinereus*



Coastal intertidal
zones



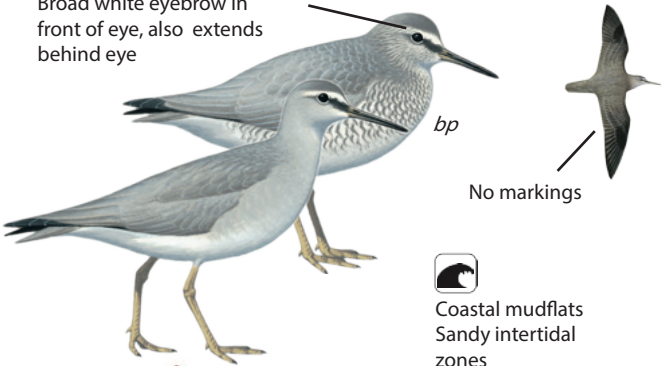
Energetically hunts
mobile prey, primarily
small crabs



Tattlers

GREY-TAILED TATTLER 25cm *Tringa brevipes*

Broad white eyebrow in front of eye, also extends behind eye



No markings



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones

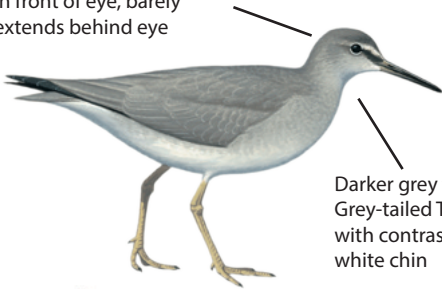


Call 'pyuee pyuee'



WANDERING TATTLER 25cm *Tringa incana*

Narrow white eyebrow in front of eye, barely extends behind eye



Darker grey than Grey-tailed Tattler, with contrasting white chin



Rocky coasts and reefs



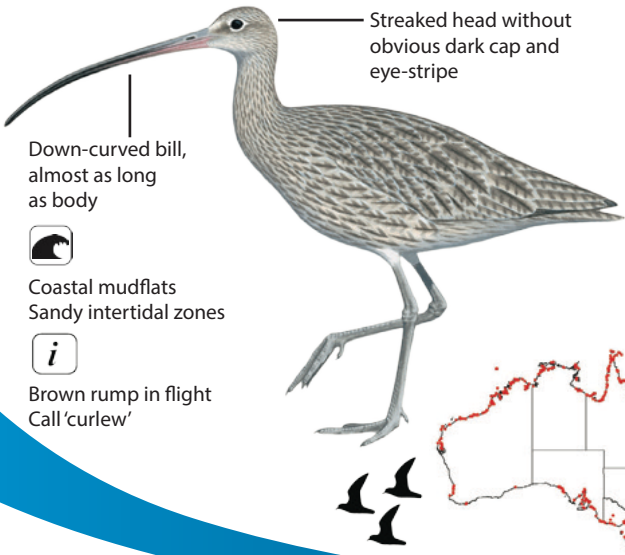
Call 'tititi'



Curlews & Godwits

EASTERN CURLEW 63cm *Numenius madagascariensis*

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED



WHIMBREL 42cm *Numenius phaeopus*

Dark cap with light stripe on crown and dark eye-stripe

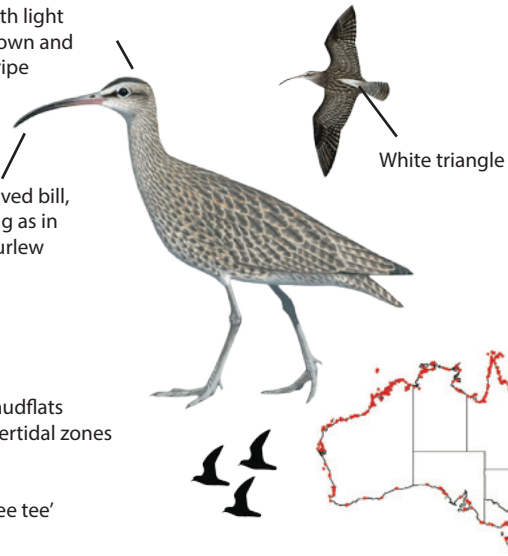
Down-curved bill, half as long as in Eastern Curlew



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones



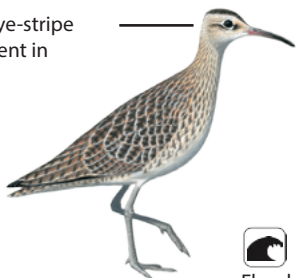
Call 'tee tee tee'



Curlews & Godwits

LITTLE CURLEW 29cm *Numenius minutus*

Dark cap, eye-stripe
faint or absent in
front of eye



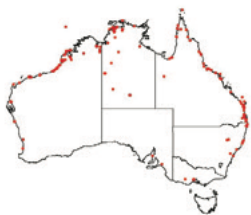
Short down-
curved bill



Floodplains
Short dry grassland

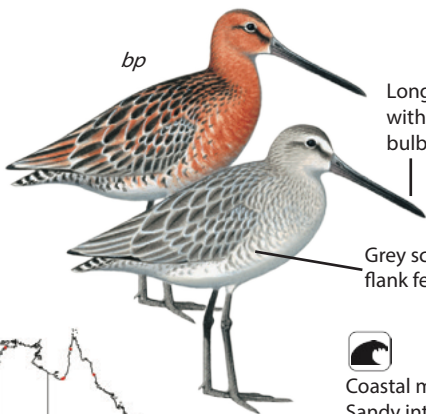


Often in large flocks



ASIAN DOWITCHER 34cm *Limnodromus semipalmatus*

bp



Long, thick bill
with slightly
bulbous tip

Grey scallops on
flank feathers



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal
zones



Uncommon



Curlews & Godwits

BAR-TAILED GODWIT 42cm

Limosa lapponica

CRITICALLY ENDANGERED (*L. l. menzbieri*)

VULNERABLE (*L. l. baueri*)

Slightly upturned bill

bp

Bars

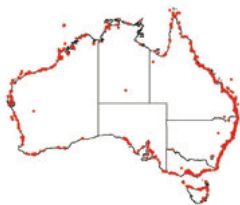


Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones



Striped tail

Streaked upperparts



BLACK-TAILED GODWIT 39cm

Limosa limosa

Straight bill

bp

Smooth upperparts

Black

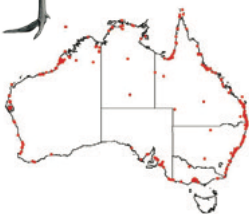
White wing bars



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones
Inland saline and freshwater marshes



Black-and-white tail



Snipes

LATHAM'S SNIPE 31cm *Gallinago hardwickii*

Striped face

Long bill



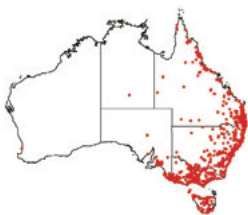
Tail detail



Shallow freshwater swamps



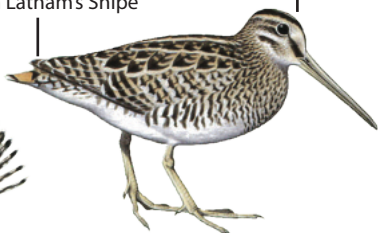
By far the most common snipe in Australia



SWINHOE'S SNIPE 29cm *Gallinago megala*

Tail end less pointed than Latham's Snipe

Striped face



Tail detail



Shallow freshwater swamps



Rare. Similar to Latham's Snipe and vagrant Pin-tailed Snipe



PIN-TAILED SNIPE 26cm *Gallinago stenura*



Narrower tail than Swinhoe's



Tail detail

Outer tail feathers fine, pin-like



Shallow freshwater swamps



Rare vagrant to northern Australia



AUSTRALIAN PAINTED-SNIPE 27cm *Rostratula australis* ENDANGERED

'Egyptian' eye-stripe



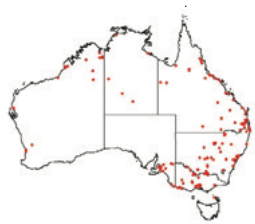
White harness



Shallow freshwater swamps



Most active at dusk



Ruff, Phalarope

RUFF 26cm
Calidris pugnax



Short bill

Long neck



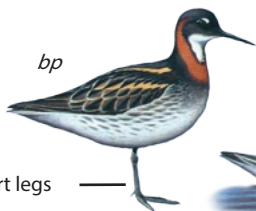
Coastal mudflats and inland wetlands



Feeds in shallow water and occasionally on dry mud. Uncommon



RED-NECKED PHALAROPE 19cm
Phalaropus lobatus



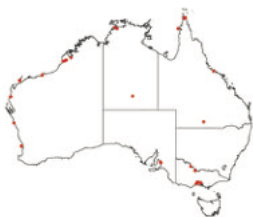
bp

Short legs

Fine, straight bill



Large bodies of water including lakes, bays, swamps and the ocean, salt evaporation ponds, water treatment facilities



Uncommon. Swims while foraging



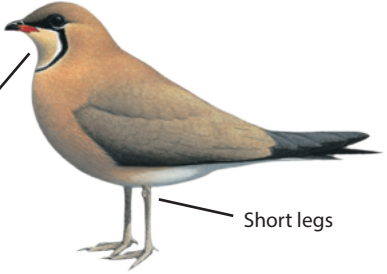
Pratincoles

ORIENTAL PRATINCOLE 24cm *Glareola maldivarum*

Chestnut
underwing



Black throat-band



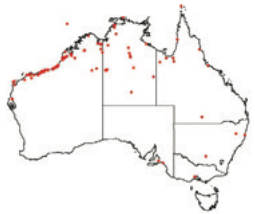
Short legs



Open and barren
grasslands and floodplains

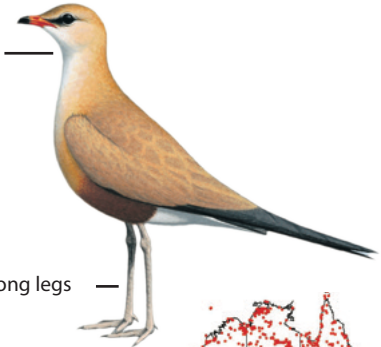


Graceful and tern-like
while catching insects
on the wing



AUSTRALIAN PRATINCOLE 21cm *Stiltia isabella*

Plain throat

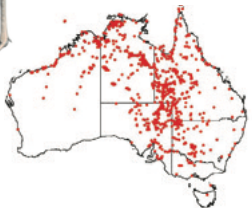


Long legs

Black underwing



Open and barren
grasslands and
gibber plains



Beach-nesting Birds Project

What are beach-nesting birds?

Australia's beaches, whether sandy or rocky, offer ideal breeding habitat for resident shorebirds and seabirds (e.g. terns and gulls). There are five shorebirds which commonly breed on beaches in Australia:

- Pied Oystercatcher (P. 31)
- Sooty Oystercatcher (P. 31)
- Beach Stone-curlew (P. 13)
- Red-capped Plover (P. 10)
- Hooded Plover (P. 10)

You may also find the nests of some other resident shorebirds on beaches (e.g. Masked Lapwing or Bush Stone-curlew), but these birds aren't as highly dependent on beach habitats for breeding and aren't traditionally known as beach-nesters.

Beach-nesting birds have camouflaged eggs and chicks, and typically have passive nest defence behaviours, such as leading away from the nest or performing broken wing displays. They are vulnerable to disturbance from people, dogs, and off-road vehicles.

The Beach-nesting Birds project works to:

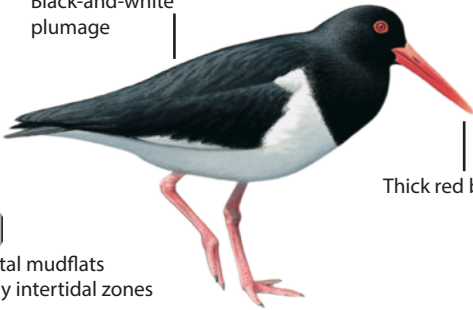
- Educate beach users to adopt bird-friendly beach use behaviours (e.g. leashing dogs).
- Establish and support community monitoring of beach-nesting birds.
- Protect vulnerable nesting sites from recreational impacts.
- Research new techniques for mitigating threats to beach-nesting birds.

If you would like to get involved in helping to monitor or protect your local beach-nesting birds, visit www.birdlife.org.au/beach.

Oystercatchers

AUSTRALIAN PIED OYSTERCATCHER 46cm *Haematopus longirostris*

Black-and-white
plumage



Thick red bill



Coastal mudflats
Sandy intertidal zones



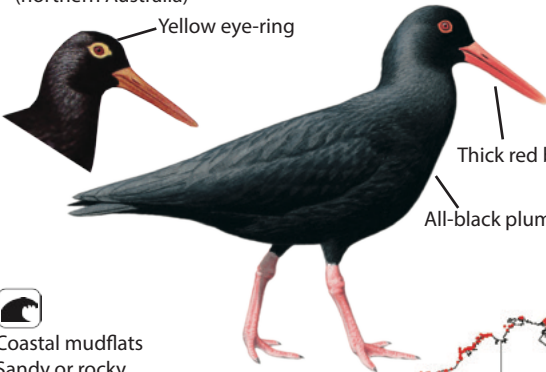
Young have a black
bill tip



SOOTY OYSTERCATCHER 46cm *Haematopus fuliginosus*

spp. *ophthalmicus*
(northern Australia)

Yellow eye-ring



Thick red bill

All-black plumage



Coastal mudflats
Sandy or rocky
intertidal zones



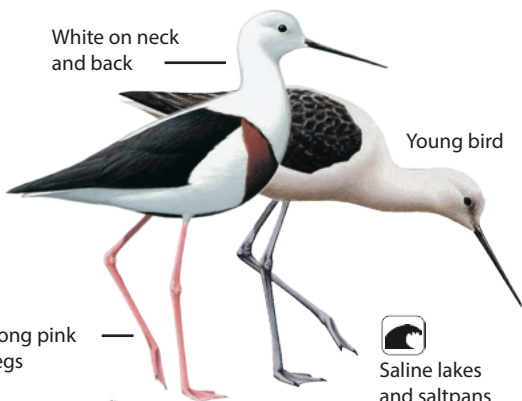
Young have a black
bill tip



Stilts

BANDED STILT 39cm *Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*

White on neck
and back



Young bird

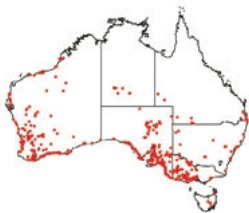
Long pink
legs



Saline lakes
and salt pans

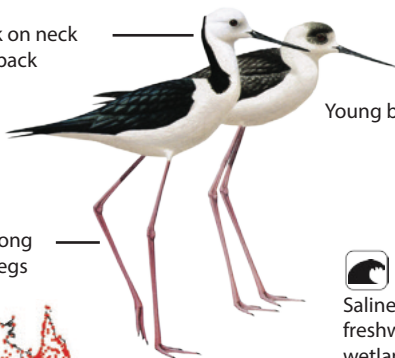


White back and
wingbar in flight



PIED STILT 37cm *Himantopus leucocephalus*

Black on neck
and back



Young bird

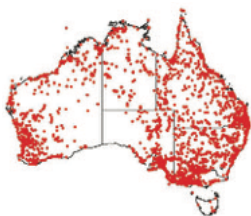
Very long
pink legs



Saline and
freshwater
wetlands. Coastal
intertidal zones



All-black wings
in flight



Avocet, Jacana

RED-NECKED AVOCET 44cm *Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*

Fine, up-curved bill

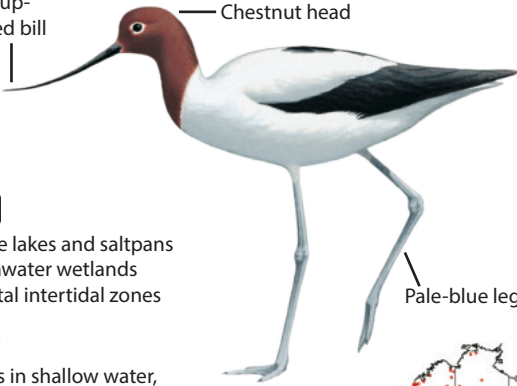
Chestnut head



Saline lakes and salt pans
Freshwater wetlands
Coastal intertidal zones



Feeds in shallow water, rapidly sweeping bill from side to side



Pale-blue legs



COMB-CRESTED JACANA 21cm *Irediparra gallinacea*

'Comb' of red skin

Black breast

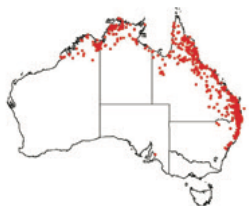
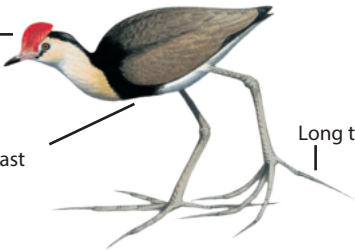
Long toes



Tropical freshwater wetlands



Walks on floating vegetation



Vagrant Species

In addition to the 54 species shown in this guide, each year a number of vagrant shorebird species are detected by keen observers. Vagrant species do not occur in Australia on a regular basis and in most cases, they have only ever been recorded a small number of times.

These species can arrive in Australia after being caught in large storm systems which push them off course, or they can get mixed up with the wrong flock in their Arctic breeding grounds and travel southward down a neighbouring flyway. While of great interest to birdwatchers, from a shorebird conservation perspective these individual stragglers are of less relevance and have not been illustrated here to avoid confusion.

Semipalmated Plover	Stilt Sandpiper
Eurasian Curlew	Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Nordmann's Greenshank	Baird's Sandpiper
Hudsonian Godwit	White-rumped Sandpiper
Little Stint	Long-billed Dowitcher
American Golden Plover	Short-billed Dowitcher
Dunlin	Spotted Redshank
Lesser Yellowlegs	Ringed Plover
Green Sandpiper	Kentish Plover
Grey-headed Lapwing	Grey/Red Phalarope
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	Wilson's Phalarope



Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, December 2014, Lake Tutchewop, Victoria
Photo: Dan Weller

Birdata: Your Counts Count

Shorebird population monitoring count data is entered, stored and managed in our online portal, Birdata. Birdata has a dedicated mobile app which makes it as easy as possible to record and automatically upload surveys in the field. The app is available from the App Store or Google Play Store.

You can also enter and manage your shorebird counts with your web browser by visiting <http://birdata.birdlife.org.au>. In addition to seeing your own sightings, the portal allows you to explore data from species and shorebird sites around the country.

In addition to monitoring shorebird numbers, we are keen to gain a better understanding of what puts shorebirds at risk in Australia. As such, Birdata also allows logging of human activity and flights due to disturbance. By recording human activity, fluctuations in shorebird numbers can be directly related to the type and frequency of disturbance. This can improve applications of the count data and help with conservation planning and wetland management.

If you have recorded your data on one of our old shorebird count forms please post it to BirdLife Australia, Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester St, Carlton VIC 3053. For your username and password or assistance with the form contact: shorebirds@birdlife.org.au.



Support Shorebird Monitoring

If you would like to support us by making a donation, leaving a bequest, or becoming a member, please visit www.birdlife.org.au/support-us. Alternatively, send a cheque/money order payable to BirdLife Australia, Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton VIC 3053. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible and will go into our Australian Bird Fund, helping BirdLife Australia's research and conservation projects.

Conservation Action Plan

Birdlife Australia works hard to protect migratory shorebirds and the Australian National Migratory Shorebird Conservation Action Plan (MS CAP) offers a framework for their conservation. The action plan is implemented by a broad range of stakeholders from across the country, and internationally across the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF).

The plan improves coordination and collaboration on research, conservation actions and management for migratory shorebirds that regularly visit Australia.

The MS CAP aims to make sure that the four High and Very High priority actions of the Australian Government's Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds are implemented:

1. To protect important habitats throughout the flyway.
2. To ensure wetland habitats in Australia are protected and conserved.
3. To minimise or eliminate human-caused threats.
4. To identify knowledge gaps in Australia.

The implementation of the MS CAP is overseen by a Steering Committee with representatives from Commonwealth and State Governments, academic institutions and key conservation bodies.

BirdLife Australia is also supporting stakeholders in several Australian states with the development of state-specific MS CAPs. Opportunities and partnerships exist at national, state and local scales. If you are interested in becoming involved, contact us at shorebirds@birdlife.org.au.



Keeping Shorebirds Safe

Australia provides critical habitat for a variety of shorebird species. You can help protect them by taking the following actions:



Minimising disturbance in and around wetland and estuary habitats.



Keeping dogs on leashes around feeding or roosting birds.



Ensuring people, horses or vehicles aren't within 250 metres of feeding or roosting birds.



Ensuring boats aren't within 250 metres of feeding or roosting birds.



Joining Birdlife Australia's National Shorebird Monitoring Program.

Key Biodiversity Areas

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are the places that matter most to birds, as recognised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). About half of Australia's KBAs have been nominated partially for migratory shorebirds. Many KBAs are in need of a Guardian to help with monitoring. To learn more about the program visit www.birdlife.org.au/projects/KBA.



Broome Bird Observatory



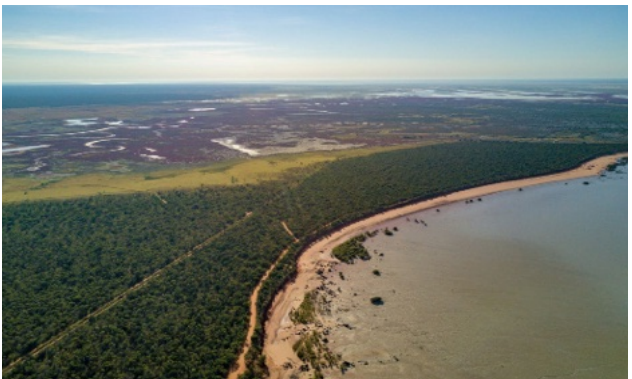
The Broome region is regarded as the most significant viewing site for shorebirds in Australia, and among the top four sites in the world. The Broome Bird Observatory (BBO) was established in 1988 as a centre for research and education to conserve migratory shorebirds.

Broome Bird Observatory facilitates, supports, and assists with a range of research and education projects. These efforts include research activities, such as the annual Australasian Wader Studies Group NW Australia Expedition & Study Tour, regular cannon-netting programs for tagging, monitoring and tracking shorebirds, regular shorebird counts to assist with understanding the patterns of diversity and abundance of shorebirds, and surveys of benthic organisms.

The BBO also runs a range of courses, workshops and tours for anyone seeking to extend their knowledge of migratory shorebirds. For more information, contact Broome Bird Observatory, PO Box 1313, Broome, WA 6725.

T (08) 9193 5600, E broome@birdlife.org.au

W www.broomebirdobservatory.com



Queensland Wader Study Group



The Queensland Wader Study Group (QWSG) was established in 1992 as a special interest group of Birds Queensland, dedicated to the study and conservation of waders (shorebirds).

QWSG volunteers have conducted monthly high tide roost counts to monitor wader populations from Cooktown to Tweed Heads. The group has been involved in regular surveys of the Great Sandy Strait, Mackay area and Gulf of Carpentaria.

Shorebird count data collected by QWSG has been used by all levels of government to assist in the protection of waders and their habitat. QWSG has an active education program, teaching people about waders through identification days and school programs.

A membership application and further information on QWSG can be found online.

W www.waders.org.au

F www.facebook.com/QueenslandWaderStudyGroup/



AWSG Wader Flagging Program

Migration research and leg-flags

The Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) was formed in 1981 and is now a Special Interest Group of BirdLife Australia. AWSG primarily researches migratory shorebirds in Australia and along their migration routes in the Asia-Pacific region.

The shorebird flagging program started in 1990 and a flagging protocol has been developed for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) so that any country or region may join the scheme. The 'flag' is a small coloured plastic band with a tab on the end which is placed either on the upper (tibia) or lower (tarsus) part of the leg, or both. Flags are designed to be easily seen by an observer and may also be engraved with an alphanumerical code.

The image opposite shows most flag colour combinations actively being placed on shorebirds by countries following the EAAF flagging protocol. In most cases, one or more colour flag(s) are placed on the right leg, and a metal band on the left leg. Some birds may also have coloured bands (rings) and/or flags for special projects.

Although the colour combination alone provides an indication of region of origin, the position of all flags and bands, and which leg they are on is important. If you observe a flagged migratory shorebird please take special note of the colour, position, and engravings (if any) of the flags or rings on the bird, and send the information along with a date and location and any photos to flagging@aws.org.au.

Where possible, flag observations will be acknowledged with a formal flag-sighting report containing a sighting history of the bird you have observed. You can also view combinations and information by visiting the EAAF Partnership website <http://eaaflyway.net>.

Note that resident shorebirds and terns are flagged using similar colours. Observations of resident species should be sent to AWSG, except information on flagged Hooded Plovers, which should go to hoodedplover@birdlife.org.au.

F [facebook.com/AustralasianWaderStudiesGroup](https://www.facebook.com/AustralasianWaderStudiesGroup)

W www.aws.org.au



Flag combinations



Guide:



- Light green
- Light blue
- Dark blue
- Black
- White
- Green
- Yellow
- Red
- Orange

Shorebird Index

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The National Shorebird Monitoring Program is managed and supported by BirdLife Australia. This project is supported by Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority and Hunter Local Land Services through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program. Funding from Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and Port Phillip Bay Fund is acknowledged.



The National Shorebird Monitoring Program is made possible with the help of over 1,600 volunteers working in coastal and inland habitats all over Australia.

Thank you to Jeff Davies who contributed the artwork and Liam Bailey who helped design the first edition of this booklet. Drawings by Jeff Davies © WWF.

Edited by Lindall Kidd, Dan Weller, Marta Ferenczi & Steve Klose.

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ISBN: 978-0-9873140-0-0 (3rd edition)

Back image: Chris Purnell



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join us

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