

Migratory and resident shorebirds of Wilson Inlet

Wilson Inlet is in the top 118 Australian wetlands of international significance to migratory shorebirds, and could qualify for formal listing because 1% of the world population of Red-necked Stint has been observed here. Migratory shorebirds are protected by international agreements. Federal, State and Local authorities have a legal responsibility to protect them. Major threats to shorebirds, both overseas and locally, include: loss of habitat, e.g. due to reclamation of wetlands for development; pollution of wetland habitat; disturbance by commercial or recreational activity in feeding and roosting areas, reducing feeding and resting time as birds are unable to utilize their habitat when disturbed; predation, e.g. by domestic dogs off leads, foxes and feral cats; fire, particularly for local species which breed on or near our coast; and climate change, as rising sea levels will potentially flood large areas of habitat. Locally, decisions resulting in the flooding of Morley Beach and other habitat over summer months can greatly affect the available habitat for shorebirds. Shorebirds visiting Wilson Inlet utilize a variety of habitat, feeding on worms, molluscs, crustaceans and other marine invertebrates in shallow water, and roosting above the high tide line. In addition to those illustrated, the following migratory species are uncommonly seen on Wilson Inlet: Ruddy Turnstone, Lesser Sand Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Terek Sandpiper, and Long-toed Stint. Additional non-migratory shorebirds also occur here include: Black-winged Stilt, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers & Black-fronted Dotterel.



Bar-tailed Godwit 37-45cm
Limosa lapponica
Population estimate: Global 1,100,000 – 1,200,000; Flyway 325,000; Australian 185,000
Migrant from Asia, September to April. Many overwinter in Australia. Occurs in Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe. Common

& widespread in Australia, particularly around coast, most common in E & N. Habitat: predominantly saline, coastal & inland- mudflats, estuaries & islands. Colourful breeding plumage (shades of red) can be seen on departure.



Great Knot 26-29cm
Calidris tenuirostris
Population estimate: Global 380,000 - 390,000; Flyway 375,000; Australian 360,000
Migrant, October to March, some overwinter. Widespread around Australian

coast, most abundant in N. Habitat: predominantly coastal, intertidal habitats. Gregarious, forages in large flocks (100 to several 1000) on passage, small flocks in winter. Juvenile non-breeders may remain in tropical parts of wintering range during breeding time.



Red Knot 23-25cm
Calidris canutus
Population estimate: Global 1,100,000; Flyway 220,000; Australian 135,000
Summer migrant. Breeds in Eurasia & N America. Widespread around Australian coast, most abundant in N. Predominantly sheltered coastal habitats. Name

refers to chestnut red breeding plumage of males, which is only occasionally seen in Australia on arrival or departure.



Common Greenshank 30-35cm
Tringa nebularia
Population estimate: Global 440,000 - 1,500,000; Flyway 60,000; Australian 19,000
Migrant from Asia, September to April, a few overwinter in Australia. Breeds in N

Europe & N Asia. Winters in Africa, Middle East, SE Asia & Australia. Widespread & common throughout Australia. Habitat: diverse inland & coastal habitat, fresh & saline,



Grey-tailed Tattler 24-27cm
Tringa brevipes
Population estimate: Global 50,000; Flyway 50,000; Australian 45,000
Summer migrant from NE Siberia, August to April. Widespread around Australian coast, more common in N.



Greater Sand Plover 20-25cm
Charadrius leschenaultii
Population estimate: Global 180,000 - 360,000; Flyway 110,000; Australian 75,000
Migrant, August to May. Breeds from Turkey to Mongolia. In Australia, most common on N & W coasts, less common

on E & S coasts, uncommon in Tas. Habitat: sandy beaches & coastal mudflats. May migrate without stopping.



Grey Plover 25-30cm
Pluvialis squatarola
Population estimate: Global 360,000; Flyway 125,000; Australian 12,000
Migrant, breeds in Arctic tundra. Widespread around Australian coast, abundant in Kimberley, common on W & S coasts, scarce in Tas. Predominantly

coastal habitat including mudflats, salt marshes and estuaries.



Pacific Golden Plover 23-28cm
Pluvialis fulva
Population estimate: Global up to 1,000,000; Flyway 100,000 - 1,000,000; Australian 9,000
Migrant from Arctic, August/September to April/May, some overwinter in Australia. Breeds Siberia to Alaska, June to July. Widespread in Australia, particularly

abundant around coast. Predominantly coastal habitat. Returns to same nest cup or within 100m of previous year's nest-site.

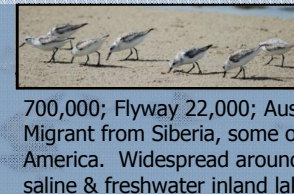


Hooded Plover 19-23cm
Thinornis rubricollis
IUCN Status: Near Threatened (small population, suspected to be declining)
Population estimate: Global & Australian 7,000
Resident, endemic to Australia, mainly S coast, also inland salt lakes in WA.

Habitat: sandy beaches, coastal & inland salt lakes. Breeds in dunes & near beaches August to February/March (peak in summer). Main threats: predation (cats, foxes, dogs, ravens, gulls), disturbance by human recreation activities (including off-road driving).



Red-capped Plover 14-16cm
Charadrius ruficapillus
Population estimate: Global & Australian 95,000
Resident, sometimes nomadic, endemic to Australia. Widespread & common throughout Australia. Coastal & inland, saline & brackish habitats. Busy and gregarious.



Sanderling 19-20cm
Calidris alba
Population estimate: Global 620,000 - 700,000; Flyway 22,000; Australian 10,000
Migrant from Siberia, some overwinter. Breeds in high arctic of Asia & N America. Widespread around Australian coast. Stopover sites include saline & freshwater inland lakes. Winter habitat is coastal, principally sandy beaches & lagoons. Runs behind receding waves & darts up beach ahead of next wave. Breeds June to July in solitary pairs. Small flocks for migration, larger flocks at stopover sites & for foraging in winter. Threats include disturbance on beaches, avian influenza, pollution/ degradation of wetland habitat in China & Korea.



Common Sandpiper 19-21cm
Actitis hypoleucos
Population estimate: Global 2,600,000 - 3,200,000; Flyway 25,000-100,000; Australian 3,000
Summer migrant. Breeds in Eurasia, May to June. In Australia, most common on N & W coast. Habitat: diverse rocky, sandy & muddy habitats, coastal & inland. Avoids wide open mudflats. Breeds in single pairs, migrates singly or in small flocks, solitary in winter range. Forages diurnally, roosts in flocks at night. Nervous, with a "teetering" habit.



Curlew Sandpiper 18-23cm
Calidris ferruginea
Population estimate: Global 1,800,000 – 1,900,000; Flyway 180,000; Australian 118,000
Summer migrant from Siberia. Many overwinter, particularly juveniles. Breeds in Arctic, June to July. Widespread

around Australian coast, with some occurrence inland, particularly during inbound migration (August to October). Coastal & inland mudflat habitats (inland depends on rain). Gregarious, except during breeding.



Pectoral Sandpiper 18-24cm
Calidris melanotos
Population estimate: Global 25,000-100,000
Migrant, breeds in E Siberia & N American Arctic, November to March. Uncommon but widespread in Australia, particularly SE. Diverse habitat: shallows & soft mud, coastal & inland, fresh & saline.

Pectoral Sandpiper on left, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper on right. Note how similar these birds are.



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper 17-23cm
Calidris acuminata
Population estimate: Global 160,000; Flyway 160,000; Australian 140,000
Migrant, breeds in high arctic tundra of NE Siberia. Common & widespread

across most of Australia, particularly abundant in SE. Habitat: fresh & salt wetlands, coastal & inland.



Red-necked Stint 13-16cm
Calidris ruficollis
Population estimate: Global 320,000; Flyway 325,000; Australian 270,000
Migrant from N Asia, August to May, many overwinter. Breeds in N central Siberia to W Alaska. Common &

widespread across most of Australia. Habitat: coastal mudflats & estuaries; inland fresh & salt wetlands (particularly during inbound migration- August to October). Gregarious.



Banded Stilt 35-45cm
Cladorhynchus leucocephalus
Population estimate: Global & Australian 210,000
Nomadic resident, endemic to Australia. Coastal & inland, widespread across southern & mid latitudes, vagrant to Tas. Saline coastal & inland habitat: salt lakes, marshes & estuaries. Gregarious, often

seen in large, dense flocks. Breeds irregularly, in huge, dense colonies, when flooding by major rainfall provides suitable habitat at inland salt lakes.

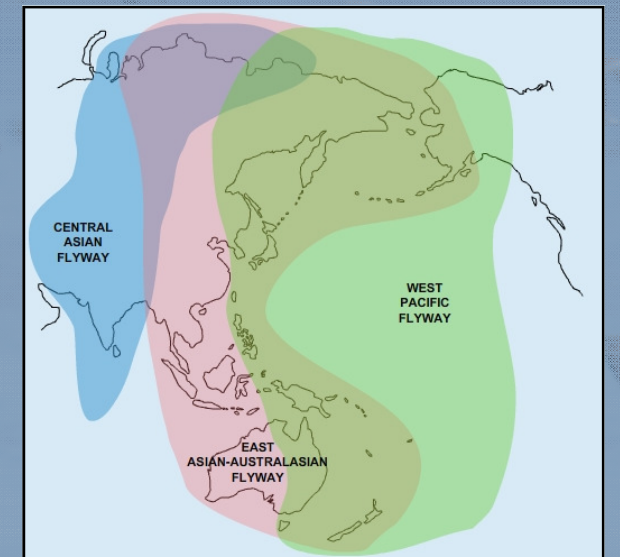


Red-necked Avocet 40-48cm
Recurvirostra novaehollandiae
Population estimate: Global & Australian 110,000
Nomadic resident, endemic to Australia. Widespread & common on mainland,

scarce near N & NE coast, vagrant to Tas. Habitat: fresh & saline wetlands, large numbers on salt lakes. Usually in large flocks. Uprturned bill tip facilitates feeding habit of sweeping bill from side to side. Juvenile has paler colouring.

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Migratory shorebirds visiting Wilson Inlet migrate along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF), shown at left with other, overlapping migration flyways. Birds in the EAAF breed mainly in Central & Eastern Siberia, utilize staging sites in East & South East Asia, and overwinter in Australia and New Zealand. Protection of these birds requires protection of all their required habitats along the flyway.



Working for a sustainable future
Compilation by Xanthe Bourne supported by Basil Schur and Green Skills staff



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- Photos Geoff Taylor
- Global population estimates and species information from BirdLife International (2009) [Species factsheets](http://www.birdlife.org): <http://www.birdlife.org>
- East Asian- Australasian Flyway & Australian population estimates were obtained from Geering A; Agnew L; Harding S (2008) [Shorebirds of Australia](http://www.shorebirds.net). CSIRO Publishing
- Flyway map from the Shorebird Network website: <http://www.shorebird-network.net/shorebirds.html>.
- Flyway information from Rowe, M (2002) [Feathers, Flyways and Fart Food: Long distance migration of shorebirds](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/publications/feathers-flyway-food/distance.html):
- <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/publications/feathers-flyway-food/distance.html>
- Additional species information from Morcombe, M (2004) [Field Guide to Australian Birds](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/publications/feathers-flyway-food/distance.html). Steve Parish Publishing & Slater, P (2003) [The Slater field guide to Australian birds](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/publications/feathers-flyway-food/distance.html). Reed New Holland
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