

# Birds of Hobsons Bay's Coastline



birds are in our nature



**HOBSONS  
BAY CITY  
COUNCIL**



# Introduction

## **Welcome to the Birds of Hobsons Bay's Coastline booklet**

This booklet aims to help you identify Hobsons Bay's resident and migratory shorebirds, along with some of our more familiar coastline birds and seabirds. Sadly, for a lot of these beautiful birds, their inland and coastal wetland habitats are under pressure, which has resulted in a decline in numbers for some species.

Hobsons Bay has over 20 kms of beaches and foreshore areas. It also has significant coastal wetlands, five creek systems, remnant native grasslands, and important flora and fauna habitats. These habitats are important feeding, sheltering and sometimes breeding grounds for many of the birds in this booklet.

### **What can we do?**

Responsible behaviour around these areas is important in ensuring shorebirds can feed and breed naturally. Actions that you can take include:

- Contain and restrain pets from accessing important shorebird and waterbird habitat.
- Avoid excessive disturbance through noise and visitation where shorebirds and waterbirds are frequenting.
- Raise awareness with relatives, colleagues and friends.
- Respect habitat by disposing of litter appropriately and picking up after pets.
- Join one of the many local environmental volunteer community groups in Hobsons Bay.
- Eliminate using pesticides where possible.
- Adhering to signage within our reserves and foreshore areas.
- Participate in one of BirdLife Australia's monitoring programs (see pages 33 - 35).

We hope this booklet will inspire you to go and discover birds in wetlands across Hobsons Bay, and join in their conservation through monitoring. Please enter your bird count data online at:

<http://birddata.birdlife.org.au>

## Bird identification

This booklet covers 46 bird species that occur regularly along the Hobsons Bay coastline. A further 15 uncommon species are outlined on page 32. For easier identification we have included ID tips for each species.

Bird species are split into three major groups of similar species to make navigating the pages a little faster. Please note some species could easily be classified under multiple of these groups. A detailed index is also located at the back of this booklet.

### Wetland birds

Pages 5-18



### Shorebirds

Pages 19-27

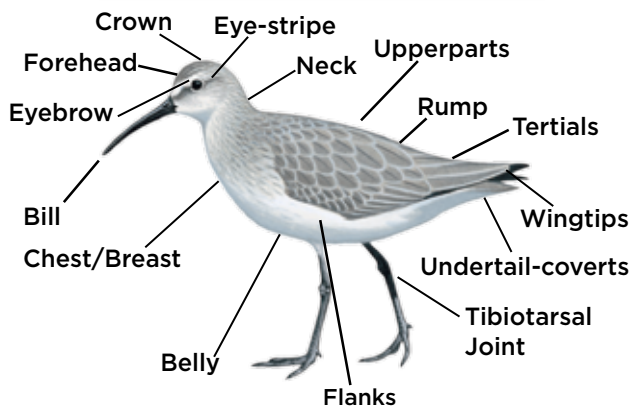


### Seabirds

Pages 27-31



# Key to descriptions



Size



Identification tips



Habitat description



Migrant: Breeds outside Australia



Resident: Breeds in Australia

*bp*

Breeding plumage

*nbp*

Non-breeding plumage

**Juv.**

Juvenile

**Threatened species status from Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (as of January 2018)**

## AUSTRALIAN PELICAN

*Pelecanus conspicillatus*



↔ 170cm

**i** Unmistakable. Fishes in groups

**🏞️** Freshwater and coastal wetlands



## BLACK SWAN

*Cygnus atratus*



↔ 1.2m

**i** Unmistakable. Often in pairs

**🏞️** Freshwater and coastal wetlands

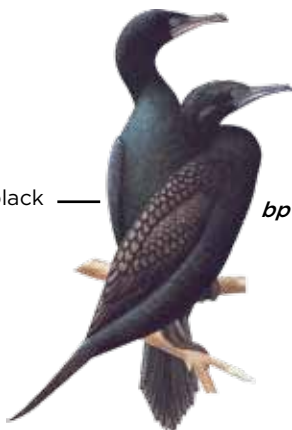


# Wetland birds

## LITTLE BLACK CORMORANT

*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*

Entirely black



61cm



Often seen in big flocks

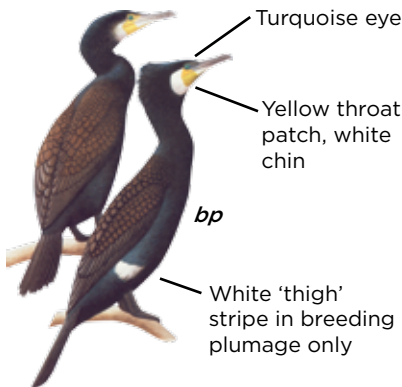


Freshwater and coastal lagoons



## GREAT CORMORANT

*Phalacrocorax carbo*



82cm



Usually found alone. Largest Australian Cormorant

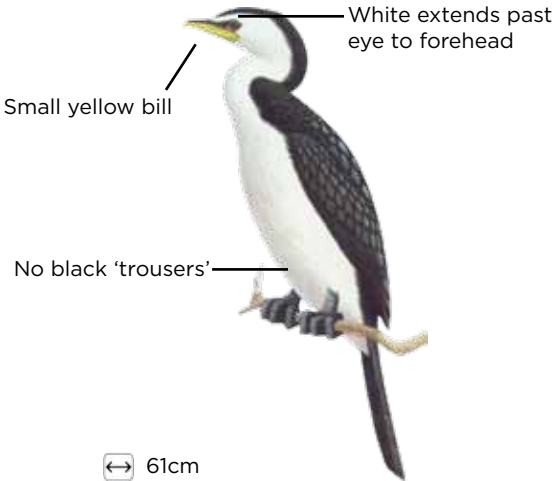


Marine and freshwater




## LITTLE PIED CORMORANT

*Microcarbo melanoleucos*



↔ 61cm

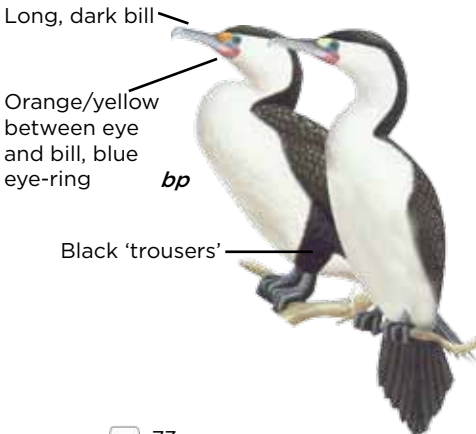
**i** Has spiky crest in breeding plumage

 Freshwater, farm dams, bays



## PIED CORMORANT

*Phalacrocorax varius*



↔ 73cm

**i** Travels in V formation sometimes in groups of thousands

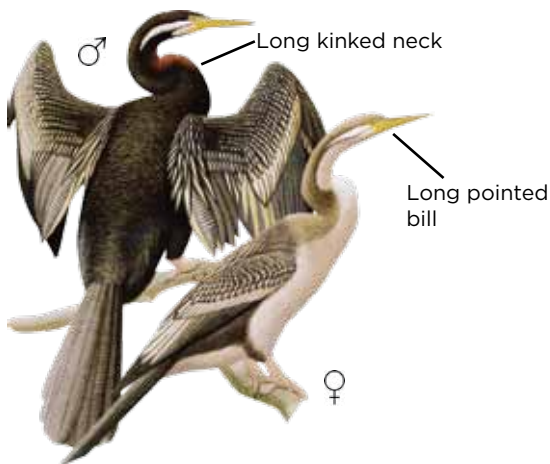
 Marine and freshwater



# Wetland birds

## AUSTRALASIAN DARTER

*Anhinga novaehollandiae*



↔ 90cm

**i** Swims very low in water often only with head and neck showing

**🏠** Marine and freshwater



## PACIFIC BLACK DUCK

*Anas superciliosa*

Distinct dark facial markings



↔ 53cm

**i** Also called Black Duck

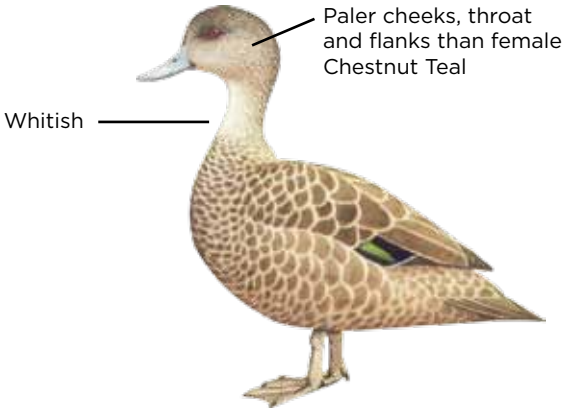
**🏠** Freshwater estuaries and bays





## GREY TEAL

*Anas gracilis*



↔ 43cm

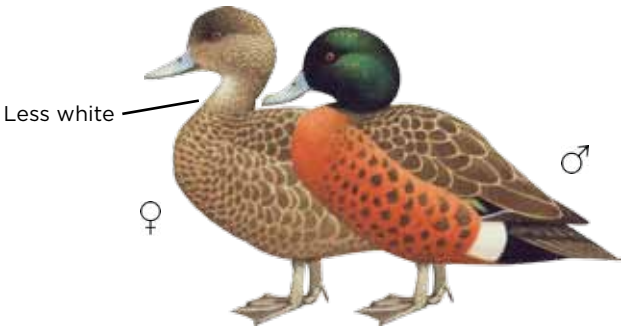
**i** Female and male identical. Difficult to distinguish from female Chestnut Teal

**🌊** Freshwater but can be on sea. More common inland than Chestnut Teal



## CHESTNUT TEAL

*Anas castanea*



↔ 44cm

**i** Calls also very similar to Grey Teal

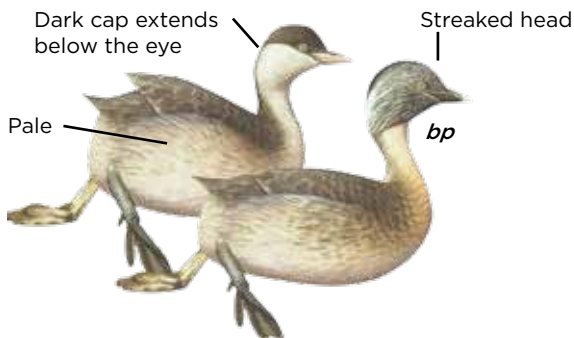
**🌊** Freshwater, tidal flats. More common near coast than Grey Teal



# Wetland birds

## HOARY-HEADED GREBE

*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*



↔ 29cm

**i** Sits high in the water.  
Has a more upright posture than the Australasian Grebe

 Freshwater




## EURASIAN COOT

*Fulica atra*



↔ 37cm

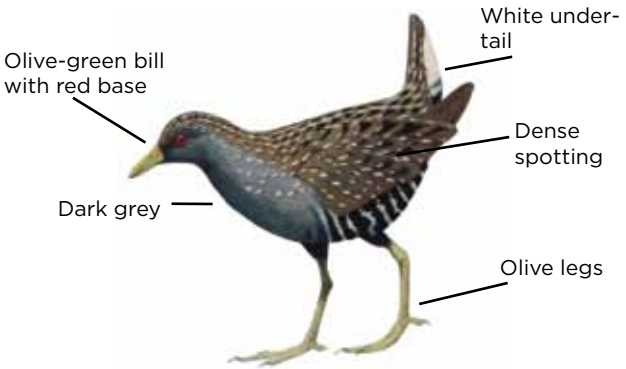
**i** Frequently swimming, diving.  
Sometimes feeding on land

 Freshwater, pastures and parks




## AUSTRALIAN SPOTTED CRAKE

*Porzana fluminea*



↔ 21cm

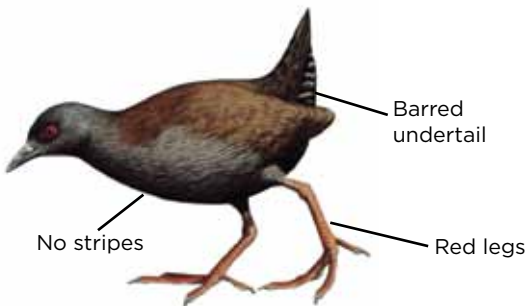
**i** Most common crake, but not often seen

 Well vegetated freshwater wetlands




## SPOTLESS CRAKE

*Porzana tabuensis*



↔ 19cm

**i** Rare. Single, sharp 'kek' call. Also explosive purring, from mid-July to December

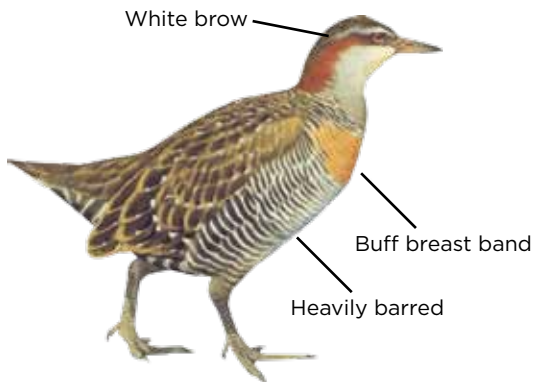
 Well vegetated freshwater and coastal wetlands



# Wetland birds

## BUFF-BANDED RAIL

*Gallirallus philippensis*



↔ 30cm

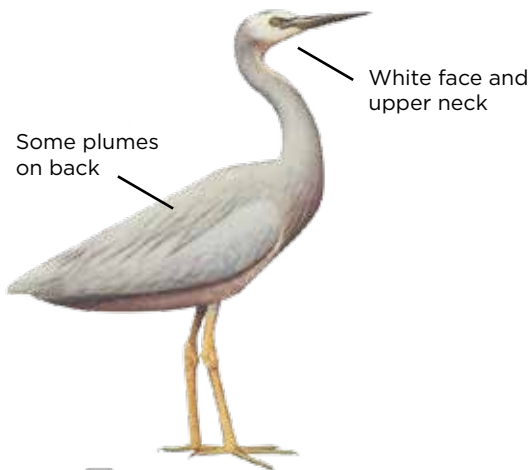


**i** Usually secretive but can become habituated at man-made lakes

**🏞️** Freshwater and coastal lagoons

## WHITE-FACED HERON

*Egretta novaehollandiae*



↔ 68cm

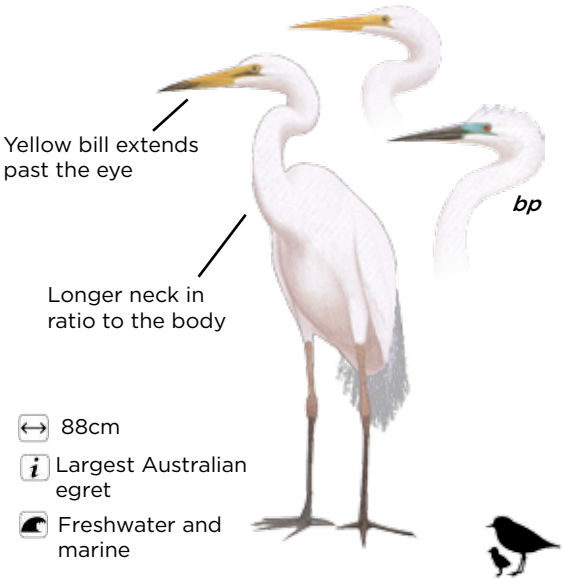


**i** Plumes on nape and neck during breeding season

**🏞️** Freshwater and coastal wetlands, pastures and drains

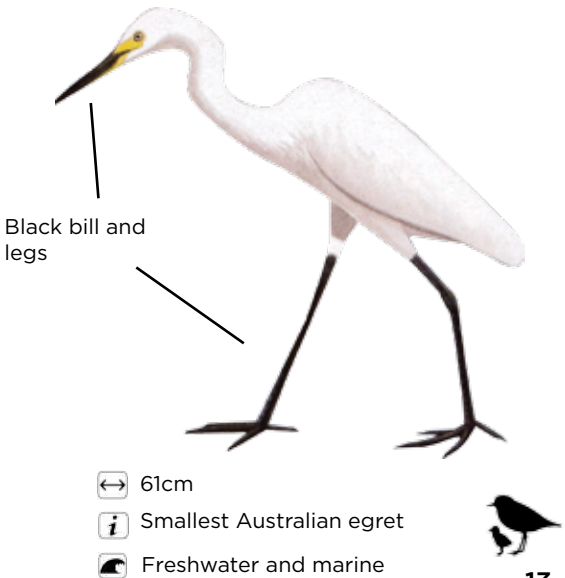
## EASTERN GREAT EGRET

*Ardea alba modesta*



## LITTLE EGRET

*Ardea garzetta*



# Wetland birds

## AUSTRALIAN WHITE IBIS

*Threskiornis molucca*

Iridescent head skin



70cm



Can be seen in large flocks



Freshwater, marine and pastures, fields. Scavenges in parks and tips



## STRAW-NECKED IBIS

*Threskiornis spinicollis*

Straw-like feathers



67cm



Can be seen in large flocks



Freshwater, marine and pastures, fields, dry grasslands



## ROYAL SPOONBILL

*Platalea regia*



↔ 77cm

**i** Distinct side-to-side movement when feeding

 Freshwater and coastal lagoons



## YELLOW-BILLED SPOONBILL

*Platalea flavipes*



↔ 83cm

**i** Distinct side-to-side movement when feeding

 Freshwater and coastal lagoons



# Wetland birds

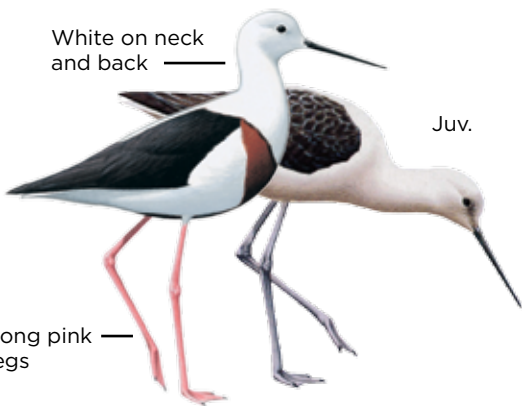
## BANDED STILT

*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*

White on neck  
and back

Juv.

Long pink  
legs



↔ 39cm

**i** White back and wingbar in flight

**🌊** Saline lakes and salt pans

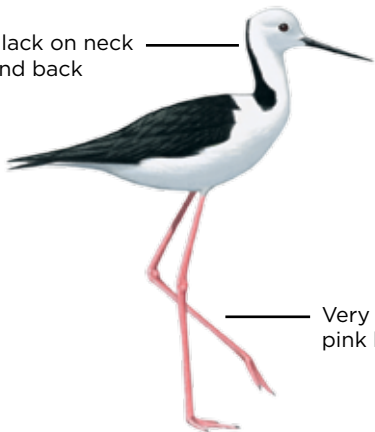


## BLACK-WINGED STILT

*Himantopus himantopus*

Black on neck  
and back

Very long  
pink legs



↔ 37cm

**i** All-black wings in flight

**🌊** Saline and freshwater wetlands.  
Coastal intertidal zones



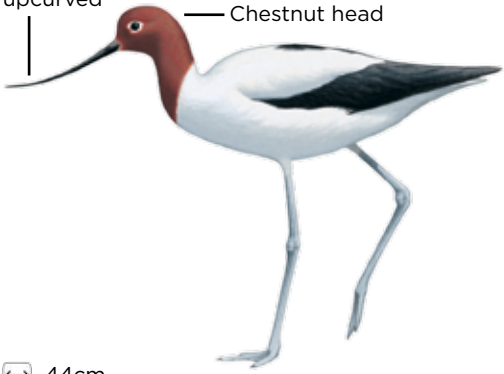


## RED-NECKED AVOCET

*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*

Fine, upcurved  
bill

Chestnut head



↔ 44cm

**i** Saline lakes and salt pans. Freshwater wetlands. Coastal intertidal zones

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



## MASKED LAPWING

*Vanellus miles*

Yellow wattles

Wing spurs



↔ 34cm

**i** Large, noisy and often aggressive plover

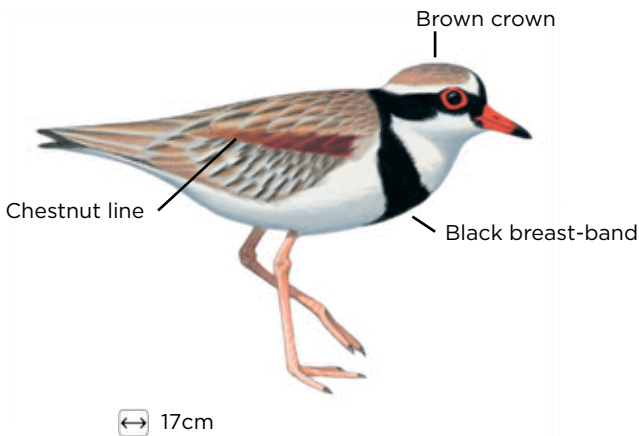
**👤** Short grass habitats, wetland edges, and modified urban environments



# Wetland birds

## BLACK-FRONTED DOTTEREL

*Elseiyornis melanops*



↔ 17cm

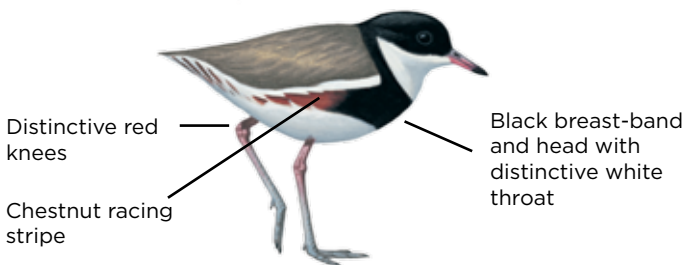
**i** Often in pairs or family groups

**🌿** Dry margins of freshwater wetlands. Farm dams



## RED-KNEED DOTTEREL

*Erythrogonyx cinctus*



↔ 18cm

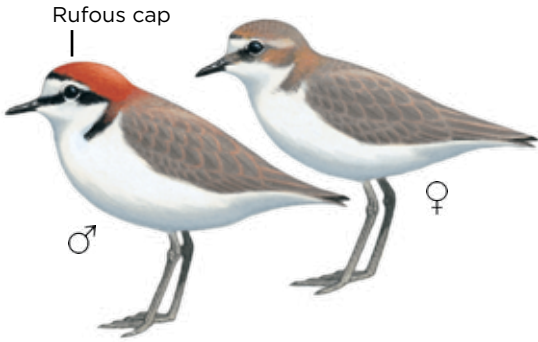
**i** May sometimes swim whilst foraging

**🌿** Margins of inland freshwater wetlands including temporary shallows after rain



## RED-CAPPED PLOVER

*Charadrius ruficapillus*



↔ 15cm

**i** Bobs head nervously, darting and stopping abruptly

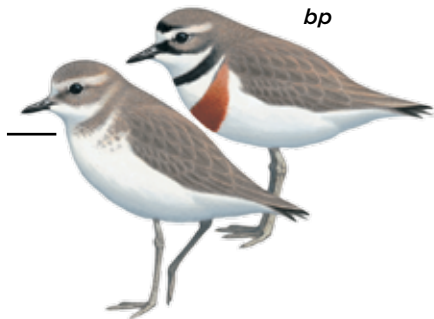
**🏠** Sandy beaches, bare margins of inland and coastal wetlands



## DOUBLE-BANDED PLOVER

*Charadrius bicinctus*

Double bands still evident in non-breeding plumage



↔ 19cm

**i** Species occurs in Australia between February and August

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



# Where to find shorebirds in Hobsons Bay





### Key

Bird watching locations



Bird hide



Car park



Toilets



Public parkland



Gate



Walking/cycling trail



Train line and stations



# Birdwatching locations

## Coastal birdwatching locations of Hobsons Bay.

### 1 Stony Creek Park

The jetty under the Westgate Bridge is a unique experience with views across saltmarsh and white mangrove habitats. This secluded and tranquil area provides respite for humans and birds from the neighbouring hustle and bustle of suburbia. Our larger waterbirds like the Cormorants, Herons and Egrets are the major bird attractions here.

### 2 Sandy Point and Riverside Spit Reserve

Greenwich Bay surrounded by The Strand foreshore and Sandy Point Reserve has always been a haven for Black Swans and Cormorants and when the tide is low small waders like Red-capped Plovers can be found along the sand spit at the end of Sandy Point. The Sandy Point Nature Reserve itself is a common place to see and hear birds, like the Superb Fairy-wren.

### 3 Point Gellibrand

The rocky outcrops and rock pools along the area fronting Point Gellibrand Coastal Park are home to a great variety of waterbirds. All sizes of waterbirds can be found here including the larger White-faced Herons, smaller Eurasian Coots and tiny uncommon waders.

### 4 Rifle Range/Jawbone Reserve

The lakes in this area are a refuge for a vast array of ducks and water fowl along with our larger iconic species like Pelicans and Spoonbills. Freckled, Blue-billed and Pink-eared Ducks are all odd visitors to this area, which is rapidly colonised in times of drought. Tern species are also frequently observed.

### 5 Paisley Challis Wetlands

These areas are best visited when the tide is low and the sand flats are exposed. Pelicans, Swans, Cormorants, and Teals are common all year round. In the warmer months look out for the smaller waders that have made the trip over from Alaska and Siberia to feed up before heading home again in Autumn.

## 6 Altona Coastal Park

The sand flats here link up directly with the Paisley Challis Wetlands attracting our wading birds like the resident Black-winged Stilt and our summer visitor from Siberia, the Red-necked Stint. Access is via the Hobsons Bay, Bay Trail.

## 7 Seaholme Foreshore

The rocky outcrops here provide great roosting spots for Cormorants, Terns and Pelicans. Being on the Bay Trail ensures good access to this viewing point.

## 8 Laverton Creek

When the tide is out you can spot Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers between Altona Pier and the Laverton Creek mouth. Small lagoons which have recently formed along the spit of sand from the Laverton Creek mouth, are ideal habitat for all wading birds. This area is growing in popularity with migratory birds, especially those that are found in the adjacent Ramsar site - Cheetham wetlands.

## 9 Truganina Park

The Truganina Park wetlands make for a great starting point with resident waterbirds commonly found in the lakes. Numerous woodland birds can also be spotted in and around the vegetation surrounding the area. You may even spot a bird of prey soaring overhead including Swamp Harrier, Brown Falcon and Black-shouldered Kite.

## 10 Truganina Swamp

A Melbourne Water Site of Biodiversity Significance is Truganina Swamp. This is a large but quiet area, which is home to many different bird species feeding in amongst the coastal saltmarsh vegetation.

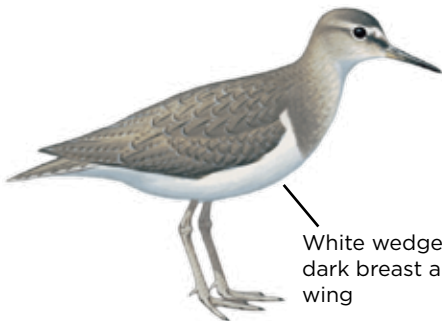
## 11 Skeleton Creek

At the Cheetham wetlands wading shorebirds can be seen by following the Bay Trail to the Pedestrian Bridge, and as you move upstream numerous other wetland and woodland species can be found.

# Shorebirds

## COMMON SANDPIPER

*Actitis hypoleucos*



White wedge separates dark breast and folded wing

↔ 20cm

**i** Found singly. Bobs tail constantly

**🏠** Margins of coastal or inland wetlands



## CURLEW SANDPIPER

*Calidris ferruginea*

**CRITICALLY ENDANGERED**

*bp*

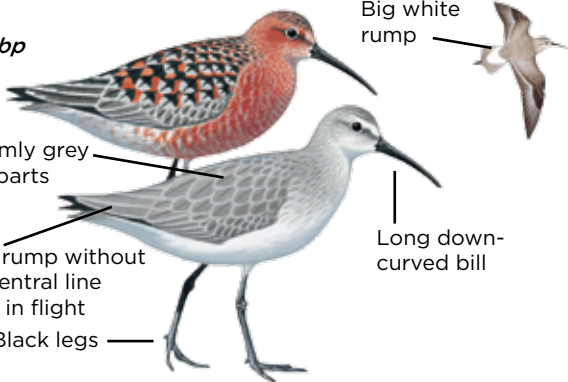
Uniformly grey upperparts

White rump without dark central line visible in flight

Black legs

Big white rump

Long down-curved bill



↔ 20cm

**i** Oil-pump head movement

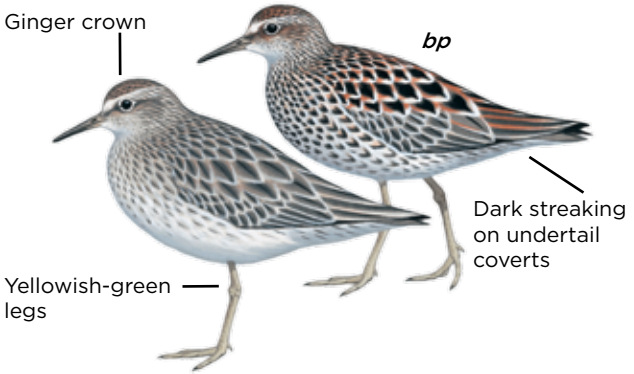
**🏠** Coastal intertidal zones. Inland saline and freshwater marshes





## SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER

*Calidris acuminata*



↔ 20cm

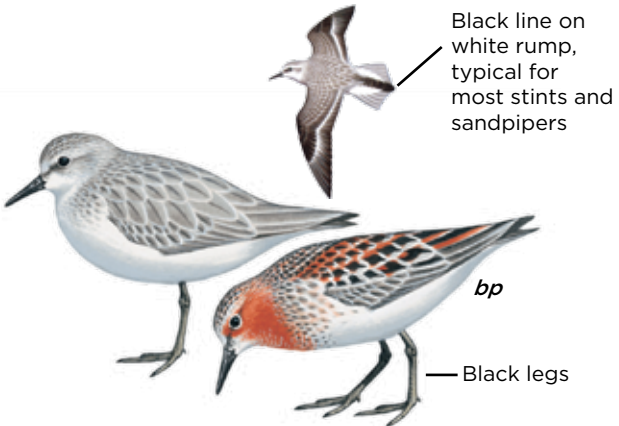
**i** Migrant, nests in Siberia tundra

**🏠** Coastal intertidal zones  
Inland saline and freshwater marshes



## RED-NECKED STINT

*Calidris ruficollis*



↔ 21cm

**i** Often in large flocks. Common and widespread

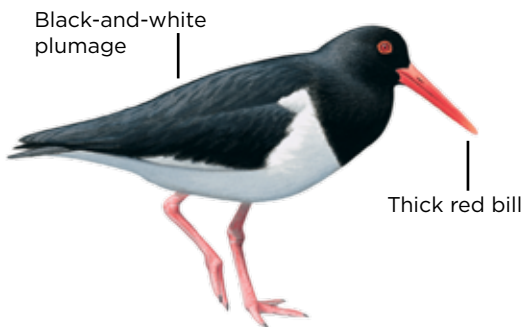
**🏠** Coastal intertidal zones  
Inland saline and freshwater marshes




# Shorebirds

## AUSTRALIAN PIED OYSTERCATCHER

*Haematopus longirostris*

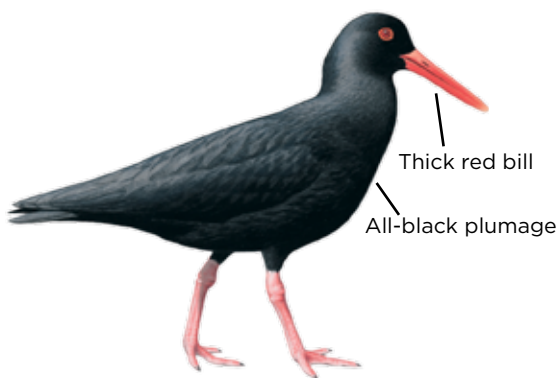



- ↔ 46cm
- i** Young have a black bill tip
-  Coastal mudflats  
Sandy intertidal zones



## SOOTY OYSTERCATCHER

*Haematopus fuliginosus*

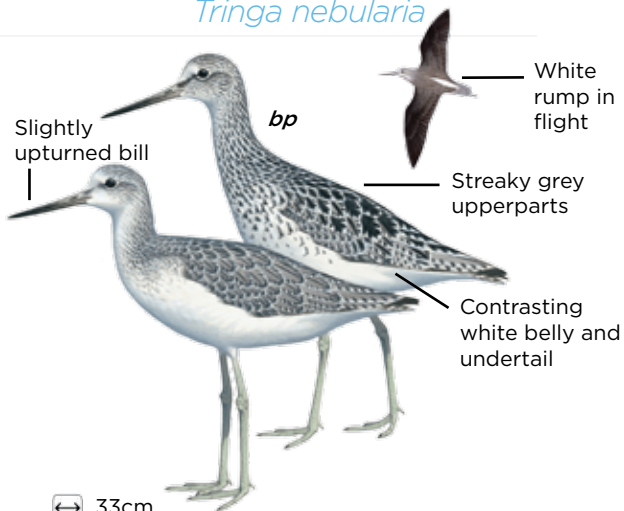


- ↔ 46cm
- i** Young have a black bill tip
-  Coastal mudflats  
Sandy intertidal zones




## COMMON GREENSHANK

*Tringa nebularia*



↔ 33cm

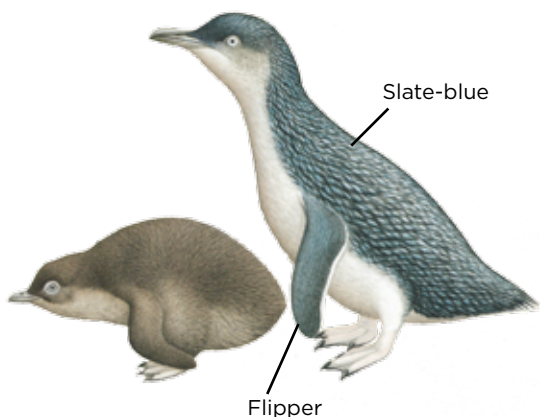
**i** Piping three-note alarm call

 Coastal mudflats  
Inland saline and freshwater marshes



## LITTLE PENGUIN

*Eudyptula minor*



↔ 40cm

**i** Also known as Fairy Penguin.  
Noisy when returns to shore

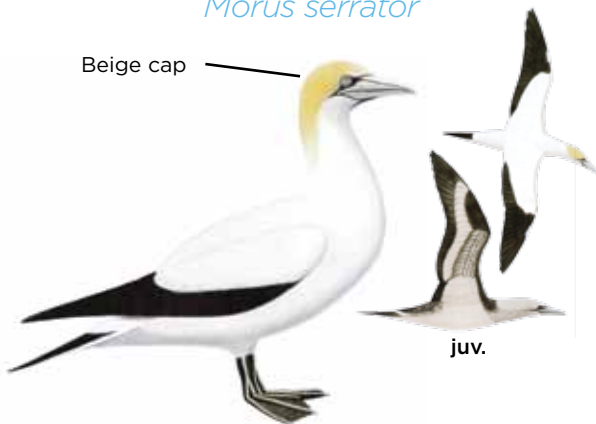
 Marine



# Seabirds

## AUSTRALASIAN GANNET

*Morus serrator*



↔ 91cm

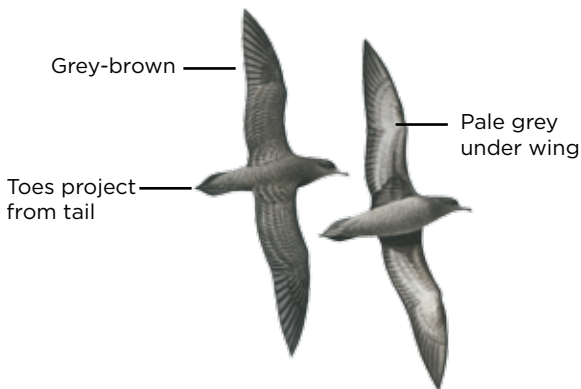
**i** Can breed in huge colonies. Distinct dive bombing fishing technique

**🏠** Strictly ocean, large estuaries and bays



## SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER

*Ardenna tenuirostris*



↔ 45cm

**i** Can be seen in huge flocks at sea. Migrate to Antarctic edge to feed.

**🏠** Marine




## SILVER GULL

*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*



↔ 40cm

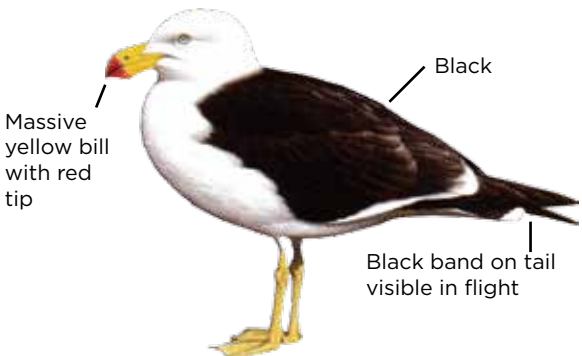
**i** Please do not feed. An over-population of Silver Gulls threatens beach-nesting birds

 Freshwater and coastal wetlands, beaches, parks, pastures and tips




## PACIFIC GULL

*Larus pacificus*



↔ 63cm

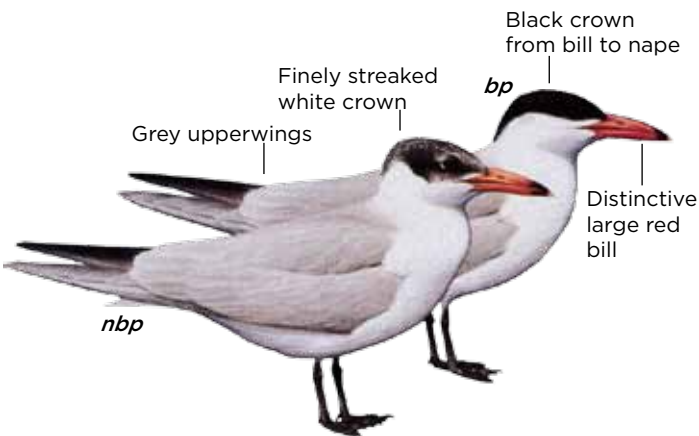
**i** Juv. have chocolate brown plumage and large bill

 Coastal shorelines



## CASPIAN TERN

*Sterna caspia*



↔ 52cm

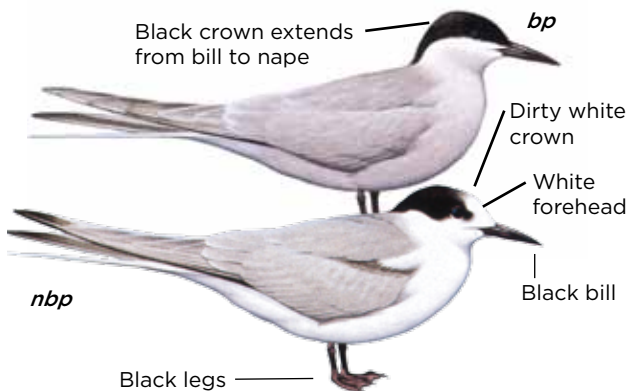
**i** Patrols beach line sometimes hovers before diving into water

**m** Marine, coastal



## COMMON TERN

*Sterna hirundo*



↔ 35cm

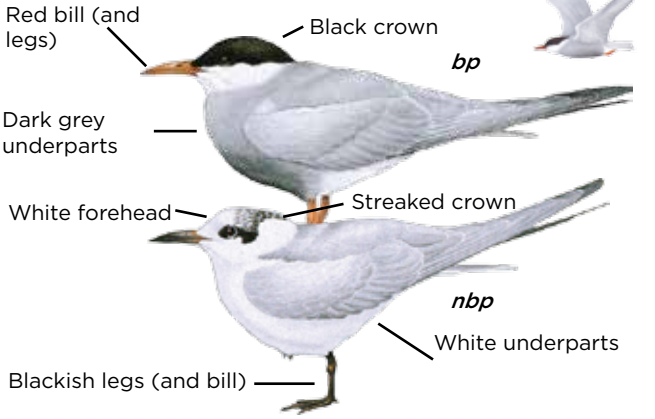
**i** Migrates to Australia in non-breeding season

**m** Coastal



## WHISKERED TERN

*Chlidonias hybrida*



↔ 36cm

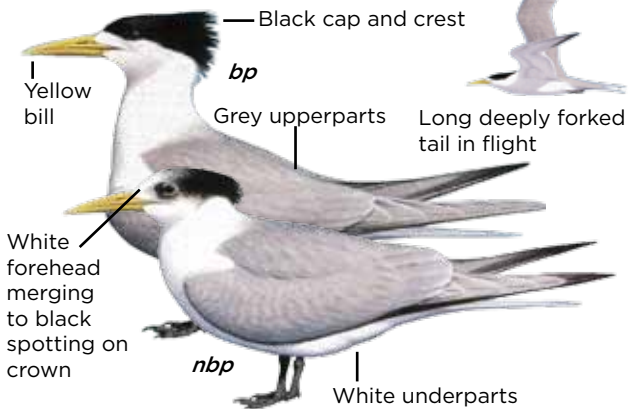
**i** Usually in flocks patrolling back and forth over wetlands

**🏠** Freshwater, marshes, estuaries



## CRESTED TERN

*Thalasseus bergii*



↔ 46cm

**i** May be in mixed flocks with other terns and gulls

**🏠** Estuaries and marine

# Uncommon species

In addition to the 46 species shown in this guide, each year a number of uncommon shorebird, waterbird and seabird-species are detected in Hobsons Bay by keen observers. These are species which do not occur in Hobsons Bay on a regular basis, and in most cases, have only ever been recorded a small number of times. These species have not been illustrated here to avoid confusion; however observers should be aware that there is the chance that individuals of the following species may turn up at any time.

For further information on these species, please consult your Australian bird field guide of choice.

Common name	Scientific name
Arctic Jaeger	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>
Bar-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa lapponica</i>
Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i>
Eastern Curlew	<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>
Fairy Prion	<i>Pachyptila turtur</i>
Fluttering Shearwater	<i>Puffinus gavia</i>
Great Knot	<i>Calidris tenuirostris</i>
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>
Latham's Snipe	<i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>
Nankeen Night-heron	<i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i>
Pacific Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis fulva</i>
Red Knot	<i>Calidris canutus</i>
Swamp Harrier	<i>Circus approximans</i>
Whistling Kite	<i>Haliastur sphenurus</i>
White-bellied Sea-eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>



The Shorebirds 2020 program coordinates the national shorebird population monitoring in Australia. Volunteers from the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) and BirdLife Australia have carried out monitoring of key shorebird areas in Australia since 1981. Shorebird count data aids conservation by highlighting population trends and identifying threats to shorebirds.

Using the shorebird count data the project is able to declare Key Biodiversity Areas (see page 35) and influence land management and on-ground conservation management actions, to reduce disturbances to foraging or nesting shorebirds.

The project needs your help to conduct annual counts at key shorebird areas. We also work to discover and mitigate the factors behind local and national population declines.

**[www.birdlife.org.au/shorebirds2020](http://www.birdlife.org.au/shorebirds2020)**

In addition to monitoring shorebird numbers, the project is keen to gain a better understanding of what puts shorebirds at risk in Australia. 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.

Once you have recorded your shorebird data you can enter them directly into the online database <http://birdata.birdlife.org.au.au> or post the form to BirdLife Australia, 60 Leicester St Carlton VIC 3053.

# Making your counts count

## A Long Term National Bird Monitoring Project

The Atlas of Australian Birds is one of BirdLife Australia's greatest resources, allowing the organisation to track changes in birds across the country. Since 1998 a dedicated band of over 10,000 volunteers have amassed close to one million surveys, comprising over 15 million bird records.

### Important uses of the data collected include:

- The State of Australia's Birds report series: tracking trends in bird populations and their health
- Action Plan of Australian Birds: assessment and recovery action summaries for all Australian birds
- Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas: data collection and reporting on Australia's vast IBA network

If you want to put your birdwatching skills to good use and help conserve Australia's birds, please contact the Birddata team via [atlas@birdlife.org.au](mailto:atlas@birdlife.org.au) or sign-up to contribute <http://birddata.birdlife.org.au.au>



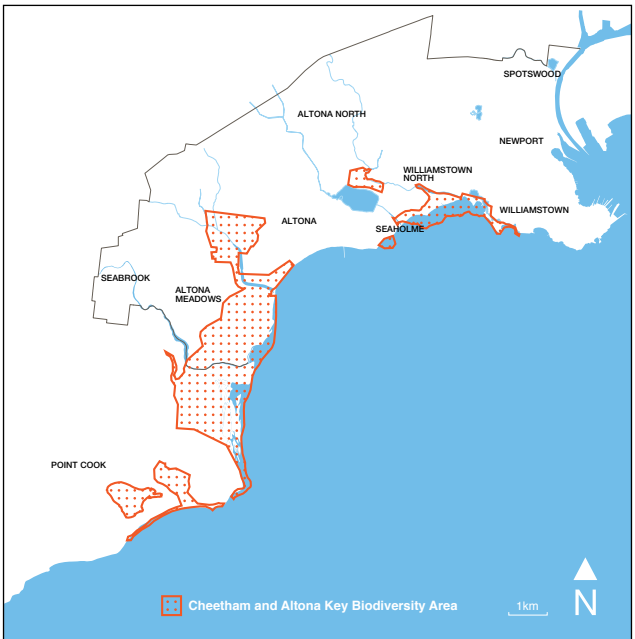
# Key Biodiversity Areas

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) are the focal sites for BirdLife Australia's biodiversity conservation work. They are identified and monitored by the BirdLife International partnership according to global scientific criteria. There are over 300 KBAs across Australia. BirdLife Australia aims to take an annual snapshot of the threats and conservation actions through a yearly KBA Easter Health-check.

The data gathered are extremely valuable, and shows us where we need to focus our conservation work. For each KBA, the Health-check is conducted by a registered KBA 'Guardian', who are assigned to a specific KBA. The role of the Guardian is open to anyone with environmental knowledge and an interest in conservation and does not require extensive bird ID skills.

If you are interested in KBAs or in becoming a Guardian, please visit <http://birdlife.org.au/projects/KBA> or contact the national program manager on [kba@birdlife.org.au](mailto:kba@birdlife.org.au)

## Cheetham & Altona KBA



## 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, which focuses on research on 'waders', or shorebirds, in Australia and throughout their migration routes in the Asia-Pacific. The wader flagging program has revolutionised wader migration studies. The program started in Australia in 1990, and a flagging protocol has been developed for the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, which enables any country, or in some cases regions within a country, to join the scheme.

The "flag" is a small coloured plastic band with a tab on the end. Flags can be placed either on the upper part of the leg (the tibia), the lower (the tarsus), or both upper and lower. Flags can also be engraved with a alphanumeric code. Easily seen by an observer, it means that, unlike with banding/ringing, the bird does not have to be re-caught to find out in which region it has been banded and when.

**The table opposite** lists the colours of the flags being placed on shorebirds by countries following the EAAF flagging protocol. In most cases, the colour flag(s) is placed on the right leg, and the metal band on the left leg. However the leg on which the flag(s) are located is not critical in determining the flagging origin of the bird. Some birds may also have coloured bands (rings) as well as flags for special projects. The position of these bands and which leg they are on, is important. The colour combinations have been carefully coordinated to ensure that all researchers throughout the Flyway benefit from the program, and do not confuse other people's research (and their own) by not following the protocol.

If you observe a flagged shorebird during any survey or field outing, please take special note of the colour, position, and engravings of the flags or rings on the bird, and enter the information along with a date and location on the AWSG webpage. You can also send information about your sighting directly to **flagging@awsorg.org.au**. This will ensure that sightings will be reported to the original flagger promptly, and that no valuable records are lost. All 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 additional combinations and information by visiting the EAAF

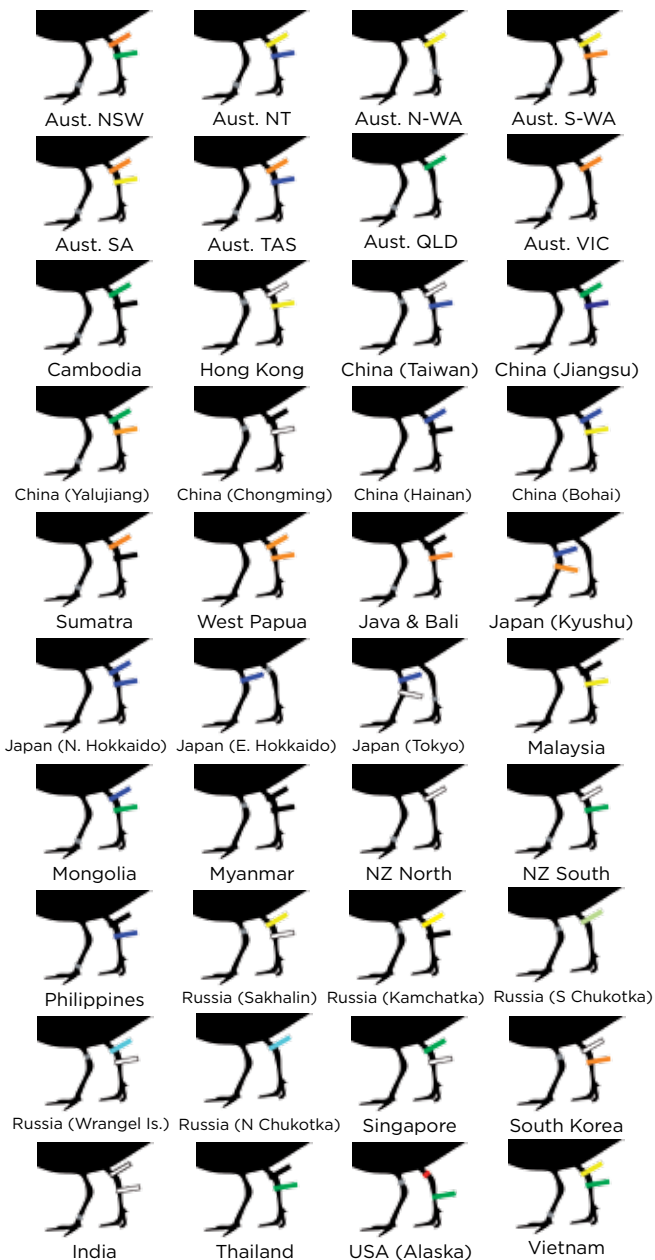
Partnership website: **<http://eaaflyway.net>**



**W** [www.awsorg.org.au](http://www.awsorg.org.au)





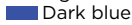




**f** [facebook.com/AustralasianWaderStudiesGroup/](https://facebook.com/AustralasianWaderStudiesGroup/)

# Flag combinations



**Guide:**



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

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The Birds of Hobsons Bay's Coastline has been compiled by Birdlife Australia's Nick Bradsworth with support from Caroline Wilson.

This booklet was developed by Hobsons Bay City Council as part of their joint partnership with the Port Philip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority as part of the Federal funded Ramsar Protection Program.



For more information or if you are interested in volunteering visit [birdlife.org.au](http://birdlife.org.au), call 1300 730 075 or email [info@birdlife.org.au](mailto:info@birdlife.org.au)

The illustrations in this booklet are from the Handbook of Australian, New Zealand, and Antarctic Birds, and non-breeding Whiskered Tern by Nicolas Day.

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Back image: Australian Spotted Crake - Nick Bradsworth



## Australia's voice for birds since 1901

BirdLife Australia is dedicated to achieving outstanding conservation results for our native birds and their habitats. With our specialised knowledge and the commitment of an Australia-wide network of volunteers and supporters, we are creating a bright future for Australia's birds.

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