

North Central Waterwatch

# Waterbirds Field Guide



# The North Central CMA Region



## Acknowledgement of Country

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) acknowledges Aboriginal Traditional Owners within the North Central CMA region, their rich culture and their spiritual connection to Country. We also recognise and acknowledge the contribution and interests of Aboriginal people and organisations in the management of land and natural resources.

## Acknowledgements

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# Contents

<b>Avocets and Stilts</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Bitterns, Egrets and Herons</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Coots, Crakes, Native Hens and Rails</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Cormorants, Darters and Pelicans</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Dotterels, Lapwings and Plovers</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Ducks</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Godwits, Greenshanks, Ruff, Sandpipers, Snipes and Stints</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Grebes and Swans</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Gulls and Terns</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Cranes, Ibis and Spoonbills</b>	<b>74</b>

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Ian Mayo, Vanessa Murray and Danielle Beischer.

# Introduction

The North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) region covers more than one eighth of the state and features an abundance of natural attractions. Local forests, parks, rivers and wetlands are home to a teeming assortment of flora and fauna, some of which are found nowhere else in the world.

## Using this guide

This handy reference guide has been developed by the North Central Waterwatch program for anyone interested in learning more about the waterbirds that inhabit our region's rivers, creeks and freshwater wetlands.

Each bird listing includes a description, conservation status and notes on habitat, feeding, breeding, and voice. Symbols provide a quick way to identify species included on important state, national and international lists.

## Conservation status

There are state, national and international mechanisms for protecting waterbirds, with legislation listing threatened species including the Australian *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the Victorian *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. The *Advisory List of Threatened Fauna in Victoria 2013* provides listing for species considered threatened, poorly known, near threatened or extinct in Victoria.

The *Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement* (1974) and the *China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement* (1986) agreements also list bird species which migrate between Australia and the respective countries. The agreements require the protection of migratory birds.

More information on these conservation and protection mechanisms can be found at [www.environment.gov.au](http://www.environment.gov.au).

## Symbols indicating current conservation status

Species listed as threatened in accordance with the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Act 1988*:

**FFG** FFG = Listed as threatened in accordance with Section 10 of the *Victorian Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*.

Species listed in the *Advisory List of Threatened Fauna in Victoria 2013*:

<b>EX</b> Extinct	<b>RE</b> Regionally extinct
<b>EW</b> Extinct in the wild	<b>CE</b> Critically Endangered
<b>EN</b> Endangered	<b>VU</b> Vulnerable
<b>NT</b> Near threatened	<b>DD</b> Data deficient

Species listed in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*:

<b>EN</b> Endangered	<b>CE</b> Critically endangered
<b>VU</b> Vulnerable	<b>EW</b> Extinct in the wild
<b>TH</b> Threatened	

Species listed in the *Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement* or the *China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement*:

**JAMBA** **CAMBA**



## Listed species occurring in the North Central region

Common Name	Advisory	FFG	EPBC	JAMBA	CAMBA
Australasian Bittern ( <i>Botaurus poiciloptilus</i> )	(EN)	✓	EN		
Nankeen Night Heron ( <i>Nycticorax caledonicus</i> )	(NT)				
Little Egret ( <i>Ardea garzetta</i> )	(EN)	✓			
Cattle Egret ( <i>Ardea ibis</i> )					✓
Intermediate Egret ( <i>Ardea intermedia</i> )	(EN)	✓			
Eastern Great Egret ( <i>Ardea modesta</i> )	(VU)	✓		✓	✓
Royal Spoonbill ( <i>Platalea regia</i> )	(NT)				
Baillon's Crake ( <i>Porzana pusilla</i> )	(VU)	✓			
Lewin's Rail ( <i>Rallus pectoralis</i> )	(VU)	✓			
Pied Cormorant ( <i>Phalacrocorax varius</i> )	(NT)				
Freckled Duck ( <i>Sticonetta naevosa</i> )	(EN)	✓			
Blue-billed Duck ( <i>Oxyua australis</i> )		✓			
Musk Duck ( <i>Biziura lobata</i> )	(VU)				
Australasian Shoveler ( <i>Anas rhynchotis</i> )	(VU)				
Hardhead ( <i>Aythya australis</i> )	(VU)				
Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> )	(VU)			✓	✓
Bar-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa lapponica</i> )				✓	✓
Common Greenshank ( <i>Tringa nebularia</i> )	(VU)			✓	✓



Sharp-tailed Sandpiper ( <i>Calidris acuminata</i> )				✓	✓
Curlew Sandpiper ( <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> )	(EN)			✓	✓
Marsh Sandpiper ( <i>Tringia stagnitillis</i> )	(VU)			✓	
Wood Sandpiper ( <i>Tringia glareola</i> )	(VU)			✓	
Pectoral Sandpiper ( <i>Calidris melanotos</i> )	(NT)			✓	
Common Sandpiper ( <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> )	(VU)			✓	✓
Latham's Snipe ( <i>Gallinago hardwickii</i> )	(NT)			✓	✓
Australian Painted Snipe ( <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i> )	(CE)	✓	VU		✓
Long-toed Stint ( <i>Calidris subminuta</i> )	(NT)			✓	✓
Red-necked Stint ( <i>Calidris ruficolis</i> )				✓	✓
Magpie Goose ( <i>Anseranas semipalmata</i> )	(NT)	✓			
Gull-billed Tern ( <i>Sterna nilotica</i> )	(EN)	✓			
Caspian Tern ( <i>Hydroprogne caspia</i> )	(NT)	✓		✓	✓
Whiskered Tern ( <i>Chlidonias hybridus</i> )	(NT)				
Brolga ( <i>Grus rubicunda</i> )	(VU)	✓			
Glossy Ibis ( <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> )	(NT)				✓
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>



# Banded Stilt

(*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Recurvirostridae

**Description:** The Banded Stilt has a white head and is plump bodied, with a broad chestnut band across the breast. The wings are black with a conspicuous white trailing edge in flight, with legs that are long and orange or pink in colour. Adult size is 35-43cm.

**Distribution:** Endemic to Australia, found in the south and inland. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Saline and hypersaline (very salty) typically large, open and shallow water.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects and their larvae, crustaceans and seeds. It wades in shallow waters and picks and probes by swinging its bill from side to side.

**Breeding:** May to December. Nests are saucer-shaped scrapes lined with dry grass. Usually three to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Yelping notes 'chowk-chowk', yaps and wheezes.

# Black Winged Stilt

(*Himantopus himantopus*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Recurvirostridae

**Description:** The Black Winged Stilt has a white nape with a black back and wings. Its bill is needle like and black, with legs that are long and pink in colour. Adult size is 36-39cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout mainland Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater and saltwater marshes, mudflats, and the shallow edges of lakes and rivers.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects, molluscs and crustaceans. It wades in shallow water and picks its prey near the surface, sometimes plunging its head to catch sub-aquatic prey.

**Breeding:** August to December. Nests are a simple shallow scrape on the ground or a mound of vegetation placed in or near the water. Usually three to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Repeated high-pitched 'bark' or 'yap'.





# Red-necked Avocet

(*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*)



Photos John Barkla

**Family:** Recurvirostridae

**Description:** The Red-necked Avocet has a chestnut brown head and neck, with a long and sharply upturned black bill. Its body is white, except for two black streaks along its back; its legs are long and pale blue-grey in colour. Adult size is about 40-48cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout mainland Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Marshes, shallows and inland salt lakes.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects and their larvae, crustaceans and seeds. It wades in shallow water, sweeping its bill back and forth below the surface. It sometimes swims and up-ends to feed.

**Breeding:** August to November. Nests are shallow scrapes lined with water vegetation. Usually three to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A musical 'toot toot'; also, yelps and wheezes.



# Australasian Bittern

(*Botaurus poiciloptilus*)



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The Australasian Bittern is a heavy-set, partially nocturnal heron, with patterned dark brown underparts, buff and black. Its eyebrow and throat are pale, and the side of its neck is dark brown. Its bill is brown and legs are greenish in colour. Adult size is about 66-76cm.

**Distribution:** South-eastern and south-western mainland Australia and the eastern marshes of Tasmania. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Reed beds and other vegetation such as Cumbungi, Lignum and sedges.

**Feeding:** Fish, amphibians, crayfish and aquatic invertebrates. It waits for its prey, and then actively lunges at it swaying its head from side to side.

**Breeding:** September to December. Nests are usually a shallow structure of dry or green reeds, in clumps of reeds in water or swamps. Usually four to six eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A series of deep 'booms'.

FFG

EN

EN



# Cattle Egret

(*Ardea ibis*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The Cattle Egret is small and snowy-white with a white head and an orange crown. It has a long, sharp and slightly down-curved yellow-red bill; its legs are normally grey-green, turning bright red or orange-brown during breeding. Adult size is about 70cm.

**Distribution:** Found in north-eastern and south-eastern Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, woodlands and wetlands amongst low emergent vegetation and abundant aquatic flora.

**Feeding:** Grasshoppers and invertebrates. Follows larger animals like cattle and grabs prey disturbed by their feet, lunging at it in a stabbing manner.

**Breeding:** October to January. Nests are found in the middle to upper branches of trees in wetland areas. Usually two to seven eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Normally quiet, sometimes makes a 'croak' noise when breeding.



# Eastern Great Egret

(*Ardea modesta*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The Eastern Great Egret is a large white egret with yellow facial skin, the long hair-like feathers (nuptial plumes) hang across the lower back. Its feet and legs are dark olive-grey or sooty black. Adult size is about 83-103cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Grasslands, woodlands and wetlands.

**Feeding:** Molluscs, amphibians, fish and aquatic invertebrates. It wades through shallow water and is motionless before it stabs its prey.

**Breeding:** October to December. Nests are made from a large platform of sticks, placed in a tree over the water. Usually two to six eggs and are laid.

**Voice:** Usually quiet. A 'cuk, cuk, cuk, cuk' call is repeated when disturbed.

FFG

VU

JAMBA

CAMBA



# Intermediate Egret

*Ardea intermedia*



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The Intermediate Egret is a large white egret, similar to the Eastern Great Egret, with a yellow-orange beak not extending past the eye. Lacy plumage hangs from its upper breasts. Its feet and legs are dark. Adult size is about 56-70cm.

**Distribution:** Northern, eastern and south-eastern Australia, sometimes visits Tasmania. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater wetlands and intertidal mudflats.

**Feeding:** Molluscs, amphibians, fish and aquatic invertebrates. It wades through shallow water and is motionless before it stabs its prey.

**Breeding:** October to February. Scanty nests of sticks are built over the water. Usually three to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Harsh 'croaks'.

FFG

EN



# Little Egret

(*Ardea garzetta*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The Little Egret is small, elegant and pure white. Its face is yellow-orange with a long black bill and black legs. Adult size is about 25-65cm.

**Distribution:** Northern, eastern and south-eastern Australia, sometimes visits Tasmania. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Tidal mudflats, saltwater and freshwater wetlands and mangroves.

**Feeding:** Aquatic macroinvertebrates, fish and amphibians. Hunts through shallow water, stirring up its prey.

**Breeding:** October to February. Scanty nests of sticks are built over the water. Usually three to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Generally quiet but makes a croaking or bubbling call, sometimes a 'harsh' alarm call.

FFG

EN



# Nankeen Night Heron

(*Nycticorax caledonicus*)



Photos Diana Womersley



Photo Vanessa Murray

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The Nankeen Night Heron is a stocky heron with a black cap and a rich brown neck, back and wings. Its underparts are white or pale. Adult size is about 55-65cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Permanent water bodies that are well vegetated with trees or shrubs close to water.

**Feeding:** Insects, crustaceans, fish, amphibians, eggs and mice. A nocturnal feeder.

**Breeding:** October to March. Nests are made of loose sticks on platforms, in trees and shrubs over water. Usually two to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A deep 'croak' when feeding; a 'quok' when in flight.

NT



# White-faced Heron

(*Ardea novaehollandiae*)



Photos Diana Womersley

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The White-faced Heron is a slender blue-grey heron with a white face. Its neck is long and slim with a pointed grey-black bill and long dull yellow legs. Adult size is about 58-66cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** A range of freshwater and saltwater habitats.

**Feeding:** Fish, aquatic invertebrates and amphibians. Walking and disturbing its prey while searching through damp crevices, it will also stand and wait in the water watching for movement.

**Breeding:** August to December. Flimsy stick platforms nests are typically built in trees and are lined with finer twigs and grass. Usually two to seven blue-greenish eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A 'graak' or 'graaw'. Can also give a 'gow, gow, gow' call and a high-pitched 'wrack' in alarm.



# White-necked Heron

(*Ardea pacifica*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Ardeidae

**Description:** The White-necked Heron's head and neck are white with a double line of black spots running down the front. Its upperparts of the body are slate-black, with plum-coloured nuptial plumes and dark grey legs. Adult size is about 76-106cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater wetlands. Can also be found in farm dams, flooded pastures, claypans and even roadside ditches.

**Feeding:** Fish, amphibians, crustaceans and insects. It will wade through shallow water or stalk prey through wet grass.

**Breeding:** September to December. Nests are usually a loose platform in a living tree such as a river red gum near or over water and can be solitary or in loose colonies. Usually four to six eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A loud 'croak'.



# Eurasian Coot

(*Fulica atra*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Eurasian Coot has a black head and neck with a dark grey body. Its legs are also dark grey and bill is white with a large frontal shield. Adult size is about 32-39cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater wetlands, lakes, swamps, reservoirs and lagoons. Also found in brackish lakes and estuaries.

**Feeding:** Aquatic plants obtained by diving underneath the water.

**Breeding:** August to February. Nests amongst reeds, logs or tree stumps surrounded by water. Usually fifteen eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A loud 'kowk'.



# Australian Spotted Crane

(*Porzana fluminea*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Australian Spotted Crane has a grey head, throat and chest, with underparts of the tail barred black and white. Adult size is about 19-23cm.

**Distribution:** South-east and the south-west of Australia. Not thought to be common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater swamps, estuaries and brackish lagoons with well vegetated edges.

**Feeding:** Seeds, molluscs and insects. Forages on the ground in mudflats or reeds.

**Breeding:** August to January. Builds cup-shaped nests that are well hidden in reeds or vegetation above the water level. Usually three to ten eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A sharp metallic call, also a high pitched 'chatter-chatter'.



# Baillon's Crake

(*Porzana pusilla*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Baillon's Crake is one of the smallest crakes. Its head, neck and upperparts of body are brown with black streaks. Its breast and throat are blue-grey, with underparts of its tail barred black and white and an olive green bill and legs. Adult size is about 15-18cm.

**Distribution:** Found in north-eastern and south-eastern Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater and saltwater, favouring marshes, lakes, swamps and wetlands.

**Feeding:** Insects, worms, small fish and plant material. It forages in mud and shallow water.

**Breeding:** August to January. Builds cup-shaped nests that are well hidden in reeds or vegetation above the water level. Nests often have a canopy constructed from reeds or other aquatic plants. Usually three to ten eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Bubbling crackling sound.

FFG

VU



# Spotless Crake

(*Porzana tabuensis*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Spotless Crake has a dark grey head and underparts with a dark brown back and wings. Underparts of the tail barred black and white; it has red eyes and legs. Adult size is about 17-20cm.

**Distribution:** South-east and the south-west of Australia. Uncommon in north central Victoria.

**Habitat:** Freshwater swamps and wetlands that are well vegetated.

**Feeding:** Aquatic plants and insects found amongst reeds and muddy areas.

**Breeding:** August to December. Nests are shallow and cup-shaped; constructed from reeds, rushes and grass. Usually three to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A single sharp 'kek'.



# Dusky Moorhen

(*Gallinula tenebrosa*)



Photo Diana Womersley



Photo Trevor Hausler

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Dusky Moorhen has grey-brown wings and a dark grey head and underparts. It has a red bill with a yellow tip and a large, red frontal shield. Underparts of its tail are white and its legs are orange. Adult size is about 34-39cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread in eastern and south-western Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Open waters such as wetlands, rivers and artificial waterways with well vegetated edges.

**Feeding:** Plants and grasses in the water and on land. Also feeds on carrion, seeds, fruit and molluscs.

**Breeding:** August to March. Nests are usually built amongst reeds or on floating platforms made of reeds and other water plants. Usually five to eighteen eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A harsh 'shriek' or sharp guttural crowing.



# Black-tailed Native Hen

(*Gallinula ventralis*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Black-tailed Native Hen has a lime green bill with an orange base and a yellow eye, the legs are red. Adult size is about 30-38cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout mainland Australia and vagrant in Tasmania. Common in the north central region.

**Feeding:** Feeds along the edges of water bodies.

**Breeding:** August to December. Prefers to build nests that are well hidden in Lignum and Cumbungi. Usually five to seven eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Usually silent.



# Purple Swamp Hen

(*Porphyrio porphyrio*)



Photos Diana Womersley

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Purple Swamp Hens upperparts and wings are black with deep purple underparts. It flicks its tail when walking, exposing a white patch of feathers underneath. It has a distinctive red bill with a large frontal shield and orange legs and feet. Adult size is about 44-48cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout eastern and northern Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater marshes, streams and swamps.

**Feeding:** Roots of reeds and rushes, also known to steal eggs and feed on frogs, snails and small ducklings. It uses its feet to clutch onto its food source when feeding.

**Breeding:** Forms small breeding groups. Nests above the water level, often amongst trampled reeds. Two broods raised in a year. Usually three to seven eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A sharp screaming 'weeah'.



# Buff-banded Rail

(*Gallirallus philippensis*)

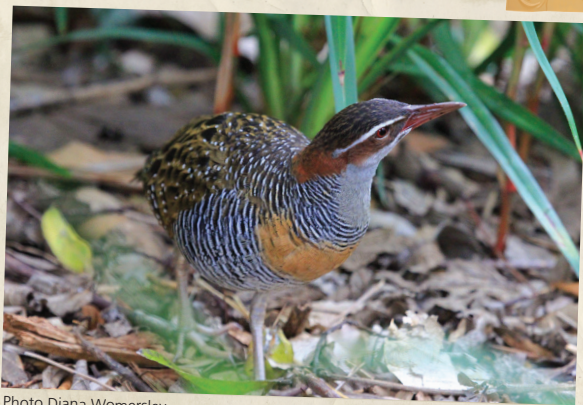


Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Buff-banded Rail has a stout body with short legs, a chestnut cap and nape and a grey throat with a white stripe above eye. Its upperparts are streaked black and brown and its underparts are barred black and white. It has a constantly flicking tail. Adult size is about 28-33cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread in mainland Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Amongst vegetation around edge of artificial and natural wetlands, crops, sewage ponds and drainage channels.

**Feeding:** Crustaceans, molluscs, insects, fruit, frogs and carrion. Prefers to feed early morning and in the evening.

**Breeding:** September to February. Builds cup-shaped nests of grass or reeds amongst dense vegetation. Usually five to eight eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Usually silent; loud 'squeak' when breeding.



# Lewin's Rail

(*Rallus pectoralis*)



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Rallidae

**Description:** The Lewin's Rail has a chestnut head and nape, with black and white barred underparts. Its upperparts are streaked black and brown, with a long, slightly curved and pinkish bill. Adult size is about 20-27cm.

**Distribution:** Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Permanent and ephemeral freshwater or saline wetlands with dense fringing vegetation

**Feeding:** Invertebrates, eggs and frogs.

**Breeding:** August to December. Nests are cup-shaped hidden amongst dense vegetation above the water line. Usually three to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Loud 'krek' in burst of 10-20 calls.

FFG

VU



# Great Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax carbo*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Phalacrocoracidae

**Description:** The Great Cormorant is very large; its body is entirely black and glossy with a white chin. Its beak is thick, yellowish and hooked. Adult size is about 70-90cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout most of Australia but is more numerous in the south-east and south-west. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Wetlands and along rivers. Occasionally found on coastal inlets and estuaries.

**Feeding:** Feeds mainly on fish or occasionally crustaceans, molluscs and amphibians. Dives under water to catch its prey.

**Breeding:** August to January. Breed in large colonies. Large nests are made of sticks in a low tree or on the ground. Usually three to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Gargling, grunts and hisses.



# Pied Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax varius*)



Photos John Barkla

**Family:** Phalacrocoracidae

**Description:** The Pied Cormorant has a black cap, nape, back and wings. The rest of its body is white, with a long grey hooked bill and webbed feet. Adult size is about 65-80cm.

**Distribution:** Throughout mainland Australia, particularly in the south. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Estuaries and harbours. Can also be found in large inland wetlands and rivers.

**Feeding:** Fish or occasionally crustaceans and molluscs. Dives underwater to catch its prey.

**Breeding:** December to June. Large nests are made of seaweed, sticks or twigs bound by droppings, either in tree or on ground. Usually one to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** 'Grunting' noise.

NT





# Little Pied Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*)



Photo Diana Womersley

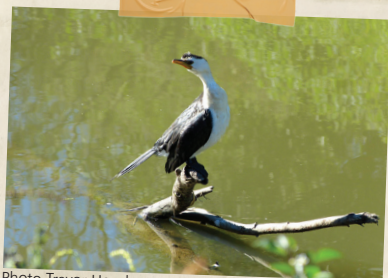


Photo Trevor Hausler

**Family:** Phalacrocoracidae

**Description:** The Little Pied Cormorant is small and has a black cap, nape, back and wings. The rest of its body is white. Its bill is short and yellow and it has webbed feet. Adult size is about 50-66cm.

**Distribution:** Throughout Australia, including Tasmania. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, rivers, inland streams and dams.

Feeding: Fish, yabbies and other crustaceans. Dives underwater to catch its prey.

**Breeding:** Usually breeds in colonies. Platform nests are built and are lined with green leaves in trees over a waterbody. Usually two to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Mutters.

# Little Black Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*)

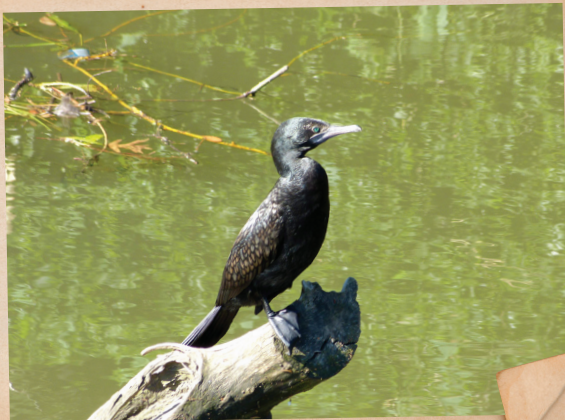


Photo Trevor Hausler

**Family:** Phalacrocoracidae

**Description:** The Little Black Cormorant is small, slender and black all over with a slight green tinge on its back. It has a slender grey hooked bill and webbed feet. Adult size is about 55-65cm.

**Distribution:** Throughout Australia, including Tasmania. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater wetlands, lakes, swamps, reservoirs and rivers. Not often observed on dry land.

**Feeding:** Fish, crustaceans and aquatic insects. Large groups dive underwater to feed; they also forage in shallow well vegetated water.

**Breeding:** Can occur all year round, depending on seasonal conditions. Builds large stick nests in tree forks over water or on the ground. Usually three to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Usually silent.





# Australasian Darter

(*Anhinga novaehollandiaea*)



Photo John Barkla



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Anhingidae

**Description:** The Australasian Darter is large and slim with a long snake-like neck and a sharp pointed bill. Males are dark brown-black with glossy upper wings; females are more grey-brown and grey-white below. Adult size is about 85-97cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, lakes, swamps, slow flowing rivers and estuaries. Prefers tree trunks, branches or stumps along the waters edge for resting and drying its wings.

**Feeding:** Fish, amphibians and aquatic invertebrates, some vegetable matter may be consumed. Uses its sharp pointed bill while diving into the water head first to catch its prey.

**Breeding:** Nests are found in trees located in the water and are made of sticks and reeds. Usually two to six eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Makes a clicking sound.



# Australian Pelican

(*Pelecanus conspicillatus*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Pelecanidae

**Description:** The Australian Pelican is mostly white with black on its wings. It has a large elongated bill with a throat pouch. Adult size is about 160-180cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater, estuarine or marine waterways including wetlands, lakes, swamps and rivers.

**Feeding:** Usually cooperate in large groups to catch and feed on fish. Their large bill and pouch acts as a net to collect fish and can hold up to 13 litres.

**Breeding:** Tends to breed in colonies. Nests are built on the ground. Usually one to three eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Grunting sound.



# Black-fronted Dotterel

(*Elseyornis melanops*)



Photo Diana Womersley



Photo Trevor Hausler

**Family:** Charadriidae

**Description:** The Black-fronted Dotterel has a black stripe through its eye, extending around its nape and chest. Its throat and underbelly are white with a light brown cap, back and wings. Its bill is red with a black tip. It also has a red eye ring and pink legs. Adult size is about 16-18cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Open water such as rivers, wetlands, marshes, lakes and sewage ponds. Prefers freshwater.

**Feeding:** Aquatic and terrestrial insects and molluscs. It bobs its head into the surface and along edges of water to forage for food.

**Breeding:** September to February. Builds a rounded nest that is usually hidden close to the water. Usually two to three eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A metallic 'tink'.



# Inland Dotterel

(*Charadrius australi*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Charadriidae

**Description:** The Inland Dotterel has a distinctive black 'Y' on its chest, extending around the back of its neck. It has a vertical black band through its eye and dark brown streaks on its head, back and wings; with a short bill and long legs. Adult size is about 19-23cm.

**Distribution:** Found in the arid zones of mainland Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Flat, open, arid habitats with sparse shrubby vegetation. Stony plains, clay pans and depressions.

**Feeding:** Seeds, leaves, spiders and insects. Uses its bill vigorously to dislodge plants.

**Breeding:** Anytime of the year, depending on rainfall. Nests are formed by scraping shallow depressions in the ground, ringed by material scraped out of the nest. Usually three eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Usually quiet, sometimes a guttural trill or 'krroot'.





# Red-kneed Dotterel

(*Elseya cinctus*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Charadriidae

**Description:** The Red-kneed Dotterel is a small, plump, stocky wader. It has a black cap which extends to its nape and chest and a white throat and underparts. Its wings and shoulders are brown and its bill red with a black tip. Adult size is about 17-19cm.

**Distribution:** Throughout mainland Australia.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, lagoons and marshes. Prefers freshwater areas that are prone to flooding.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects, larvae and seeds. It wades along shallow water edges, foraging for food in the mud.

**Breeding:** September to December. Usually two to three eggs are laid. Nest is formed by scraping a shallow depression in wet ground under vegetation.

**Voice:** A sharp double 'tet-tet'.

# Banded Lapwing

(*Vanellus tricolor*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Charadriidae

**Description:** The Banded Lapwing has a broad black breast band and white throat; it is mainly grey-brown with white underparts, a black cap and broad white eye-stripes. It has a yellow eye-ring and bill and a small red wattle over the bill. Its legs are pinkish-grey. Adult size is about 25-29cm.

**Distribution:** Endemic to Australia in the east, south and west of the mainland. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Open, short grasslands such as heavily grazed paddocks, agricultural lands and saline herblands in dry and semi-arid regions.

**Feeding:** Insects, worms, spiders and molluscs. It chases insects with short runs and darts and may eat seeds in dry times.

**Breeding:** June to November. The nest is a scrape on the ground, lined with dry grass and even sheep droppings. Usually three to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A descending pitch: 'a-chee-chee-chee'.





# Masked Lapwing

(*Vanellus miles*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Charadriidae

**Description:** The Masked Lapwing has a predominately white throat and underparts with a black cap and nape. Its wings and back are brown. It has a yellow bill and large yellow wattles covering the face. Adult size is about 33-38cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout northern, central and eastern Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Marshes, mudflats, beaches and grasslands. Also seen in urban areas.

**Feeding:** Earthworms, insects and insect larvae. Forages for food on or just below the ground surface.

**Breeding:** Anytime of the year, when conditions are suitable. Nests are formed by a simple scrape in the ground away from ground cover, generally in inappropriate locations. Usually three to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A loud 'kekekekekek'. Can be heard loudly at night.

# Double-banded Plover

(*Charadrius bicinctus*)



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Charadriidae

**Description:** The Double-banded Plover is predominately white underneath with a light brown head, back and wings. It has a black stripe through its eye and a stubby black bill. Adults are about 18-21cm.

**Distribution:** Mainly on the east coast and Tasmania during February to August. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Coastal beaches, mudflats, river banks, dunes and sewage farms.

**Feeding:** Invertebrates, molluscs, crustaceans, seeds and fruit. Forages by probing mudflats and picking food off the surface.

**Breeding:** December to August. Nests are formed by shallow scrapes in the ground, lined with stones. Usually two to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A loud 'pit', low double 'chip chip'.





# Red-capped Plover

(*Charadrius ruficapillus*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Charadriidae

**Description:** The Red-capped Plover has predominately white underparts with a distinctive red cap and light brown wings and back. It has a black line from the bill through to the eye. Adult size is about 14-16cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Inland salt lakes, clay pans, brackish pools, sheltered estuaries and salt marshes.

**Feeding:** Molluscs, small crustaceans and emergent vegetation in mudflats and edges of wetlands.

**Breeding:** July to March. Nests are formed by scraping a small hollow in the sand beside inland lakes, sheltered by vegetation. Usually three to five eggs are laid.

**Voice:** An abrupt, repeated 'tik'.

# Australasian Shoveler

(*Anas rhynchos*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Australasian Shoveler is a chestnut-brown coloured duck with a broad heavy black bill. It has a grey-blue head and a white flank with yellow eyes and orange legs. Adult size is about 44-55cm.

**Distribution:** In Western Australia it can be found from the south up to the North West Cape. In eastern Australia it can be found from Tasmania to Cairns. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Heavily vegetated wetlands, swamps, lakes, estuaries and inland waters.

**Feeding:** Insects, crustaceans and seeds. It keeps its bill below the water surface while swimming to collect and filter for food.

**Breeding:** August to December. Nests are made of grass lined with down, well hidden in vegetation. Usually nine to eleven eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A 'tuk tuk' sound.





# Australian Wood Duck

(*Chenonetta jubata*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Australian Wood Duck has a dark brown head with a grey body and black wing tips. It has a short black bill and a heavily spotted breast. Adult size is about 44-50cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Cleared landscapes, open woodlands, urban parkland lakes and open pastures.

**Feeding:** Grass, clover, other herbs and sometimes eat insects. It prefers to forage in shallow water.

**Breeding:** September to November. Nests in tree hollows above or near the water. Form monogamous breeding pairs and often use same nest site. Usually eight to ten eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Females long, loud 'gnow'. Male calls are short and higher pitched.

# Chestnut Teal

(*Anas castanea*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Chestnut Teal is a medium sized duck. Females are brown, while males have a glossy green head and a grey bill. Adult size is about 35-50cm.

**Distribution:** Found in south-western and south-eastern Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Tidal mudflats, saltwater and freshwater wetlands and mangroves. Can tolerate high salinity levels.

**Feeding:** Seeds, insects, some vegetation, molluscs and crustaceans. It forages for food on the water surface while swimming or up-ends to bottom feed.

**Breeding:** July to November. They nest in tree hollows lined with down above the water or on ground amongst grassy clumps. Usually nine to eleven eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Chuckling quacks; sharp grunts and whistles.





# Freckled Duck

(*Sticonetta naevosa*)

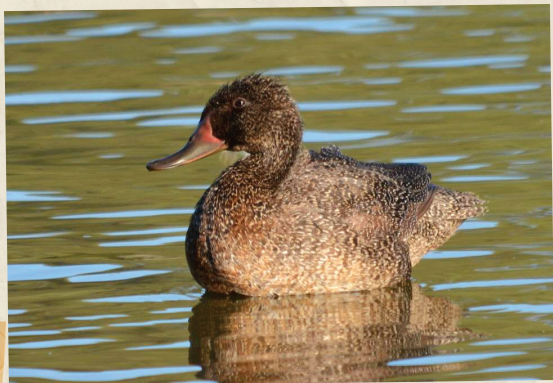


Photo Ian Mayo

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Freckled Duck is quite large; it is dark greyish-brown in colour with fine off-white speckles all over. It has a slightly upturned bill. Adult size is about 48-59cm.

**Distribution:** Primarily occurs in south-eastern and south-western Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Permanent freshwater swamps, creeks, lakes, reservoirs, farm dams and sewage ponds with heavy growth of Cumbungi, Lignum or Tea-tree.

**Feeding:** It feeds by dabbling in shallow water, often near the edge.

**Breeding:** October and December. Nests are usually located in dense vegetation at or near water level. Usually five to fourteen eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Rarely vocal

FFG

EN

# Hardhead

(*Aythya australis*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Hardhead is mainly chocolate brown, with a white undertail. Its bill is pale blue on the tip. Adult size is about 45-60cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread, endemic to Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater swamps and wetlands and occasionally in sheltered estuaries.

**Feeding:** Aquatic plants and animals, particularly mussels and freshwater shellfish. It dives for food, leaping forward and diving smoothly under the water.

**Breeding:** Variable, usually after rain. Nest are a platform of reeds, sticks and vegetation, with some down lining.

**Voice:** A distinctive whirring sound.





# Grey Teal

(*Anas gracilis*)



Photos Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Grey Teal is grey-brown with pale edged body feathers, distinctive red eyes and dark green bill. It has an off white lower face and throat. Adult size is about 40-48cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater and saline wetlands, inland rivers and urban water bodies.

**Feeding:** Dry land plants, aquatic plants, seeds, crustaceans, insects and their larvae. It may dabble and upend and feed from the bottom, or graze from the surface of the water on plant material.

**Breeding:** July to November. Utilising tree hollows, nests are lined with down. Usually eight eggs are laid.

**Voice:** The voice of the male and female are quite different. Males emit soft whistles and low, soft grunts whilst females make a loud series of descending quacks.

# Pacific Black Duck

(*Anas superciliosa*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Pacific Black Duck has a distinct head pattern; a cream face divided by a black crown, dark line through the eye and a black chin stripe. Its legs are olive green. Adult size is about 50-60cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout most of Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, dams and urban parks as well as natural waterways.

**Feeding:** Feeding on aquatic vegetation, small crustaceans, molluscs and aquatic insects. Plunges its head and neck underwater and upends, raising its rear end vertically out of the water.

**Breeding:** Breeding can depend largely on the availability of sufficient food, water and nesting sites. Nests can be found in concealed areas.

**Voice:** Males make a quick, loud 'rhaab-rhabb' whilst females make a more typical loud duck quack; a strong descending 'quaak, quaak, quak, quak, quak-quakquak'.





# Plumed Whistling Duck

(*Dendrocygna eytoni*)



Photos Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Plumed Whistling Duck is tall with a long neck. Its face and fore neck are pale, with a darker crown and brown-grey edged buff upper back feathers. Its breast is pale chestnut and finely barred in black whilst its bill is mottled pink and grey and legs and feet are pink. Adult size is about 40-60cm.

**Distribution:** Found in the northern and eastern tropics of Australia, extending southwards to New South Wales. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Grasslands nearby to lakes, dams, river and swamps.

**Feeding:** Grazes at night along the edges of wetlands and in open plains.

**Breeding:** Usually during tropical wet season. Flattened nests of grass are built on the ground amongst wetland vegetation. Usually eight to fourteen eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A shrill whistling sounded as a single sharp note.

# Australian Shelduck

(*Tadorna tadornoides*)

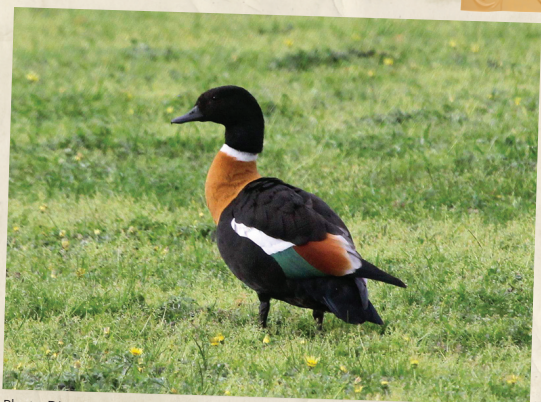


Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Australian Shelduck is a brightly coloured, large duck with a small head and bill. It has a black head and a light green neck with a white collar, a grey bill and grey legs. Adult size is about 56-72cm.

**Distribution:** Found in south-western and south-eastern parts of Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Fresh, brackish or saline waters. Swims frequently in the water but relies on terrestrial habitats to graze on pasture.

**Feeding:** Grazes green grass on land and in pastures and sometimes feeds in shallow water, eating algae, insects and molluscs.

**Breeding:** July to December. Nests usually in a large tree hollow, well lined with down.

**Voice:** A loud, harsh, nasal 'grunt' or 'honk', often in flight.





# Pink-eared Duck

(*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Pink-eared Duck is a small brown duck with white barred dark brown underparts. It has a large brown eye patch on a white finely barred face and a small pink patch behind the eye. It has a huge square-tipped grey bill. Adult size is about 36-45cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Timbered areas near water. It prefers shallow, temporary waters. However, open wetlands support large flocks.

**Feeding:** It has a highly specialised bill used to filter out the microscopic plants and animals which make up the bulk of its diet, feeding in shallow warmish waters.

**Breeding:** Usually after rain. Nests are a rounded mass of down placed in a hollow or on a stump. Likes to take over nests built by other birds. Usually five to eight eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A musical 'chirruping'.

# Blue-billed Duck

*Oxyua australis*



Photos John Barkla

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Blue-billed Duck has a large, scooped, bright light blue bill with chestnut plumage. Its head is dark and upper neck orange to brown. Its tail is black and its chin and throat speckled black. Adult size is about 35-44cm.

**Distribution:** Endemic to Australia, found mostly in the south-east and south-west parts. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Large, deep open freshwater dams and lakes and some rivers.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects, seeds, buds and fruit. Feeds from the water's surface or by diving.

**Breeding:** August to November. Nests are constructed in Cumbungi beds or other vegetation, generally over water from dead *Typha* leaves and can be lined with down. Usually four to six eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Unknown

FFG





# Musk Duck

(*Biziura lobata*)



Photos Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Musk Duck is sooty-brown in plumage, with paler brown barring on the body and fine spots on its head, becoming whiter towards the abdomen. Males are decorated with a large bulbous lobe of skin hanging under the bill, which is dark grey. Adult size is about 47-73cm.

**Distribution:** North-west Western Australia, through the south and east to southern Queensland. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Deep freshwater lagoons, with dense reed beds.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects, crustaceans, snails, shellfish, fish, frogs, ducklings and seeds of aquatic plants. They are excellent divers and search underwater for the majority of their food.

**Breeding:** September to December. Nests are a large cup of trampled vegetation, loosely lined with fine grasses and feathers, and is hidden in dense reeds. Usually two to three eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Usually silent. During mating display the male makes a rumbling grunt followed immediately by a shrill whistle.

VU

# Black-tailed Godwit

(*Limosa limosa*)



Photos John Barkla

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Black-tailed Godwit has a dark grey back with a white eyebrow and dark crown. It has a dull white belly and undertail and a long, slightly upturned pink bill with a black tip. Adult size is about 40-44cm.

**Distribution:** Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Can be seen on shorelines, river edges and in freshwater or saline wetlands.

**Feeding:** Feeding mostly on aquatic invertebrates, worms and crustaceans. They wade in water or probe the mud with their bills for food.

**Breeding:** Breeding occurs from mid-May to mid-June.

**Voice:** Produces a characteristic 'weeka-weeka-weeka' call.

VU

JAMBA

CAMBA





# Bar-tailed Godwit

(*Limosa lapponica*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Bar-tailed Godwit has a long neck, brown and buff-tipped feathers, appearing mottled. It has a long, slightly upturned bill and a white tail barred with brown. Adult size is about 37-39cm.

**Distribution:** Appears mostly north-west and moves around the coast of Australia from August to April. Uncommon in north central region.

**Habitat:** Estuarine mudflats, beaches and mangroves.

**Feeding:** Molluscs, worms and aquatic insects. Wades through shallows or over exposed mud and probes its long bill rapidly into the bottom to find food.

**Breeding:** Breeding takes place each year in Scandinavia, northern Asia and Alaska.

**Voice:** Calls include a rapid "tititi" and a sharp "kuwit" in alarm.

JAMBA

CAMBA

# Common Greenshank

(*Tringa nebularia*)



Photo John Barkla



Photo Ian Mayo

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Common Greenshank is grey-brown above and pale below with a head and neck flecked with dark grey. Its bill is dark to green-grey and long with a slight upward curve; its legs are long and yellowish-green. Adult size is about 30-35cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout Australia in the summer. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Estuaries and mudflats, mangrove swamps, lagoons, billabongs, swamps, sewage farms and flooded crops.

**Feeding:** Insects, worms, molluscs, small fish and crustaceans. Picking from the surface, probing, sweeping and lunging at the edges of mudflats or shallows.

**Breeding:** Breeding takes place from April to August after migration north to the Palaearctic region.

**Voice:** Clear ringing 'tchu - tchu-tchu' call.

VU

JAMBA

CAMBA





# Ruff

(*Philomachus pugnax*)



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Ruff has a small head that is grey up above and white underneath, with scalloped feathers on its back. Its throat and chest have light grey blotches and its bill is slightly turned down and long. Adult size is about 20-32cm.

**Distribution:** Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Found in muddy shorelines, saline and freshwater habitats.

**Feeding:** Forages in wet grassland and soft mud, probing or searching by sight for insects but will also consume plant material.

**Breeding:** The female usually has one brood per year in the Northern Hemisphere. A ground nesting bird, four eggs are laid in a well-hidden ground nest.

**Voice:** Usually silent

# Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

(*Calidris acuminata*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Sharp-tailed Sandpiper has reddish brown upperparts; each feather having a black centre. Its nape and crown are chestnut and eyebrow is white. It has a straight black bill with an olive-grey base and olive legs. Adult size is about 18-24cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Grassy edges of shallow inland freshwater wetlands.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects and their larvae as well as worms, molluscs, crustaceans and sometimes seeds. Wades and forages shallow waters.

**Breeding:** Breeding occurs in Siberia during June to August. Its nest is a well-hidden shallow hollow on the ground, lined with grass and leaves.

**Voice:** Dry 'wit-wit' as well as crackling warbles and musical twitterings.

JAMBA

CAMBA





# Curlew Sandpiper

(*Calidris ferruginea*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Curlew Sandpiper is grey-brown above and white below, with a white wing bar visible in flight. It has a long, black bill with a down-curved end and black legs and feet. Adult size is about 18-23cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread summer migrant to Australia.

**Habitat:** Shallow brackish or saline wetlands, saltmarshes, and sewage ponds.

**Feeding:** Insects and their larvae when breeding. Otherwise, it feeds on small marine invertebrates, especially polychaete worms.

**Breeding:** Breeding occurs in Siberian and Alaskan summer. The nest is a shallow depression on a ridge in the lowlands. Usually three to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Rippling contact call: 'chirrip, chirrip, chirrip'.

EN

JAMBA

CAMBA

# Pectoral Sandpiper

(*Calidris melanotos*)



Photos John Barkla

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Pectoral Sandpiper has dark streaking above with a white belly below; it has a white patch on either side of its tail. Its bill is long and slightly down-curved. Adult size is about 19-24cm.

**Distribution:** Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Can be seen in grassy or lightly vegetated coastal and inland swamps.

**Feeding:** Mostly on aquatic plants and insects. Probes the edges of wetlands.

**Breeding:** Unknown

**Voice:** A harsh 'crick'.

NT

JAMBA





# Marsh Sandpiper

(*Tringa stagnatilis*)



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Marsh Sandpiper is light greyish brown, with a pattern of diffuse small brownish spots on the breast and neck. It has a long fine bill and long yellowish legs. Adult size is about 22–26cm.

**Distribution:** Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater wetlands, swamps and lakes.

**Feeding:** Insects and small prey. It forages by probing in shallow water or wet mud.

**Breeding:** Migrates to the easternmost Europe to central Asia.

**Voice:** Unknown.

VU

JAMBA

# Common Sandpiper

(*Tringa hypoleucos*)



Photo Albert Wright



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Common Sandpiper is a small wader with a rather long body and short legs. It is grey-brown above with white below, extending up in a pointed shape between the wing and the dark breast band. Its bill is dark grey with yellow at the base and its legs vary from greyish-olive to a yellowish-brown.

**Distribution:** Mainly found in the north and west of Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Coastal or inland wetlands, both saline or freshwater. Found mainly on muddy edges or rocky shores.

**Feeding:** Molluscs, aquatic and terrestrial insects. It is a very active bird and will follow prey over rocks. Also known to swim under water.

**Breeding:** Migrates to easternmost Europe and Asia. Nests can vary from an open shallow nest to a complex nest filled with leaves and grass, often hidden in thick vegetation.

**Voice:** Fine 'squeaks'.

VU

JAMBA

CAMBA





# Wood Sandpiper

(*Tringia glareola*)



Photos John Barkla

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Wood Sandpiper is small and slim; it is dark grey-brown above with light flecks or spots and a white underbelly. It has a distinct white brow line and its legs are yellow-green. Adult size is about 20-23cm.

**Distribution:** More common in the north than the south of Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Inland shallow freshwater wetlands, ponds and pools with emergent reeds and grass, surrounded by tall plants or dead trees and fallen timber.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects and their larvae and molluscs in moist or dry mud. They high-step daintily through shallow water, probing in mud or picking at the surface. Also feed by sweeping their bill from side to side under water.

**Breeding:** Migrates to Siberia from April to August. Nests are found in shallow depressions lined with grass and leaves.

**Voice:** Loud metallic 'chif chif'.

VU

JAMBA

# Latham's Snipe

(*Gallinago hardwickii*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Latham's Snipe has cryptic plumage; brown feathers lined with pale edges and a bold narrow dark brown cheek stripe with a dark line through the eye. Its bill is long and straight. Adult size is about 29-33cm.

**Distribution:** Common in south east of Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, in sedges, grasses, Lignum, reeds and rushes.

**Feeding:** Seeds, plant material, worms, spiders and insects, some molluscs, isopods and centipedes. Thrusts its long bill in to the mud with an up and down 'sewing machine' action in soft mudflats or shallow water.

**Breeding:** Migrate to Japan and on the East Asian mainland from February to September. Nests are found in shallow depressions lined with grasses and leaves.

**Voice:** A rasping 'shek'.

NT

JAMBA

CAMBA





# Australian Painted Snipe

(*Rostratula benghalensis*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Painted Snipe has a golden rufous neck and shoulders with a white belly extending into a band over the shoulder and down the back. It has a long slight downturned pinkish bill. Adult size is about 24-30cm.

**Distribution:** Is endemic to Australia, possible migration is between Northern and Southern Australia.

**Habitat:** Wetlands of tropical and subtropical lowlands, such as swamps, overgrown rice fields, freshwater lakes and mangroves.

**Feeding:** Invertebrates, snails and earthworms, seeds, rice and a variety of grasses. It probes its long bill into soft mud or by searching underwater, making side to side head movements.

**Breeding:** Breeding occurs during March to November. Its nest is a shallow cup lined with stems and leaves and often built up with interwoven plant material. Usually two to three eggs are laid.

**Song:** 'Booming' when in display; when threatened 'buzzes'.

FFG

CE

VU

# Long-toed Stint

(*Calidris subminuta*)



Photo Ian Mayo



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Long-toed Stint is a tiny wader. It has a streaked chestnut cap with a white brow, a slightly down turned, fine bill and long greenish-yellow toes. Adult size is about 13-16cm.

**Distribution:** Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Mostly coastal areas and inland swamps.

**Feeding:** Feeds in shallow water, foraging through mud flats.

**Breeding:** Currently under research.

**Song:** Rapid ringing 'chre-chre'.

NT

JAMBA

CAMBA





# Red-necked Stint

(*Calidris ruficolis*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Scolopacidae

**Description:** The Red-necked Stint is very small, with a red neck and back feathers that are black with chestnut edges. Its head, front of neck and breast are pinkish with a short dark bill. Adult size is about 13-16cm.

**Distribution:** Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Saline wetlands and lakes and along coastal and estuarine shores.

**Feeding:** Forages through mud flats along the waters edge.

**Breeding:** Currently under research.

**Song:** High trill 'chit chit'.

JAMBA

CAMBA

# Australasian Grebe

(*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*)

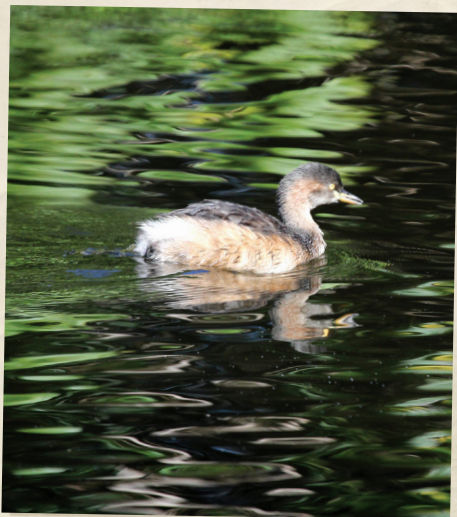


Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Podicipedidae

**Description:** The Australasian Grebe's plumage is dark grey-brown above and mostly silver-grey below, with a white oval patch of bare skin at the base of the bill. Adult size is about 25-27cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater ponds or small waterways.

**Feeding:** Fish and aquatic invertebrates. Its prey can be caught during deep underwater dives, sometimes taken from the surface.

**Breeding:** September to January. Nests are generally a floating mound of vegetation, normally anchored to a submerged branch or reed. Usually four to five pale blue eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Rapid trills 'pit' or carrying duet of 'chittering'.





# Hoary-headed Grebe

(*Polioceohalus poliocephalus*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Podicipedidae

**Description:** The Hoary-headed Grebe is small and stocky, with darkish grey and white plumage and white streaks over its entire head. It has a narrow black streak down the nape of its neck and a dark crown extending below its eye. Adult size is about 29-30cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Large open waters, which may be estuarine, brackish or freshwater.

**Feeding:** Aquatic arthropods. Catches its prey by deep diving.

**Breeding:** October to January. Nests are constructed amongst floating water weeds and are loosely attached to submergents, sedges or fallen branches. Usually three to six eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Usually silent, occasionally makes a guttural soft 'churring' sound.

# Great Crested Grebe

(*Podiceps cristatus*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Podicipedidae

**Description:** The Great Crested Grebe is a large grebe, with a long neck and head. It has a distinctive double crest and a white face. Its wings are dark with satin white underparts, its crown black and feet dark olive- green. Adult size is about 48-61cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Large deep open bodies of freshwater including lagoons, lakes, swamps, reservoirs, estuaries and bays.

**Feeding:** Fish, insects and aquatic invertebrate. When diving underwater to catch its prey, it is propelled by its feet alone.

**Breeding:** August to September. Nests are constructed from a mass of dead water-plants, weeds and mud and can be found on or near the vegetated margins of large open waters. Usually five to seven eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A guttural 'karr-arr', a shrill 'er-wick'.





# Black Swan

(*Cygnus atratus*)

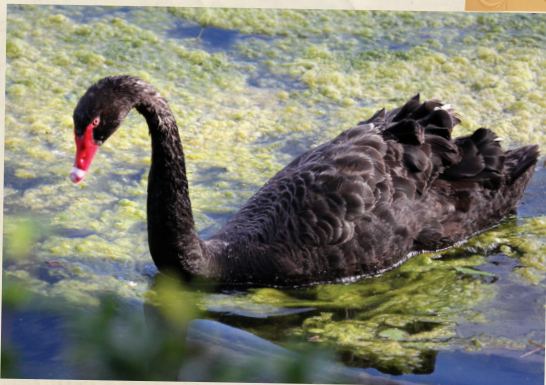


Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anatidae

**Description:** The Black Swan is black with red eyes and a red beak tipped with yellow-white. It has distinctive white wing tips when in flight. Adult size is about 120-142cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout Australia, is more common to the south. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Shallow water with aquatic vegetation ranging from urban parklands to estuaries and flooded pastures.

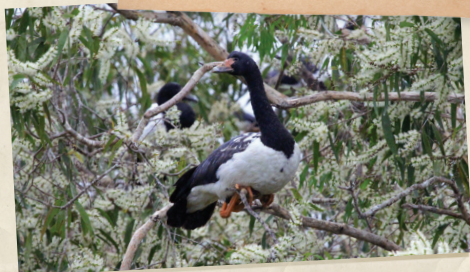
**Feeding:** Algae and weeds obtained by plunging its long neck into water up to one metre. Occasionally will graze on land, but considered to be a clumsy walker.

**Breeding:** June to September. Nests are large piles of grasses and reeds. Usually up to ten eggs can be laid.

**Song:** Bugling or trumpeting calls; hisses when defending nest or young.

# Magpie Goose

(*Anseranas semipalmata*)



Photos Diana Womersley

**Family:** Anseranatidae

**Description:** The Magpie Goose has a black neck and head, with a characteristic knob on the crown. Its underparts are white, with contrasting black edges on the underwing. Its bill, legs and feet are orange. Adult size is about 71-89cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread throughout coastal northern and eastern Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Floodplains and grasslands.

**Feeding:** Aquatic vegetation obtained by plunging its long neck into water up to one metre. Occasionally grazes on land but considered to be a clumsy walker.

**Breeding:** February to June. Nests usually consist of a simple unlined cup placed either in a floating platform of trampled reeds or built in tree-tops. Usually eight to sixteen eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Unknown.

FFG

NT





# Silver Gull

(*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Laridae

**Description:** The Silver Gull has a white head, tail and underparts, with a light grey back and black-tipped wings. Its bill, legs and eye-ring are bright orange-red. Adult size is about 40-45cm.

**Distribution:** Common throughout Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Watered areas, rarely seen far from land.

**Feeding:** Worms, fish, insects and crustaceans. A successful scavenger.

**Breeding:** August to November. Nests are shallow scrapes, lined with vegetation. Usually three eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A harsh 'squawk'.

# Gull-billed Tern

(*Sterna nilotica*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Laridae

**Description:** The Gull-billed Tern's upperparts are whitish-grey and underparts white. Its legs are black and bill black, short and thick. Adult size is about 35-38cm.

**Distribution:** Common and widespread in south-eastern Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Tidal flats, shallow lakes, and flooded fields and crops.

**Feeding:** Feeds on insects as it flies over shallow water, plucking its prey without landing.

**Breeding:** Currently under research.

**Song:** Usually quiet. When breeding can give a 'crarck' call.

FFG

EN





# Whiskered Tern

(*Chlidonias hybridus*)



Photo Albert Wright

**Family:** Laridae

**Description:** The Whiskered Tern has a black cap and white cheeks. It is pearl-grey above with a light chin that fades to a black belly and a dark bill. Adult size is about 23-25cm.

**Distribution:** Scattered in most regions of the mainland Australia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Usually found near freshwater wetlands with emergent vegetation and flooded salt marshes.

**Feeding:** Feeds on insects as it flies over shallow water, plucking its prey without landing.

**Breeding:** Currently under research.

**Song:** Harsh shrieks.

# Caspian Tern

(*Hydroprogne caspia*)



Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Laridae

**Description:** The Caspian Tern is finely streaked white with a black crown from the bill to the nape. It has a short, shaggy black crest and a red bill with a dusky tip. Adult size is about 47-54cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout Australasia. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Wetlands, on coastal and interior beaches and sheltered estuaries.

**Feeding:** Fish usually caught by shallow plunging; hovering above the water with its bill pointing down, before folding wings in and diving, fully submerged, to quickly re-emerge.

**Breeding:** October to December. Its nest is a deep scrape, usually unlined, but occasionally sparsely ringed with debris or scraps of local vegetation such as saltbush. Usually one to three eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A sharp harsh 'kraak'.

FFG

NT

JAMBA

CAMBA





# Australian White Ibis

(*Threskiornis molucca*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Threskiornithidae

**Description:** The Australian White Ibis has an almost entirely white body plumage; its head and neck are black and head featherless. Its black bill is long and down-curved; it has a tuft of cream plumes on the base of the neck. Adult size is about 69-76cm.

**Distribution:** Widespread in northern and eastern Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Swamps, lagoons, floodplains and grasslands. Can be seen inhabiting urban parks and gardens.

**Feeding:** Terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates as well as human scraps. It finds its prey by digging with its long bill. Mussels are opened by hammering them on a hard surface.

**Breeding:** Nests in group in trees and bushes.

**Voice:** A deep guttural 'squark'.

# Glossy Ibis

(*Plegadis falcinellus*)

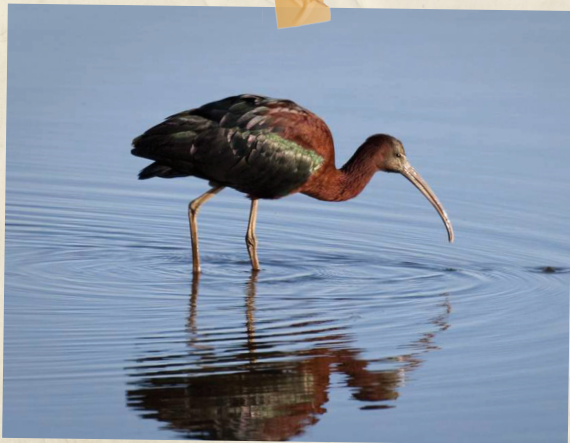


Photo John Barkla

**Family:** Threskiornithidae

**Description:** The Glossy Ibis has a reddish-brown neck; its body is bronze-brown with a metallic iridescent sheen on the wings. Its distinctive long, curved bill is olive-brown and legs are brown. Adult size is about 48-61cm

**Distribution:** Common throughout mainland Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Shallow water and mudflats, well-vegetated wetlands, floodplains and mangroves.

**Feeding:** Frogs, snails, aquatic insects and spiders. It catches its prey by probing the water and mud with its long, curved bill.

**Breeding:** September to April. Builds a platform nest of sticks, usually with a lining of aquatic plants, between the upright branches of trees or shrubs growing in water. Usually three to six eggs are laid.

**Song:** A croaking call.

NT

CAMBA





# Straw-necked Ibis

(*Threskiornis spinicolis*)



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Threskiornithidae

**Description:** A large bird with a black, featherless head. It has a long downward curved black bill and yellow throat plumes; a glossy blue-black back with a metallic purple, green and bronze sheen and a white nape, sides of neck and underparts. Adult size is about 59-76cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout mainland Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Dry grasslands, pastures, croplands and swamp or lagoon margins.

**Feeding:** Terrestrial invertebrates, frogs, small reptiles and mammals. Forages by probing or takes prey from the surface of water bodies.

**Breeding:** August to January. Low nests are large trampled platforms of reeds, rushes and sticks over water, often blending together to form one continuous platform. Usually two to five eggs are laid.

**Song:** A deep guttural 'squark', similar to the Australian White Ibis.

# Yellow Billed-spoonbill

(*Platalea flavipes*)



Photo Vanessa Murray



Photo Diana Womersley

**Family:** Threskiornithidae

**Description:** The Yellow Spoonbill has a white body, a yellow face and spoon-shaped bill and yellow legs and feet. Its lacy outer wing plumes are tipped black with long hackles on its upper breast. Adult size is about 76-91 cm.

**Distribution:** Found across Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater wetlands, dams, lagoons, swamps and sometimes dry pastures.

**Feeding:** Aquatic insects and their larvae. Uses its bill to sweep for prey even in murky water. Can feed by day or night.

**Breeding:** July to November. Places its nest in high forks of trees over water, or in among reed beds, building a shallow, unlined platform of sticks, rushes and reeds. Usually two to four eggs are laid.

**Song:** Some feeble grunting and bill-clapping.





# Royal Spoonbill

(*Platalea regia*)



Photo Danielle J Beischer

**Family:** Threskiornithidae

**Description:** The Royal Spoonbill has a large white body with a black spoon-shaped bill and face, legs and feet. Breeding adults have a creamy-yellow wash across the lower neck and upper breast. Adult size is about 74-81cm.

**Distribution:** Found throughout eastern and northern mainland Australia. Common in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Freshwater and saltwater wetlands, intertidal mud flats and wet grasslands. Artificial wetlands such as sewage lagoons, saltfields, dams and reservoirs.

**Feeding:** Fish and shrimps, crustaceans and aquatic insects. The structure of its bill limits it to feeding in water less than 40cm over sand, mud or clay, where it can sweep the water.

**Breeding:** October to March. A solid bowl-shaped nest is built of sticks and twigs, lined with leaves and water plants and usually placed in the crown of a tree over water or among high reeds and rushes. Usually two to four eggs are laid.

**Voice:** Grunts, growls and soft honks.

FFG

NT

# Brolga

(*Grus rubicunda*)



Photo Diana Womersley



Photo Nick Layne

**Family:** Threskiornithidae

**Description:** The Brolga is grey with a featherless red head and grey crown. Its legs are grey and there is a black dewlap under its chin. Adult size is about 100-125 cm.

**Distribution:** Found across tropical northern Australia, southwards through north-east and east central areas, as well as central New South Wales to western Victoria. Uncommon in the north central region.

**Habitat:** Open wetlands, grassy plains, coastal mudflats and irrigated croplands.

**Feeding:** Tubers and crops, insects, molluscs, amphibians and even mice.

**Breeding:** September to December. Its nest is a large mound of vegetation on a small island in a shallow waterway or swamp. Usually two eggs are laid.

**Voice:** A loud trumpeting 'garooo' or 'kaweee-kreee-kurr-kurr-kurr-kurr-kurr-kurr'.

FFG

VU





# Glossary

**Bar:** A fine traverse mark on a group of feathers or across the body of a bird.

**Class:** The division of classification in to which is placed the whole of a significant group of organisms.

**Critically endangered:** When the best available evidence indicates a species is considered to be facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild.

**Crustaceans:** Diverse group of animals with jointed limbs and a hard external skeleton, characterised by the possession of two pairs of antennae, one pair of mandibles (mouthparts used for handling and processing food) and two pairs of maxillae (appendages used in eating, which are located behind the mandibles). Includes crabs, lobsters, shrimps, woodlice and barnacles.

**Cryptic:** Has protective colouring or camouflage.

**Data deficient:** When there is inadequate information to make a direct, or indirect, assessment of a species' risk of extinction based on its distribution and/or population status.

**Endangered:** When the best available evidence indicates that a species considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

**Endemic:** Native to a particular or defined area, and breeding only there.

**Extinct:** When there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual of a species has died.

**Extinct in the wild:** When a species is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalized population (or populations) well outside the past range.

**Family:** The division of classification into which the order is divided and which has gone one or more genera.

**Gape:** The fleshy corner of the beak.

**Genus:** The division of classification into which a family is divided and which has one or more species.

**Incubation:** The act of incubating eggs; that is, keeping them warm so that development is possible.

**Invertebrates:** Animals with no backbone, such as insects, crustaceans, worms, molluscs, spiders, cnidarians (jellyfish, corals, sea anemones) and echinoderms.

**Mandible:** In birds, the lower jaw and beak, but the term is also used to denote the two parts of the beak.

**Mask:** Area that encloses the eyes and part of the face.

**Migratory:** Of regular geographical movement.

**Nape:** The back of the birds neck.

**Near threatened:** A species is near threatened when it but does not qualify as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable now, but is close to qualifying for, or is likely to qualify for, a threatened category in the near future.

**Order:** The division of classification into which a class is divided and which has one or more families.

**Plumage:** Entire layer of feathers and down covering a bird's body. ➤

**Plume:** An ornamental feather that is usually long and conspicuous, and is used by a bird for display.

**Regionally extinct:** As for extinct but within a defined region (in this case the state of Victoria) that does not encompass the entire geographic range of the taxon.

**Species:** The division of classification into which a genus is divided, the members of which can interbreed among themselves.

**Subspecies:** A population usually restricted to a geographical area that differs from other populations of the same species, but not to the extent of being classified as a separate species.

**Underparts:** chin, throat, breast, belly, underwing, flank, vent and undertail coverts, and undertail.

**Upperparts:** Frons, lores, face, crown, nape, mantle, back, upperwing, rump, base of tail, upper tail.

**Vagrant:** An individual found outside the normal range of the species.

**Vulnerable:** When the best available evidence indicates that a species is considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.

## References & Recommended Reading

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## Website References

Arkive – Discover the world's most endangered species: [www.arkive.org](http://www.arkive.org)

Australian Government, Department of the Environment:  
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Birds in Backyards: [www.birdsinbackyards.net](http://www.birdsinbackyards.net)

BirdLife Australia: [www.birdlife.org.au](http://www.birdlife.org.au)

Department of Environment and Primary Industries: [www.depi.vic.gov.au](http://www.depi.vic.gov.au)

North Central Catchment Management Authority: [www.nccma.vic.gov.au](http://www.nccma.vic.gov.au)



Photo Diana Womersley





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