



## SAVING OUR SPECIES

# Terek Sandpiper

2019-2020 annual report card

### Summary

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Management sites</b>      | Hunter Estuary and Port Stephens;<br>Shoalhaven Estuary   |
| <b>Action implementation</b> | 6 (of 6) management actions were fully or partially implemented as planned for the financial year.                                |
| <b>Total expenditure</b>     | \$20,976 (\$10,388 cash; \$10,588 in-kind)  |
| <b>Partners</b>              | Environment, Energy and Science; Hunter Bird Observers Club; Hunter Local Land Services; MidCoast Council; South Coast Shorebirds |



**Scientific name:**  
*Xenus cinereus*

**NSW status:**  
Vulnerable

**Commonwealth status:**  
Not listed

**Management stream:**  
Partnership (range-restricted)

Photo: Lachlan Copeland

# Priority management site: Hunter Estuary and Port Stephens





## Local government area:

Lake Macquarie; Maitland; Mid-Coast; Newcastle; Port Stephens

## Partners:

Environment, Energy and Science; Hunter Bird Observers Club; Hunter Local Land Services; MidCoast Council

## Population outcome

-  **On track**
-  **On track (inferred)**
-  **Not on track (inferred)**
-  **Not on track**

## Monitoring

*Species population monitoring by one or more methods indicates response to management over time and provides an outcome measure.*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Monitoring metric</b>                      | Species abundance   |
| <b>Annual target</b>                          | Monitoring shows population numbers are on par with the last decade trends for the site (six to 33 individuals)   |
| <b>Long term target</b>                       | To maintain stable or increasing populations of the species across the site   |
| <b>Monitoring result</b>                      | Compared to the 600 birds recorded in the 1970s, this species is nowadays present in low numbers at this site with only a maximum of six birds observed in 2018-19 and 2019-2020. |
| <b>Scientific rigour of monitoring method</b> | High  |
| <b>Conducted by</b>                           | Environment, Energy and Science   |

## Investment

| Participant                     | Cash    | In-kind |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Environment, Energy and Science | \$2,092 | \$2,361 |
| Hunter Bird Observers Club      | \$0     | \$874   |
| Hunter Local Land Services      | \$6,949 | \$760   |
| MidCoast Council                | \$0     | \$291   |

## Management actions

The following actions are those identified as being required in financial year 2019-2020 to secure the species in the wild.

| Threat   | Management action  | Implemented as planned?  |
|--|--|--|
| Human disturbance at roosting and foraging sites (e.g. walking, fishing, pets, boating). | Hunter Local Land Services plan to install interpretive shorebird identification signs at key visitor locations in the Hunter Estuary and Port Stephens areas.   | Yes  |
| Human disturbance at roosting and foraging sites (e.g. walking, fishing, pets, boating). | Deliver National Parks and Wildlife Service Discovery Ranger environmental education presentations on migratory and beach-nesting shorebirds to caravan parks and schools in the Port Stephens area. Hunter Region Landcare Network to develop educational resources for school aged children. | Partial implementation (logistical delays).  |
| Mangrove incursion into saltmarsh habitat.   | Clear 2.5 ha of mangroves under license and re-establish migratory shorebird habitat on Spit 2 Kooragang dykes, recently renamed Curlew Point.   | Partial implementation - It was decided to stagger the removal of mangroves over two seasons instead of removing all 2.5 ha in one go. This year, 1.5 ha were removed, the remaining area to be removed next year. |

## Threat outcome

Assessment on the status of critical threats at this site.

| Threat   | Annual target  | Threat status |
|--|--|---------------|
| Mangrove incursion into saltmarsh habitat.   | No adult or seedling mangroves within cleared area.                                | On track      |
| Human disturbance at roosting and foraging sites (e.g. walking, fishing, pets, boating). | Minimal disturbance from human and dog interference at key roost and forage sites. | Not assessed  |
| Habitat loss from erosion, climate change inundation and sea-level rise.                 | Maintain or reduce level of threat.  | Not assessed  |
| Groundwater pollution impacting foraging habitat and resources.                          | Maintain or reduce level of threat.  | Not assessed  |
| Habitat loss due to development.   | Maintain or reduce level of threat.  | Not assessed  |

## Site summary

The Hunter Estuary and Port Stephens site is a large area comprised of multiple important sites for migratory shorebirds.

Hunter Local Land Services (HLLS) are delivering a \$1.8 million program over four years (starting 2019-2020) for migratory and beach-nesting shorebirds and their habitats across the Port Stephens, Hunter Estuary and Manning Estuary, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program (NLP2). It is beyond the scope of SoS to report on the entirety of the HLLS program, but we have attempted to capture and acknowledge the value of some key interventions which contribute to SoS action targets.

This year, HLLS and BirdLife Australia have worked with key stakeholders and land managers, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), to develop a Migratory Shorebirds Site Action Plan (SAP) for this site. Actions from the SAP will inform conservation action in coming years.

Some of the key threats to migratory shorebirds in Australia are disturbance from recreational visitors, vehicles and dogs. Through NLP2 funding, HLLS are also supporting various community engagement actions to inform the public about these species, their threats and what we can do to reduce our impact on them. For example, shorebird identification signs were installed by MidCoast Council and Hunter Local Land Services at 13 key visitor nodes in Port Stephens, and three more at similar sites on Ash Island in the Hunter Estuary. The signs will help educate the public on the impacts of disturbance to migratory shorebirds and how to avoid disturbing them while feeding or roosting. NPWS Discovery Rangers also held presentations on migratory and beach-nesting shorebirds in Port Stephens caravan parks and schools to raise awareness about migratory shorebirds and their threats. HLLS are also supporting the Hunter Region Landcare Network to develop educational resources for school age children and deliver community engagement activities.

Also through NLP2 funding, HLLS are working with the University of Newcastle to research movement patterns of migratory shorebirds and build knowledge of key habitat areas to better inform future management.

The Hunter Bird Observers Group has continued their monthly annual monitoring of migratory shorebirds at known roosting and foraging habitat across the site.

At Curlew Spit on Kooragang Island, stage one of planned habitat restoration for migratory shorebirds has been completed. Drone photos were taken of the site before and after stage one of mangrove removal. On-ground photo monitoring points have also been established.

# Priority management site: Shoalhaven Estuary





## Local government area:

Goulburn Mulwaree;  
Shoalhaven

## Partners:

Environment, Energy and  
Science; South Coast  
Shorebirds

## Population outcome

-  On track
-  **On track (inferred)**
-  Not on track (inferred)
-  Not on track

The species population is inferred to be on track based on threat management being on track. The population trend is unknown at this time.

## Monitoring

*Species population monitoring by one or more methods indicates response to management over time and provides an outcome measure.*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Monitoring metric</b>                      | Species abundance   |
| <b>Annual target</b>                          | Collate Birdlife and Australasian Wader Study Group data to establish project commencement baseline.          |
| <b>Long term target</b>                       | To monitor population status of the species to inform management actions.                                     |
| <b>Monitoring result</b>                      | There is no access to quantitative monitoring data for this reporting period. Data to be collated in 2020-21. |
| <b>Scientific rigour of monitoring method</b> | Not applicable  |
| <b>Conducted by</b>                           | Environment, Energy and Science   |

## Investment

| Participant                     | Cash    | In-kind |
|---------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Environment, Energy and Science | \$1,347 | \$3,802 |
| South Coast Shorebirds          | \$0     | \$2,502 |

## Management actions

The following actions are those identified as being required in financial year 2019-2020 to secure the species in the wild.

| Threat   | Management action  | Implemented as planned?   |
|--|--|---|
| Habitat loss due to development.   | Presentation to Culburra Progress Association to increase education of community members and local council decision makers, on the species habitat requirements and impacts by beach users and increased seasonal tourism pressure.  | Partial implementation - Due to Covid-19, the planned presentation to the Culburra Progress Association has been delayed until 2020-21. |
| Human disturbance at roosting and foraging sites (e.g. walking, fishing, pets, boating). | Temporary fencing and new migratory waders specific temporary signage designed and installed at key roost and forage sites to exclude beach users, particularly dog walkers, from fatigued birds.  | Yes   |
| Human disturbance at roosting and foraging sites (e.g. walking, fishing, pets, boating). | Beach wardens and volunteers to be engaged to expand the community education elements of the South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program to migratory waders. Beach users and community groups to be targeted through presentations, workshops and Birdhaven Festival (October 2019). New temporary and permanent signage, including murals to be deployed in the site vicinity and the region. | Yes   |

## Threat outcome

Assessment on the status of critical threats at this site.

| Threat   | Annual target  | Threat status |
|--|--|---------------|
| Human disturbance at roosting and foraging sites (e.g. walking, fishing, pets, boating). | Minimal disturbance from human and dog interference at key roost and forage sites. | On track      |
| Weed invasion of key habitat.  | Weeds have little to no impact on shorebirds.                                      | On track      |
| Habitat loss due to development.   | Maintain or reduce level of threat.  | On track      |

## Site summary

The Shoalhaven site consists of two critically important estuaries for migratory shorebirds at Lake Wollumboola (in Culburra) and Shoalhaven Heads on the NSW South Coast.

Local South Coast Shorebird Recovery program volunteers have continued their dedication and ongoing efforts to raise awareness, monitor and protect the migratory waders in addition to beach-nesting shorebirds of the Shoalhaven and Wollumboola estuaries.

Key threats to migratory shorebirds in Australia are disturbance from recreational visitors, vehicles and dogs. In this second year, temporary fencing and migratory waders specific temporary signage was installed at key roost and forage sites to exclude beach users, particularly dog walkers, from fatigued birds. This was implemented by a combination of contracted beach wardens during the peak summer visitation period in conjunction with existing South Coast Shorebird Recovery program volunteers. Beach users and community groups have been targeted through presentations and workshops to train and educate stakeholders about the risks associated with human and dog walking disturbance, again through both this SoS project and in conjunction with the ongoing South Coast Shorebird Recovery program.

However, the 2019-20 bushfires had an indirect impact at the Shoalhaven site. The subsequent evacuation of tourists from the South Coast meant that beaches, and in turn the waders, were not subject to the same pressure from visitors normally seen during the holiday period. Despite these challenges, beach wardens played an outstanding role conducting bird counts and engaging tourists and locals alike. They were able to provide valuable insight as to how best to engage different beach users and demographics about minimising disturbance to the birds.

The Birdhaven Festival that ran in October 2019 delivered community workshops and expert presentations on the plight of the migratory shorebirds while relating the importance of the local estuaries in their continued survival. Final designs of permanent signage and murals at both sites have been developed in conjunction with local bird groups, Shoalhaven City Council and National Parks and Wildlife Service as a partnership effort to enhance the knowledge and awareness of the species locations, migratory behaviours, habitat requirements and risks of disturbance. These artworks and interpretive signage will be installed within the next month, ready for the peak summer visitation period in 2020-21.

Weeds have not been identified as a critical threat to the shorebird population at this site, therefore no weed control was planned.

---

Saving our Species 2019-2020 annual report card for Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*). For more information refer to the specific strategy in the Saving our Species program.