

Beach Stone-curlew

Esacus neglectus (Mathews, 1912)

Other common names Beach Thick-knee, Large-billed Stone Plover, Shore Plover, Beach Curlew

Other scientific name *Burhinus neglectus*

Conservation status

The Beach Stone-curlew is listed as an **Endangered Species** on Schedule 1 of the New South Wales *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995* (TSC Act).

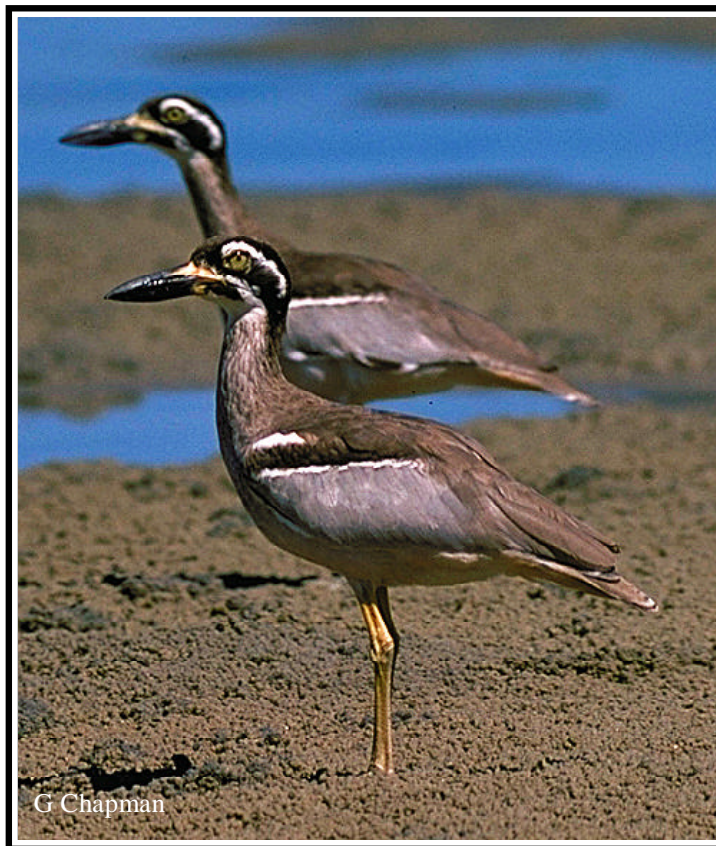
Distribution

The Beach Stone-curlew has been observed around the north coast of Australia and associated islands from near Onslow in Western Australia to the

Description (summarised from Marchant & Higgins 1993)

- Length*
540-560mm
- Wingspan*
890-1090mm
- Tail*
110-137mm
- Bill*
70-82mm
- Tarsus*
82-96mm
- Weight*
1kg

The Beach Stone-curlew is a very large, thick-set wader. The body size is similar to the Eastern Curlew *Numenius madagascariensis* and slightly larger and more thick-set than the Bush Stone-curlew *Burhinus grallarius*.



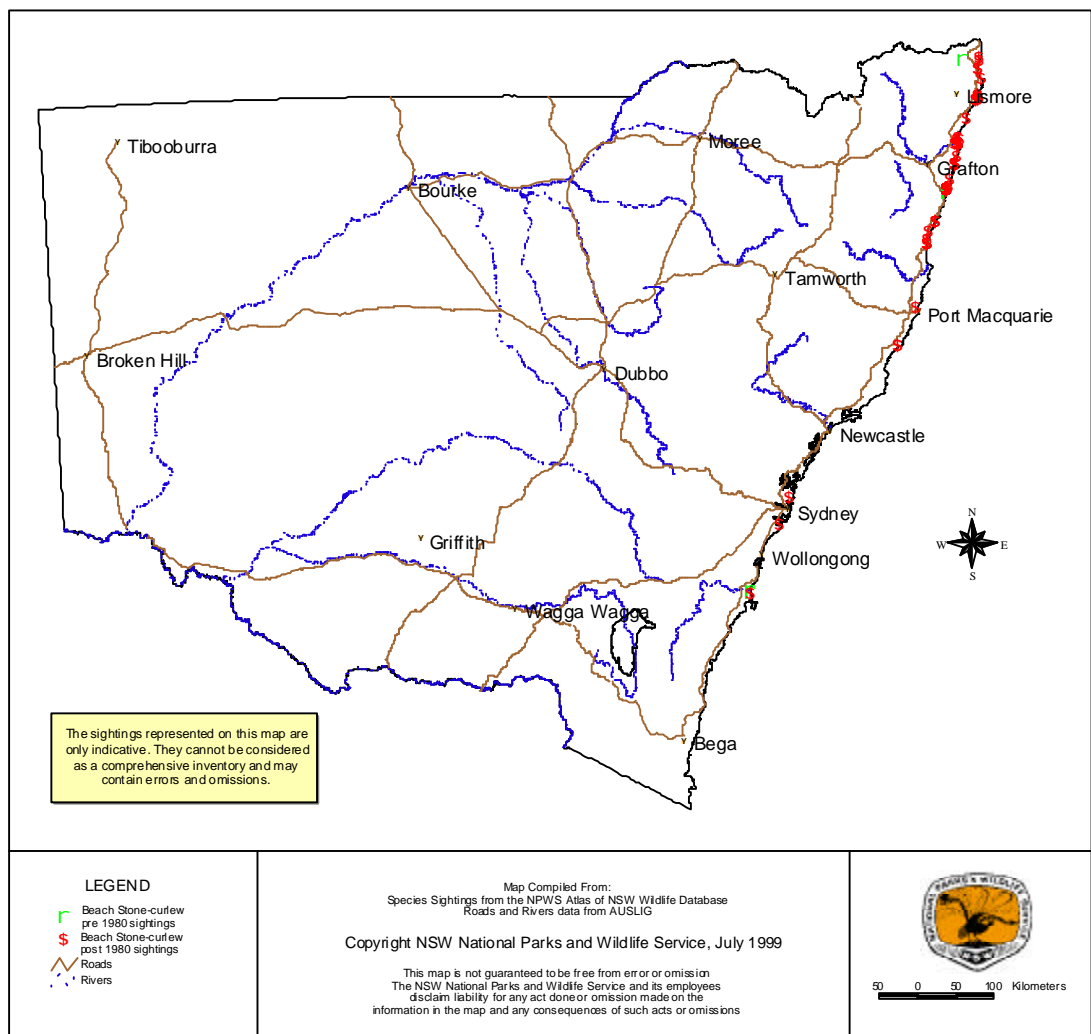
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Beach Stone-curlew

Adults have a large head, massive uptilted bill, hunched profile, stout legs and thick 'knees'. The upper body is predominately grey-brown with distinctive black and white patterning on the face, shoulder and secondary wings. The throat and breast are a paler grey-brown and the belly and wings are white with some black on the tips of the wings.

During the night, breeding Beach Stone-curlews use a harsh, wailing territorial call which is higher pitched, harsher and less fluty than that of the Bush Stone-curlew. When alarmed, the species may vocalise with a *weal* yapping.

Manning River in New South Wales (Lane 1987). However, the species has largely disappeared from the south-eastern part of its former range, being rarely recorded on ocean beaches in NSW. It has been estimated that at present the Australian population may not exceed 15 breeding pairs (J. Martindale pers. comm.). The range and distribution of this species, within NSW, is thought to have contracted as a result of urban and industrial development and recreational activities in coastal areas.



NPWS records of the Beach Stone-curlew in NSW

Recorded occurrences in conservation reserves

Yuragir NP, Bundjalung NP, Ukerebagh NR, Brunswick Heads NR (Garnett 1992a; NPWS 1999).

Habitat

The Beach Stone-curlew occurs on open, undisturbed beaches, islands, reefs and estuarine intertidal sand and mudflats (Pizzey 1991; Marchant & Higgins 1993). The species prefers beaches with estuaries or mangroves nearby (Garnett 1992a). However, the species also frequents river mouths, offshore sandbars associated with coral atolls, reefs and rock platforms and coastal lagoons (Woodall & Woodall 1989; Balmford 1990).

Ecology

The Beach Stone-curlew forages on large, intertidal mudflats, sandflats, sandbanks and sandpits exposed by low tide (Woodall & Woodall 1989). The species diet consists of crabs and other marine invertebrates (Marchant & Higgins 1993).

The breeding season in temperate Australia lasts from September to November. Nests may be located on sandbanks, sandpits or islands in estuaries, coral ridges, among mangroves or in the sand surrounded by short grass and scattered casuarinas (Wheeler 1959; Marchant & Higgins 1993).

Typically only one egg is laid per season, however, the female may lay a second egg if the first is lost. The incubation period

lasts at least 30 days and both parents care for the young until independence is reached at 7-12 months (Clancy 1986).

Threats (summarised from Garnett 1992a)

- Loss of habitat due to residential and industrial development
- Susceptible to human disturbance through beach-combing, boating and 4WD vehicles
- Predation by raptors, cats and dogs
- Nest destruction by pigs
- High tides may wash the eggs from the nest
- Nest desertion

Management (summarised from Garnett 1992a; Garnett 1992b)

- Restricted or controlled access to beaches where birds are resident, particularly during the breeding season
- Research to determine the critical level of disturbance which triggers nest desertion
- Research into effects of predation and dispersal of juveniles
- Monitoring of populations to determine long-term trends

Recovery plans

A recovery plan has not been prepared for the species.

References

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