



Greater Sand Plover

Charadrius leschenaultii Lesson, 1826

Other common names Geoffroy's Sand Plover, Large Sand Dotterel, Large Sand Plover, Large-billed Dotterel

Conservation status

The Greater Sand Plover is listed as a **Vulnerable Species** on Schedule 2 of the New South Wales *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995* (TSC Act).

Description (summarised from Marchant & Higgins 1993)

Length

220-250mm

Wingspan

530-600mm

Tail

49-5 mm

Bill

21-24mm

Tarsus

35-39mm

Weight

75-100g

The crown and nape of the adult Greater Sand Plover is grey-brown. The lores, bill and upperwing are black and the ear coverts are dusky. White plumage is prominent on the forehead, chin, throat and underparts. The dorsum is brown-grey and legs and feet are greenish-grey.

When breeding, which occurs in the northern hemisphere, the plumage on the breast and the top of the head changes to a dull brick-red and the ear coverts become black.

The Greater Sand Plover is distinguishable from the Lesser Sand Plover because of larger, slightly longer bill and legs. The Greater Sand Plover also lacks a narrow black breast band immediately above the red-brick plumage which is apparent in the Lesser Sand Plover in the breeding season.

In Australia, records indicate that the species calls in a dry, soft, trill *drii*.

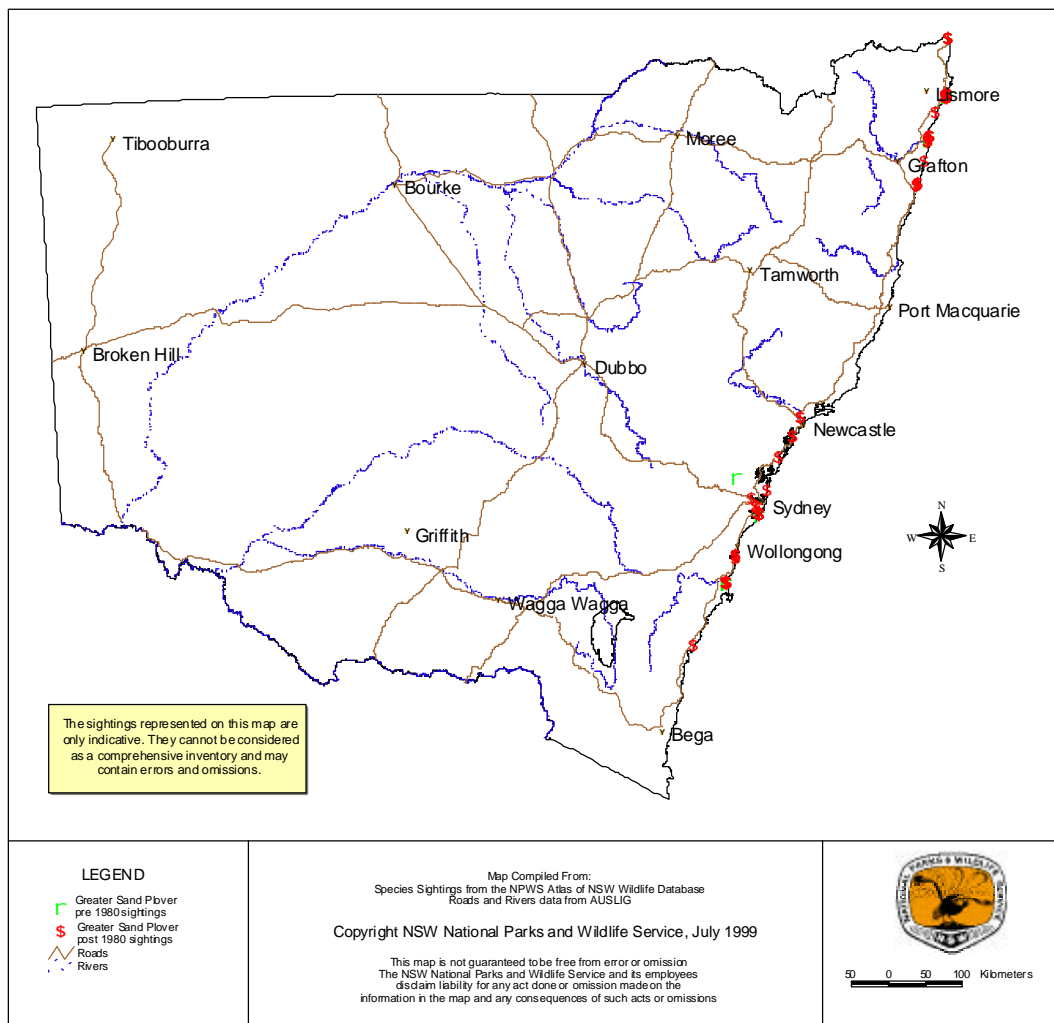
Distribution

The Greater Sand Plover breeds in central Asia from Armenia to the Aral Sea and moves further south for the winter. The species has been recorded along the coasts of the Indian Ocean from South Africa eastward to the Philippines, New Guinea, New Zealand and Australia (Marchant & Higgins 1993).

In Australia, the species is commonly recorded on the west coast but is apparently rare on the east coast (Smith 1991). The



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NPWS records of the Greater Sand Plover in NSW

far north-west of Australia appears to be the stronghold of the population, particularly around Roebuck Bay and Eighty Mile Beach. Parties of 10-20 birds are common in the far north, but single birds are more usual further south (Pringle 1987).

In NSW, the Greater Sand Plover has been recorded in coastal areas from the northern rivers south to Shoalhaven Heads (Marchant & Higgins 1993). The majority of the birds sighted in NSW were recorded in the Clarence and Richmond estuaries (Smith 1991).

Recorded occurrences in conservation reserves

Comerong Island NR, Pitt Town NR, Iluka NR (NPWS 1999).

Habitat

The Greater Sand Plover is entirely coastal in NSW, foraging on intertidal sand and mudflats in estuaries, and roosting during high tide on sandy beaches or rocky shores (Smith 1991).

Within Australia, individuals have also been recorded on inshore reefs, rock platforms, small rocky islands and sand cays on coral reefs (Morris 1989). Occasional sightings have also occurred on near-coast saltlakes, brackish swamps, shallow freshwater wetlands and grassed paddocks (Morris 1989; Bamford 1988).

Ecology

The Greater Sand Plover forages at low tide on wet ground, usually away from the water's edge (Smith 1991). Prey is detected visually by running a short distance, stopping to look, then running to collect the prey. The species diet includes insects, crustaceans and molluscs (Barker & Vestjens 1989).

The Greater Sand Plover is migratory and gregarious but seldom observed in very large flocks. Often individuals may be encountered alone, although they may freely join waders and other plovers when feeding or roosting (Pringle 1987).

Threats

- Hydrological changes to the Clarence and Richmond estuaries may modify or remove important areas of suitable habitat
- Tourism or agricultural developments reducing coastal and inland habitat areas

Management

- Protection and maintenance of known or potential habitat, including the implementation of protection zones around recent records

Recovery plans

A recovery plan has not been prepared for this species.

References

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- NPWS 1999. Atlas of NSW Wildlife. NPWS, Hurstville.
- Pringle J.D. 1987. The Shorebirds of Australia. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Smith P. 1991. The Biology and Management of Waders (Suborder Charadrii) in NSW. NPWS, Hurstville.

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