



SHOREBIRDS

OF
NORTH WEST
TASMANIA
POCKET ID BOOKLET



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CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



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Illustrations by Jeff Davies, provided courtesy of the World Wildlife Fund and Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources:

World Wildlife Fund and Department of the Environment and Water Resources *Australian Shorebirds Identification Sheet Numbers 1 - 6.*

Appearance descriptions sourced from:

Flegg, J. (2002) *Birds of Australia Photographic Field Guide* Second Edition. New Holland Publishers Pty Ltd: Sydney, Australia.

Geering, A., Agnew, L. and Harding, S. (2007) *Shorebirds of Australia* CSIRO Publishing: Collingwood, Victoria, Australia.

Simpson, K., Day, N. and Trusler, P. (1996) *Field Guide to the Birds of Australia* Fifth Edition. Penguin Books Australian Ltd: Ringwood, Victoria, Australia.

Slater, P., Slater, P. and Slater, R. (1989) *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds* Revised Edition. Lansdowne Publishing Pty Ltd: The Rocks, NSW, Australia.

1. Monitoring is best done on a falling tide, one to two hours after high tide so that participants can walk below the high tide line.
2. Scan ahead with binoculars to locate birds feeding or resting on the sand and walk beyond birds to observe their behaviour, rather than stopping close to them. Birds will feel less threatened if you sit or lie down.
3. Avoid monitoring birds at times of the day which are popular with people walking dogs.
4. Do not approach close to a nest and never touch eggs or pick up chicks.
5. Limit potential disturbance by monitoring singly or in pairs rather than large groups.

n.b. All birds listed as protected are migratory species listed under the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

For more information on bird monitoring protocols, please contact:

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Red-capped Plover (Dotterel)

Charadrius ruficapillus



Usually seen in pairs or small numbers on sandy and small pebble beaches. However, sometimes uses nearby sparse paddocks and edges of saline wetlands.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	15 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Pale brown upper parts and a black bill and legs. A white forehead with a black edge and rufous crown extending to a half-collar.
<i>Male</i>	Brighter than females with a rufous cap.
<i>Female</i>	Crown is less bright with a brown cap and breast-band.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Paler with upper parts edged buff.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on bare mudflats and margins of inland and coastal saline wetlands. Common on coastal areas of sand and pebbles.

Black-fronted Dotterel

Elseyornis melanops



Can be seen on the Lagoon at Narawntapu NP and many farm dams in our area.

Appearance

Size	16 – 18 cm
Adult	Sandy brown with faint streaks on crown and upper parts. Chestnut patch on shoulder. Black forehead, short central crown stripe, eye stripe and V-shaped breast band. Red bill with a black tip.
Juvenile	Less boldly patterned than adults, shoulder patch lacking and breast band less obvious.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found in pairs or small family groups on dry margins of freshwater wetlands large or small.

Hooded Plover

Thinornis rubricollis



Mostly seen in pairs or family groups east of Devonport or west of Wynyard. Tasmania is a stronghold for this species.

Appearance

Size

19 - 21 cm

Adult

Black head and neck with a white nape. Sandy buff upper parts and white lower parts. Red eye ring and a red bill with a black tip.

Juvenile

Paler than adults with a sandy brown cap.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on sandy ocean beaches of southern Australia.

Masked Lapwing

Vanellus miles



Very common within the Cradle Coast region.
Common on sports fields and grassy paddocks.

Appearance

Size	35 - 38 cm
Adult	Long-legged plover. Neck and under parts are white while upper parts are a uniform grey-brown. Crown and nape are black with yellow wattles drooping from face.
Juvenile	Similar to adult with smaller wattles and buff tips to black and grey-brown plumage.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found in a wide variety of short grass habitats, beaches, wetland edges, and urban environments. Also known as a Spurwing plover.

Banded Lapwing

Vanellus tricolor



In the Cradle Coast region they can be found at Narawntapu NP, in short grass paddocks close to the sea (eg. Moorland Point and Anthony's Beach) and some sites further inland (eg. Upper Natone). Species decreasing in Tasmania.

Appearance

Size	25 - 28 cm
Adult	Brown upper parts and white belly. Black crown and nape with a bold white eye strip. White throat edged by black merging into black breast band. Small red facial wattle at base of bill.
Juvenile	Similar to adult with brown crown, and buff edges to plumage. Wattles smaller.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on open short grasslands and semi arid rangeland, southern half of Australia.

Pied Oystercatcher

Haematopus longirostris



Seen in low numbers along most of the Cradle Coast coastline. Sometimes feeds in wet grasslands nearby. Some areas have high-tide roosts. High numbers in Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay.

Appearance

Size	50 cm
Adult	Black head, neck, back and wings. White undersides and white wingbar. Bill, eye and orbital ring are bright orange red. Legs are pink.
Juvenile	Back and wing plumage brown with pale edges. Bill, eyes, orbital ring and legs all duller than adult colourings.

Status

Common

Habitat

Found on mudflats and sandy inter-tidal zones.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Haematopus fuliginosus



Usually seen singly or in pairs on rocky shorelines. Mostly breeds on small islets. Some high tide roosts west of Stanley. Can be seen occasionally on sandy beaches.

Appearance

Size

50 cm

Adult

All black with red eye, orbital ring and bill. Pink legs.

Juvenile

Similar to adult with slightly duller colourings to plumage, eyes, bill and legs.

Status

Common

Habitat

Found on coastal rock platforms and rocky islets but can also be seen on sandy beaches.

Double-Banded Plover

Charadrius bicinctus



Occurs in Tasmania mostly March–August and returns to New Zealand to breed in Summer. Can be seen regularly west of Stanley and east of Devonport, sometimes in high-tide roosts in paddocks. Low numbers along the rest of the Cradle Coast region coastline, particularly when migrating.

Appearance

Size	17.5 – 19 cm
Adult	Small shorebird with buff brown upper parts and small, slender, pointed bill.
Non-breeding	Upper parts grayish brown tinged buff. Incomplete breast bands.
Breeding	Grey brown upper parts and white under parts. Narrow upper breast band black, broader lower breast band chestnut.
Juvenile	Similar to non-breeding adult with single incomplete breast band and pale edged feathers on upper parts.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal mudflats, sandy inter-tidal zones and some bare margins of inland wetlands in south-east Australia. Also found in short grass pastures.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres



Internationally significant numbers are found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay and there is a high-tide roost at Moorland Point. Low numbers in other areas of the NW coast.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	23 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Dumpy medium-sized wader with short legs and wedge-shaped bill.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Dark brown head and neck and grayish black breast band with white under parts.
<i>Breeding</i>	Upper parts chestnut and head, neck and breast-band boldly patterned with black.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Plumage similar to non-breeding adult but slightly duller with pale edges on back feathers.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Uses stout short bill to flip stones, shells, seaweed and driftwood on sandy or cobble beaches, rock platforms or reef of coastal Australia.

Pacific Golden Plover

Pluvialis fulva



Found at Robins Passage Boullanger Bay. Small numbers seen regularly at other sites, such as Moorland Point and Narawntapu NP.

Appearance

Size	23 - 28 cm
Adult	Medium large plover with an upright stance. Slender dark bill.
Non-breeding	Upper parts mottled black brown with golden tinge. Under parts white with golden buff wash.
Breeding	Black and gold flecks above. Throat, breast and under parts black bordered with white.
Juvenile	Similar to non-breeding adult with face, foreneck and breast golden buff.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal mudflats and sandy inter-tidal zones, roosting in short saltmarsh herbfield or paddocks.

Grey Plover

Pluvialis squatarola



Mostly seen at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay.
Recorded a few times in other areas.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	29 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Robust medium-sized shorebird with short, stout bill and longish legs.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Flecked grey upper parts and white under parts with black axillaries ('armpits').
<i>Breeding</i>	Upper parts mottled silver grey and black. Face, breast and under parts black, except tail which is white.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Face, throat and breast streaked dusky brown. Upper parts grey brown spotted buff and gold. Under parts white with some mottling.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal mudflats and sandy inter-tidal zones.

Eastern Curlew

Numenius madagascariensis



Occurs at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay / Stanley area. Also a small number in the Rubicon estuary. Numbers have decreased dramatically in recent times.

Appearance

Size

53 - 60 cm

Adult

Large wader with sandy buff upper parts. Head and neck darkly streaked. Black and brown markings on back and wings. Under parts grey buff. Long down-curved black bill, pink towards base.

Status

Protected

Listed as Endangered under Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*

Habitat

Found on coastal mudflats and inter-tidal zones. This is the largest shorebird that migrates between Tasmania and Siberia.

Bar-tailed Godwit

Limosa lapponica



Found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay / Stanley area. There is also a small group in the Rubicon Estuary.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	38 – 45 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Large shorebird with long, slightly upturned bill.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Mottled grey to grey brown upper parts. Under parts white shading to grey.
<i>Breeding</i>	Head, neck and under parts marked richly chestnut.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Similar to non-breeding adult with washed buff neck and breast.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal mudflats and sandy inter-tidal zones.

Red Knot

Calidris canutus



Found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay. NW Tasmania is the stronghold in Tasmania.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	25 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Medium-sized dumpy wader with short, straight bill and short legs.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Grey upper parts with some brown streaking on head. Under parts shading from grey to white.
<i>Breeding</i>	Head, neck and under parts rust red. Back feathers black patterned rufous.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Similar to non-breeding adult. Breast spotted buff. Back feathers edged white with dark subterminal bar.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on mudflats and inter-tidal zones.

Great Knot

Calidris tenuirostris



Sometimes found in small numbers at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	29 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Stocky wader with slender bill and shortish olive legs. Crown streaked, white and white bar in wing.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Mottled grey upper parts and white under parts.
<i>Breeding</i>	Chestnut upper parts with black striped head and neck. Under parts white with dark spots on breast, belly and flanks.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Upper parts darker than non-breeding adult. Back, head and neck more boldly patterned.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on mudflats and sandy inter-tidal zones.

Grey-tailed Tattler

Tringa brevipes



Found singly or in small numbers at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay and Moorland Point.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	27 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Plain grey upper parts. Yellow legs. Grey bill with nasal groove.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Upper parts uniformly grey. White belly and grey washed breast. Pale forehead and dark underwing.
<i>Breeding</i>	Breast and flanks thinly barred brown.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Upper parts finely spotted white. Breast and flanks mottled with smudged dark and light grey bars.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on mudflats and inter-tidal zones.

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia



Found in small numbers at Robbins Passage
Boullanger Bay.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	31 - 35 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Large grey shorebird with long neck and legs. Long bill slightly upturned.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Upper parts grey. Back feathers margined white with small black notches. Under parts and forehead white.
<i>Breeding</i>	Head and neck streaked black. Black feathers amongst grey on back.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Similar to non-breeding adult with more heavily streaked crown and neck. Broader white margin on back feathers.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal inter-tidal zones and inland saline and freshwater marshes.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper

Calidris acuminata



Mostly found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay, a few records in other areas during migration times.

Appearance

Size	18 – 23 cm
Adult	Medium sized shorebird with short neck. Mottled with a rufous crown.
Non-breeding	Crown dull rufous streaked with dark brown. Upper parts grey brown with dark shaft streaks and pale fringes.
Breeding	Crown brighter rufous streaked black. Head and under parts heavily mottled with dark chevrons.
Juvenile	Crown bright rufous streaked black. Black back feathers edged with chestnut and white. Breast buff with weak markings.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal inter-tidal zones and inland saline and freshwater marshes.

Curlew Sandpiper

Calidris ferruginea



Found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay, occasional records from elsewhere. Numbers have decreased significantly over recent years.

Appearance

Size	21 cm
Adult	Smallish slender shorebird with long, tapering, down-curved bill.
Non-breeding	Grey brown mottled upper parts with brown streaking on crown. Whitish buff under parts.
Breeding	Head, neck and under parts chestnut brown. Upper parts heavily mottled with large brown spots and white tips.
Juvenile	Similar to non-breeding adult with darker upper parts. Light brown crown streaked black and buff.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal inter-tidal zones and inland saline and freshwater marshes.

Red-necked Stint

Calidris ruficollis



Common at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay / Stanley area and regular in small groups in the Rubicon estuary. Singles or low numbers occasionally seen at other sites on migration. This is the most abundant migratory shorebird in Tasmania and flocks of thousands have been recorded in the NW.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	15 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Tiny wader with short legs and a short, straight bill.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Sandy grey brown upper parts with darker streaking. Under parts mostly white with grey smudge on side of breast.
<i>Breeding</i>	Rufous crown streaked black. Back feathers reddish mottled black and fringed grey.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Face, throat and under parts mostly white. Breast washed buff with brown streaks on sides.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal inter-tidal zones.

Latham's Snipe

Gallinago hardwickii



Scarce and seldom seen. Occasionally flushed from small dams and marshy areas in various locations within the Cradle Coast region.

Appearance

Size

24 – 26 cm

Adult

Medium sized shorebird with long, straight, olive grey bill. Body mottled black, brown and buff. Crown and forehead dark brown with light brown centre stripe. Dark eye stripe. White belly and rufous tail tipped white.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Shallow freshwater swamps, erupts from cover with fast zig-zagging flight, eastern Australia.

Sanderling

Calidris alba



Found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay.
Considered very rare in the region.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	20 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Small compact shorebird with short legs. Black shoulder patch and white wingbar.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Pale grey upper parts with some streaking on the crown. White face and under parts.
<i>Breeding</i>	Head and breast rufous speckled black and buff. Back feathers patterned black and rufous. White under parts.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Similar to non-breeding adult with bolder streaking on crown. Black back patterned with white spots.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on exposed sandy ocean beaches where tight feeding flocks run quickly along the edge of surf. Occasionally seen on sandbars.

Mongolian Plover

Charadrius mongolus



Found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay.
Considered very rare in the region.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	19 - 20 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Small shorebird with short, stout bill and short legs.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Dark brown grey upper parts and white under parts. Narrow grey breast band. White eyebrow and throat.
<i>Breeding</i>	Grey brown upper parts. Nape, and breast rufous. Distinctive black eyepatch.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Similar to non-breeding adult with sides of breast buff. Back and wing feathers edged buff.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal mudflats and sandy inter-tidal zones.

Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus



Found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay and the Rubicon estuary. Considered very rare in the region.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	38 - 43 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Large shorebird with long down-curved beak. Dark brown crown with median white stripe and paler eye stripes. Under parts pale buff with dark brown streaks and bars on breast and flanks. Upper parts dark brown with buff notches.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Similar to adults with darker crown and less distinct eye stripe.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on coastal mudflats and inter-tidal zones.

Common Sandpiper

Actitis hypoleucos



A vagrant in the Cradle Coast Region.
Considered very rare in the region.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	20 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Small wader with brown upper parts and white under parts barred grey. Brown streaking on throat and breast to form collar.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Back plain olive brown with faint barring on wing-coverts.
<i>Breeding</i>	Similar to non-breeding adult with darker arrow-shaped markings on back.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Back and wing feathers edged buff.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found singularly on rocky or sloped muddy margins of coastal or inland wetlands, also drains, channels and dams. Has a distinctive flight and bobbing behaviour.

Terek Sandpiper

Xenus (Tringa) cinereus



Found at Robbins Passage Boullanger Bay /
Smithton area. Considered very rare in the region.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	20 - 23 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Medium sized squat shorebird with orange legs and long, upturned bill.
<i>Non-breeding</i>	Pale brownish grey upper parts with pale edges. Under parts white.
<i>Breeding</i>	Brownish grey crown, nape and back. Black shoulder stripe.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Feathers to upper parts edged buff.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Found on inter-tidal mudflats.

Banded Stilt

Chadorhynchus leucocephalus



Very rare vagrant from mainland Australia.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	36 - 45 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Large pied wader with distinctive chestnut V-shaped breast band. Broad white bar on hindwing. Head and neck white. Long legs and long, slender, straight bill.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Back and wings black brown fringed white. Head and under parts white. Lacks breast band.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Common nomad on salt lakes, salt marshes and estuaries.

Black-winged Stilt

Himantopus himantopus



Very rare vagrant from mainland Australia.

Appearance

<i>Size</i>	35 - 38 cm
<i>Adult</i>	Large, slender wader with very long pink legs and a long, slender, straight bill. Mostly white with black back, wings and nape patch. Head, neck and under parts white.
<i>Juvenile</i>	Head and nape patch dirty grey or white.

Status

Protected

Habitat

Wetlands

This booklet belongs to:



Cradle Coast
NRM