

Guidelines



Working in shorebird habitat

G-10.2

Tasmania's beaches and wetlands are important coastal habitat for both migratory and resident shorebirds. Tasmania supports breeding populations of beach nesting birds (shorebirds and small terns) that are threatened or in low numbers in other parts of Australia. Migratory shorebirds and waders, many of them threatened species, make annual stop-overs to many coastal areas and wetlands across the state. Shorebird breeding times and migratory patterns mean that birds are present and vulnerable to human impacts from September to March.

Migratory birds are threatened by habitat loss both here and in other international locations along their migratory route (flyway). They are all protected by international agreements and Commonwealth legislation. Resident shorebirds and small terns nest on sandy beaches and threats include destruction and loss of habitat due to coastal development, disturbance to nesting birds (poor breeding success) from recreational activities such as dog walking, horse riding or vehicles on beaches. Many of them are protected by Commonwealth and state legislation.

Everyone working in coastal areas has a responsibility to minimise impacts on shorebirds and protect shorebird habitat.

Use these guidelines in conjunction with the information provided in Chapter 10 when planning works and engaging consultants and contractors to ensure the proposed works use the most effective methods and minimise the risk of causing damage to coastal values.

Planning

Plan works carefully and consult with wildlife specialists and Birds Tasmania. Schedule works to avoid shorebird breeding season, from September to March, if possible.

Ensure all works staff and contractors are briefed on minimising impacts on shorebirds and provide adequate supervision to ensure best practice environmental standards are being implemented.

Sometimes the best time to undertake coastal works or manage weeds clashes with the shorebird season so implement strategies to minimise impacts when working on shorebird beaches during breeding season.

Include local residents and community groups in planning for management actions to protect shorebirds. Local residents can make a big difference to improving outcomes for birds by making changes in their behaviour such as keeping dogs locked up and not modifying the foreshore environment.

Working in shorebird habitat

Assume that nests, eggs and chicks are present even if you haven't found them - reduce your time at the top of the beach to the minimum time required to remove weeds or undertake works.

Travel along the tide line preferably limiting intense activities to low tide. Keep vehicles and foot traffic away from nesting birds.

Minimise time working in bird breeding territories or close to nests, eggs and chicks to reduce adults' times off nests, eggs and chicks.

Where possible, avoid working near nests on hot and cold days to reduce likelihood of nest failure.

Avoid disturbing nesting birds at night to prevent eggs chilling - beach sands cool rapidly at night.

Avoid damage to the dune landscape that may affect the profile of the dunes and make it difficult for young birds to seek shelter.

Disclaimer

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Protecting shorebird nests and chicks

It is important to ensure that beach users are aware of the presence of shorebirds and their vulnerability to human impacts. It is also important that dogs, horses and vehicles are restricted from important breeding beaches.

Sometimes, on high use beaches, it may be necessary to erect temporary fences around nest sites and provide signage to alert visitors to the presence of breeding shorebirds.

Seek specialist advice before considering fences and other protection measures.

Monitoring

Birds Tasmania undertake annual monitoring of shorebird numbers. Community groups and land managers working on the coast can assist by providing information to Birds Tasmania when working in shorebird areas.

Data requested from land managers, community groups and others interested in shorebird management includes:

- Reports of nesting shorebirds and small terns, including GPS data and estimates of numbers
- Reports of migratory shorebirds - estimates of numbers/species
- Evidence of entanglement - photographs

Birds Tasmania can provide data sheets, bird identification guides, and possibly assist in the identification of carcasses. Remember not to disturb the birds when collecting data.

More Information

A practical guide for managing beach nesting birds in Australia. Maguire 2008

Birds Tasmania batas@birdsaustralia.com.au 0419 138 054 (Secretary)

Tasmanian coastal works manual: Chapter 10, Page & Thorp 2010

Wildlife Management Branch and Biodiversity Conservation Branch, DPI/PWE
6233 3556



Checklist

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Working in shorebird habitat

Tasmania's beaches and wetlands are important coastal habitat for both migratory and resident shorebirds. Tasmania supports breeding populations of beach nesting birds (shorebirds and small terns) that are threatened or in low numbers in other parts of Australia. Migratory shorebirds and waders, many of them threatened species, make annual stop-overs to many coastal areas and wetlands across the state. Shorebird breeding times and migratory patterns mean that birds are present and vulnerable to human impacts from September to March. All migratory species and threatened species are protected wildlife under a number of state and Commonwealth Acts.

Use this checklist in conjunction with the accompanying Guideline and the information provided in Chapter 10 when planning works and engaging consultants and contractors to ensure the proposed works use the most effective methods and minimise the risk of causing damage to coastal values.

Planning

- Shorebird presence/habitat identified
- Works rescheduled to avoid shorebird breeding and stop-over times if possible
- Consultation with wildlife specialists and Birds Tasmania undertaken
- Consultation with local community care groups undertaken.

Working in shorebird habitat

- Staff and contractors briefed on minimising impacts on shorebirds
- Any nests or chicks identified and locations marked
- Activities kept to low tide if possible. Time spent at top of beach minimised
- Travel along beach limited to along tide line
- Use of vehicles kept to a minimum
- Vehicles and people kept away from nests or chicks
- Work kept away from nests and chicks, particularly during extreme temperatures
- Damage to dune profile and landscape avoided

Protecting shorebird nests and chicks

- Beach users informed of presence of birds and their vulnerability to human impacts
- Temporary fences considered on high use beaches to protect nests and chicks. Seek specialist advice
- Dog management plans provide protection for shorebirds, particularly during breeding season

Monitoring

- GPS locations of nests
- Numbers of eggs or chicks
- Reports of migratory bird species and numbers

More Information

A practical guide for managing beach nesting birds in Australia.
Maguire 2008

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