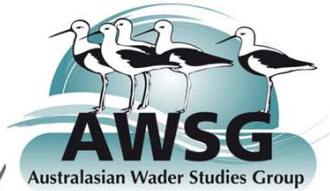




CARING  
FOR  
OUR  
COUNTRY



## ***The Shorebird Count Form***

### ***Why should I use this form?***

The shorebird count form has been designed as an easy means of submitting shorebird count data, ready for entry into the AWSG national shorebird database, currently managed by Birds Australia's Shorebirds 2020 team. The form is designed with national shorebird counts in mind, although there will be cases where it is not entirely suited to specific counts. If you find this is the case, please provide any extra details for your count in the *Comments*.

Whilst we will accept alternate versions of the count forms (by your own creation), please keep in mind that when many different formats are submitted from around the country, it slows our ability to organise and enter the data, leaving less time for the more important analysis. It also ensures that we get all the data we need, if everyone is using the same form.

If you already submit your shorebird counts to Birds Australia's Atlas, and do not wish to fill out the shorebird count form, please contact the Shorebirds 2020 team to let them know that this is how you will be submitting your records. We will ensure that we receive a copy of this data directly from the Atlas administrators. Additionally, we are also in the process of organising a data-swap agreement with Atlas, so that all your shorebird counts also go into the Atlas.

### **Using the Shorebird Count form**

The following is a description of how you should fill out the different sections of the shorebird count form. Many of the fields are self explanatory, whilst others are described in more detail to assist in your understanding of what they require.

One form should be used for each separate *Count Area* that is counted. Please do not combine counts from more than one *Count Area* on the same form.

### **Observer Details**

**Full Name, Phone Number** (daytime), and **Email**: Contact details should be those of the leader of the count. This should be someone who participated in the count, not the name of the overall coordinator. This is very important, as occasionally we need ask specific questions about the count.

**Total Number of Observers**: The total number of counters that participated in the count of the *Count Area*.

**Years of Counting Experience**: Please only put down the number of years of experience of the person with the most experience. This data is needed to look at how observer ability affects count totals.

### **Time & Date**

**Count Date**: Please use the format provided

**Time Started** and **Time Finished**: 24 hour clock format.

## Count Details

**State name, Shorebird Area name and Count Area name:** You should be given the names of both the *Shorebird Area* and the *Count Areas* you are to count by your count coordinator, or you can refer to the count area maps. You can also use the unique alpha-numeric code in place of the count area name (as used on some of the maps, and available upon request).

If your count is not completed at one of the specified *Shorebird Areas* or *Count Areas*, please write the name of your site in the *Shorebird Area* field, and provide as much detail as you can in the *Comments*, with GPS locations (you do not need to provide a GPS location for counts of set *Count Areas* as the location is already fixed), and a detailed map of the boundary of the area that was counted. It is likely that a member of the Shorebirds 2020 team will want to get in contact with you regarding new sites, so please make sure that you provide your contact details as well.

**Was a Complete Count of the Mapped Area Conducted?:** Did you count the entire area as specified on the map? If you answer *NO*, please provide details in the *Comments* section as to why the entire area was not covered, and how much of the area was counted. Examples of why the entire area may not have been counted may include adverse weather conditions or difficulties with access to the area.

If your count was *disrupted*, and you had to go away and then return later or on the following day to complete the count, then this is considered a complete count. However, please provide details as to why the count was disrupted in the *Comments* section. Examples include a change in weather conditions, excess human or other disturbance of shorebirds in the count area, the boat needed to be refuelled etc.

**Were All Shorebirds Visible/Counted?:** Did the count include all of the shorebirds in the area? If you answer *NO*, please provide an explanation in the *Comments*. Examples of why all of the birds may not have been counted may be that many more birds may be thought to be roosting in inaccessible areas, or birds may have moved during the time of the count. You can make estimates of how many birds you think were missed in the *Comments*, but please do not include them in the reported total in the *Bird Counts* section.

**Was a Complete Waterbird Count Conducted?:** If you also recorded other waterbirds during your shorebird count, did you do a complete count, or did you just count waterbirds opportunistically, record presence only, or count some species and not others?

**Tide Height:** Quote in metres where possible, otherwise R for rising, H for High, F for falling and L for Low will suffice (If your count was longer than 4 hours it is still valuable to record the maximum tide height).

**Area Under Water:** Applies to wetlands only. How much of the area, as a percentage, was covered with water? It is not asking for an indication of the volume of the wetland.

**Wind Direction:** What direction was the wind coming from?

**Wind Speed:** Check the wind speed category that applies using the descriptions provided.

## Potential Disturbance

As the human population grows, the number of people visiting shorebird areas will continue to increase. It is critical that we begin to collect data on the relationship between disturbance and the number of birds found in an area.

**Number of Flights to Disturbance:** The total number of times the birds took flight, regardless of whether or not you could attribute it to any particular disturbance. *This includes when birds take flight in response to your presence.*

In addition, write down the number of potential disturbances, of the different kinds listed, that you observed within 200 m of shorebirds during the count. Please write more details in the *Comments* if necessary.

**Threats** *N.B. This section only needs to be filled out once annually*

The details in this section are extremely important in recognising threats to shorebirds and the habitats they use, and the data collected is just as important as bird numbers. Shorebird numbers have decreased significantly in some areas around Australia, yet there is no centrally reported data to indicate why this has happened. These scores will enable us to identify what kinds of things might be driving the changes in numbers, and more importantly, alert a wider audience of things happening that could impact shorebird numbers.

Whilst time may not permit you to fill out this section during your count, we strongly encourage you to take the time to complete this section afterwards. It would be ideal for you to discuss it amongst other counters who participated in the count. Unless there have been noticeable changes between the summer and winter count that need to be recorded, it is only necessary to fill out this section of the form once a year.

Please rate each of the threats of *Habitat Loss*, *Human Disturbance*, *Invasive Species*, *Pollution*, and *Other* by ticking one of the descriptions in each of the Timing, Scale, and Severity categories. Where categories are left blank for an entire threat, it is understood that this threat is not applicable at the site you counted. *We understand these scores are subjective, and hard to settle on in many cases, but they have proved powerful in other wildlife studies around the world.*

Use the following as a guide when filling out the *Threats* section:

- **Habitat Loss:** Use this to indicate threats to the shorebird population from human induced habitat loss, for example, land reclamation, water extraction or altered water regimes of wetlands/estuaries as a result of human management etc.
- **Human Disturbance:** Use this to indicate threats to the shorebird population from things like 4WD's on beaches, dog walking, fishing, development, population increases etc.
- **Invasive Specie/Introduced Pests:** Use this to indicate threats to the shorebird population from invasive plants such as *Spartina spp.*, or feral animals such as foxes.
- **Pollution:** Use this to indicate the threat to the shorebird population from pollution effects such as oil spills, industrial discharges, agricultural run-off, increased nutrients and algal blooms.
- **Other:** Use this to indicate any threats that are not covered by the other categories.

You are also encouraged to provide details or further explanation in the *Comments*.

**Habitat Change** *N.B. This section only needs to be filled out once annually*

**Has the Habitat Changed in the Last Year?:** Please indicate whether you think the habitat has changed in the last year, or since you last counted the site (if longer than one year). Try to indicate the **Percentage of Area Affected by Habitat Change** (as used by shorebirds).

Tick all of the categories in the fields that you think are attributable to the habitat change. Please include details in the *Comments* section.

## Bird Counts

Please write the number of birds for each species counted in the space provided. If you do a count and find no birds, please fill out a form and submit it to us anyway. For scientific analysis and population monitoring, *a zero count is every bit as important as very high numbers of birds*. If you wish to submit component counts, please use the separate forms (available at [www.shorebirds.org.au](http://www.shorebirds.org.au)).

The birds are divided into two sections – shorebirds; and other waterbirds under various group headings. While the emphasis of the national shorebird survey is on counting shorebirds, we also encourage counters to record all other waterbirds, where possible. This is also valuable information which we will pass on to Birds Australia's Atlas. Unfortunately there is not enough room on the count form to include all species that may be encountered around the country. We encourage you to include additional species (including raptors) in the spaces provided, or use the *Comments* to add more.

The bird species list is in alphabetical order, as opposed to systematic order. This is to make it easier for people who are new to counting, in that it is easier for them to find the birds on the sheet. It also makes it easier for volunteers who are entering the data.

**'P' = Present:** Enter 'P' into the box provided for each species if a species was present but you did not count the numbers present. Examples of when you would do this would include if you cannot see all of the birds, or are recording the presence only of other waterbird species, or very abundant species, such as Silver Gulls.

**'B' = Breeding:** (for resident species and waterbirds) only check this field if:

- A nest with eggs, young or a brooding bird is found
- Newly fledged young are seen with a parent.
- It is not sufficient to report a bird as breeding based on the colour of its plumage alone. If you wish to record more information about a breeding observation, please fill out a Nest Record Scheme form (available at [www.birdsaustralia.com.au](http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au)).

If you observe any flagged or banded birds, please submit a Leg Flag Report on the AWSG website, [www.awsg.org.au](http://www.awsg.org.au).

## Comments

Please provide all details that you deem appropriate to give extra information about the count in the *Comments* field. If necessary, please attach additional pages.

You might also like to consider writing brief answers to questions such as:

- Were the total numbers of shorebirds different to usual?
- Were there any species you expected to see that were not present?
- Did you see any dead birds?

## Submitting your form

Completed sheets should be given to your Count Coordinator so that they can collate all of the data before passing it on to Birds Australia. Otherwise, you can send completed forms, by mail, fax, email, or by filling out (the soon to be completed) excel version of the count form, to:

**Rob Clemens or Jo Oldland, Shorebirds 2020**

Birds Australia

Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street

Carlton Victoria 3053

**Phone:** (03) 9347 0757 **Fax** (03) 9347 9323

**Email:** [r.clemens@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:r.clemens@birdsaustralia.com.au) OR [j.oldland@birdsaustralia.com.au](mailto:j.oldland@birdsaustralia.com.au)