

Keep the Broadwater alive and friendly for birds

The Gold Coast Broadwater has a large population of migratory waders. These birds make long annual migrations between Australia and the northern hemisphere.

Putting these birds to flight just before migration time causes them to waste valuable energy that they may require for their journey.

We can work together for the survival of these birds.

- Dog walkers are encouraged to take their dogs off their leash only in Council's designated off leash areas. Allow these unique birds to roost without being disturbed. A roost such as the one in the centre of the Broadwater is the only place a wader may wait out the high tide.
- Do not disturb birds which are feeding.
- If you visit the sandbanks of the Broadwater avoid going near a roost an hour before or after high tide.
- Fish in areas away from the birds.
- Please take your litter, plastic bags, used fishing lines and tackle home with you.



The migratory waders seen on the Gold Coast Broadwater, span the globe with their migration journeys.

They leave during March and April and fly to northern polar lands where they breed. They return to the Broadwater in September and October.

During the Australian summer they recover and rebuild themselves for the next journey. Their round trip is a journey of between 16,000 and 20,000 kilometres.

More information

Healthy Land and Water



Wader Study Group



Birdlife Australia



Federation Walk



GCCC Environmental Planning and Conservation
goldcoastcity.com.au/environment



Shorebirds of the Broadwater

The Living Broadwater



Migratory birds

About 40 species of shorebirds are found in Australia. Eastern Curlews, Bar-tailed Godwits and Whimbrels are the most common migratory birds found on the Broadwater. These birds are unable to swim. They feed on small marine animals which live on the tidal flats. During our winter they migrate to northern polar lands where they breed.

Eastern Curlew

(*Numenius madagascariensis*)

World's largest wader. Very long down-curved bill and long legs. Feeds on tidal flats and shorelines. Requires a high tide roost.



Whimbrel

(*Numenius phaeopus*)

Similar to an Eastern Curlew but much smaller. Shorter bill. Usually found in flocks. Will roost in mangroves during high tide.



Common Tern

(*Sterna hirundo*)

Half the size of a Crested Tern. It has a black bill. A summer migrant from South East Asia. Often flocks with Crested Terns.



Bar-tailed Godwit

(*Limosa lapponica*)

Half the size of an Eastern Curlew. Slightly upturned long bill. Feeds on tidal flats. Requires a high tide roost.



Double-banded Plover

(*Charadrius bicinctus*)

Small winter migrant from New Zealand. Up to 100 in a loose flock are often found on the Broadwater.



Great Knot

(*Calidris tenuirostris*)

Occasional visitor, but common in Moreton Bay. Plump with medium bill.



Photo © Todd Burrows

Special resident bird

Beach Stone Curlew

(*Esacus magnirostris*)

An extremely wary and shy resident, with only five pairs estimated to live within Gold Coast waterways and the southern islands of Moreton Bay. This species is listed as vulnerable under the Nature Conservation Act 1992 in Queensland and critically endangered in New South Wales.

The beach stone-curlew is a very large thick-set wader. It is distinguished from all other waders by its large size (55cm), massive bill with yellow patches at the base, and bold black and white pattern on the head.

These rare birds usually nest on the beach. They prefer undisturbed islands, reefs, sandbanks, spits or islands in estuaries and beaches with mangroves or estuaries nearby. Threats to their survival include dogs, cats, pigs, four wheel drive vehicles and habitat loss.

Please take great care not to disturb the beach stone-curlew.



Common resident birds

Resident birds spend most of their lives in the same general area. They may make short migrations but do not undertake international migrations. They are often seen in the one area for the whole year.

Silver Gull

(*Larus novaehollandiae*)

Silver Gulls are very common. They are aggressive feeders and adjust to people and dogs. Large numbers without other bird species present may indicate a poor marine environment.



Pied Oystercatcher

(*Haematopus longirostris*)

Beautiful resident shorebird. A small number of pairs are usually present on the sandbanks. Black and white with a red bill and red legs.



Masked Lapwing

(*Vanellus miles*)

Has a wide distribution but it is a true shorebird. Seldom flock with other birds.



Crested Tern

(*Thalasseus bergii*)

Large tern with heavy yellow bill and black crest. Most common bird on the Broadwater after the Silver Gull. They often dive and fish in the Gold Coast Seaway.



Caspian Tern

(*Hydroprogne caspia*)

Large tern with a bright red bill. Solitary in behaviour. Usually one or two are present on the Broadwater sandbanks.



Little Black Cormorant

(*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

Large numbers are present on the Broadwater. They use their numbers to herd fish. Very common throughout Australia where ever there is fresh or salt water.



What is a shorebird roost?

A roost is a place where birds may rest or shelter from adverse conditions. Many terrestrial birds roost in trees but most shorebirds, also known as migratory waders, prefer to roost on sandy beaches.

Their diet is the multitude of small marine animals such as worms, yabbies, crabs and shellfish which inhabit the tidal flats of coastal rivers and bays. As the tide rises and their feeding areas are covered, they require a safe roost where they may wait for the tide to change. This is usually a sandbank or an island which is higher than the highest annual tide.

The roost needs to be free of predators such as dingoes, foxes, feral cats, rats, domestic dogs and away from people. Waders are attacked by raptors. To counter this threat they prefer

a roost which has clear vision in all directions so they may flee quickly from approaching danger.

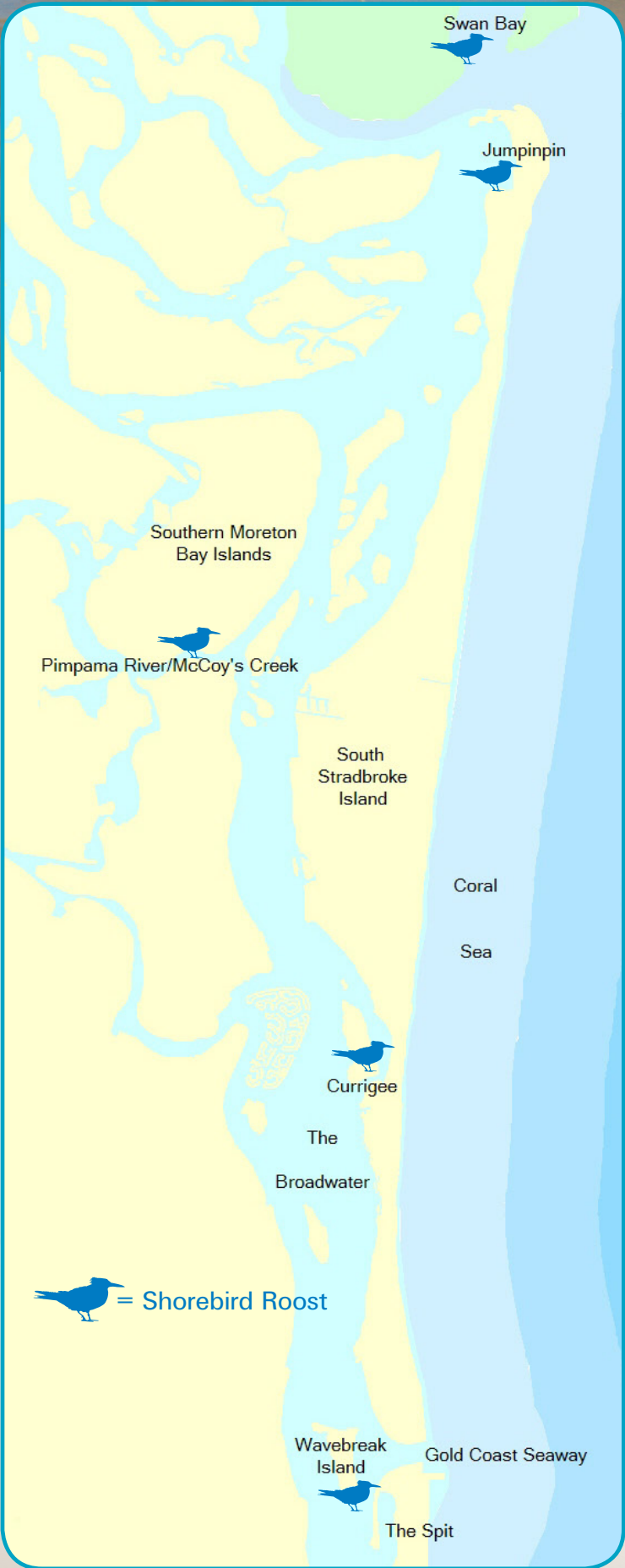
Only a small number of suitable wader roosts now exist in the Gold Coast region. Loss of a strategically placed roost may force birds to fly long distances to an alternate roost or abandon an area.

The small sandy island just south of Wavebreak Island is a very good roost and at high tide a large number of birds shelter there. However it is receiving an increasing number of visitors. The presence of dogs, especially when they are off-leash, disturb these birds.

Please avoid disturbing birds on their roost.

Little Terns

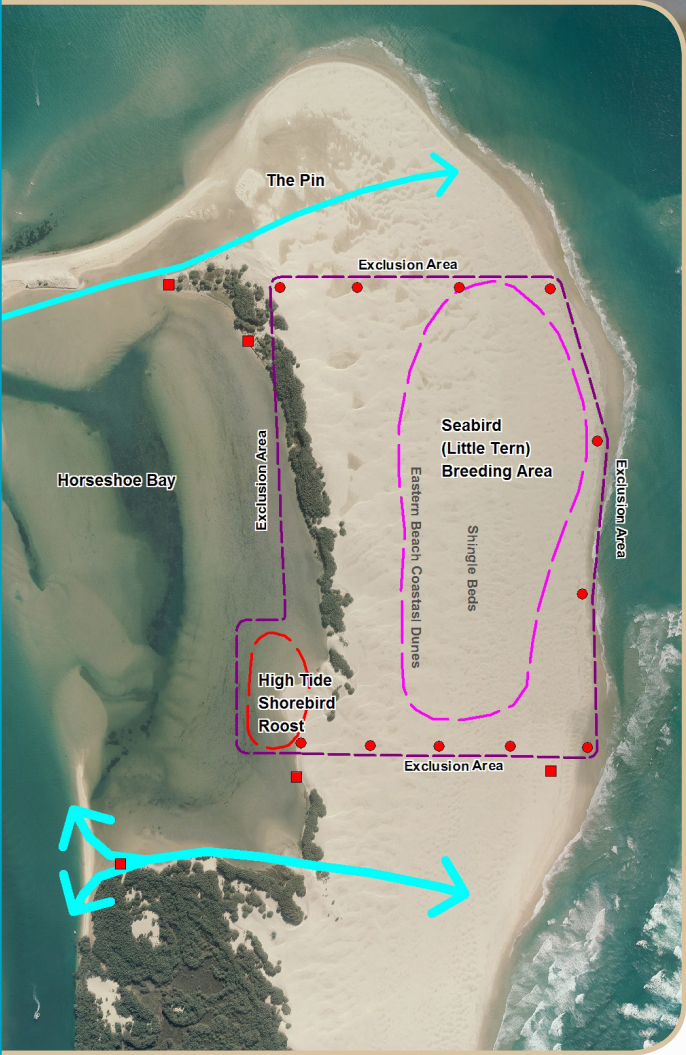
(*Sternula albifrons*)



Juvenile little terns



Conservation officers regularly monitor the population



Guidelines for visitors and boaties

- do not disturb the feeding and roosting areas though coastal recreational activities such as beach-combing, fishing, boating, jet skiing and 4WD vehicles
- limit beach driving, walking or running on the northern parts of South Stradbroke Island during Little Tern breeding season (September to January)
- drive only on hard-pack sand below the high water mark
- when walking at the northern tip of South Stradbroke Island, be careful not to disturb nesting birds and stay at least 100 metres away
- dogs are prohibited within South Stradbroke Island Conservation Park. Regular patrols are undertaken and infringement notices will be issued
- dispose of your rubbish thoughtfully
- educational patrols are also undertaken during the peak breeding season

The northern tip of South Stradbroke Island is highly significant as a roosting and breeding site for the Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons*), a small migratory seabird found throughout the world's oceans. They inhabit coastal environments, including beaches, inlets, estuaries, lakes and bays, preferring exposed sandbanks or sand spits to roost and breed.

Why are they important?

The small eastern Australian population of Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons sinensis*) is listed as endangered in Queensland under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. It is estimated only about 3000 pairs remain and the endangered status is due to low breeding success and high levels of disturbance at coastal breeding and resting sites. It breeds in spring/summer (September to December) from Tasmania to South East Queensland.

The South Stradbroke Island site, at Jumpinpin, is the only known breeding location within south east Queensland. This population is being monitored to find out more about this species, its breeding success, how we impact them and how we can help them survive.

Visitors should not disturb the site and should refer to the interpretive signage which outlines the bird refuge exclusion area, (see map).

Little Terns eat small fish, and forage by plunging into the shallow water of channels and estuaries, or into the surf. Fish are captured with the bill and consumed whilst in flight. They are generally seen roosting in large flocks on isolated sand spits with other terns – typically the Common Tern and the much larger Crested Tern.



Little tern eggs are not much bigger than a shell

These birds nest in small, scattered colonies in low dunes or sandy ocean beaches just above high tide mark. Nesting areas on the northern end of South Stradbroke Island are typically low-lying, barren and far from any vegetation, and often located in larger patches of 'beach shingle', where shell grit, pebbles and other beach debris provide camouflage. The nest is a shallow scrape in the sand, onto which the eggs are directly laid.

Both parents incubate up to three eggs for 17 to 25 days. They aggressively defend against predators until the young fledge at 17 to 19 days. The incubation and fledgling of young typically occurs between October and December. This is when they are most vulnerable to predation and other disturbance.

Identification

Little Terns are the smallest tern in Australia. Its body length is 20 to 28 centimetres. It has a white neck, chest and underbelly with a moderately long and narrow, deeply forked tail (80 to 110 millimetres). The wings are light grey and become darker grey-black on the outer edge. The tail is slightly shorter than the wing-tips when the bird is at rest.

Another distinguishing feature is a white crown and forehead, with a narrow, black band from eye to the back of the neck or nape. Breeding birds have a black crown, nape and tapering line from eye to bill, with a triangular, white patch on the forehead. Also during the breeding season, the bill and legs will change from black to yellow.



A little tern hatchling

Threats to the survival of the Little Tern

- habitat destruction from sand mining and waste disposal
- pesticides and contamination of estuaries by oil spills and heavy metals
- predation of eggs and chicks by feral animals, uncontrolled domestic dogs, silver gulls and raptors
- nesting at flood-prone locations