

## LAKE WOLLUMBOOLA IS IMPORTANT FOR BIRDS

Lake Wollumboola is a shallow, brackish coastal lake known as an ICOLL, an intermittently closing and opening lake or lagoon. The Lake cycles through high and low water levels depending on rainfall, runoff, openings and evaporation. The Lake is perched above mean sea level so when the Lake breaches the sand bar, a huge volume of water pours out and it becomes tidal, leaving 60% of the Lake bed exposed. Waves eventually deposit sand and the entrance closes.

An estimated 104 bird species, including over 20 NSW-listed Threatened migratory and indigenous bird species benefit from this unique variability.

The diversity of habitats for foraging, breeding, roosting and shelter is extraordinary including the sand bar where Little Terns breed. They feast on the plentiful fish along with other fish-eating birds in the clear, shallow waters of the Lake. Migratory waders such as the Bar-tailed Godwit and local Pied Oystercatchers probe for crustaceans on the exposed sand and mudflats. Black Swans graze on sea grasses and algae, whilst White-fronted Chats and Black-winged Stilts nest in salt marsh vegetation on the Lake fringe.

The greatest bird numbers and diversity occurs during summer when the Lake level is low, attracting both migratory waders, sea birds and water birds as occurred during 2013-14 summer.



The Lake's special role in sustaining such amazing bird diversity is conserved and recognised by its inclusion in Jervis Bay National Park. It is also recognised as a Wetland of National Importance and by its candidacy for listing under the Ramsar Convention as a Wetland of International Importance and as a Globally Important Bird Area.

Lake Wollumboola and therefore its value as a bird haven, is vulnerable to nutrient and sediment pollution from urban stormwater and ground water which will cause micro algae blooms depleting oxygen and smothering aquatic plants that support the Lake's bird and aquatic life.

## BIRDS OF LAKE WOLLUMBOOLA

Protected under both or one of NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act or Commonwealth Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act

Musk Duck (breeding)	Black-tailed Godwit
Black Swan (breeding)	Bar-tailed Godwit
Australian Shelduck	Pied Oystercatcher (breeding)
Australian Wood Duck	Sooty Oystercatcher
Pacific Black Duck	Black-winged Stilt (breeding)
Australasian Shoveler (breeding)	Banded Stilt
Grey Teal	Red-necked Avocet
Chestnut Teal (breeding)	Pacific Golden Plover
Pink-eared Duck	Grey Plover
Northern Mallard	Red-capped Plover (breeding)
Hardhead	Double-banded Plover
Australasian Grebe	Lesser Sand Plover
Hoary-headed Grebe	Greater Sand Plover
Great Crested Grebe	Black-fronted Dotterel
Darter	Hooded Plover
Little Pied Cormorant	Masked Lapwing (breeding)
Great Cormorant	Whimberel
Little Black Cormorant	Eastern Curlew
Pied Cormorant	Beach-stone Curlew
Australian Pelican	Common Greenshank
White-necked Heron	Ruddy Turnstone
White-faced Heron	Great Knot
Striated Heron	Red Knot
Australian Bittern	Sanderling
Black Bittern	Red-necked Stint
Eastern Great Egret	Pectoral Sandpiper
Intermediate Egret	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
Little Egret	Buff-breasted Sandpiper
Eastern Reef Egret	Curlew Sandpiper
Australian White Ibis	Marsh Sandpiper
Straw-necked Ibis	Broad-billed Sandpiper
Royal Spoonbill	Terek Sandpiper
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	Grey Tattler
Eastern Osprey	Little Tern (breeding)
White-bellied Sea-eagle	Gull-billed Tern
Wedge-tailed Eagle	Caspian Tern
Whistling Kite	Whiskered Tern
Square-tailed Kite	Fairy Tern
Black-shouldered Kite	White-winged Black Tern
Brown Goshawk	White-fronted Tern
Grey Goshawk	Common Tern
Swamp Harrier	Crested Tern
Nankeen Kestrel	Kelp Gull
Brown Falcon	Silver Gull
Peregrine Falcon	Pacific Gull
Australian Hobby	Little Shearwater
Purple Swamphen	Wedge-tailed Shearwater
Dusky Moorhen	White-fronted Chat
Buff-banded Rail	Australasian Pipit
Spotless Crane	Australasian Raven
Latham's Snipe	Welcome Swallow
Eurasian Coot	

## LAKE WOLLUMBOOLA PROTECTION ASSOCIATION INC

# Presenting the Birds of Lake Wollumboola



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November 2014

# THE BIRDS OF LAKE WOLLUMBOOLA



The **Black Swan** is an icon of Lake Wollumboola. They dine on the abundant algae and sea grass (*Ruppia*) growing to the surface in the Lake. The south west shore and the northern shore and swales including Sheepwash Creek are favourite places for the Swans to congregate and drink fresh ground

water. Swans need these freshwater soaks as they cannot process salt. On one occasion over 13,000 Swans were recorded on the Lake. This makes Lake Wollumboola one of the most important drought refuges for this species in eastern Australia.



**Teal** come in Chestnut and Grey at Lake Wollumboola. The male Chestnut Teal has a beautiful bottle green head and neck which shines brilliantly in the sun and a rich chestnut body. They feed on small crustaceans, invertebrates and seeds that they collect in their

bills from the surface of the water or from the lake bed by upending.



Lake Wollumboola has supported, bird numbers as high as 20,000. The Lake is recognised by Birdlife International as an Important Bird Area for supporting more than 1% of the world populations of Swans and Chestnut Teal.



**Red-necked Avocets** are an elegant wader with chestnut brown head and neck, a long, upturned bill and pale blue legs. Its wings are white, with striking black wing bars and tips. It forages by sweeping its bill back and forth below the surface to catch its food.

## The East Asian-Australasian Flyway—the migratory route to Australia

Shorebirds travel the longest distances in the world, flying up to 13,000 kms non-stop from their northern hemisphere breeding grounds, arriving in Australia in September each year. The Little Tern does the reverse, breeding here.

The season coincides with summer holidays with many visitors enjoying our coastline. Shorebirds are vulnerable to human disturbance especially beach-nesting shorebirds. Dogs and vehicles on the beach frighten the birds who leave their nests exposing eggs and chicks to predators and trampling by people and vehicles.

The loss or degradation of critical feeding and roosting habitat is a major problem for shorebirds. Threats to habitat along the Flyway include filling in of wetlands, water pollution from development, changes to water flows, invasive weeds, introduced predators such as foxes, dogs and cats, and disturbance caused by vehicles, dog walking, jogging and boating. These threats impact on the availability of suitable habitat for shorebirds to feed, rest and breed.

Shorebirds are good indicators of change in their environment and can provide early warnings of environmental problems, including those caused by climate change and deteriorating habitat.



We are indebted to ornithologist, Ms Joy Pegler, who every month since 1993 has counted and documented the birds at Lake Wollumboola and their varied habitats.



**Little Terns** migrate from Asia to nest on the sand bar at Lake Wollumboola. The Little Tern is endangered in NSW due to habitat loss. They make their nest by scraping a depression in the sandy shell grit and laying 1 to 3 eggs. The chicks are well disguised and can lay still for long periods be-

coming virtually invisible. However many fall prey to foxes, gulls, ravens, raptors and snakes. Care must also be taken when walking on the beach not to tread on a chick often hiding in footprints. Little Terns dive for the plentiful small fish which they feed to their young. National Parks volunteers help protect the Little Terns by monitoring nests, erecting fencing, signage and sandbagging individual nests to protect them from wave wash over.



The **Pied Oystercatcher** is an unmistakable, large, black and white wader with striking bright red/orange bill and eyes and pink legs. They nest on sandy beaches in a nest scrape similar to the Little Tern. Pied Oystercatchers are endangered in NSW. They feed on worms, crustaceans,

insects and bivalve molluscs, which they prise apart with their specially adapted bills. In November this year a nest was laid and two chicks hatched—an exciting addition for Lake Wollumboola.



**Red-necked Stints** breed in the Arctic regions of Alaska and Siberia, on moist moss and lichen tundra. These tiny birds follow the East Asian-Australasian Flyway to spend the summer months in Australia. They forage in groups, moving

rapidly on exposed mudflats picking constantly for seeds, insects, small vertebrates, saltmarsh plants, molluscs and crustaceans.



The **Bar-tailed Godwit** is an amazing bird. It leaves its breeding ground in Alaska to undertake a non-stop eight day journey of over 11,000 kms to arrive in time for the Australian spring. They wade in groups through the shallows and over exposed mud probing their

long bills rapidly to find the abundant molluscs, worms and aquatic insects.