

TAXON SUMMARY

Beach Stone-curlew

1	Family	Burhinidae
2	Scientific name	<i>Esacus neglectus</i> Mathews, 1912
3	Common name	Beach Stone-curlew
4	Conservation status	Least Concern

5 Reasons for listing

Initial fears of declines of this species have not been born out by monitoring and much of the habitat, particularly on islands, is secure. The global status is Near Threatened on the basis of extralimital threats but there is unlikely to be much genetic interchange between Australian and global populations. The Australian population is therefore assessed independently (as per Gärdenfors *et al.*, 1999).

	Estimate	Reliability
Extent of occurrence	12,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	high
Area of occupancy	3,000 km ²	medium
trend	stable	medium
Population size	5,000	low
trend	stable	medium
No. of sub-populations	1	high
Generation time	5 years	low
Global population share	25 %	low
Level of genetic exchange	low	medium

6 Intraspecific taxa

None described.

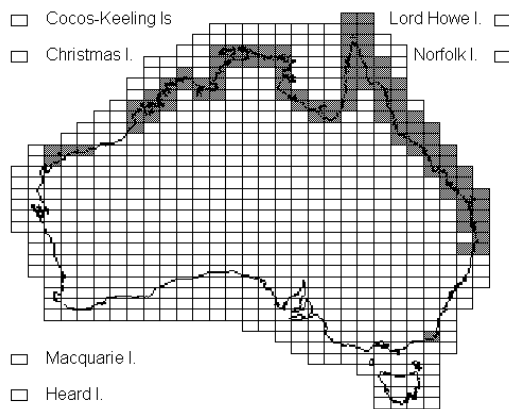
7 Past range and abundance

Disjunct distribution around the coast and on offshore islands in northern and eastern Australia (Draffan *et al.*, 1983, Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Balmford, 1990, McLean, 1996, Marchant and Higgins, 1993, Johnstone and Storr, 1998, Milton, 1998). Breeding recorded between Sandy Point, W. A., and north-eastern New South Wales. Vagrants found as far south as Carnarvon, W. A., and Mallacoota, Vic. (Blakers *et al.*, 1984, Marchant and Higgins, 1993, Johnstone and Storr, 1998). Extralimital populations in south-east Asia and on islands of south-west Pacific Ocean.

8 Present range and abundance

Density may have declined locally on islands or in areas of the mainland where there are high levels of human disturbance, particularly around inhabited islands of the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait. However, from 1920s to 1970s range appears to have extended south in the east from Great Keppel I., Qld. to Ballina, N. S. W. (Marchant and Higgins, 1993, Clancy and Christensen, 1980). Population estimate of at least 1,000 individuals (Draffan *et al.* 1983,

Cornelius, 1987, 1988, Watkins, 1993), with a further 50-70 birds on northern Great Barrier Reef, and an unknown, but probably substantial, number along the coasts of Northern Territory and Western Australia (Milton, 1998, A. A. Burbidge, J. Woinarski).



9 Ecology

Pairs of Beach Stone-curlews may be found on most beaches within the species' range, including short stretches of muddy sand among mangroves, coralline sands on atolls and prime surf beaches. However, not all apparently suitable beaches support the birds. Birds do not occupy long stretches of continuous mangroves or cliffs (Clancy, 1986, Marchant and Higgins, 1993), though beaches associated with estuaries or near mangroves are particularly favoured. Though vagrants are recorded far from their usual range, adults appear sedentary. The species lays a single egg in a scrape in the sand at the landward edge of the beach, often using the same small area repeatedly. It mainly forages in the intertidal zone, feeding on crabs and other marine invertebrates (Clancy, 1986, Marchant and Higgins, 1993).

10 Threats

Beach Stone-curlews are thought to be sensitive to human disturbance, and predation by cats, dogs and feral pigs may reduce breeding success (Roberts, 1957, Garnett, 1992). Uninhabited islands of the Great Barrier Reef (Milton, 1998) and elsewhere around northern Australia are largely free of such disturbances, so provide an important refuge. As the species occurs at a low density in an essentially linear habitat, local extinctions could easily become regional ones, although the historical expansion of range south

suggests that such extinctions do not represent genetic barriers.

11 Recommended actions

- 11.1 Maintain a register of beaches on which species is recorded as a means of monitoring trends, particularly in parts of range with high human usage.
- 11.2 If necessary, control use of beaches by humans and their dogs, particularly when Beach Stone-curlew are breeding.
- 11.3 Determine relationship between human disturbance and breeding success.

12 Bibliography

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