

Community Conservation of the Far Eastern Curlew

Project update

4 April 2018

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Far Eastern Curlews are the largest of all the world's shorebirds. About 75 per cent of the world's curlews winter in Australia, so we have a special responsibility to protect them.

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is leading a project titled *Community Conservation of Eastern Curlew* to help protect this critically endangered species. This is a 2-year project to be completed by 30 June 2019. Funds have been provided by the Australian Government through the Threatened Species Recovery Fund under the National Landcare Program.



Project activities are taking place in 5 locations: Towra Point Nature Reserve (Sydney NSW), Moreton Bay and the Broadwater (SEQ), Hunter Estuary (Newcastle NSW), Shoalhaven Heads (Nowra NSW), and Casuarina Coastal Reserve (Darwin NT).

Project action

1. *On-ground work*: undertaken by supervised volunteer teams to engage the community in conservation action and improve the condition and resilience of beach and saltmarsh habitat by controlling invasive weeds and mangroves under license, closing access and removing marine debris.
2. *Community Awareness Events*: An annual event in each location to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of Eastern Curlews and other shorebirds, and promote the message that shorebirds should not be disturbed.
3. *Shorebird monitoring*: bi-annual CVA monitoring surveys uploaded to BLA's shorebird 2020 data portal, plus local data contributions and analyse by BirdLife Australia.
4. *Land Manager and Stakeholder workshop*: to connect land managers with the monitoring data, build knowledge of shorebird issues across the flyway, and plan ongoing conservation.
5. *Preparation of Guidelines for community restoration of shorebird habitat*: web-based fact sheets and case studies distributed by the EAAFP.



PROGRESS REPORT September 2017-March 2018

On-ground work

The CVA project team has liaised with land management agencies to assess each location and prepare Site Action Plans. These have been approved by the land managers and reviewed by BirdLife Australia.

To date, 17 on-ground team-days have been completed at 4 of the locations, with the fifth location commencing on 10/4. On-ground work is being monitored via daily site reports and photo points. These are being evaluated at the end of each 6-month stage, so results are not yet available.

Community Awareness Events

CVA has hosted four community events at Towra Point, Hunter Estuary, Shoalhaven and Deception Bay. The events included a community marine debris clean-up, a Year 8 geography excursion, and two *Farewell Shorebird* field events with a chance to observe migratory shorebirds through scopes. The Darwin event was postponed due to a cyclone and will be held on 21st April 2018.

In all 86 people participated in these events, and 12 organisations were involved including University of Queensland, Moreton Bay Regional Council, Hunter Bird Observers Club, Shoalhaven Birders, Shoalhaven City Council, Sutherland Shire Council, NSW Wader Study Group, Georges River Riverkeepers, NSW NPWS, and Local Land Services.

CVA produced a factsheet and PowerPoint presentation on Eastern Curlew, and BLA provided ID booklets and student handouts.

Evaluation surveys are undertaken at all community events. We have had a very enthusiastic response, as shown by the feedback:

"[I learned] how endangered the Eastern Curlews are and how important our shoreline is to their survival"

"It is wonderful to be a part of this project to help protect and preserve these incredible, critically endangered species."

"Awesome day, combining action to clean the land and education on how to protect endangered species. Having food provided and pick-up were enjoyable bonuses!"

"Worthwhile project. Anything that contributes to avoidance of the Eastern Curlew extinction is to be encouraged and applauded."

"Easy to join, friendly staff, visible outcomes and education at the front."



High school excursion at the Hunter Estuary, supported by Hunter Bird Observers Club and NPWS.

Shorebird Monitoring Surveys

CVA teams have undertaken 16 shorebird surveys at 10 locations. These have been completed with community participants at on-ground team-days and awareness events, and during site assessments. One survey was conducted at night to help Hunter Bird Observers Club ascertain if Tomago Wetlands is used as a night-roost.

To date, 125 participants have been involved in these surveys, most of them new to shorebirds. They included 34 students from Hunter River High School. Our assistants from Hunter Bird Observers Club enjoyed the experience of educating young people.

Our surveys have counted 2,143 birds in all from 79 species. In total we have counted 280 Eastern Curlew, which were present at 7 of the sites. The site with the most consistent Eastern Curlew numbers is Shoalhaven Heads, with 48-94 birds across the three counts. The worst site for disturbance is Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

Local organisations assisting with the surveys include Hunter Bird Observers Club, NSW Wader Study Group, Charles Darwin University, Larrakia Nation, and Darwin Field Naturalists.

Conclusion

In its first 6-months, the project is building community understanding and conservation of Eastern Curlew and other migratory shorebirds, and engaging volunteers in habitat restoration.

Further information

Louise Duff
Program Manager
Wetlands Catchments Coasts
Conservation Volunteers Australia
lduff@cva.org.au
M: 0432 688775



CVA project team planning the clean-up at Quibray Bay. Community volunteers removed 0.5 tonnes of debris, mainly plastics.