

Community Conservation of the Far Eastern Curlew

PROGRESS REPORT

Year 1 September 2017-June 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).

On-ground work

To date, CVA teams have completed a total of **55 on-ground team-days** at the five locations. We have made good progress, controlling weeds, mangroves and marine debris across **226 hectares** compared to our final target of 270 ha. Our teams have **removed 2 tonnes of marine debris** from saltmarsh and beach habitat, and planted 1200 local natives to close-off an unauthorised trail and prevent horse-riders from disturbing shorebirds at Towra Point.

In total **419 volunteers** have participated in on-ground work, including **15 Indigenous Australians** working on-country. Of these 320 volunteers have returned to participate more than once.



Community Awareness Events

CVA hosted a community event at each location. **123 people participated** in these events, and **15 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, Local Land Services and Larrakia Rangers.

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."

Shorebird Monitoring Surveys

CVA exceeded our fauna survey targets, engaging volunteers to conduct 20 summer and winter shorebird counts which were uploaded to BirdLife Australia's BirdData portal. Across all sites, our teams counted **2,376 birds from 107 species**, including **275 Eastern Curlew and 17 Curlew Sandpiper**.



The channel between Comerong Island and Shoalhaven River reserve has the most significant number of Eastern Curlew. Volunteers recorded 48-94 individuals across three surveys.

Shorebird Monitoring Surveys continued...

The top site for Eastern Curlew was Shoalhaven Heads, with 48-94 birds across the three counts. The worst site for disturbance is Casuarina Coastal Reserve. 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.

CVA appreciates support from local organisations assisting with the surveys, including Hunter Bird Observers Club, NSW Wader Study Group, Charles Darwin University, Larrakia Nation, and Darwin Field Naturalists. BirdLife Australia has prepared a summary report of Shorebird 2020 data for each location.

Conclusion

At the end of Year 1, the project is building community understanding and conservation of Eastern Curlew and other migratory shorebirds, and engaging volunteers in habitat restoration.

Further information

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CVA removed 75 cubic metres of marine debris weighing 2 tonnes from project sites.

