

Black-tailed Godwit

Limosa limosa (Linnaeus, 1758)

Other common names Eastern Black-tailed Godwit, Large Godwit

Conservation status

The Black-tailed Godwit is listed as a **Vulnerable Species** on Schedule 2 of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995* (TSC Act).

Description (summarised from Higgins & Davies 1996)

Length

380-440mm

Wingspan

630-750mm

Tail

70-73mm

Bill

72-85mm

Tarsus

62-68mm

Weight

200-300g

The Black-tailed Godwit is a large sandpiper with a long, straight, bicoloured bill, a long, broad, white wing-stripe and a black tail. In Australia, individuals are observed in their non-breeding plumage which is grey-brown

above and white below, with a grey breast. A broad white strip is apparent on the upperwing. There is a sharp demarcation between the white rump and the black tail. The iris is brown and the legs and feet are greenish-grey.

Individuals are distinguishable from Bar-tailed Godwits by even more grey upperparts, white rump and upper-tail, black terminal half to tail, broad white wing-bar, straighter bill, longer legs with toes extending well beyond the tail tip in flight.

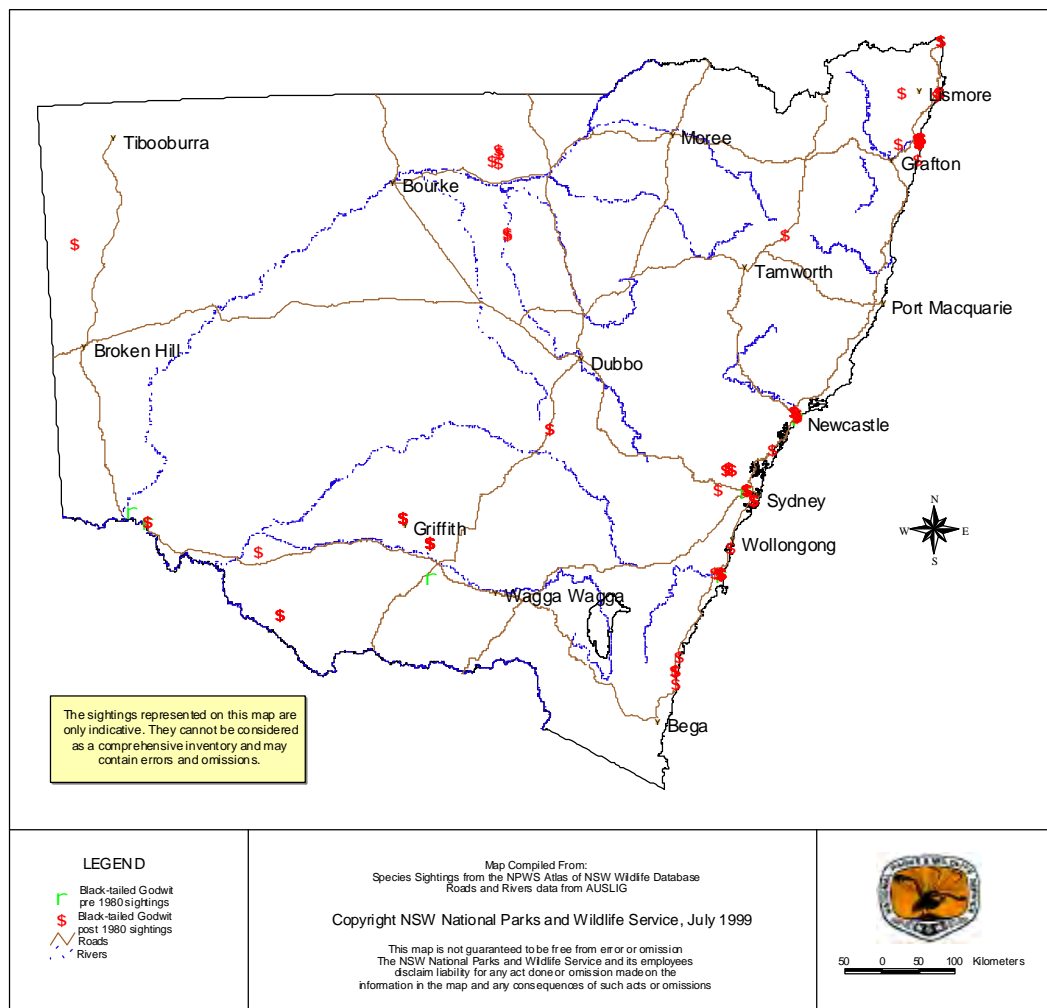
The species calls in flight with a loud *gritto-gritto*, *witta-witta* and *kip-kip-kip*.

Distribution

The Black-tailed Godwit is a migratory, wading bird that breeds in the Palaearctic (Mongolia and Siberia) and visits Australia during the summer, arriving in August and leaving in March (Kingsford 1991; Higgins & Davies 1996).



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NPWS records of the Black-tailed Godwit in NSW

Within Australia, the Black-tailed Godwit is most common on the north coast between Weipa and Darwin. However, it is found in small numbers elsewhere, including along much of the Queensland coast south of Cairns and at scattered inland sites. In Western Australia the species is known along the coastline south of Derby and a few inland sites including Kalgoorlie. South Australia has records from the south-eastern coastal region and inland near Lake Eyre. The species also extends into Victoria, where it is found mainly around Port Phillip Bay (Higgins & Davies 1996).

In NSW, the Black-tailed Godwit has been regularly recorded only on Kooragang Island (Newcastle), however scattered sightings

from both coastal and inland areas are usual (Higgins & Davies 1996; P. Ewins pers. comm.). Inland records in western NSW indicate that a regular inland passage is used by this species as it may occur around any of the large lakes in the western zone during summer when the muddy shores are exposed (Pizzey 1991). This species has been recorded within the Murray-Darling Basin from Narran Lake in the north, to the Riverina in the south (including Fivebough and Nerrcon swamps), and west to Fletcher's Lake and Gol Gol Swamp. It has also been infrequently recorded in the Northern Tablelands on the west slopes of the Great Dividing Range and in the far north-west corner of NSW including Cobham Lake (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Recorded occurrences in conservation reserves

Eurobodalla NP, Comerong Island NR, Koorangang NR, Macquarie Marshes NR, Narran Lake NR, Pitt Town NR (NPWS 1999).

Habitat

The Black-tailed Godwit is primarily found along the coast on sand spits, lagoons and mudflats. However, the species also occurs inland on mudflats and in those portions of large muddy lakes and swamps (freshwater or brackish) where the water is less than 10 cm deep during suitable conditions (i.e. receding water) (Pizzey 1991; Higgins & Davies 1996). Individuals have also been observed in wet meadows and sewerage treatment works (Kingsford 1991).

Ecology

The diet of the Black-tailed Godwit includes a variety of invertebrates such as insects and larvae, earthworms, crustaceans, molluscs, spiders, spawn and tadpoles of frogs and fish eggs (Schodde & Tidemann 1986; Higgins & Davies 1996). Seeds and berries are important food sources when the species is in the northern hemisphere, especially after breeding and before migration (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Threats

- Hydrological changes to inland lakes may modify or remove important areas of suitable habitat for those individuals that remain in Australia over winter
- Tourism or agricultural developments reducing coastal and inland habitat areas

Management

- Protection and maintenance of known or potential habitat, including the implementation of protection zones around recent records

Recovery plans

A recovery plan has not been prepared for this species.

References

- Higgins P.J. and Davies S.J. (Eds) 1996. Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 3: Snipe to Pigeons. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
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- NPWS 1999. Atlas of NSW Wildlife. NPWS, Hurstville.
- Pizzey G. 1991. A Field Guide to the Birds of Australia, Revised Edition. Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Schodde R. and Tidemann S.C. 1986. Complete Book of Australian Birds. Reader's Digest Services Pty Ltd, Surrey Hills.

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