



mallee

# waterbirds

field guide



**ma/ee**  
catchment management authority

# Mallee CMA Region



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Chris Woods

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## Why another field guide for birds?

This field guide includes waterbirds that are known to occur in the Mallee region. It contains information based on local knowledge and experience to help identify a waterbird. It is designed to be small and light enough to carry in your pocket.

## Who is this guide for?

This guide is to assist natural resource managers in monitoring waterbird numbers at sites that have received environmental water. It is also for seasoned bird observers, and anyone interested in learning more about waterbirds in the Mallee.

## What is a waterbird?

The definition of a waterbird used for this guide is those birds expected to be seen in, on and around water bodies that are receiving environmental water.

## International Agreements

The international agreements protecting migratory waterbirds species throughout the Mallee CMA include:

- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals - (Bonn Convention)
- China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA)
- Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA)
- Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (ROKAMBA)

### **Bonn Convention**

The Bonn Convention is an inter-governmental treaty that recognises that wild animals are an irreplaceable part of the earth's natural system which must be conserved for the good of the human race.

There are 49 parties to the convention, which aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range.

### **CAMBA & JAMBA**

The China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA) and Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA) are bilateral agreements between the governments of Japan and China and the government of Australia for the Protection of Migratory Birds in Danger of Extinction, and their Environment.

The two agreements list terrestrial, water and shorebird species which migrate between Australia and the respective countries.

### **Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (ROKAMBA)**

ROKAMBA formalises Australia's relationship with the Republic of Korea in respect to migratory bird conservation and provides a basis for collaboration on the protection of migratory shorebirds and their habitat.



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# Red-necked Avocet

*Recurvirostra novaehollandiae*



Photo Trevor Pescott

## Description

Large pretty bird, white body with a deep chestnut head and neck, white eye-ring, wings barred white and black. Unmistakable bill, at least twice as long as the head, thin and upward-curved. Long blue-grey legs. No discernible difference between male and female. **Flight:** Black and white striped pattern when flying, legs trail far behind. **Voice:** A musical yap yap yap.

## Where You'll See Them

Fairly common locally. Inhabit shallow salt lakes, hardly ever seen in fresh water. **Locally:** Quite often seen in Mourquong at the salt interception scheme, in large numbers, and also known to occur on Meridian Road wetlands in the past.

## Breeding

Nest is a scrape in the ground, sometimes with a few sticks or twigs in there. Breed locally.

## Feeding

Feed from side to side moving bill through the water as they walk, bottom feeders.

## Quirky Fact

Will swim.

# Banded Stilt

*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*



Photo Trevor Pescott

## Description

Similar to Black Winged Stilt except for white head, breast band tapers to a single strip under the belly. White back, feet partly webbed, straight long thin bill. Legs are red in adult and blue as a youngster. **Flight:** Slow wing beat, legs trail beyond tail, usually fly in small groups. **Voice:** A yap sound.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in saline wetlands only, on land and water, often found in company of other stilts.

## Breeding

Nest is a shallow scraping in sand.

## Feeding

Feed mostly on numerous types of saline shrimps and krill-like food.

## Quirky Fact

Until 1939 nest and eggs weren't discovered in the Mallee.

## Similar Species

When in large flocks the leg colour distinguishes these from other species.

# Black Winged Stilt

*Himantopus himantopus*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Medium-sized white bird with black wings and back and a white nape. Needle-like black bill, long pink legs which hang out past the tail in flight. **Voice:** A yap yap sound.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in fresh and brackish swamps.

## Breeding

Nest in colonies on mud mounds interwoven with grasses. Nest is a raised platform.

## Feeding

Feed along the edges of water and in water, will put bill into the mud for worms and molluscs. Also feed on shrimp.

## Distinguishing Fact

Will swim.



# Little Bittern

*Ixobrychus minutus*



**Photo** Julian Robinson, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Smallest of the bitterns, very colourful. Straw-coloured with a black crown, dark back and tail, chestnut down the side of the head and on nape, light brown patch on the top of the wings. Brown streaks run down the throat and belly. Yellow eyes, placed high on the head. Strong pointed thick bill, quite long. Long legs and strong feet to grab onto reeds.

## Where You'll See Them

Not commonly seen in the Mallee region. Rarely seen in the open, always in the reeds. **Locally:** Have been seen in Gol Gol recently. Also seen at Baggs Lagoon and Kings Billabong.

## Breeding

Semi-colonial. Nest is a platform of rushes or reeds. **Locally:** Local breeder, have been known to nest at the base of Pump Hill in the past. Used to breed regularly at the sewage farm in Dareton.

## Feeding

Feed on frogs, reptiles, yabbies, etc. probably crepuscular (dusk and dawn) feeders.

## Quirky Fact

Stand vertically with their head in the air and wave in the breeze to resemble reeds.

# Australasian Bittern

*Botaurus poiciloptilus*



Photo Peter Fuller

## Description

Very large brown secretive bird, brown streaks on a buff base, large light grey-coloured bill, olive green legs. **Flight:** Laboured with slow wing beats. **Voice:** Boom which carries up to 2-3km.

## Where You'll See Them

Uncommon, not often seen, relies on camouflage for protection from predators, mainly nocturnal. Seen in reed beds.

## Breeding

Nest is a shallow platform.

## Feeding

Omnivorous, feed on frogs, lizards, snakes and other small birds.

## Quirky Fact

Relies on camouflage - pretends to be cumbungi.



# Little Egret

*Ardea garzetta*



**Photo** Ian Montgomery

## Description

White bird with black beak and black legs.

## Where You'll See Them

Not as common in the Mallee region as the Great or Intermediate Egret. Found in similar habitat as other Egrets.

## Breeding

Not often seen breeding in this region.

## Feeding

Active busy feeder, rush around in shallow water and swamps to feed.



# Intermediate Egret

*Ardea intermedia*



**Photo** Julian Robinson, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Difficult to distinguish from the Great Egret. Yellow on the beak, not extending past the eye. **Breeding:** Beak is orange, legs are dark.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in similar habitats to the Great Egret, although not as common.

## Breeding

Nest in colonies in trees over water. Nests made from sticks.

## Feeding

Feeding is similar to the Great Egret - stalker.

## Similar Species

Great Egret. Intermediate Egret is 30cm smaller than the Great Egret, and proportionately the beak is smaller. Distinguish also by the yellow on the beak.



# Great Egret

*Ardea alba*



**Photo** Manuel Mejia, Tree of Life Web Project OR Ian Montgomery?

## Description

Large white bird 30cm larger than the Intermediate Egret, with a yellow beak. Yellow on the beak extends past the eye to a point (best way to distinguish from the Intermediate Egret). When not breeding difficult to tell male and female apart. **Breeding:** Beak changes colour, legs are dark, and area below the eye is green. Males have breeding plumes.

## Where You'll See Them

Feed around edges of wetlands and rivers.

## Breeding

Breed in colonies in trees around swamps. Seen when river floods nesting in trees. Stick nest. Not often seen breeding in the Mallee region, and will move away to breed.

## Feeding

Good stealthy hunters that stalk around the edge of the water and will whip head forward like a trigger using their kinked neck. Will eat frogs and tadpoles.

## Quirky Fact

Have been seen spearing frogs with their beak.



# Cattle Egret

*Ardea ibis*



Photo Marj Kibby, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Appears squat and 'dumpy', neck appears short. **Males** colour up in the breeding season, with orange plumes.

## Where You'll See Them

Not common in the Mallee region. Commonly found around cattle in paddocks, and in wetlands.

## Breeding

Nest in trees.

## Feeding

Feed along disturbed ground as cattle move. Like to pick lice, flies and ticks off the backs of cattle.

## Similar Species

Intermediate Egret and Great Egret. Neck appears shorter than these species.

# White-faced Heron

*Egretta novaehollandiae*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Large grey bird with a white face; can have rusty plumage on the chest. Yellow legs. **Flight:** Slow, flapping flight. Folds neck back when flying.

## Where You'll See Them

Often observed singly, but can be found in small groups around any water body, including small water bodies in the middle of dry areas.

## Breeding

Will sometimes nest a long way from water. Builds a rough stick nest generally high in a tree; doesn't have to be over water.

## Feeding

Feed on anything that moves including crickets, frogs. Chase food around. Will feed in areas outside of wetlands. Catch food with a stabbing motion.

## Distinguishing Fact

Often seen standing alone in a small body of water.

# White-necked Heron

*Ardea pacifica*



Photo Graeme Chapman

## Description

Large grey bird with white neck, face and head. Much larger than the White-faced Heron. **Breeding:** Small black dots down the throat and front of neck. **Flight:** Shows 'headlights' on the front of wings.

## Where You'll See Them

Not as common as the White-faced Heron, but reasonably common in this region. Often seen along the river, and in wetlands.

## Breeding

Nesting similar to the White-faced Heron, but doesn't breed away from water.

## Feeding

Stalk around the edge of wetlands and along the river bank to feed.

# Nankeen Night Heron

*Nycticorax caledonicus*



Photo Ian Montgomery

## Description

Squat dumpy bird, appears almost comical. Nankeen brown (rusty brown) in colour with a black crown. Often with plumes. No discernible difference in appearance between male and female.

**Flight:** Awkward, commonly seen flying in the evening.

**Voice:** Very distinct, strange hoarse croak.

## Where You'll See Them

Roost in trees during the day, often in willow trees where there's plenty of cover, and near water bodies.

## Breeding

Have been seen nesting at Iraak.

## Feeding

Seen feeding at night, will feed in the day when breeding.

## Distinguishing Fact

Feathers shine when the sun hits them.

## Interesting Fact

Call in flight.

# Eurasian Coot

*Fulica atra*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Common medium-sized dark grey and dull bird, appears black from a distance. Red eye. White shield in between the eyes from the top of the forehead to the beak, wider in the male. Lobed toes with part webbing. **Flight:** Not commonly seen in flight. **Voice:** A discordant squark.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in open water and nesting in reeds.

## Breeding

Nest in reeds.

## Feeding

Feed on aquatic plants, chase insects on top of the water, often jump in the air to dive down a bit deeper.

## Quirky Facts

Often congregate in large flocks; feeding flocks make a lot of noise. Swim rapidly on the water, appear to run across the top of the water. Will kill their young by drowning.

# Baillon's Crake

*Porzana pusilla*



Photo Allan Taylor

## Description

Smallest of our Crakes. Light brown dorsally with pale grey underneath, barred belly and undertail, red eyes, olive legs and bill, large feet. **Flight:** Fluttering, legs dangle as they fly. **Voice:** A bubbling cracking sound (similar to other Crakes).

## Where You'll See Them

Secretive in nature, inhabit reeds around waterways. Rarely seen in the open.

## Breeding

Cup-shaped nest of grass in reeds, canopy over nest.

## Feeding

Surface feeding on reeds and to a lesser extent on exposed mud; feed on small insects and invertebrates and small crustaceans.



# Australian Spotted Crake

*Porzana fluminea*



Photo Allan Taylor

## Description

Dark grey bird with spots on the upper back, horizontal barring across the belly, and white underneath the tail. Beak is greenish with a red base, legs olive green. **Voice:** Bubbling crackle (similar to other Crakes).

## Where You'll See Them

Very secretive, rarely seen in the open. Inhabit muddy verges of brackish swamps.

## Breeding

Dome-shaped nest made of dry grass and reeds mainly found in the water in dense cover.

## Feeding

Pick food off the top of the mud (surface feeding), feed on small molluscs, insects, and other invertebrates found in the mud.

## Quirky Fact

The tail is held vertically and flicked as a means of communication.

# Spotless Crake

*Porzana tabuensis*



**Photo** Julian Robinson, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Small dull dark bird, dark brown back and wings, sooty underneath. Appear almost black. Barred black and white under the tail. Red eye, short and stout grey bill, red legs. **Young** are tiny, the size of a marble. **Flight:** Not generally seen flying. **Voice:** Rattling call (similar to other Crakes).

## Where You'll See Them

Very secretive, rarely seen in the open. Inhabit edge of the reeds in fresh and salty wetlands.

## Breeding

Nest in the reeds in sheltered places. Shallow cup-shaped nest.

## Feeding

Feed on the edges of reeds on molluscs, worms, etc.

## Distinguishing Fact

Upright tail.



# Dusky Moorhen

*Gallinula tenebrosa*



Photo Graeme Chapman

## Description

Common chook-sized hen. Sooty dull black with a white patch under the tail. Red shield on the bill; bill bright red with a yellow tip. Red legs. Semi-lobed, very long toes (compared with Eurasian Coot with toes fully lobed, and toes of the Purple Swamp Hen, which are plain - no lobes). **Young** have a bright red feathered head and green legs. **Flight:** Heavy, don't fly very well. Legs trail behind when flying. **Voice:** A sharp cruck-cruck sound, but also can be a high-pitched screeching call when alarmed.

## Where You'll See Them

Usually found on the edges of wetlands, also in well-vegetated areas on the edge of the river. Able to enter the water more frequently than a Purple Swamp Hen. Will come out from the reeds onto the grass.

## Breeding

Loose flimsy cup-shaped nest in reeds above water. Usually made from surrounding reeds that they bend down.

## Feeding

Grazing bird, feeds on water weed. Will forage around picnic areas close to the water. Pick off from the surface, will duck their head under the surface.

## Quirky Facts

Constantly flicks tail. Pulls out the softest parts from the centre of water weeds to feed on.

# Purple Swamp Hen

*Porphyrio porphyrio*



Photo Bernie Chaplin

## Description

Large purple bird with a red beak, red shield above the beak, red eye, knobby knees, and very large feet. No discernible difference in appearance between male and female.

**Voice:** Loud shrieking call.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in and around water bodies, in the reeds, on grassy areas and sometimes on river banks.

## Breeding

Nest in reeds, often cumbungi, just above water level.

## Feeding

Feed on the rhizomes of cumbungi by pulling up the reeds and holding them in their feet. Also pick at the ground around wetlands.

## Quirky Fact

Will shred cumbungi in long strands to make nests.

# Black-tailed Native Hen

*Gallinula ventralis*



Photo Trevor Pescott

## Description

Similar in shape to a Bantam Hen. White spots down its side, forward of the wing. Lime green around the face and green shield that widens out below the eyes to cover the top of the beak. Lower beak red, yellow eye, red legs. Male and female similar in appearance.

## Where You'll See Them

Can occur in large flocks at times. Not often solitary. Mainly a water bird but can be found out in the open. **Locally:** Seen at Wentworth sewerage ponds, Kings Billabong, and Meridian Road.

## Breeding

Like to breed in lignum and cumbungi. Nests are well hidden.

## Feeding

Will feed along the edges of water bodies, but also away from water.

## Quirky Fact

Usually holds its tail erect, especially when alarmed.

# Buff Banded Rail

*Gallirallus philippensis*



Photo Allan Taylor

## Description

Medium-sized stocky bird, underparts are black-banded, buff patch on front breast. White eyebrows, chestnut strip from the bill through the eye down to the nape. Short, brown bill.

**Voice:** Call consists of clicks, chips sound, and rattling.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in thick vegetation near water, more often on land than water.

## Breeding

Nests are cup-shaped, made of grasses and leaves in dense cover. Chicks are mobile.

## Feeding

Wide range of feeding habits, opportunistic in their feeding. Feed on frogs, crustaceans, insects, small mammals, other bird eggs, and a wide range of seeds.

# Lewin's Rail

*Rallus pectoralis*



Photo Peter Fuller

## Description

Small secretive bird, smaller in size than the Buff-banded Rail. Dark head with chestnut over the eyebrow and down the neck, chestnut nape. Barred underneath, heavily under the tail, and also on the wings. Barring is very distinctive. Bill is pinkish with a darker dull tip, slightly down-curved, slightly longer than the head. **Flight:** Legs dangle when flying.

## Where You'll See Them

Not commonly seen in the Mallee region. Very shy and secretive. Found in reeds at the edges of wetlands.

## Breeding

Deep cup-shaped nest with a canopy over it, made from reeds.

## Feeding

Feed mainly in the reeds, probably mainly on macroinvertebrates.

# Little Pied Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax melanoleucos*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Small black and white bird - white underneath and white face. Short yellow bill. **Breeding:** Have a spiky crest.

## Where You'll See Them

Most common bird along the river and in wetlands in the Mallee region. Often seen on farm dams.

## Breeding

Nest over water in trees, in rookeries, sometimes in mixed colonies.

## Feeding

Feeds primarily on introduced carp and redfin.

## Similar Species

Similar to the Pied Cormorant - distinguish by colour of bill (yellow compared with grey).



# Little Black Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Black body, bluish around the face. Hook on the end of the beak (characteristic of all cormorants). Black legs. **Flight:** Strong fliers.

## Where You'll See Them

Can be in large numbers in the right conditions. Often seen in big numbers along the river, also found in smaller water bodies like farm dams. **Locally:** Seen in Etiwanda Wetlands in 2008 with young.

## Breeding

Nest over water in big colonies. **Locally:** Colonies have been seen near the Wentworth Weir and over the river from Charcoal Bend (probably in a mixed colony).

## Feeding

Feed on fish and yabbies.

# Pied Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax varius*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Black and white bird, white underneath with a white face. Black on the flank, grey beak (compared with Little Pied Cormorant that has a yellow beak). About a third bigger than the Little Pied Cormorant. **Breeding:** Yellow, blue and pink skin on its face.

## Where You'll See Them

Not very common in the Mallee during the breeding season; tend to be more common here in winter. Found along the river and around wetlands. **Locally:** Were very common some years ago when the Menindee Lakes were full.

## Breeding

Nest over water in large colonies. Nests are substantial platforms built of plant stems and debris. Both parents play roles with inundation.

## Feeding

Feed on fish.



# Great Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax carbo*



**Photo** Marty DeAngelo, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Very large black and glossy bird, with some white on the flank, yellow beak and yellow colouration extending onto the face and throat. Thick beak with a hook on the end, serrated along the edge. No discernible difference in appearance between male and female. **Voice:** Croak and carry on especially when breeding and defending space..

## Where You'll See Them

Found in most wetland habitats, often along rivers but also in wetlands.

## Breeding

Primarily nest in trees over water.

## Feeding

Feed on fish, diving down from the water surface.

## Quirky Fact

Sometimes stretch wings out to dry.

# Darter

*Anhinga melanogaster*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

**Male** is mainly black, dark underneath in flight. **Female** is lighter with a lot of white and brown - white underbelly in flight. Often seen in pairs. **Voice:** Call out loudly, a sharp guttural call.

## Where You'll See Them

Often seen sitting in trees along the river bank holding their wings out to dry. Prefer water bodies with trees around, to be able to dry wings. **Locally:** Seen at the Mildura sewerage ponds and Etiwanda wetlands.

## Breeding

Can be seen nesting with groups of cormorants; nest in trees along the river bank. Nests made from sticks and twigs.

## Feeding

Spear fish while swimming in water. Will feed with groups of cormorants, where a lot of fish are around, for example, bony bream. Also seen individually fishing.

## Quirky Fact

Sometimes called the snake bird because they swim with their long snake-like neck out of the water and their body submerged.

# Australian Pelican

*Pelecanus conspicillatus*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Large black and white bird with a large bill, bottom part of their beak is a large fleshy sack. Males and females very similar in appearance, females have a slightly shorter bill. **Flight:** Graceful, except when they're taking off, often fly in flocks in formation; will follow thermals up. **Voice:** Croak, rasping grunts.

## Where You'll See Them

Found anywhere around or in water. Fairly migratory.

## Breeding

Nest on the ground in a shallow scrape on sandbars etc.

## Feeding

Feed mainly on fish and will work in a group to catch fish.

## Interesting Fact

A hook on the end of the beak helps secure fish for eating. The saying goes that his bill "holds more than his belly can".

# Black-fronted Dotterel

*Elseyornis melanops*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Small bird with a white throat and belly and under parts. Chestnut patch on shoulder, black forehead and strip through the eye. Black breast band, red eye ring, short and stout red bill with a black tip, pink legs. Wings are fawn in colour. **Voice:** A metallic tink, tink.

## Where You'll See Them

Sighted on the open wetlands and river, and dry areas slightly away from water. Seldom get wet feet.

## Breeding

Nest is round and marked with a marker (cow manure or extra rock etc), otherwise camouflaged. Eggs are beautiful and large for a small bird.

## Feeding

Edge feeder along the edge and surface of the water, feed on crustaceans and invertebrates, similar to Baillon's Crake.

## Quirky Facts

Often seen running intermittently (runs swiftly), defend their territory. When young hatch they emit no scent for four days. Therefore, a fox can go past without smelling it.

# Red-kneed Dotterel

*Erythrogonys cinctus*



Photo Allan Taylor

## Description

Attractive medium-sized, dumpy plover, with chestnut shoulders, light brown back, white collar and underparts. Black band on chest, black head, dark eye, red bill with black tip. Inconspicuous red knee with dull grey legs. **Flight Pattern:** Rapid. **Voice:** Double call, chip chip and whirl.

## Where You'll See Them

Usually found on the edge of swamps and lakes.

## Breeding

Nest is a scrape in the ground under vegetation.

## Feeding

Feed on land immediately adjacent to water, on invertebrates.

## Quirky Fact

Territorial.



# Masked Lapwing

*Vanellus miles*



Photo Bernie Chaplin

## Description

Resident plover with a light brown back and black head, nape and incomplete collar. White throat, breast and underparts, yellow wattles on face, yellow eye, long pink legs, and one spur on each wing elbow. **Flight:** Slow deep wing beat. **Voice:** Calls in an agitated repetitive voice used as a warning.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in open dry areas and surrounding wetlands.

## Breeding

Nest is a scrape on the ground in open areas with a marker nearby. Known to nest in urban areas.

## Feeding

Feed on the ground on invertebrates.

## Quirky Fact

Aggressive when nesting, in urban areas is known to attack people near nest sites by swooping from the air.

# Red-capped Plover

*Charadrius ruficapillus*



Photo Peter Fuller

## Description

Small plover, white underneath, brown back, chestnut crown and nape (back of neck) which comes over the shoulders like a cape. White face with a black line through its eye. Fine, short pointed black bill, dark brown legs. **Female** is slightly duller.

## Where You'll See Them

Around wetland edges, and open areas near water.

## Breeding

Nest in a shallow scrape in the ground along shorelines in open vegetation, under bushes etc, sometimes on stony and pebbly surfaces.

## Feeding

Feed in mud around the edges of wetlands, also out on sandy areas, mud flats and shores. Don't enter the water very far.

## Distinguishing Fact

Short jerky movements when walking.

## Quirky Fact

Will lure predators away from nests with 'broken wing' displays.

# Double-banded Plover

*Charadrius bicinctus*



Photo Peter Fuller

## Description

Medium-sized wader with short, straight, stubby black bill and dull olive legs. **Breeding:** Grey/brown above, white underneath, white throat and forehead, broad dark brown band around neck, second broad chestnut band on the breast, white eyebrow.

**Non-breeding:** Duller than breeding. Two bands less obvious, face more buff. **Flight:** Fine white wing bar, white sides to brown rump. **Voice:** High pitched call chip chip and some whirring calls.

## Where You'll See Them

Arrive in Australia late February to August from New Zealand in breeding plumage. Inhabit muddy shorelines, freshwater and saline wetlands.

## Breeding

Only in New Zealand and surrounding islands.

## Feeding

Probe in the mud and pick food off surface, feed on invertebrates.

## Distinguishing Fact

Moulting begins after arrival which puts bird into non-breeding plumage. Breeding plumage shows a distinct double band on the breast.



# Australasian Shoveler

*Anas rhynchos*



**Photo** Brenda Anderson, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Brightly coloured duck, deep chestnut underparts and flanks. Iridescent in the plumage and on the head. White patch on flank, breast grey with scalloped pattern, grey-blue head. Green panel in the wing. White crescent on the front of the eye. Yellow eyes, heavy broad bill, orange legs. **Female** plain brown with scalloped markings on feathers. **Flight:** Fast, ascending. **Voice:** A tuk tuk sound.

## Where You'll See Them

Found mainly in shallow wetlands.

## Breeding

Grassy nest lined with down, well hidden from view.

## Feeding

Filter feeder, feed mainly on invertebrates and seeds.

# Australian Wood Duck

*Chenonetta jubata*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Legs are dull brown showing a panel of purple, iridescent green on the bend of wing, only seen when flying. Goose-like bill (shorter).

**Males** have a light grey body, chocolate brown head, with a mane at the back of the head, the breast is heavily spotted (mottled effect). **Female** head is lighter in colour with two white strips above and below the eye. **Flight Pattern:** Direct. **Voice:** A cat-like sound.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in grass verges, swamps and waterways.

## Breeding

Nest in gum trees preferably in hollows at varying heights over water.

## Feeding

Mainly vegetarian, grazing on green pasture.

# Chestnut Teal

*Anas castanea*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Medium-size duck with a marked difference between male and female. **Male** has a dark glossy green head with a grey bill, brown back, with scalloped chestnut breast and underparts, white flanks, dark tail, and a red eye. No white neck ring. **Female** is dark brown.

**Flight:** Green and white panel on the wings seen in flight.

**Voice:** A pip for the male and crackle for the female.

## Where You'll See Them

Found mostly in lakes and swamps.

## Breeding

Nest in tree hollows and grasses.

## Feeding

Dabbling duck, up-ending in shallow waters. Feed on invertebrates and seeds.

## Similar Species

Female is similar to the Grey Teal female, but slightly darker.

# Freckled Duck

*Sticonetta naevosa*



Photo Graeme Chapman

## Description

Large very pretty, dark grey duck. Close up has very fine delicate lines that give it a speckled appearance. Dull white patch under forward part of the wings. Easily identified by the peak on the back of the head and a ski-ramp (concave) bill with a pronounced small hook on the end. **Males** have red colouration at the base of the bill when breeding.

## Where You'll See Them

Travel long distances to areas of recent rain and flood. Will occur in flocks of hundreds. Often perch on dead wood/posts in the water.

## Breeding

Retreat to big lignum swamps to breed.

## Feeding

Not diving ducks, perhaps dabble. Specialised bill indicates they feed by sieving and filtering.

## Distinguishing Fact

Sit high in the water.

## Quirky Fact

Sit high in the water. Called the monkey duck because of the way they hop through the lignum.

# Hardhead

*Aythya australis*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Dark brown duck, white under the tail, extending to flanks. Dark brown head with a pale blue tip to the bill. Legs dark grey. In flight, all white underwing. **Male** is very dark brown with a white eye. **Female** is lighter brown with a white underbelly and brown eye. **Voice:** Usually silent but male gives a soft whistle.

## Where You'll See Them

Aquatic birds inhabiting deep, still permanent waters.

## Breeding

Nest in vegetation in or near water, commonly lignum.

## Feeding

Diving duck that feeds off the bottom on invertebrates.

## Similar Species

Can be mistaken for a Blue-billed Duck

# Grey Teal

*Anas gracilis*

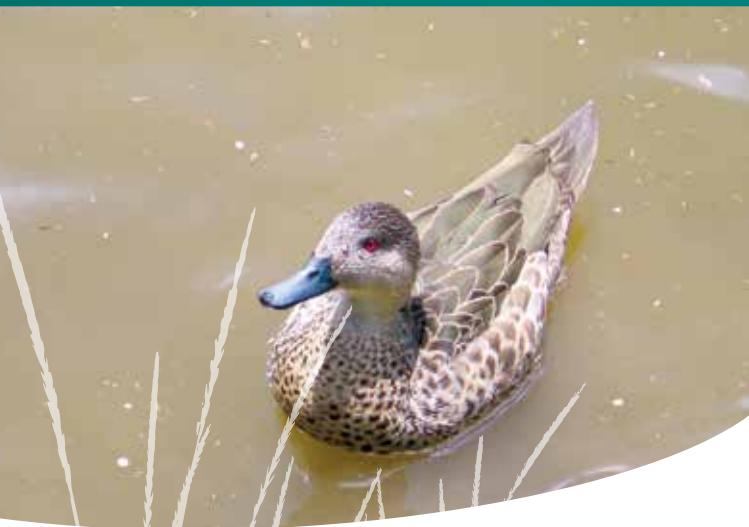


Photo Jarrod Amore, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Common medium-sized light brown duck, pale colour under the chin and throat, red eye. Duck-like bill, grey legs. Male and female are similar in appearance. **Flight:** Green-white panel in wing in flight, swift and direct flight pattern. **Voice:** Crackling laugh.

## Where You'll See Them

Any open water surface. Common.

## Breeding

Nest in tree hollow or can be concealed in ground.

## Feeding

Mainly by dabbling and some surface feeding, on seeds floating on the water.

## Distinguishing Fact

Congregate in large flocks. Voice has been described as an evil harsh cackling/chuckling.

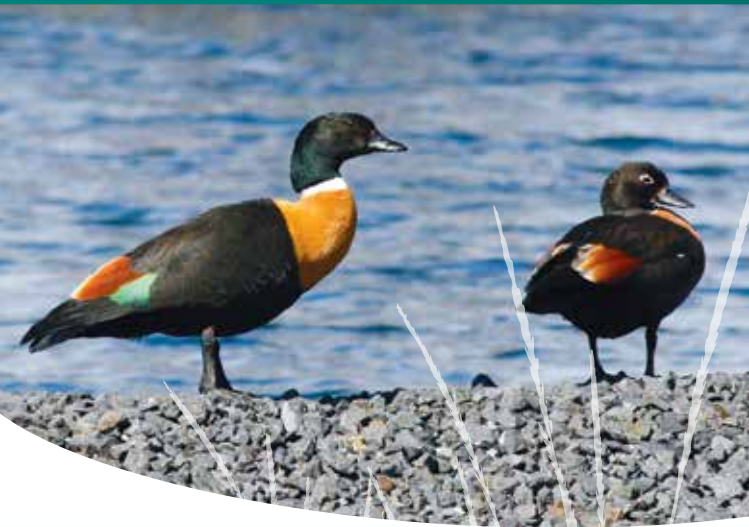
## Interesting Fact

Noted for moving vast distances.



# Australian Shelduck

*Tadorna tadornoides*



**Photo** Julian Robinson, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Large dark brown duck with chestnut breast and patches on the body. Dark brown head with white neck ring, green panel on wings, in flight mainly white underwings and shoulders. Dark grey bill and legs. **Females** show white eye ring and white strip on base of bill. **Flight:** Laboured. **Voice:** A grunt and honk.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in farmlands and saline and freshwater wetlands.

## Breeding

Nests are hollows, also use rabbit burrows under vegetation.

## Feeding

Omnivorous, feed on grain and seeds.

## Quirky Fact

Copulates in water (as do all ducks).

# Pink-eared Duck

*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*



Photo Ian Montgomery

## Description

Dark brown above with zebra stripes down the neck, breast, belly and sides. Tail is chestnut underneath, darker brown on top with white on the flanks. Dark crown and nape, dark brown patch around the eye with a small pink patch behind the ear. Long square-tipped bill with a flap each side, which are used to filter food out of water. Short feet. No discernible difference between male and female. **Flight:** Swift-flying, can travel large distances.

## Where You'll See Them

Often found on brackish and saline waters. **Locally:** Seen at the Mildura sewage farm.

## Breeding

Young not commonly seen in the Mallee region.

## Feeding

Swim in pairs in tight circles with their heads in the water to make a whirlpool and bring food to the surface. They filter food through their beak.

## Quirky Fact

Also known as the Zebra Duck.

# Musk Duck

*Biziura lobata*



Photo Ian Montgomery

## Description

Large duck covered in fine spots and fine barring, appears dark coloured from a distance. Bill is thick and solid, like a goose. Feet are very lobed and very far back, very clumsy walkers. **Male** has a large lobe that is blown up to attract females. **Young** are striped when they hatch and accompany the parents under the wing to feed. **Flight:** Poor flyer. **Voice:** High-pitched penetrating whistle.

## Where You'll See Them

Usually on deep, still water, not on rivers. Also in salt water.

## Breeding

Nest is reached from under the water through a small hole, water in the nest is squeezed out. The top of the nest is quite loose. Huge egg. Three eggs, blue-green, no markings on them.

## Feeding

Diving duck, feeds from the bottom of the water on crustaceans, yabbies, fish, etc.

## Quirky Facts

Sits low in the water. Tail trails flat in the water. When displaying the male raises its tail, whistles and holds its head up, and kicks water up to shower over its head. Musky odour (not good for eating).

# Pacific Black Duck

*Anas superciliosa*



**Photo** Norman Goodwin via Dorothy Reid

## Description

Large dark brown duck, the pale edged feathers giving a scalloped appearance (likened to scales). Distinctive head pattern - two light creamy white stripes above and below eye, dark brown through the eye. Olive green legs. Iridescent green panel on the wing.

**Flight:** Fast wing beat, direct flight. **Voice:** A single quack sound.

## Where You'll See Them

Most often found in open waters.

## Breeding

Nest in any concealed area, including rabbit burrows.

## Feeding

Dabbling duck that feeds on invertebrates and seeds from floating vegetation.

# Blue-billed Duck

*Oxyura australis*



Photo Tim Williams, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Smallish, chestnut bodied duck with black head and a bright blue bill. 16 tail feathers. **Male** shows distinctively raised tail feathers.

**Female** generally dull brown in colour with a brown bill.

**Flight:** Laboured, long take-off, fly under the cover of darkness.

**Voice:** Makes various sounds including dunk dunk and quack.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in still deep saline and freshwater wetlands.

## Breeding

Nest is a cup-shaped dome in reeds with a domed entrance.

## Feeding

Feed underwater on crustaceans and invertebrates.

## Quirky Facts

Copulates in water (as do all ducks). Robs other nests. Nest entrance is smaller than the bird so when duck comes out of water it squeezes excess water from the bird.

# Black-tailed Godwit

*Limosa limosa*



Photo Julio Caldas, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Large wader, dark grey on back and upper wing, white eyebrow and dark crown. Light grey-buff neck and breast. Dull white belly and under-tail, black on end of tail. Long slightly upturned bill, pink with black tip, long legs. **Flight:** White rump seen in flight. White strip through the middle of upper wing. Mainly white below. Legs extend way beyond tail. Flies swift and direct often low over water. **Voice:** Varied, high pitched weka weka.

## Where You'll See Them

Uncommon in Sunraysia, seen during summer in non-breeding plumage on shorelines, river edges, and in fresh or saline wetlands.

## Breeding

Don't breed in Australia.

## Feeding

Not as vigorous a feeder as the Bar-tailed Godwit. Can feed in deeper water on mud flats, further from the edge, probing the mud. Feeds on aquatic invertebrates, worms and crustaceans.

## Similar Species

Similar to Bar-tailed Godwit, but slightly smaller, bill longer and less curved, legs longer.



# Bar-tailed Godwit

*Limosa lapponica*



Photo Ian Montgomery

## Description

Large wader with long neck, brown with buff-tipped feathers giving a mottled appearance. Underparts white with brown streaks, white throat, grey neck. Dark brown line passing from base of bill through eye to back of head. White eyebrow, grey neck and breast, dark grey crown. White and black barring on the tail. Long pink slightly upturned bill, black at the tip, black legs.

**Females** have longer bill. **Flight:** Legs extend just beyond tail; rump and tail off-white with barring at end of tail. Swift and direct flight pattern. **Voice:** Soft chit chit and harsh ketta ket.

## Where You'll See Them

Uncommon visitor to Sunraysia, arrives in non-breeding plumage. Seen on mudflats, near fresh or saline water, but not along rivers.

## Breeding

Does not breed in Australia

## Feeding

Active feeder, probes in mud and on the surface. Feeds on worms and molluscs.

## Interesting Fact

Sensitive bill. When probing in mud, after prey is detected, it will walk around its bill, driving it deeper into the mud to capture prey.

# Common Greenshank

*Tringa nebularia*



**Photo** Changhua Coast Conservation Action (TWSG), The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Large grey bird with white underparts, darker line from base of bill to eye, long slender slightly up-turned bill, green legs.

**Flight:** Swift with moderate wing beats, mainly solitary in flight.

**Voice:** A rapid choo choo sound.

## Where You'll See Them

Open shore lines, either saline or fresh. Rarely seen.

## Breeding

Migratory wader that breeds in the Arctic Circle.

## Feeding

Open edge feeder on crustaceans and invertebrates.

## Interesting Facts

Hard to get near, solitary.

# Ruff

*Philomachus pugnax*



Photo Mike Baird, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Medium-sized, tall bird, appears bulky. Fairly non-descript. Grey above with scalloped feathers on the back and white underneath, throat and chest have light grey blotches. Bill is slightly down-curved, slightly longer than the head, with a knob at the tip. Pale patch around the base of the bill. Red legs. **Female** much smaller than the male. Usually seen in non-breeding plumage in this region.

## Where You'll See Them

Not common in the Mallee region. Found along muddy shorelines, saline and freshwater.

## Breeding

Don't breed locally.

## Feeding

Feed along shorelines and mud flats.

## Quirky Fact

**Female** is known as a 'Reeve', **Male** is known as a 'Ruff'.

# Sharp-Tailed Sandpiper

*Calidris acuminata*



Photo Graeme Chapman

## Description

Average-sized sandpiper with great variation in colour, generally brown with off-white underparts and a scalloped effect on the feathers. V-shaped marking on chest, chestnut crown, white eyebrows (white stripe above the eye), fine very slightly downed-curved beak, olive legs. **Flight:** Swift, wheeling. **Voice:** A whit whit sound.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in open wetlands, salt and freshwater swamps, mainly around the edges. Congregate in flocks to loafing, migrate in large flocks..

## Breeding

Breed in northern hemisphere in Arctic tundra.

## Feeding

Feed on crustaceans and invertebrates, feed well or store food prior to migrating to the northern hemisphere.

## Quirky Fact

Gregarious in small and large groups.

## Similar Species

Can be confused with the Pectoral Sandpiper.

# Curlew Sandpiper

*Calidris ferruginea*



Photo Risto Silaste, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Arrive here usually in eclipse plumage, sometimes leave in breeding plumage. Plain pale grey to white down the chest, darker grey down the back with herringbone pattern, slightly down-curved beak. **Breeding:** Chestnut coloured plumage. **Flight:** Legs hang out slightly beyond the tail in flight.

## Where You'll See Them

Summer visitors. Arrive in spring, depart in autumn. Are seen in more open wetlands, including saline wetlands. **Locally:** Have been seen at Mourquong.

## Breeding

Don't breed locally.

## Feeding

Feed along the edge of water.

## Similar Species

Other sandpipers. Patterns on the tail and wings during flight can distinguish which species, but it is quite difficult.



# Pectoral Sandpiper

*Calidris melanotos*



**Photo** Jason Weckstein, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Distinguishing feature is a sharp demarcation on the breast with dark streaking above - throat and chest - and white belly below. Scalloped feathers on its back - brown with pale edges. White patch either side of the tail, white eyebrow, long slightly down-curved bill (longer than the head), pale legs. **Voice:** A harsh crick.

## Where You'll See Them

Migrant, resident in summer time although not commonly seen in the Mallee region. Prefer low grassy areas in water, fairly clean habitat. Not usually seen in big numbers. Can be seen with Sharp-tailed Sandpipers although usually occupy different habitats.

## Breeding

Don't breed locally.

## Feeding

Shallow probing bird on edges of wetlands, feed on insects etc., in fresh green herbage.

## Similar Species

Similar in appearance to Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, which are common in the Mallee region. Has pale legs compared with the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper's green-brown legs.



# Marsh Sandpiper

*Tringa stagnatillis*



Photo: Changhua Coast Conservation Action (TWSG), The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Very light-coloured, mottled grey-brown. Long straight very pointy beak. Very small feet (as with all Sandpipers). No discernible difference in appearance between male and female.

## Where You'll See Them

Similar habitat to Curlew Sandpiper. **Locally:** Have been seen at Merbein Common below the cemetery, and Meridian Road when water was present.

## Breeding

Don't breed locally.

## Feeding

Fairly active feeders, on the move. Probes in the mud with its beak.

## Similar Species

Very similar to the Curlew Sandpiper but slightly larger and with longer legs.

# Common Sandpiper

*Tringa hypoleucos*



**Photo** Jose Sousa, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Tail almost continually bobbing. Dark brow line. Belly and under tail is white. White strip divides brown feathers on the chest. Wings and back a uniform dull brown, with a white wing-bar. Small white eye ring. Bill black, straight and fine. Long yellow legs. **Flight:** Tail has white outer edge. Glides to land. **Voice:** Fine squeaks.

## Where You'll See Them

Freshwater and brackish wetlands. Favours wooded areas adjacent to water. Prefers fallen timber around water's edge and into water, where it can hide and rest.

## Breeding

Don't breed in Australia.

## Feeding

Probes shallow water and wet mud. Feeds on crustaceans and invertebrates.

# Wood Sandpiper

*Tringa glareola*



Photo Ian Montgomery

## Description

Slender sandpiper. Dark brown above with white spots and blotches. Belly and under tail is white. White eyebrow, barred tail, chestnut crown with buff spotting, neck and chest streaked light brown. Pale chin, dark line from bill to eye. Small white eye ring. Bill black, straight, thin and length of head. Long yellow legs.

**Flight:** Legs extend beyond tail. Light grey under the wings with a white rump. Flight is swift with a zig-zag pattern. **Voice:** Loud metallic chif chif.

## Where You'll See Them

Freshwater and brackish wetlands. Favours wooded areas adjacent to water. Prefers fallen timber around water's edge and into water, where it can hide and rest.

## Breeding

Don't breed in Australia.

## Feeding

Probes shallow water and wet mud. Feeds on crustaceans and invertebrates.

## Quirky Fact

Has bobbing action and flicks tail.

# Latham's Snipe

*Gallinago harwickii*



Photo Trevor Pescott

## Description

Large snipe with very cryptic plumage. Brown feathers with pale edges. White eyebrow, dark brown crown, light brown line through the eye. Short rufous tail. Eyes placed high on the head. Long straight bill, twice the length of the head, used for probing.

**Flight:** Zig-zag motion and very quick.

## Where You'll See Them

Migrant summer visitors. They like marshy ground, don't like to wade in water but like to be in waterlogged and boggy ground with some vegetation. **Locally:** Appeared in 2009 in large numbers in southern Australia but not locally. A couple have been seen at Etiwanda Wetlands recently.

## Breeding

Don't breed locally. Only breed on the island of Hokkaido in Japan.

## Feeding

Probe in wet mud, eat crustaceans, worms, etc.

## Quirky Fact

Placement of the eyes very high on the head means they can almost look forward.

# Painted Snipe

*Rostratula benghalensis*



Photo: Changhua Coast Conservation Action (TWSG), The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Lovely colourful bird with a striking colour pattern. Golden, rufous neck and shoulders like a hood, with a white belly extending up in a white band over the shoulder and down the back. Long thick beak with a slight down-curve. **Female** more colourful than the male.

## Where You'll See Them

Very rare throughout its range and very secretive. **Locally:** Seen at Hattah during the 2006 environmental watering.

## Breeding

Nest on the ground, usually near water or on islets.

## Feeding

Feed in shallow waters and soft mud.

## Quirky Fact

Female does the courting and the male sits on the eggs. Females may have more than one nest.



# Long-toed Stint

*Calidris subminuta*



**Photo** Changhua Coast Conservation Action (TWSG), The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Very small bird with streaked chestnut cap with a white brow. Fine bill with a slight down-curve. Long toes.

## Where You'll See Them

Very rare, unlikely to find in the Mallee region.

## Breeding

Not known to breed locally.

## Feeding

Shallow water feeder, foraging through mud flats.

## Distinguishing Fact

Regular visitor but scarce.



# Red-necked Stint

*Calidris ruficollis*



Photo nkenji (Ken), The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Very small and compact bird with a red neck and short legs.

## Where You'll See Them

Migratory wader, can be in big numbers. Arrive in spring, leave in autumn. **Locally:** Quite common locally, seen in saline wetlands such as Lake Ranfurly and Mourquong.

## Breeding

Don't breed locally.

## Feeding

Forage in mud flats along the water's edge.

# Australasian Grebe

*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*

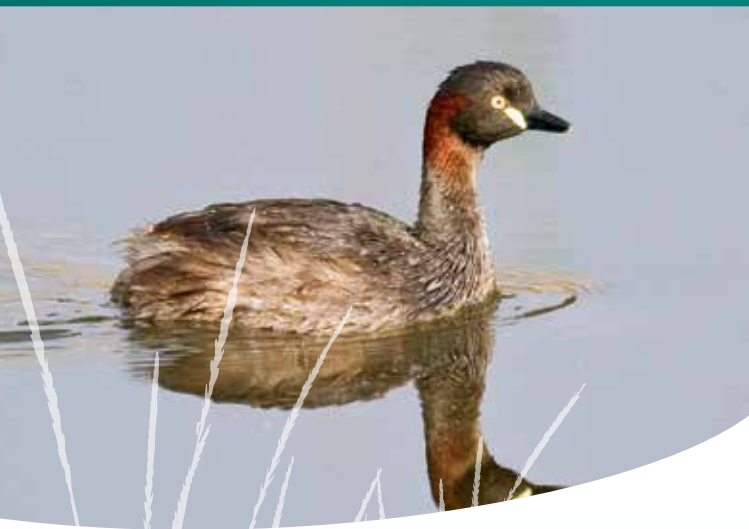


Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Small black bird with white stripe down the cheek towards the chin. Stand out in the breeding season with orange on the neck. No discernible difference between male and female. Young birds difficult to identify from Hoary Grebe young.

## Where You'll See Them

Mostly in deeper water, they nest around the edges of water.

## Breeding

Floating nest of reeds or weeds, they cover eggs up when they leave the nest.

## Feeding

Dive down into deeper water to feed.

## Quirky Fact

Has a fluffy tail that can be seen as they dive/duck into the water.

# Hoary-headed Grebe

*Poliocephalus poliocephalus*



**Photo** Julian Robinson, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Slightly darker cap and band through the eye than the Australasian Grebe. **Breeding:** Streaked head.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in wetlands with aquatic vegetation. More likely to be seen in small flocks.

## Breeding

Breeding similar to the Australasian Grebe.

## Feeding

Dive together in sometimes quite large flocks to feed.

## Distinguishing Fact

In non-breeding season can be distinguished from the Australasian Grebe when diving - the Australasian Grebe has a fluffy rear whereas the Hoary-headed Grebe doesn't.

# Great Crested Grebe

*Podiceps cristatus*



Photo Graeme Chapman

## Description

Twice as large as the Australasian Grebe. Brown above, lighter underneath. Large neck frill (rough feathers around the face) and crest. Vicious looking beak. **Female** has a slightly smaller crest and frill, otherwise similar to the male. **Flight:** Rarely seen flying.

## Where You'll See Them

Generally found in deeper water. **Locally:** Seen at Kings Billabong and at Cardross Lakes (when water was present).

## Breeding

Nest near the edge of open water in reeds or branches of trees.

## Feeding

Dive from water surface to feed.

## Distinguishing Fact

Make a lot of noise and exhibit 'fancy' antics when courting.

# Black Swan

*Cygnus atratus*



Photo Bernie Chaplin

## Description

Large black bird, red eye, red beak with a bit of yellow towards the tip. Distinct white wing tips when in flight. Very long neck, visible when flying. No discernible difference in appearance between male and female. Cygnets are grey and woolly.

**Flight:** Very graceful in flight, but not in take-off.

**Voice:** Like a brass instrument, usually call when flying.

## Where You'll See Them

Seen on any open water.

## Breeding

Build a substantial nest out of ribbon weed in shallow waters so the nest sits above the water.

## Feeding

Primarily herbivorous. Tip up on the water to feed. Feed in fresh and salty areas.

## Quirky Fact

Male is very protective of the nest and displays a lot when nesting, fluffing up his back feathers. He is often with the cygnets.

# Silver Gull

*Larus novaehollandiae*



**Photo** Marj Kibby, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Large gull. Brilliant white body with pale grey wings and back, wings with black tips, red eye ring, red bill and legs. **Breeding:** Red bill and legs are brilliant. **Flight:** Buoyant, will often soar to great heights. **Voice:** Harsh squawk.

## Where You'll See Them

Common, found in most habitats near water.

## Breeding

Nest is a hollow scrape or hollow in logs etc, lined with feathers and sticks.

## Feeding

Feed anywhere near water on a wide range of food.

## Behaviour Fact

Aggressive.



# Gull-billed Tern

*Sterna nilotica*



**Photo** barloventomagico, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Conspicuous large bulky tern, white underneath, light grey above, with a heavy black bill (like a seagull). Quite short black legs. Tail is very forked. The wings extend past the tip of the tail when folded. **Breeding:** Black cap. **Voice:** Crarck call.

## Where You'll See Them

Usually seen around September/October in this area, although may not be an annual visitor. Nomadic. Can be single or in small flocks of 6 to 8 birds. Often seen on mud flats resting. **Locally:** Single birds have been seen on Lake Ranfurly, Lake Hawthorne, and flying up and down the river near Mildura.

## Breeding

Not known to breed in the Mallee Region. Have been known to breed on the Hay Plains.

## Feeding

Fly over shallow water to feed on insects; pluck insects out of the water without landing.

## Similar Species

Caspian Tern, which is larger.

# Whiskered Tern

*Chlidonias hybridus*



Photo Peter Fuller

## Description

Small tern. Largely grey with white cheeks and chin, white under tail, dark bill. Shallow, forked tail. Wings extend beyond the tail when closed. **Breeding:** Bill is dark red, black cap and nape; underbelly becomes very dark.

## Where You'll See Them

Migratory. Found wherever there is water. Occur locally in summer.

## Breeding

Breed in colonies, nest in vegetation on the water. **Locally:** Seen breeding in swamps behind sandhills north-east of Wentworth.

## Feeding

Surface feeder, plucks from the water, feeds mainly on insects.

# Caspian Tern

*Sterna caspia*



Photo Graeme Chapman

## Description

Largest of the terns, white body, grey wings with darker grey tips, a black cap with a short crest, black legs. Black eye. Large distinctive heavy red bill with a dark tip. Black cap in breeding animals and speckled in non-breeding birds. At rest the wings extend beyond the slightly forked tail. **Flight:** In flight the legs do not go beyond the tail. When flying their bill points down and they can hover and plunge into the water. **Voice:** A sharp harsh kraak.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in all waterways.

## Breeding

Nest is a scrape in the ground with a slight lining of grass.

## Feeding

Feed on fish.

# Australian White Ibis

*Threskiornis molucca*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Large white bird with a black head and black tail. Mainly white in flight. Black down-curved beak. No discernible difference between male and female. No distinguishing features in breeding season. **Voice:** Deep guttural squark.

## Where You'll See Them

Found in groups around edges of wetlands and in swamps, paddocks, ovals, sports fields and rubbish tips.

## Breeding

Nest in groups (rookeries), which can be quite large. Nest in trees and bushes, in a flood they'll nest in trees. **Locally:** Known to have nested on a reedy island at Cardross Lakes in the past (when they contained water).

## Feeding

Eat anything including grasshoppers, locusts during plagues, they like softer ground to feed in and will pick grubs out of the ground.

## Interesting Fact

Numbers seem to be on the increase locally.

# Glossy Ibis

*Plagadis falcinellus*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Large glossy brown bird with iridescent plumage, close up shining green and brown. Looks black from a distance. Smaller than White and Straw-necked Ibis.

## Where You'll See Them

Rarer than other ibis in this region. This is on the edge of their range, found more up north. Seen around sewerage ponds and edges of wetlands. **Locally:** Have been seen around Cardross Lakes.

## Breeding

Known to have bred in Gippsland Lakes but not seen breeding locally.

## Feeding

Feed in paddocks and shallow swamps.

## Similar Species

Can be mistaken for black cormorants in flight.

# Straw-necked Ibis

*Threskiornis spinicollis*



**Photo** Julian Robinson, The Tree of Life Web Project

## Description

Large black-bodied bird; black and white in flight (underwings). Similar in shape to Australian White Ibis; straw-like feathers on lower neck. No discernible difference in appearance between male and female. **Flight:** Fly in formation. **Voice:** Call similar to Australian White Ibis.

## Where You'll See Them

Found around edges of swamps and wetlands; generally not found in rubbish tips as the Australian White Ibis is.

## Breeding

Nest in rookeries, mainly in reeds, but also in trees.

## Feeding

Frequently feed in paddocks. Feed in groups.

## Interesting Fact

Sometimes interbreed.



# Yellow-billed Spoonbill

*Platalea flavipes*



Photo Bernie Chaplin

## Description

Large white bird with yellow spoon-shaped bill and yellow legs.

**Breeding:** Males have plumes on the chest (compared with the back of the head in the Royal Spoonbill).

## Where You'll See Them

Can be solitary but also found in flocks. Seen with the Royal Spoonbill. More common in this area than the Royal Spoonbill.

## Breeding

Breeding similar to the Royal Spoonbill.

## Feeding

Omnivorous, feed on frogs, lizards, snakes and other small birds.

## Distinguishing Fact

Feed in a sweeping motion from side to side through the water. Also walks forward and probes forwards with the beak.

# Royal Spoonbill

*Platalea regia*



Photo Chris Woods

## Description

Large white bird with a large spoon-like black beak and black legs. Difference between male and female not discernible when not breeding. **Breeding:** Males have plumes on the back of the head and a yellow mark above the eye.

## Where You'll See Them

Generally seen around the edges of water bodies.

## Breeding

Nest high up in trees.

## Feeding

Feed in a sweeping motion from side to side through the water.



## References and Further Reading

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Sunraysia Bird Observers Club website - <http://home.vicnet.net.au/~sunboc>

[www.malleecma.vic.gov.au](http://www.malleecma.vic.gov.au)

The Mallee Catchment Management Authority plays a significant role in the Mallee region in maintaining and improving the health of the River Murray and its floodplain.

Delivering environmental water to important areas of creeks and wetlands is one of the ways we are helping keep our River Red Gum forests alive.

For more information please contact:

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