

## Cormorants



Pied cormorant 65-80 cm



Little black cormorant 58-65 cm



Little pied cormorant 55-65 cm



Great (black) cormorant 70-95 cm

### Sub-family *Phalacrocoracinae*

Black or pied waterbirds that frequent estuaries, rivers, mangroves, coastal areas and rocky coastal islands.

- Long necks and tails.
- Short legs with all four toes joined by webbing.
- Hooked beak.
- Swim and dive for fish, yabbies and shrimp.
- Wings are not water repellent so they spread their wings to dry.
- Build a nest over water, breed most months.
- All common and nomadic.

### WARNING

All cormorant species have razor-sharp beaks with a large hook at the end that can cause serious damage. They can also strike with great speed. When handling a cormorant ALWAYS wear welding gloves and protective glasses.



## Terns



Crested tern 48 cm



Common tern 38 cm



Little tern 25 cm



Fairy tern 27 cm

### Family *Laridae*

Terns generally have white breasts and bellies, grey upperwings, a forked tail, characteristic V-shaped wings, and a straight pointed beak. They are found in coastal areas, offshore islands, bays, estuaries and tidal inlets.

#### CRESTED TERN

- Stand-up crest, yellow beak, and black legs.
- Dive for fish; nest on offshore islands between March-December; common and sedentary, resident.

#### COMMON TERN

- Black beak and black legs.
- Skim for fish on the water's surface; breed in Siberia, migrate to Australia in October and depart in March.

#### LITTLE TERN

- Yellow beak, black eye-mask that extends to the beak.
- Dive for fish; migratory, breed in Australia between October and January, migrate to Japan in March.

#### FAIRY TERN

- Yellow beak, white face with black eye mask.
- Dive for fish; breed in Australia (November-February).

## Gulls



Silver gull 35-45 cm



Juvenile silver gull



Kelp gull 55-60 cm



Juvenile kelp gull

### Family *Laridae*

Gulls are opportunistic feeders found in small to very large flocks in a variety of habitats along the NSW coast. They generally breed in colonies on offshore islands and headlands between September and January.

#### SILVER GULL

- Familiar and ubiquitous, white body and tail with silver-grey upperwings, adults have red legs, beak and eye-ring, juveniles black legs, beak and eye-ring.
- Extremely varied diet including fish, invertebrates, seeds and eggs.
- Feed at water's edge and on the surface.
- Common, nomadic, breeds and lives in Australia.

#### KELP GULL

- Larger, white tips and spots on primary feathers, adults have a yellow beak with a red spot on the lower mandible and green-grey to yellowish legs, juveniles have a black beak and pale legs.
- Also extremely varied diet, able to dive briefly below the water's surface and drop molluscs onto hard surfaces to break open the shells.

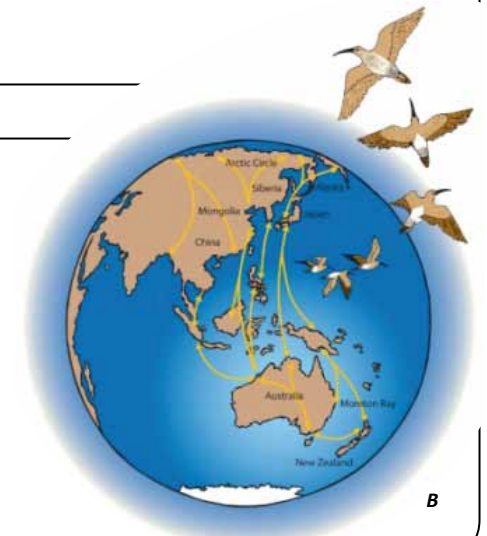
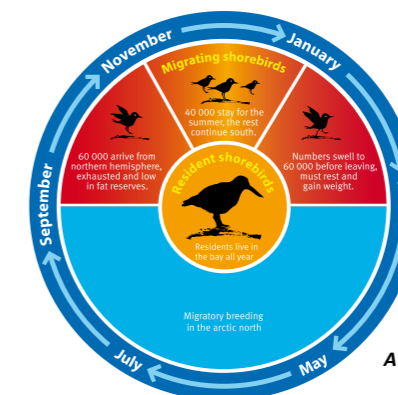
## Migratory shorebirds

The two million migratory shorebirds that visit Australia each year are born in the arctic tundra of Russia and Alaska or the rugged deserts and steppes of Mongolia and northern China. Shorebirds have to grow up incredibly fast in order to take on a migration that is virtually unmatched in difficulty. When chicks are only six- to seven-weeks-old the parents often leave on their southward migration. By eight weeks old the chicks are fully grown, without their parents, and must fly south or risk freezing in the coming snows (A).

In order to undertake the migration to the southern hemisphere, juveniles begin a feeding frenzy that packs on weight at an incredible 2-5% per day, increasing their body mass by up to 80% until they are 55% fat. Just before they leave their feeding

organs shrink, their heart grows and their blood thickens. Like an overinflated football with wings, they set off southward, flapping constantly and burning fat at up to one gram per hour.

The most difficult part of the journey is navigating the huge distances of up to 13,000 km with no parents to guide them. Evidence suggests that these birds can navigate by the position of the sun and moon, and the movement of the stars, as well as seeing the lines of polarity in the sky (like seeing a compass). They fly non-stop for days at a time, refuelling at rich intertidal areas along the East Asian Australasian flyway (B). Unfortunately, these critical areas are being destroyed at an alarming rate, driving population declines in many shorebird species. Juveniles who make the distance remain here for one to five years before migrating to the northern hemisphere to breed as adults.



## Gannets



Australasian gannet 80-90 cm, and juvenile (inset)

### Family Sulidae

- The Australasian gannet is generally found foraging in coastal waters of NSW during winter when adults and juveniles migrate along the east coast from colonies in Bass Strait or across the Tasman Sea from colonies in New Zealand.
- Adults are white with black wingtips and dark webbed feet, a buff-yellow head with a bluish ring of skin around the eyes, and a blue-grey beak with striking black borders and small, **extremely sharp**, backward-pointing serrations; juveniles are greyish-brown with white freckling.
  - Plunge dives into shoals of fishes.
  - Breeds October to November.



### WARNING

Gannets have an extremely sharp serrated beak and a powerful neck. When handling a gannet ALWAYS wear welding gloves and protective glasses.



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## Penguins



Little penguin 30-33 cm

### Family Spheniscidae

Little penguins are found in colonies scattered along the southern NSW coast. At only around 1kg they are the smallest of these flightless, southern hemisphere seabird species.

- Slate-blue back feathers and flippers with white underside, silver eye and black beak.
- Large webbed feet and modified wings (flippers) used to 'fly' through the water.
- Feed on fish caught underwater at sea.
- Nest in burrows in colonies, and breed between July and March.
- Moults between February and April, when they are not waterproof and must remain on land.

## How to avoid entanglements and injuries



- Take only photos, leave only footprints: take ALL rubbish with you and collect any you find.
- Avoid fishing near feeding seabirds.
- Do not leave set fishing lines unattended.
- If you hook a seabird DO NOT CUT THE LINE. Gently reel the seabird in.
- Be aware of seabirds around you when you're fishing, they will wait for you to cast your line.
- Be seabird aware when boating.

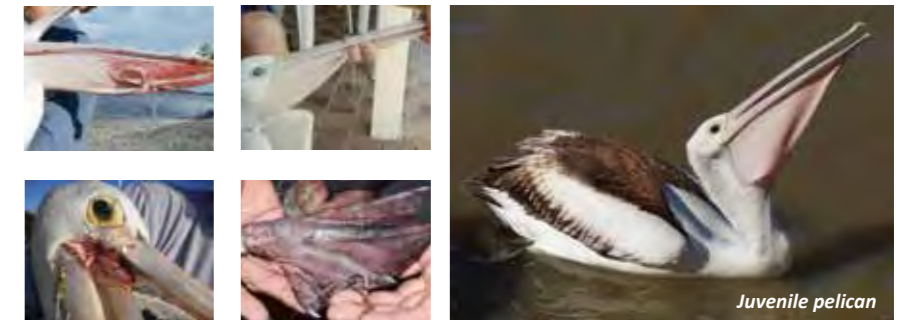
## Pelicans



Australian pelican 170-190 cm

### Family Pelecanidae

- The Australian pelican is found at beaches, estuaries, wetlands and waterways.
- Adults are black-and-white (juveniles are brown-and-white) with a long hooked bill and fleshy pouch, and distinctive yellow ring around the eye.
  - Feeds in shallow water on fish and crustaceans.
  - Breeds after rains when water levels are sufficient, nest in colonies on the ground at inland waterways (notably Lake Eyre).
  - Common, nomadic, travels long distances in V-formation, and uses thermals to soar to great heights.



Juvenile pelican

## Contact info

**Seabird emergency response**  
Australian Seabird Rescue (ASR)  
0428 862 852

National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS)  
131 555

*This project has been funded by the NSW Environmental Trust. The Trust is an independent statutory body established by the NSW government to fund a broad range of projects that enhance the environment of NSW. The Trust is administered by the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage.*



## Seabird first aid – how you can help



### Entanglements

#### Fishing tackle

- If possible, disentangle the bird.
- Do not cut any line trailing from the beak.
- Do not cut any line if the skin appears to have grown over it.
- Call your local wildlife group or National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) office for assistance.
- In cases of severe entanglement or where a hook has been swallowed, please take the bird directly to a local vet.



### Injuries

- Boat strike, collisions, dog attack**
- Generally, injuries will be obvious – by the presence of blood and/or abnormal posture, limb positions or visible bones.

## Report sightings of seabirds that need assistance to your local wildlife group or NPWS



- Loosely wrap the bird in a towel to prevent further injury. Move the bird to a shady position and ensure the bird does not overheat through wrapping too tightly.
- Any injury requires immediate veterinary care. Please take the bird directly to a local vet.



### Oil spill

#### Shipping related

- Phone 131 555 to report oil spills.
- Do not handle oiled birds without training that is particular to the incident.
- Oil spills are highly hazardous situations that require a specialist response.
- Contact your local wildlife group or NPWS to report sightings of oiled seabirds or to find out how you can help.



### Transporting birds

- Immobilise the dangerous parts of the bird (beak, feet) with a firm hold. The rest of the bird's body should be restrained gently. If the bird struggles it is important to avoid holding the bird more firmly.
- For safety reasons birds should be held at waist-height not near the handler's face.
- When handling birds with long legs, hold the legs of the bird at the top where they meet the body.
- Protect your eyes and other body parts from birds with sharp beaks and claws.
- Birds should not be held around the neck as breathing can be restricted and muscles damaged.
- Towels can be used to wrap around the bird's body and wings to aid restraint.

