

[1] "*Actitis hypoleucos* — Common Sandpiper
 Glossary SPRAT Profile
 For information to assist regulatory considerations, refer to Policy Statements and Guidelines, the Conservation Advice, the Listing Advice and/or the Recovery Plan. EPBC Legal Status and Documents Top EPBC Act Listing Status Listed marine as *Actitis hypoleucos* Listed migratory - EPBC Act as *Actitis hypoleucos*, Bonn as *Actitis hypoleucos*, CAMBA as *Actitis hypoleucos*, JAMBA as *Actitis hypoleucos*, ROKAMBA as *Actitis hypoleucos*
 Approved Conservation Advice There is no approved Conservation Advice for this species
 Listing Advice There is no Listing Advice for this species
 Adopted/Made Recovery Plans There is no adopted or made Recovery Plan for this species
 Adopted/Made Threat Abatement Plans No Threat Abatement Plan has been identified as being relevant for this species
 Wildlife Conservation Plans Commonwealth of Australia (2015). Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds. Canberra, ACT: Department of the Environment. Available from: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/wildlife-conservation-plan-migratory-shorebirds-2016>. In effect under the EPBC Act from 15-Jan-2016.
 Other Commonwealth Documents Top Other EPBC Act Plans EPBC Act Policy Statement 3.21 - Industry Guidelines for avoiding, assessing and mitigating impacts on EPBC Act listed migratory shorebird species (Department of the Environment, 2015) [Admin Guideline].
 National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife Including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds (Department of the Environment and Energy, 2020) [Admin Guideline].
 Shorebirds - A Vulnerability Assessment for the Great Barrier Reef (Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA), 2011) [Admin Guideline].
 Information Sheets Migratory Shorebirds of the East Asian - Australasian Flyway: Population estimates and internationally important sites (Bamford M., D. Watkins, W. Bancroft, G. Tischler & J. Wahl, 2008) [Information Sheet].
 Revision of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Population Estimates for 37 listed Migratory Shorebird Species (Hansen, B.D., R.A. Fuller, D. Watkins, D.I. Rogers, R.S. Clemens, M. Newman, E.J. Woehler & D.R. Weller, 2016) In effect under the EPBC Act from 29-May-2017. [Information Sheet].
 Federal Register of Legislative Instruments Marine: Declaration under section 248 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - List of Marine Species (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000c) [Legislative Instrument] as *Actitis hypoleucos* Migratory: List of Migratory Species (13/07/2000) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000b) [Legislative Instrument] as *Tringa hypoleucos* Migratory (name change): Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - Update of the List of Migratory Species (12/03/2009) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009q) [Legislative Instrument] as *Actitis hypoleucos* Wildlife Conservation Plan: Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006r) [Legislative Instrument] as *Actitis hypoleucos* Wildlife Conservation Plan: Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - Section 285 - Instrument revoking and making a wildlife conservation plan (Commonwealth of Australia, 2016) [Legislative Instrument] as *Actitis hypoleucos*
 State Government Documents and Websites QLD: Shorebirds (Department of Environment and Heritage Protection (DEHP), 2013bi) [Internet].
 State Listing Status SA: Listed as Rare (National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 (South Australia): Rare species: January 2020 list) as *Actitis hypoleucos*
 Non-statutory Listing Status IUCN: Listed as Least Concern (Global Status: IUCN Red List of Threatened Species: 2020.2 list) VIC: Listed as Vulnerable (Advisory List of Threatened Vertebrate Fauna in Victoria: 2013 list)
 NGO: Listed as Least Concern (The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2010 - non-threatened)
 Naming Top Scientific name *Actitis hypoleucos* [59309] Family Scolopacidae: Charadriiformes: Aves: Chordata: Animalia Species author Linnaeus, 1758 Infraspecies author Reference Other names

[Tringa hypoleucos \[830\]](#) [Actitis hypoleucos \[87936\]](#) [Distribution Map](#) [Top](#) [Distribution map](#)

The distribution shown is generalised from the Departments Species of National Environmental Significance dataset. This is an indicative distribution map of the present distribution of the species based on best available knowledge. Some species information is withheld in line with sensitive species policies. See map caveat for more information.

[Illustrations](#) [Top](#) [Illustrations](#) [Google Images](#) [Other Links, Including Superseded Commonwealth Documents](#) [Top](#)

[Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage \(AGDEH\) \(2006f\). Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds. Canberra, ACT: Department of the Environment and Heritage. Available from: <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/publications/shorebird-plan.html>. In effect under the EPBC Act from 25-Feb-2006. Ceased to be in effect under the EPBC Act from 15-Jan-2016.](#)

[Commonwealth of Australia \(2000b\). List of Migratory Species \(13/07/2000\). F2007B00750. Canberra: Federal Register of Legislative Instruments. Available from: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2007B00750>.](#)

[Commonwealth of Australia \(2000c\). Declaration under section 248 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - List of Marine Species. F2008B00465. Canberra: Federal Register of Legislative Instruments. Available from: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2008B00465>.](#)

[Commonwealth of Australia \(2007h\). Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - Listed Migratory Species - Approval of an International Agreement. F2007L02641. Canberra: Federal Register of Legislative Instruments. Available from: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2007L02641>.](#)

[Commonwealth of Australia \(2009q\). Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 - Update of the List of Migratory Species \(12/03/2009\). F2009L01064. Canberra: Federal Register of Legislative Instruments. Available from: <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2009L01064>.](#)

[Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts \(DEWHA\) \(2009bc\). Draft background paper to EPBC Act policy statement 3.21. Canberra, DEWHA. Available from: <http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/migratory-shorebirds.html>.](#)

[Newsletters](#) [Top](#)

EPBC Act email updates can be received via the Communities for Communities newsletter and the EPBC Act newsletter.

[Caveat](#) [Top](#)

This database is designed to provide statutory, biological and ecological information on species and ecological communities, migratory species, marine species, and species and species products subject to international trade and commercial use protected under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act). It has been compiled from a range of sources including listing advice, recovery plans, published literature and individual experts. While reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, no guarantee is given, nor responsibility taken, by the Commonwealth for its accuracy, currency or completeness. The Commonwealth does not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage that may be occasioned directly or indirectly through the use of, or reliance on, the information contained in this database. The information contained in this database does not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth. This database is not intended to be a complete source of information on the matters it deals with. Individuals and organisations should consider all the available information, including that available from other sources, in deciding whether there is a need to make a referral or apply for a permit or exemption under the EPBC Act.

[Citation: Department of the Environment \(2022\). Actitis hypoleucos in Species Profile and Threats Database, Department of the Environment, Canberra. Available from: <https://www.environment.gov.au/sprat>. Accessed Tue, 18 Jan 2022 20:26:14 +1100.](#)

Where available the sections below provide a biological profile for the species. Biological profiles vary in age and content across species, some are no longer being updated and are retained as archival content. These profiles are still displayed as they contain valuable information for many species. The Profile Update section below indicates when the biological profile was last updated for some species. For information to assist regulatory considerations, please refer to Conservation Advice, the Recovery Plan, Policy Statements and Guidelines.

[Taxonomy](#) [Top](#)

Scientific name: *Actitis hypoleucos*
Common name: Common Sandpiper
Other names: Summer Snipe, Carrier Sandpiper (Higgins & Davies 1996).
Previously known as *Tringa hypoleucos*, this species is conventionally accepted as *Actitis hypoleucos*.

[Description](#) [Top](#)

A small sandpiper of 19009621 cm in length with a wingspan of 32009635 cm. Breeding plumage of the Common Sandpiper

is dark brown above, with a greenish gloss to feathers of cap, hindneck and mantle. Brown colouring is interspersed with irregular barring. Feathers are white underneath. The species has a prominent white eye-ringing and indistinct dark eye-stripe from the bill to the rear of the ear coverts. White patches amongst darker feathers on the sides of the breast area are also notable. The species has a long tail that extends behind the wings when at rest, short legs, and a medium length bill (Higgins & Davies 1996). Colouring

Non-breeding plumage of the species is duller and more uniform in colouration. The sexes are similar and juveniles are distinguishable only when close enough to identify faint buff-spotted fringes to the feathers of head, neck, breast, mantle and scapulars (Hayman et al. 1986; Higgins & Davies 1996).

Movement

The species is said to have a characteristic "bobbing" walk, and continuous wagging of the tail and rear part of the body that is called "teetering" whilst feeding (Geering et al. 2007; Hayman et al. 1986). It is described as an agile species when moving over rocky areas or through vegetation on river banks (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Grouping

Often found singularly or in small groups, the Common Sandpiper avoids areas with congregations of more gregarious waders. However, the species will form flocks of up to 200 individuals prior to migration movements (Hayman et al. 1986).

Australian Distribution

Top Coastlines of Australia

Found along all coastlines of Australia and in many areas inland, the Common Sandpiper is widespread in small numbers. The population when in Australia is concentrated in northern and western Australia (Blakers et al. 1984; Higgins & Davies 1996). Areas of national importance and maximum counts (Watkins 1993) include:

- Northern Territory
- Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory (300)
- Darwin area, Northern Territory (52)
- Western Australia
- Nuytsland Nature Reserve, Western Australia (52)
- Roebuck Bay, Western Australia (40)
- Queensland
- South-eastern Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland (235)
- Cairns Foreshore, Queensland (42)

Bamford and colleagues (2008) claim there are few important sites within Australia due to the amount of suitable habitat for this species, and that sites in the Philippines, Myanmar, China, Russia and south-east Asia are increasingly important for migration.

In surveys of 197 wetlands in south-western Western Australia between 1981 and 1985, the species was recorded at 29 sites (Jaensch et al. 1988).

Global Distribution

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Wide range

The species is known from a wide area including the British Isles, western and central continental Europe, Scandinavia, Baltic countries, Poland, Ukraine, around the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas and into Iran, Transbaikalia, coast of the Sea of Japan and northern Japan. The species regularly occurs in New Guinea and Australia, and less often in New Zealand. The species also has scattered breeding records from Korea, central China, southern Tibet, Keya and Uganda. The Common Sandpiper has been noted as a vagrant to western Alaska, Hawaii, and Amsterdam Island in the Southern Ocean (Hayman et al. 1986; Higgins & Davies 1996).

Breeding distribution

The Common Sandpiper mainly breeds in parts of Europe and Asia, and occasionally Africa (Higgins & Davies 1996). The population that migrates to Australia breeds in the Russian far east. European breeding birds rarely remain in Europe during the non-breeding period, with individuals moving to Africa and Asia (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Sites of importance

Sites of international importance are (Bamford et al. 2008):

Site	Country	Max Count	Date
Daursky Nature Reserve	Russia	3000	1/06/1995
Tanjong Bidadari	Malaysia	2030	1/09/1984
Yancheng National Nature Reserve	China	1546	1/05/1990
Talon-Talon Wetland	Phillipines	1000	20/01/1993
Manila Bay	Phillipines	500	29/01/1990
Irrawaddy Delta	Myanmar	397	25/01/1993
Southeastern Gulf of Carpentaria	Australia	321	1/03/1999
Kakadu National Park	Australia	300	1/10/1987
Lake Evoron	Russia	115	15/05/1988

Population Information

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Total population

The total population of the Common Sandpiper is in the order of 2 455 000–4 030 000 individuals (Delany & Scott 2002, cited in Bamford et al. 2008). The East Asian-Australasian Flyway population is estimated to be 190 000 (Hansen et al. 2016).

Non-breeding season

Individuals within Australia during the non-breeding period is estimated to be approximately 3000 (Geering et al. 2007).

Habitat

Top

Salt-water and fresh-water ecosystems

The species utilises a wide range of coastal wetlands and some inland wetlands, with varying levels of salinity, and is mostly found around muddy margins or rocky shores and rarely on mudflats. The Common Sandpiper has been recorded in estuaries and deltas of streams, as well as on banks farther upstream; around lakes, pools, billabongs, reservoirs, dams and claypans, and occasionally piers and jetties. The muddy margins utilised by the species are often narrow, and may be steep. The species is often associated with mangroves, and sometimes found in areas of mud littered with rocks or snags (Geering et al. 2007; Higgins & Davies 1996).

Foraging environments

Generally the species forages in shallow water and on bare soft mud at the edges of wetlands; often where obstacles project from substrate, e.g. rocks or mangrove roots. Birds sometimes venture into grassy areas adjoining wetlands (Higgins & Davies

1996).

Roost sites
Roost sites are typically on rocks or in roots or branches of vegetation, especially mangroves. The species is known to perch on posts, jetties, moored boats and other artificial structures, and to sometimes rest on mud or 'loaf' on rocks (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Life Cycle
Top
Population biology
Birds have been recorded surviving up to twelve years in banding studies to assess lifetime reproductive success in the species (Holland & Yalden 1994). Within Australia the Common Sandpiper is recorded either singularly or in loose groups of less than five birds (Blakers et al. 1984). Flocks are formed for migration, though even in migration individuals separate widely to feed at staging sites. The species has been known to roost with other waders (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Higgins & Davies 1996).

Reproduction
The Common Sandpiper breeds in Europe and Asia within the period April to August (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Higgins & Davies 1996). Approximately four eggs are laid, though three to five eggs per clutch can occur. The nest is usually close to water, though not always on flat ground or the slope of banks, concealed by vegetation or overhangs. Occasionally nests are on more open, bare ground or on artificial ledges. Incubation takes approximately 21 days, and chicks fledge in 26 days (Hayman et al. 1986; Snow & Perrins 1998).

Feeding
Top
Diet
Typically carnivorous, the Common Sandpiper eats molluscs such as bivalves, crustaceans such as amphipods and crabs and a variety of insects such as Gryllidae; Myrmeleontidae; Cafilus; Dicax; Scarabaeidae; Tenebrionidae; Chrysomelidae; Timareta; Coelopidae; Tabanidae; Camponotus; and Iridomyrmex (Higgins & Davies 1996). Outside of the Australian range of the species, algae and seeds, worms, spiders, fish, frogs and tadpoles have also been recorded in their diet (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Feeding behaviour
A study by Yalden (2008) showed the species feeds for extensive periods in grasslands consuming terrestrial prey, though riverine areas were also well utilised. The Common Sandpiper is a diurnal feeder. The species is said to snatch low-flying insects and dart forward to secure prey. Individuals locate prey visually on the ground (especially among stones and cracks), in low vegetation or in the faeces of mammals. Common Sandpipers rarely probe whilst foraging, although they may push their bills sideways under debris on beaches. Individuals sometimes wash prey before eating. The species has been associated with large animals to take disturbed prey and may take ectoparasites (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Higgins & Davies 1996).

Movement Patterns
Top
Southerly movement for winter
The Common Sandpiper breeds in Eurasia and moves south for the boreal winter, with most of the western breeding populations wintering in Africa, and eastern breeding populations wintering in south Asia to Melanesia and Australia (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Some stay in south-east Asia during the breeding months (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Post breeding
Post breeding, the southward migration usually begins July–November, with individuals arriving from July onwards in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and from August onwards in New South Wales and Queensland. The non-breeding movements of the species within Australia are poorly known (Higgins & Davies 1996).

Observed migratory stopsites
Observed throughout eastern and southern Asia on migration (Lane 1987), the species has been recorded in stopover sites in many countries including Korea, Japan and eastern China, and also Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Indonesia. The species is a common visitor to western islands of the tropical Pacific, and an abundant passage migrant to New Guinea, arriving mid-July then gradually increasing in numbers. At least some pass through the Torres Strait (Higgins & Davies 1996). Within Australia, individuals often occur in the north in June–August (Blakers et al. 1984).

Pre-breeding
Northward migration, pre-breeding, is from February–May or early June. The species has been recorded in Russia moving along coasts and overland on broad fronts, generally following rivers (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Dement'ev & Gladkov 1951).

Diurnal and nocturnal movement
The southern migration passage is said to be mostly diurnal, whereas the northern passage mainly occurs by night (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Dement'ev & Gladkov 1951).

Threats
Top
Human activities
It is thought that human activities are the cause of the population decline of Common Sandpipers in Europe. Such activities include:

- habitat changes
- regulation of rivers
- pollution
- use of pesticides (reducing prey abundance, especially in breeding periods) (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

Habitat loss
There are a number of threats that affect all migratory waders, including the Common Sandpiper, that occur in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. The greatest threat facing waders is habitat loss, both direct and indirect (Melville 1997). Staging areas used during migration through eastern Asia are being lost and degraded by activities which are reclaiming the mudflats for future development (e.g. Barter 2002, 2005b, 2005c; Ge et al. 2007; Moores 2006; Rogers et al. 2006; Round 2006). In many suitable staging areas along the East Asia Flyway many intertidal areas have been reclaimed, and the process is continuing at a rapid rate and may accelerate in the near future (Barter 2002, 2005b, 2005c).

Reduction of quality and quantity of water
In addition,

water regulation and diversion infrastructure in the major tributaries have resulted in the reduction of water and sediment flows which compound the problem (Barter 2002, 2005b; Barter et al. 1998; Melville 1997). Migratory shorebirds are also adversely affected by pollution, such as organochlorines or heavy metals discharged into the sea from industrial or urban sources, both on passage and in non-breeding areas (Barter 2005b; Blomqvist et al. 1987; Harding et al. 2007; Huettmann & Gerasimov 2006; Melville 1997; Schick et al. 1987).

Global warming and associated changes in sea level are likely to have a long-term impact on the breeding, staging and non-breeding grounds of migratory waders (Harding et al. 2007; Melville 1997).

Potential threats

Disturbance from human activities, including shellfish harvesting, fishing and aquaculture, is likely to increase significantly in the future (Barter 2005b; Barter et al. 2005; Davidson & Rothwell 1993).

Threat Abatement and Recovery

Governments and conservation groups have undertaken a wide range of activities relating to migratory shorebird conservation (AGDEH 2005c) both in Australia and in cooperation with other countries associated with the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

Australia

The Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds (AGDEH 2006f) outlines national activities to support flyway shorebird conservation initiatives and provides a strategic framework to ensure these activities and future research and management actions are integrated and remain focused on the long-term survival of migratory shorebird populations and their habitats.

Natural Heritage Trust

Since 1996-97, the Australian Government has invested approximately \$5 000 000 of Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding in projects contributing to migratory shorebird conservation (DEWHA 2007e). This funding has been distributed across a range of important projects, including the implementation of a nationally coordinated monitoring program that will produce robust, long-term population data able to support the conservation and effective management of shorebirds and their habitat; migration studies using colour bands and leg flags; and development of a shorebird conservation toolkit to assist users to develop and implement shorebird conservation projects.

Birds Australia

Birds Australia is currently co-ordinating the Shorebirds 2020 project, which aims to monitor shorebird populations at important sites throughout Australia; and Birdlife International is identifying sites and regions which are important to various species of birds, including shorebirds, and the processes that are affecting them. The aim is to inform decisions on the management of shorebird habitat. It may be possible to rehabilitate some degraded wetlands or to create artificial wader feeding or roosting sites to replace those destroyed by development, such as by creating artificial sandflats and sand islands from dredge spoil and by building breakwaters (Denig 2005; Straw 1992a, 1999; Garnett & Crowley 2000).

Environment Policy and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The recent draft EPBC Act policy statement 3.21 provides guidelines for determining the impacts of proposed actions on migratory shorebirds. The policy statement also provides mitigation strategies to reduce the level and extent of those impacts. The policy aims to promote ecologically sustainable development that allows for the continued ecological function of important habitat for migratory shorebirds (DEWHA 2009bc).

International

Australia has played an important role in building international cooperation to conserve migratory birds. In addition to being party to international agreements on migratory species, Australia is also a member of the Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (Flyway Partnership), which was launched in Bogor, Indonesia on 6 November 2006. Prior to this agreement, Australia was party to the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy and the Action Plan for the Conservation of Migratory Shorebirds in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway and the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network.

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site Network

The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Site Network, which is part of the broader Flyway Partnership, promotes the identification and protection of key sites for migratory shorebirds. Australia has 17 sites in the network (Bamford et al. 2008):

- Northern Territory
 - Kakadu National Park, Northern Territory (1 375 940 ha).
- Western Australia
 - Parry Lagoons, Western Australia (36 111 ha)
 - Thomsons Lake, Western Australia (213 ha).
- Queensland
 - Moreton Bay, Queensland (113 314 ha)
 - Bowling Green Bay, Queensland
 - Shoalwater Bay, Queensland
 - Great Sandy Strait, Queensland
 - Currawinya National Park, Queensland.
- New South Wales
 - Hunter Estuary, NSW (2916 ha).
- Victoria
 - Corner Inlet, Victoria (51 500 ha)
 - Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria (16 540 ha)
 - Shallow Inlet Marine and Coastal Park, Victoria
 - Discovery Bay Coastal Park, Victoria.
 - Western Port, Victoria (59 297 ha).
- South Australia
 - The Coorong, Lake Alexandrina & Lake Albert, South Australia (140 500 ha).
- Tasmania
 - Orielton Lagoon, Tasmania (2920 ha)
 - Logan Lagoon, Tasmania (2320 ha)

Management Documentation

Top Management documents for the Common Sandpiper include:

- The Action Plan for Australian Birds 2000 (Garnett & Crowley 2000).
- Background Paper to the Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds (AGDEH 2005c).
- Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds (AGDEH 2006f).
- Migratory Waterbirds

Information Page (DEHWA 2007e).
 The North Marine Bioregional Plan: Bioregional Profile: A Description of the Ecosystems, Conservation Values and Uses of the North Marine Region (DEHWA 2008).
 North-West Marine Bioregional Plan: Bioregional Profile: A Description of the Ecosystems, Conservation Values and Uses of the North-West Marine Region (DEHWA 2008b).
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