

CURLEW WATCH



Burhinus grallarius and Esacus magnirostris

(Bush Thick-knee, Southern Stone Curlew or Bush Curlew and the Beach Curlew)

Information Sheet No 9

Welcome to the latest news from Curlew Watch

As regular readers and contributors would know Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland Bayside Branch began the Curlew Watch program in 1998. We did curlew counts on several of the bay islands to gain base data against which future count details could be measured. We have continued to collect data since then from our regular curlew watchers.

In recent times curlew watches have not been able to download curlew sighting forms from our Bayside website. We are happy to report that the difficulties that were being experienced with our website have been addressed and you should now be able to download the curlew sighting forms again.

Go to
<http://branches.wildlife.org.au/bayside/curlew.html>

And scroll to the bottom of the page to find the link to the sighting form.



Description

For those who may be receiving this news sheet for the first time a description of the Bush curlew is included here.

About 54 – 59 cm in length, a 82 – 105 cm wingspan. Weight, male 670 g and female 625 g. Long legs, cryptic plumage, forehead buff, white chin and throat, crown nape and hind neck, grey and finely streaked blackish,

large yellow eye, thin white eye ring, black eye stripe through neck, upper parts have black streaking over a grey – brown, while under parts are buff – white. Bill black. Legs vary from cream to olive buff.

There is a grey and rufous morph. The **grey morph** is described above. The **rufous morph** being found in Northern Australia. The rufous morph has boldly streaked rufous brown upper parts. Neck browner, forehead rufous brown, breasts, flanks and upper belly rufous brown.

The Photograph below was supplied by Bill who lives at Birkdale. Bill has lived at Birkdale for 35 years and until recently he had never seen a curlew. This particular bird spend most of the day in the council park at the back of his home against the fence, sometimes standing, sometimes on its knees and sometimes relaxing on the ground. It was quite tame and didn't 'hiss' until you were about 2 feet from it. It then came into his yard and settled into the only bushy part of our yard for the night, an area about 3 X 2 metres in the halcyonia plants. Unfortunately for Bill the bird moved on the next day. He is hoping it will make a return visit soon.



Where else have our curlews been sighted in recent times?

By Jenny Thynne

Did you know there are curlews at the University of Queensland's St Lucia campus?

One of our volunteers who currently attends the university each week sees them there on a regular basis. She first saw them early one morning in a car park in February 2008 when she arrived to help set up a WPSQ stall for the university's orientation day. There were three of them, including a young one, waiting by the ticket machine, not at all concerned by her presence. As she walked up towards the great court she noticed signs beside the footpaths and shrubbery alerting people to the presence of the curlews and warning them not to disturb them. She also saw more curlews as she got closer to the buildings.



Photograph by J Thynne

A few weeks ago when she was back at the uni Jenny decided to see if there were still curlews there, as some of the gardens and bushy areas had been revamped. On that first day she found 6 of them together, soaking up a bit of sun, unexpectedly close to all the comings and goings of both humans and vehicles near a big cluster of buildings. No doubt there are a few of them in other sites on the campus. They are so well-camouflaged it can be difficult to see them, and Jenny has been know to take a photo that had NO curlew in it, thinking she'd managed to capture one on film and not wanting to disturb it too much.

She now visits them regularly, and at midday they are usually resting under the shade of trees in leaf litter and mulch and near logs.

How they survive there is amazing, given that there must be quite a few feral cats and dogs around.

The university has an abundance of wildlife, especially birds and water dragons which love the lakes and the lush vegetation there. If you are keen on birds it is well worth a visit.



Photograph by J Thynne



Curlews can find themselves in difficult situations at times. It is often difficult to decide if some action should be taken to 'rescue' them or whether we should leave them to make their own way. This photograph by Steve Homewood of a curlew outside Cleveland Library is one of those situations. The curlew moved on and hopefully found a much more friendly environment to live.

