

## The Australasian Bittern

The Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*) is a large (66-67 cm), stocky, thick-necked heron with mottled buff-and-brown plumage. It mostly occurs singly or in pairs, usually within beds of rushes or sedges in freshwater wetlands. Because it hides so well it is heard more often than it is seen.

In 2009, the WA population was estimated to be between 38-154 adults. The species is listed as Endangered in Australia and internationally.

## Distribution

Australasian Bitterns are found in south-western Australia, south-eastern Australia and New Zealand. In WA, they are confined to the southwest in four main areas: the Swan Coastal Plain, Manjimup wetlands, the south coast from Augusta to Bremer Bay and from Esperance to Cape Arid.

You can learn more about the Australasian Bittern the website [birdlife.org.au/bird-profile/australasian-bittern](http://birdlife.org.au/bird-profile/australasian-bittern)

## Conserving wetlands on your property

You can help Australasian Bitterns by conserving freshwater wetlands on your property.

Here are some ways you can preserve or improve wetlands on your farm for bitterns and other waterbirds.

- Manage stock access to wetlands by fencing to reduce erosion, nutrients, sedimentation and vegetation losses by grazing.
- Manage drainage and bund control near wetlands so that they do not negatively impact the water level of the wetland.
- Minimise water drawdown near the wetland so that the water level is not reduced.
- Control overspray into wetlands or surrounding vegetation when applying herbicides, pesticides and fertilisers to reduce impacts to plants and animals.
- Maintain a native vegetation buffer around the wetland to filter out nutrients, prevent erosion and to reduce sediments entering the wetland.

## Healthy wetlands are the key to Bittern conservation

Australasian Bitterns need big, relatively undisturbed freshwater wetlands with large areas of cover such as rushes and sedges that are growing in water.

There has been a rapid loss of suitable natural habitat in WA for the Australasian Bittern over the past 30 years. It is estimated that the species has declined by 25% to 50% in WA since the 1980s.

Bittern declines in WA have mostly been a result of wetland destruction and degradation. The major reductions in wetland habitat have been from wetland infill, salinisation, groundwater use, changes to drainage and wetland acidification.

In recent years climate change has reduced water levels in wetlands and this has adversely affected bittern habitat.

Introduced animals such as foxes, cats, pigs and rats are likely to prey on young bitterns and eggs.

# Australasian Bittern

Managing wetlands to  
protect bitterns in WA

## Contact us

Please contact Birdlife WA's Australasian Bittern Project Coordinator, with sightings or to volunteer.

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Photographs kindly supplied by Peter O'Connell and Robyn Pickering

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