



## **Bush Stone-curlew (*Burhinus grallarius*)**

**Also known as: Bush Thick-knee, Weeloo, Willaroo  
and Angelbird**

## In Tweed Shire, the community and Council are working together to protect Bush Stone-curlews.



Scan the QR code to listen to its call

### What's so special about the Bush Stone-curlew?

In most of NSW, Bush Stone-curlews were once common. Since European settlement, their numbers have decreased significantly. This species is now in danger of becoming extinct in NSW.

The Tweed's curlews often nest in busy areas and we all need to work together to keep them safe.

#### *Did you know?*

The Tweed's Bush Stone-curlews are the only population in NSW to record an increase in numbers over recent years. Sadly, most other populations in NSW are now extinct.

### How can they be endangered when I see lots of them at night?

Bush Stone-curlews are a ground-dwelling, mostly nocturnal bird. Meaning they mainly feed, call and move about at night, and rest 'like statues' during the day.

Curlew numbers in the Tweed have increased since Council and the local community have been looking after nesting and winter roosting sites.

However, Bush Stone-curlews are disappearing in all other areas in NSW. Unless we protect the birds, they could easily become extinct in the Tweed too.

#### *Did you know?*

While Bush Stone-curlews can seem common in some parts of the Tweed Coast such as Kingscliff, Chinderah, Fingal Head, Hastings Point, and Pottsville, they were also once common in inland areas where they are now very rare such as Murwillumbah, Bray Park, Stokers Siding, Crystal Creek, Chillingham – in fact across the whole of the Tweed!



**Bush Stone-curlews often hang out in holiday parks.**

### Why do they find such odd places to nest and hang out?

These birds are not as silly as they seem. Like us, they are now primarily urban dwellers. They prefer open grassy areas such as school grounds, public parks, residential yards, and holiday parks. In most rural areas they are killed by foxes or their nests are trampled by livestock.

The birds choose these areas to have a line of sight, keeping a lookout for predators such as dogs, cats and foxes. They feed mainly on insects, so a light source such as a streetlight is handy to attract insects at night. Fresh water is also a must, especially in times of drought.

#### *Did you know?*

Bush Stone-curlews will flatten themselves against the ground with necks outstretched and eyes partially closed, remaining motionless in the hope of evading detection. This strategy is so effective that many people mistake the birds for a piece of fallen timber.

## Bush Stone-curlew banding

As an important part of population monitoring, a Bush Stone-curlew expert has been banding young birds with a yellow flag on their left leg. Each yellow flag has an alphanumeric code that is unique to that bird.

If you see a curlew with a yellow flag on its leg, please report this sighting using the QR code on the back of this brochure. This data helps us to understand where young Bush Stone-curlews move to when they leave their parents' breeding territory. We have recently had some exciting records of young Bush Stone-curlews moving south into Byron Shire, and even as far as Evans Head!

## How can I help our Bush Stone-curlews in the Tweed?

The main threats to Bush Stone-curlews in the Tweed are:

- **Vehicle strikes**  
Many chicks and adults are killed on the roads. Please slow down in areas where Bush Stone-curlews live.



**Bush Stone-curlews and chick crossing a road.**

Credit: Theo Spykers

- **Nest and habitat disturbance**  
Important nesting and winter roosting areas can be abandoned if disturbance is too great. Disturbance can include new developments, trampling of eggs by people or cattle, or recreation too close to nesting areas scaring the birds away. Keep your distance from the birds when you see them, especially if they are nesting or have chicks.



**Bush Stone-curlews flatten themselves against the ground to avoid detection by predators.**

Credit: David Charley

- **Domestic pets and foxes**  
These are a known threat to Bush Stone-curlews, especially to eggs and chicks. Please keep your cat safe at home and indoors, and your dog on a lead in public.
- **Feeding by humans**  
Bush Stone-curlew chicks grow quickly. They reach adult size approximately 7 weeks after hatching. To achieve this growth rate they need their natural diet of insects and small lizards. Feeding human food to Bush Stone-curlews, commonly bread and mince, leads to malnutrition causing them to die or developed bone deformities in some cases.



### *Did you know?*

Bush Stone-curlews can live more than 20 years in the right conditions without threats or disturbance.

Since 2012 Council and the local community have worked together to care for the Bush Stone-curlew population in the Tweed. This has included:

- Fox and feral cat control before and during the breeding season.
- Fencing, signage and improvements to nest sites to prevent disturbance.
- Community awareness campaigns to encourage keeping dogs on leads in public and cats safe at home.
- Habitat improvement programs on private and public land.
- Conditions on new developments and events to protect Bush Stone-curlews and their habitat.

### *Did you know?*

Nest protection and monitoring has helped the Tweed Coast Bush Stone-curlew population to survive and thrive. In the 2021–2022 breeding season there were at least 41 pairs of birds breeding, an increase from the 31 breeding pairs recorded the previous season.



To report a curlew sighting or activities such as nesting, eggs or chicks and birds with yellow flags, scan the QR code. Reported sightings help protect the birds.

### *Contact and connect*

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