Phillip Island
NATURE
PARKS

THREATENED SPECIES REPORT

2025

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live, work and learn, the Bunurong. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

Recovering species from the brink

From celebrating the ten-year success of the Eastern barred bandicoot translocation to Churchill Island to witnessing new milestones in wildlife conservation, habitat restoration, and community engagement, 2025 was a year of transformation and triumph for Phillip Island Nature Parks (the Nature Parks). Our efforts continued to focus on protecting threatened species, maintaining the island's fox-free status, and fostering partnerships that strengthen biodiversity outcomes.

Ten years ago, the Eastern barred bandicoot was declared Extinct in the Wild, a sobering reminder of the fragility of Australia's unique biodiversity. Today, thanks to strategic translocations, predator control, and unwavering community commitment, this species is thriving once again. An estimated 150 bandicoots now call Churchill Island home and their range expansion across Phillip Island (Milawul), marks a decade of success and demonstrates the power of science, collaboration, and persistence.

Following the successful recovery of Eastern barred bandicoots, work has begun to return the Critically Endangered in Victoria, bush stone-curlew to Phillip Island (Milawul). This species was collectively chosen by a diversity of stakeholders as a priority species for reintroduction. Lost to the island for 50 years, this enigmatic bird was returned in spring of 2024, initially as a small trial, then with a larger cohort of birds in 2025. The recovery effort is a collaboration with The Australian National University, Odonata Foundation and numerous sanctuaries and zoos that have contributed their expertise and birds to help bring back this species to south-eastern Australia.

This report celebrates the remarkable achievements of the Nature Parks and its partners in protecting threatened species. From maintaining a fox-free environment, a critical safeguard for vulnerable wildlife, to restoring habitats and monitoring populations, these efforts have delivered tangible results. In 2025, a fox sighting triggered a coordinated response that led to the successful capture of the predator within three weeks, reinforcing the importance of vigilance and rapid action.

Beyond bandicoots and bush stone-curlews, our work spans a diverse range of species and ecosystems. Hooded plovers achieved a fledging success rate of 68%, well above historic averages, while fairy terns and Eastern curlews benefiting from targeted habitat restoration and predator management. Innovative technologies, such as drone surveys, have enhanced monitoring of rare flora like the crimson berry on the cliffs at Cape Woolamai.

These outcomes reflect the passion and dedication of our team, volunteers, and community partners. Together, we are contributing significantly to national threatened species targets and proving that with commitment and collaboration, we can bring wildlife back from the brink.

Stuart Murphy

Stuart Murphy
Acting General Manager Conservation

Acting General Manager Conservation Stuart Murphy

Threatened Fauna

Eastern barred bandicoot recovery program – celebrating 10 years of success

Phillip Island Nature Parks celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the successful translocation of Eastern barred bandicoots to Churchill Island, a move that has brought the species back from the brink of extinction.

The Eastern barred bandicoot was first introduced to Churchill Island in 2015. Prior to that, the species was-classified as 'Extinct in the Wild' having been largely wiped out on mainland Australia and only surviving within three fenced predator proof reserves in Victoria. The diminutive marsupials thrive in grasslands and are vulnerable to land clearing and predation by foxes and feral cats.

The population on Churchill Island is estimated to be around 150 individuals, and they have now spread into bushland, farmland and residential areas on Phillip Island (Milawul), including from Ventnor to Newhaven and from Smiths Beach to Rhyll.

The initial release reassured our conservation efforts and following that success, Eastern barred bandicoots were relocated to the Summerland Peninsula on Phillip Island (Milawul) after it was declared fox free in 2017. Both feral and domestic cats still pose a significant risk for this species through predation and the spread of the disease, toxoplasmosis.

New research by the Nature Parks and the University of Melbourne revealed just how deadly toxoplasmosis is to Eastern barred bandicoots. Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by a parasite that is only spread through the environment by domestic and feral cats. Results indicate that Eastern barred bandicoots are highly susceptible to toxoplasmosis when they share a landscape with cats and this disease can have significant impacts on bandicoot populations.

Despite the impacts of toxoplasmosis, moving the Eastern barred bandicoots to fox free island safe havens, like Churchill Island, French Island, and Phillip Island has given them a lifeline.

'We are delighted to see the bandicoots bounce back in recent years and it is a tremendous outcome for a species that had once been deemed extinct in the wild. But we cannot be complacent. Feral and domestic cats still pose a significant risk for these bandicoots through predation and by spreading the disease toxoplasmosis'.
Senior Scientist Dr Duncan Sutherland, Phillip Island Nature Parks

Eastern barred bandicoot in the wild.

Bandicoot volunteers

During spring 2025, ongoing population monitoring of the Eastern barred bandicoot was conducted at Churchill Island and the Summerland Peninsula. This monitoring involved regular trapping sessions to gather critical data on the population and the results included:

- **Churchill Island**: Over three nights, the Nature Parks staff and volunteers recorded 65 captures of 33 individuals, with eight captured for the first time. Breeding activity was robust, with 74 pouch young observed.
- **Summerland Peninsula**: Over three nights, the team documented 38 captures of 26 individuals, with 13 captured for the first time. A total of 21 pouch young were observed.

Through these trapping sessions, 27 volunteers contributed 283 hours over six days, assisting with trap setting, research assistance and animal handling.

Volunteers have played a crucial role in bandicoot monitoring for ten years now. Their expertise in handling animals and recording data is instrumental in the ongoing success of population surveys. The dedication and support of these volunteers are highly valued and greatly appreciated.

Our citizen science 'EBB sightings portal' provides a platform for our community to report wild bandicoot sightings and helps us understand the spread of the species across Phillip Island (Milawul). Portal sightings have indicated Eastern barred bandicoots are continuing to expand into the Rhyll and Cowes areas.

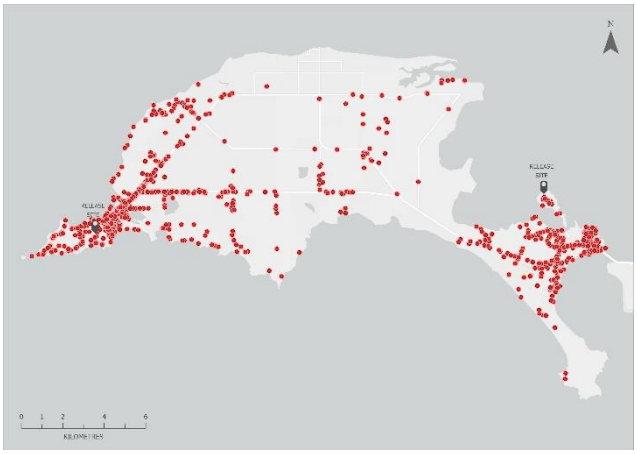


Figure 1: Eastern barred bandicoot sightings reported through the EBB sightings portal (last updated December 2025).

Eastern barred bandicoot on Churchill Island illuminated with a red-light torch.

National Threatened Species Day

To mark National Threatened Species Day on Sunday 7 September 2025, the Nature Parks offered an unforgettable experience on Churchill Island, inviting guests to step into the world of one of Australia's most remarkable conservation success stories the Eastern barred bandicoot.

Participants joined Senior Scientist, Dr Duncan Sutherland, for an exclusive guided tour. The evening began with insights into the decade long recovery efforts that brought this Endangered marsupial back from the brink of extinction. Once widespread across Victoria, the Eastern barred bandicoot faced catastrophic decline due to habitat loss and introduced predators. Today, thanks to collaborative conservation efforts, its future is looking brighter.

The highlight of the event was an exhilarating spotlight walk, where 20 guests observed these small, nocturnal creatures in their natural habitat. For many, it was a rare chance to witness firsthand the resilience of a species that has become a symbol of hope for threatened wildlife across Australia.

This immersive experience not only celebrated the bandicoot's comeback but also reinforced the vital role community engagement plays in protecting biodiversity.

Keep it wild, celebrating Eastern barred bandicoots on National Threatened Species Day.

Collaborators

The Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery Team members.

Penguin Foundation

VICTORIA State Government | Energy, Environment and Climate Action

Conservation Volunteers Australia

ZOOS VICTORIA

T A I F

Parks VICTORIA

The University of Melbourne

National Trust

Bush stone-curlew reintroduction

A landmark program reintroducing the Critically Endangered bush stone-curlew to the wild on Phillip Island (Milawul) has been many years in the making. In 2019, the Nature Parks recognised the exceptional opportunity for the organisation to contribute to significant conservation outcomes for Victoria through rewilding and the protection of threatened flora and fauna species. Our *Threatened Species Plan* was developed in consultation with key stakeholders representing a diverse range of parties involved in managing and coexisting with threatened species on Phillip Island (Milawul). This plan looked at both current vulnerable species and the recovery of threatened fauna that were once found on Phillip Island (Milawul), with the bush stone-curlew identified as a priority species.

Phillip Island (Milawul) is part of the bush stone-curlew's natural home range. They were last seen on the island in the 1970s and a feasibility assessment concluded there are areas on the island with broadly suitable and intact habitat for the species. The removal of foxes, together with a strong history of robust conservation governance, management and research, means this location is primed to be a stronghold for the species.

The program is a collaboration between the Nature Parks, Odonata Foundation and The Australian National University and aims to improve the long-term viability of bush stone-curlews, not just on Phillip Island (Milawul), but across south-eastern Australia. A series of sanctuaries and zoos also support the program by breeding suitable and genetically diverse birds.

This is a long-term program given the relatively slow reproduction and long lifespan of these birds, and we expect setbacks and delays along the way as we refine the tactics that lead to population recovery. To manage the uncertainties involved we built the translocation plan using the Translocation Continuum Framework which provides a structured way of making context-specific decisions for each translocation phase based on the uncertainty involved.

An initial trial release of bush stone-curlews to Phillip Island (Milawul) was conducted in August 2024 when 12 birds from captivity at Mount Rothwell were released into suitable habitats (as determined by a habitat suitability model) with their wing feathers clipped to prevent them dispersing off the island to nearby mainland areas where foxes roam. All birds were tracked using GPS devices that were attached to the birds with custom-made harnesses. Survival of these birds to six months from release was 83% and the cause of each mortality was road strike. This was one of the highest survival rates in a trial release of this species, but it highlighted that roads were a risk in this environment. Extensive community engagement has been undertaken regarding wildlife on roads, particularly in high-risk areas.

Following the positive outcome of the trial, the program moved to primary trials with opportunity for experiments to test tactics aiming to execute translocation strategies that may improve successful establishment. This involved the release of a further 24 birds in April 2025, undertaken with an experimental comparison of a cohort of captive birds versus an equivalent cohort of captive birds that had been given exposure to wild conditions within a fenced reserve for at least four weeks. All birds had wing feathers clipped and were tracked with GPS devices. The primary cause of mortality for these birds was again road strike, though some cases of acute septicaemia and predation were seen. The trial indicated that, contrary to expectations, wild training was not beneficial to bird survival.

A further eight birds were released in spring 2025 to supplement the population, again all being monitored with GPS backpacks. Excitingly we have observed four nests in the wild and recorded chicks hatching, but sadly none of the chicks have survived for long. These birds are still learning to be wild and are inexperienced breeders, but this gives us hope that in time bush stone-curlews can once again thrive in the wild on Phillip Island (Milawul).

Curlew Custodians

In 2025, 18 Curlew Custodian volunteers continue to support the bush stone-curlew captive birds, including preparing the daily feed, recording behavioural observations, and providing vital support for this priority threatened species.

The volunteers provided valuable assistance to the regular health checks. In 2025, they contributed a total of 784 volunteer hours supporting the Conservation team to monitor and provide care for the captive bush stone-curlews. We gratefully acknowledge the commitment and support from this team.

'Being a Curlew Custodian has been such a rewarding experience. Preparing the daily feed and recording behavioural observation gives me a real sense of contributing to the survival of this incredible species. Every contribution to the program feels like a step toward bringing curlews back to the wild'.
Jill Diamo, Curlew Custodian

L-R Bush stone-curlew in the wild, bush stone-curlew chick, and bush stone-curlews in captivity.

Sponsor

Penguin Foundation

Collaborators

Alice Springs Desert Park

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary

Featherdale Sydney Wildlife Park

Caversham Wildlife Park

Coexistence Conservation Laboratory

Odonata Foundation

Oakvale Wildlife Park

Conservation dogs

The conservation dogs have undertaken extensive monitoring across Phillip Island (Milawul) though consistent scent detection surveys targeting evidence of fox and feral cat presence.

Fox-detection dogs Macey and Blaze have remained active in the field, conducting systematic surveillance across Milawul and responding to any reported fox sightings or suspicious activity called in by the community. Their ability to detect evidence of foxes plays a critical role in maintaining the island's fox-free status. Together they surveyed more than 417 km over the year.

In May 2025, a fox incursion on Phillip Island triggered an urgent, coordinated response led by the pest animal team. Following multiple reported sightings, detection dog surveys were conducted, and the discovery of tracks and scats across multiple sites confirmed the presence of a fox. This intelligence was critical in directing control measures to remove the individual. The operation resulted in the successful capture of the fox within three weeks after the first verified scat was located. Post-capture DNA analysis confirmed all scats belonged to the same individual and subsequent island-wide surveys were completed to ensure there were no other foxes.

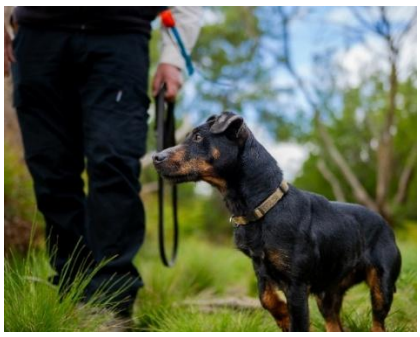
After an intensive twelve-month training regime, Blaze, our new fox-detection dog, is now fully prepared for field deployment, maturing from a cheeky puppy to a highly skilled detection dog. He carries on the legacy of his predecessor Flash, who sadly passed away in July, after battling lymphoma, cutting his loyal service detecting foxes and protecting our island haven short at only three years old.

The conservation dog team also welcomed another new member with handler Zoe Kellett commencing a traineeship under the mentorship of Senior Vertebrate Pest Officer, Craig Bester. This addition has increased operational efficiency by enabling two trained detection dog handlers to independently deploy and manage the dogs. This has significantly enhanced survey coverage, response times and overall resource efficiency.

As feral cats continue to pose a significant threat to native species through predation and disease transmission, our feral cat-detection dogs, Marbee and Milly, have been busy searching for evidence of feral cats to inform control programs. A combined total of 223 km was surveyed across the island, with efforts prioritised in monitoring critical habitat at key locations including Oswin Roberts Reserve, Summerland Peninsula, Observation Point and Cape Woolamai.

In November, Milly travelled across the bay to French Island in collaboration with Parks Victoria to conduct a two-day monitoring survey in search of evidence of feral cats. Her little legs covered a total of 16 km, and she successfully detected cat scats, triggering further management actions.





L-R Handler Zoe and fox-detection dog Macey on Summerland Peninsula, fox-detection dog Blaze, and cat-detection dog Milly.

High and mighty hooded plovers

The 2024-25 hooded plover breeding season resulted in chicks fledged from 17 pairs giving a fledged per pair rate of 0.76 which again exceeded the benchmark of 0.5 provided by BirdLife Australia. This is amongst the highest fledged per pair rates in Victoria.

Ongoing monitoring by the Nature Parks staff and volunteers showed the following key results:

- 32 nests,72 eggs and 19 chicks. Below the (2014-2024) 10-year average number of 36 nests, 83 eggs and 31 chicks.
- A huge 68% of chicks went on to fledge, well above the historic average of 40%.

The coastal bird survey conducted in November 2025 recorded 33 hooded plovers which is lower than the 38 seen in 2024 but the same as the two years prior. Between 2012 and 2021 the hooded plover population was at a stable November average of 43 birds. The November count is usually the most accurate representation of the hooded plover population, but even into December 2025 there was a lot of movement of birds that appeared to still be looking for territory. This could explain the lower numbers compared to 2024, or alternatively, and the Nature Parks will investigate any other potential concerns through ongoing monitoring. The results of BirdLife Australia's biennial hooded plover count in 2024 resulted in the population in Victoria being considered as stable.

As of mid-December, the 2025-26 season has seen 22 nests, two of which had five chicks between the two nests and four other nests also had eggs. The rest of the nests failed due to high tides and severe weather, one failure was due to unknown predation shown by evidence of the remaining eggshell, and for the remaining nests, the eggs were gone without clear evidence as to what happened to them.

In September 2025, a hooded plover watch volunteer found a four-egg nest. Hooded plovers usually lay two or three eggs, unpublished Australia-wide data gathered by BirdLife Australia shows four egg nests happen approximately one in every 1,000 nests. Unfortunately, a week before being due to hatch, high tides washed away the eggs, but this pair were very persistent and they have three chicks that have since fledged.

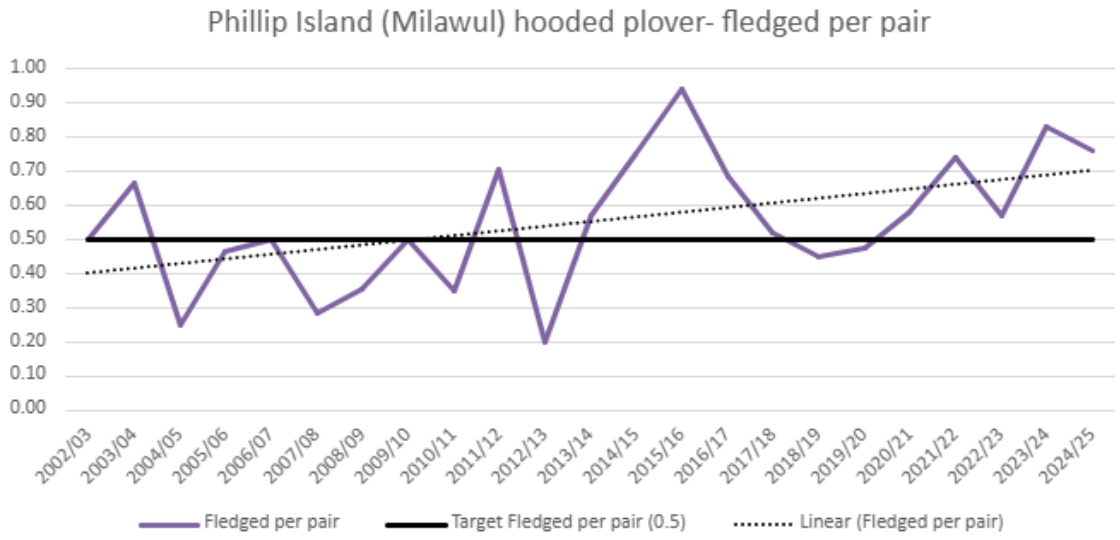


Figure 2: Hooded plover fledged per pair rate with a linear trendline against the target of 0.5 fledged per pair as provided by Birdlife Australia.



L-R Nest with four eggs, first chicks of the 2025-26 season, and three fledged hooded plover chicks.

Hooded plover interns and volunteers

Over the peak breeding season, two internship students are assisting with beach monitoring and installing wildlife refuges, contributing to ongoing research on hooded plovers. The study aims to determine the cause of nest failures, as often the eggs are gone with no evidence as to what happened.

During the 2024–25 season, eight remote cameras were set up on nests and the results indicated that two nests failed due to high tides, this was confirmed by camera footage and field observations. The camera at Smiths Beach helped solve a mystery where after a chick hatched, two eggs were found in the nest again. The camera helped show the eggs had to be moved due to the tide and the hoodies found them again and tried to continue incubation which unfortunately failed.

Hooded Plover Watch volunteers are integral to the success of the hooded plover program and through their dedication, they contributed over 460 hours monitoring nesting pairs and participating in coastal bird surveys. Volunteers contributed 57% of total local records on the Birdlife Australia 'MyBeachBird' citizen science portal, significantly supporting the overall conservation efforts for hooded plovers and other beach nesting shorebirds.

'I have had a great time over the past three months working as the Threatened Coastal Birds' intern at Phillip Island Nature Parks. I am grateful for all the knowledge and skills I have learnt throughout this time and very thankful to all the staff who have made me feel so welcome and taught me new skills. I have particularly enjoyed watching the progression of a family of hooded plovers on Anchorage Beach. We now have three fledged chicks and hopefully more to come for the remainder of the season!'

Harriet Fallaw, Deakin University Intern

Sharing Our Shores campaign

From 1 December 2025 to 30 April 2026, the Nature Parks, in partnership with BirdLife Australia, Bass Coast Shire Council, and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's Conservation Regulator, is leading the 'Sharing Our Shores' campaign. This initiative invites residents and visitors to enjoy our beaches responsibly while protecting wildlife.

The campaign combines beach safety messages with a strong call to action to safeguard nesting shorebirds and their fragile habitats by keeping dogs on leads, cats indoors and giving wildlife space. Species like hooded plovers and fairy terns face immense challenges during the breeding season from potential interactions with people and animals.

Supporting this effort are regular beach patrols by compliance officers from the Nature Parks, Bass Coast Shire Council, and the Conservation Regulator's 'Operation Soho'. These patrols ensure beach users follow regulations and provide valuable opportunities to educate the community about the importance of protecting these important beach nesting birds.

L-R Nature Parks staff and volunteers at the Nippers Program educating people about hooded plovers as part of the campaign.

Partners

VICTORIA State Government | Energy, Environment and Climate Action

birdlife AUSTRALIA

BASS COAST

Western Port Ramsar habitat for threatened species

Fairy terns and far Eastern curlews

Following the successful 2024–25 breeding season of the fairy tern (*Sternula nereis*) on the Phillip Island (Milawul) Ramsar coast we recorded:

- >140 adult birds
- 72 nests
- 139 eggs laid
- 65 fledgling counts (highest ever recorded)

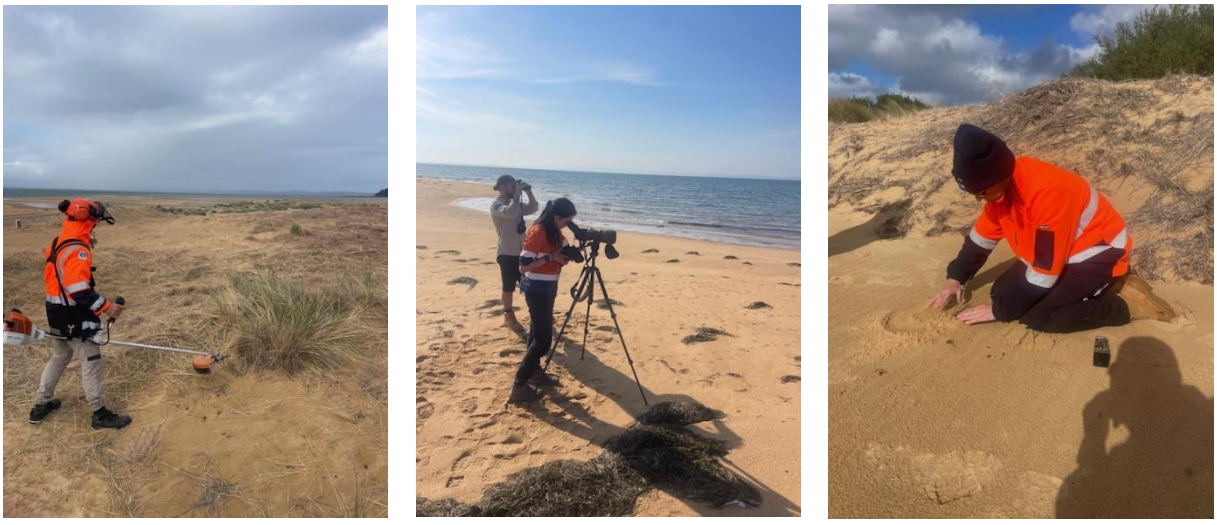
During 2025, management efforts on Milawul focused on reducing key threats to birds while collaborating with the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation on habitat restoration activities such as weed control, predator management, and ongoing bird monitoring.

The primary weed species targeted were marram grass and sea spurge. Removal of these weeds is important as they smother suitable nesting habitat for fairy terns and other shore nesting birds and alter the natural morphology of the dune system. During 2025, approximately 5.4 ha was treated for weeds over 166 hours to protect habitat for shore nesting birds.

A network of 4G cameras is also installed across the site, providing real-time alerts of potential feral cat incursions. This allows rapid response to sightings and reduces the risk of species utilising the area. Cat trapping undertaken over 800 nights resulted in the removal of two feral cats from vital shorebird habitat and four cats overall in response to camera detections.

Bird surveys were conducted regularly across the area, with records confirming the ongoing presence of the Critically Endangered fairy tern and far Eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*).

In 2025, far Eastern curlews were recorded on Milawul on 12 separate occasions, with the highest count being 25 individuals. Fairy terns also returned to Phillip Island (Milawul) in October 2025, with up to 14 individuals observed regularly utilising the site. Evidence of attempted courtship, mating, and nesting behaviour was recorded.



L-R Marram grass biomass removal, bird monitoring, and supplementary planting of spinifex.

'Although fairy terns and far Eastern curlews have very different life histories, one being a shore nesting species and the other a long-distance migratory species, both depend on healthy coastal ecosystems with minimal threats to survive and thrive. On Phillip Island, the Western Port Ramsar coast provides an important refuge for these species. Limiting the impacts of threats in this area is therefore critical to giving them the best possible chance of long-term success.'

Reserves Ranger Brandan Zerafa, Phillip Island Nature Parks

Partners

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BUNURONG LAND COUNCIL

Melbourne Water

Latham's snipe

Latham's snipe (*Gallinago hardwickii)* is nationally listed as 'Vulnerable' due to recent population declines.

Along with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, Australia is a signatory to the protection of habitats to aid migration of Latham's snipe. Birds migrate to south-eastern Australia from their breeding grounds in Japan and far east Russia and are a regular summer visitor to Phillip Island (Milawul). Latham's snipes are usually found associated with a wide range of wetland habitats from fresh to saline, natural and artificial. The sites where most snipes have been recorded on Phillip Island (Milawul) are adjacent to urban areas often in drainage reserves, however snipes disperse to feed at night.

Results of surveys undertaken on Phillip Island (Milawul) in 2024-25

DATE	TOTAL BIRDS	COMMENTS
13/09/24	7	2 sites
15/11/24	36	2 sites, 18 snipe each
17/01/25	3	1 site

For the 2024-25 surveys, all birds were recorded at two sites. The November survey is significant, as a wetland that supports eighteen birds or more is nationally important and therefore considered habitat that is critical to the survival of the species *(Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water 2024, Conservation Advice for Latham's snipe, (Gallinago hardwickii) (), Canberra*). Over the last ten years, 20 site surveys have met or exceeded the National benchmark.

L-R Snipes feed on a wide range of invertebrates using their bills to probe the muddy ground and blend in superbly with their wetland habitats.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of regular snipe surveys by the Nature Parks. In 2016, staff and volunteers began monitoring eight wetland sites (seven sites since 2018), three times each year in September, November and January, as part of the National monitoring program. With the support of local landholders, staff and volunteers they are able to access private land to undertake these surveys.

Preliminary analysis of the data by National Coordinator, Birgita Hansen, indicates that Phillip Island (Milawul) supports a population of between 37 and 215 birds. Snipes are very hard to monitor, usually occurring in low numbers, but sometimes in larger groups, and as only a sample of wetlands are surveyed the population is likely to be higher. Tracking data from birds caught in western Victoria in September will help identify movement and habitat use, and this can help us target our monitoring efforts.

Threatened flora

Crimson berry (*Leptecophylla oxycedrus*)

With clear skies, low winds and ripe berries, autumn was the perfect time to use the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) to take another look at the crimson berry (*Leptecophylla oxycedrus)* population growing below the light beacon at Cape Woolamai. This population is the largest on Milawul but assessing its size is difficult on vertical cliffs. In 2005, using binoculars from the top of the cliff, the population was surveyed at approximately 45 plants. In 2019, it was surveyed with a UAV, and although this technique was promising and it could be seen that 45 plants was a conservative estimate, the resolution was not good enough to get a more accurate count. Now in 2025, the technology has improved, and the current drone has given us much better imagery. The population is re-estimated to be in the range of 120-180 plants.

There appears to be a scattering of smaller younger plants lower down the slope, suggesting that our previous assumption that no natural recruitment was occurring may be incorrect. The imagery also shows the recovery of some of the plants that were affected by the significant easterly weather event of 2021. Although there are some large dead patches remaining, there is plenty of newer growth and the plants continue to flower and develop fruit.

L-R Monitoring the crimson berry population using the UAV, and young crimson berry flowers.

The translocated population at Cape Woolamai has continued to thrive and some plants have flowered for the first time. Regular watering throughout the drier months for the first half of the year, along with ongoing maintenance of the enclosure has ensured that there have been no losses.

Woodland flora

The successful natural regeneration of an area excluded from rabbits and swamp wallabies in 2022 inspired the Reserves team to create another similar zone in early 2025 within the currant-wood (*Monotoca glauca)* habitat of Rhyll wetland. The team constructed a 750 sqm coop that includes several mature currant-wood, a stinkwood *(Zieria arborescens)* thicket and a coast manna-gum (*Eucalyptus viminalis* subsp *pryoriana)*. As with the original exclusion zone however, the ground and small shrub layers were largely absent due to heavy browsing pressure.

After just six months, there has been evidence of currant-wood recruitment occurring, along with coast manna -gum, grass trigger-plant (*Stylidium graminifolium)*, prickly guinea-flower (*Hibbertia acicularis)*, common aotus (*Aotus ericoides)*, grey parrot-pea (*Dillwynia cinerascens),* common heath (*Epacris impressa)* and many other small shrub and herb species.

Spring monitoring revealed several orchid species occurring. There were large numbers of musk-hood orchids *(Caladenia moschata)*, a significant number of slender sun orchids (*Thelymitra pauciflora)*, a small patch of nodding greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans)* and a single specimen of a new record for Milawul, tiny pink-fingers (C*aladenia pusilla)*.



L-R Tiny pink-finger orchid, musk-hood orchid, and young currant wood fruit.

After three and a half years, the original exclusion zone is thick with regenerated growth and species diversity. The currant- woods continue to thrive, with some of the regenerated plants now up to 2 m high with developing flowers and fruit.

The team at Barb Martin Bushbank are producing currant-wood plants from cuttings and 20 advanced plants have been introduced to suitable habitat near Newhaven wetland. After several months, all are doing well and showing new growth. If continued development and success prevail, further specimens can be installed in successive years to develop a robust community.

Additional to the naturally regenerated coast manna-gum occurring in the herbivore exclusion zones near Rhyll wetland, 46 eucalypt plants including blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus* subsp *globulus)* grown at the Barb Martin Bushbank were installed with tree guards in the area of the slender pink-finger (*Caladenia vulgaris)* and one-flower early nancy (*Wurmbea uniflora)* populations. A further 40 blue gums were planted in the Koala Conservation Reserve woodland along with 25 coast manna-gum and 25 swamp gums (*Eucalyptus ovata)*. These plant installations are part of the continuing aim of restoring the woodland canopy.

Coastal biodiversity sites

Although it was very dry for the first half of the year, higher than average late spring rain has favoured many of the small herb species and shrubs. Coast daisy (*Brachyscome parvula)*, twining fringe-lily (*Thysanotus patersonii)* and branching bluebell (*Wahlenbergia multicaulis)* popped up in large numbers on Summerland Peninsula this year. There were large numbers of sun-orchids (*Thelymitra* spp) and onion orchids (*Microtis* spp) although many succumbed to herbivory. Good numbers of these species, however, were able to complete their full cycle under the herbivore exclusion cages.

The herbivore exclusion zones at other key locations along the coast have continued to foster the regeneration of many more of the rarer ground-flora species of Milawul such as the grass trigger-plant and everlasting daisy (*Chrysocephalum apiculatum)*.

A notable new occurrence was slender bush-pea (*Pultenea tenuifolia)* in one of the cages at Pyramid Rock. This was previously recorded at Cape Woolamai in 1999 and more recently at Red Rocks in 2022 but had not previously been seen at Pyramid Rock.

L_R Fringe lily, slender onion orchid flower and buds on Summerland Peninsula, and creamy candles.

Barb Martin Bushbank threatened flora production

The Barb Martin Bushbank continued to expand the production of locally available species to include less common plants of the Bass Coast and Western Port region. These include creamy candles (*Stackhousia monogyna)*, bassian pomaderris (*Pomaderris oraria)*, chocolate lily (*Arthropodium strictum)* and vanilla lily (*Arthropodium milleflorum)*.

There has been continuous production of listed threatened species for population enhancement purposes such as crimson berry, currant-wood, yellow sea-lavender (*Limonium australe)*, salt lawrencia (*Lawrencia spicata)* and peninsula daisy-bush (*Olearia sp2)*. The nursery now stores seed of all the species that have been produced to date as well as maintaining stock specimens for all species requiring clonal production.

National Threatened Species Day 2025

Keeping it Wild - community connections

Phillip Island's commitment to conservation took centre stage on National Threatened Species Day 2025, as locals and visitors joined Nature Parks staff, Friends of Scenic Estate Reserve (FOSER), and Bass Coast Shire Council for a guided tour of the Scenic Estate Conservation Reserve.

The event highlighted a decade of dedicated community stewardship and showcased the island's role as a sanctuary for some of Australia's most vulnerable wildlife. Species such as the far Eastern curlew, fairy tern, hooded plover, and Eastern barred bandicoot, along with endangered ecological communities such as coastal tussock grasslands and threatened moonah woodlands, rely on healthy habitats to survive and thrive.

Participants explored the 28 ha reserve overlooking a World Heritage Ramsar wetland with local expert, John Eddy who shared insights into threatened species recovery, biodiversity projects, and practical ways the community can help protect fragile ecosystems.

Formed in 2014, FOSER has worked tirelessly with partners including the Nature Parks, Bass Coast Shire Council, Parks Victoria, and the State Government to restore and protect this unique environment. Officially opened to the public in 2015, Scenic Estate Reserve has become a special place for birdwatchers and nature lovers, offering a rare opportunity to connect with coastal grasslands and observe threatened birds in their natural habitat.

As Phillip Island (Milawul) looks ahead, the message remains clear: community action is vital to safeguarding biodiversity for future generations.

Friends Of Scenic Estate Reserve 10-year celebration at World Heritage RAMSAR wetland with John Eddy.

Our collaborators & supporters

- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Eastern Barred Bandicoot Recovery Team
- Penguin Foundation
- Odonata Foundation
- The Australian National University
- Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria
- Birdlife Australia
- Melbourne Water
- Threatened Species Commission
- Currumbin Widllife Sanctuary
- Alice Springs Desert Park
- Featherdale Sydney Wildlife Park
- Caversham Wildlife Park
- Oakvale Wildlife Park

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