Scan for more information on the project

Shorebirds in an imperilled flyway

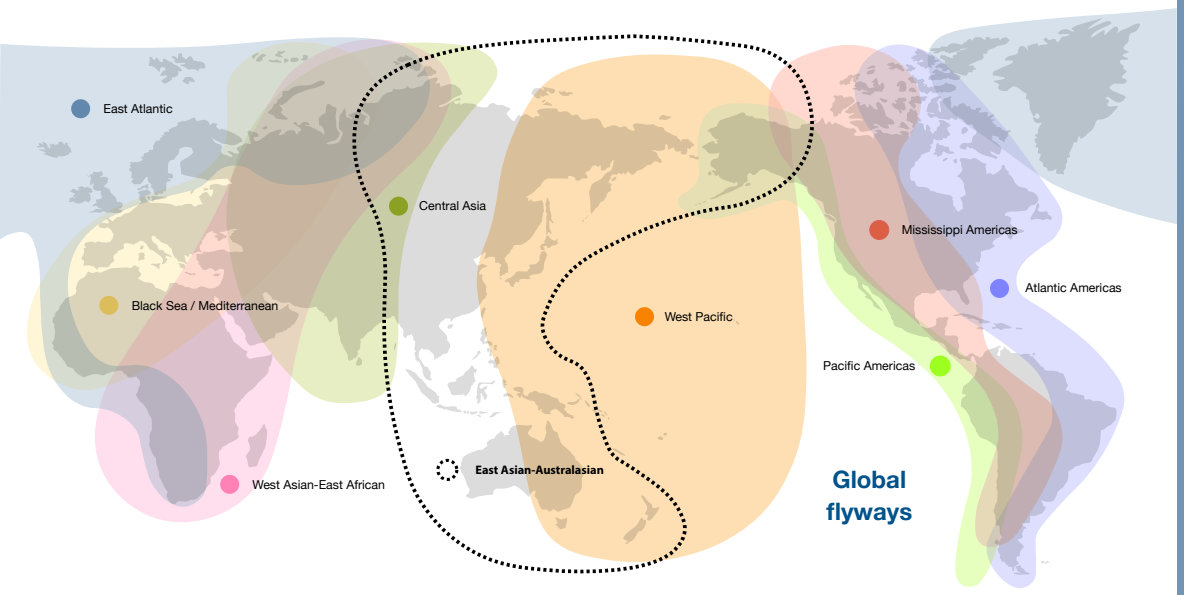
Turning the tide: Can shorebird survival trends guide habitat action?

Migratory shorebirds have declined during the past 50 years due to habitat loss and hunting, although some species appear to have stabilised for reasons that remain unclear. This project will investigate survival rates and reproductive success, identify key factors driving recovery, and assess which conservation actions have been most effective. Findings will be summarised into practical guidelines to support sustained population recovery.

Marine and Coastal
National Environmental Science Program

PROJECT 4.17

Migratory shorebird populations: research for management and recovery



The team invites individuals with on-ground shorebird conservation experience to participate in a short survey. Responses will provide valuable insights into current conservation efforts along the EAAF and will inform the development of the handbook. All survey respondents will receive a copy once it is completed. Please visit **tinyurl.com/shorebirdsurvey** to take the survey or scan here:

Scan to complete the survey

Signs of change

Despite long-term declines in shorebird populations, some species have recently shown signs of stabilisation. The factors driving this change remain unknown. Without identifying the factors that underpin stabilisation, it will be difficult to replicate positive outcomes or inform effective conservation strategies. Understanding whether stabilisation reflects genuine recovery or temporary respite is critical for ensuring the long-term survival of threatened shorebird species.

Demographic drivers

This project addresses the problem from two complementary angles. First, it will assess whether survival rates of shorebirds have improved across key populations. Second, it will evaluate whether conservation actions, such as habitat protection and restoration, have been effective.

Together, these analyses will reveal the drivers of stabilisation in some species and provide insights into which management actions are most likely to support population recovery across the East Asian–Australasian Flyway (EAAF).

Data integration

This project will analyse more than one million shorebird observation and capture records to model survival and reproductive success for key shorebird populations. These models will feed into a regularly updated dashboard that tracks populations trends and highlights conservation priorities. A comprehensive database of conservation management actions will be developed, highlighting those actions that demonstrably improve shorebird demographics. The findings will be translated into a practical shorebird management handbook to guide practitioners across Australia and the EAAF, translating scientific insights into practical conservation strategies.

Applied outcomes

By integrating demographic modelling with habitat management knowledge, this project will support Australia's international obligations to conserve wetlands and migratory species. Expected outcomes include improved understanding of coastal species and habitats to inform regional planning, and support habitat restoration, and strengthened use of existing monitoring data to build conservation knowledge for threatened and migratory shorebirds.

Photo of Sanderling foraging by Rebecca Hall.

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