

## Shorebird values at Bagot Point, Dolphin Sands

Report to Glamorgan Spring Bay Council, October 2018.  
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### Executive Summary

Bagot Point is of conservation significance for shorebirds and small terns. The Bagot Point area is the management responsibility of Crown Land Services in accordance with the *Crown Lands Act 1976*. The conservation significance is largely arising from its connection with the adjacent Moulting Lagoon Ramsar site, which is of international and national significance to resident and migratory shorebirds. It is one component of a local network of coastal feeding and roosting habitats used by resident and migratory shorebirds depending on the tide, prevailing winds and weather conditions, and human disturbance regime. It is critical that shorebirds have alternative sites available to them if their preferred feeding or roosting sites are unavailable due to high tides, poor weather and disturbance arising from human recreational activities. The push to allow vehicular access to Bagot Point for launching boats poses the greatest risks to resident breeding and migratory shorebirds.



Pied Oystercatcher feeding in shallows.  
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## 1. Location

Bagot Point is the easternmost point of Nine Mile Beach, approximately 13km NE of Swansea on Tasmania's east coast. It is located at the mouth of the Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve, a Ramsar wetland of international significance (Woehler and Ruoppolo 2014). The shape and extent of Bagot Point is variable as a result of the interaction between downstream flows out of Moulting Lagoon and marine waves and tides. Bagot Point is within the Bagot Point Coastal Reserve, which is managed by Crown Land Services and its boundary coincides with that of the Moulting Lagoon Game Reserve (<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/file.aspx?id=6751>) and with the Moulting Lagoon Important Bird Area (Dutson et al. 2009).

The entrance of Moulting Lagoon is narrow, typically of the order of 90 – 100m in width (Figure 1). The township of Swanwick is situated to the east of the entrance of Moulting Lagoon, opposite Bagot Point. Sandpiper Beach is a small sandy beach on the Swanwick foreshore (Figure 1); the data for Swanwick have been included in the analyses reported here as the two sites, Bagot Point and Swanwick, are used interchangeably by the resident and migratory shorebirds and small terns. Sandpiper Beach is within the Coles Bay Conservation Area and is managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service in accordance with the *National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002*. Disturbance at either will result in birds moving to the other site.



**Figure 1.** Satellite image showing Bagot Point, the mouth of Moulting Lagoon and the township of Swanwick and Sandpiper Beach. Symbols show breeding territories (including nests): Hooded Plover (orange), Red-capped Plover (Brown) and Pied Oystercatcher (red). The green symbol shows the approximate centre of a Fairy Tern colony. All data from BirdLife Tasmania field surveys in 2002/03, 2007/08, 2011/12 and 2015/16.

## 2. Shorebirds and terns recorded

Table 1 lists the species of shorebirds and terns recorded from Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach by BirdLife Tasmania from February 1981 to present. A total of four locally resident species have been recorded from the two beaches, but breeding records (nests, eggs or chicks) are only known for three species: Hooded and Red-capped Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers (Figure 1 and Table 1). Sooty Oystercatchers have been observed but no breeding has been recorded at either Bagot Point or Sandpiper Beach.

In total, 13 species have been recorded at Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach including five EPBC-listed species. There are seven resident (local and Australian) /breeding species and six migratory species (Table 1).

Shorebird species		Res/Mig	EPBC			Max #
			Thr	Mar	Mig	
<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Ruddy Turnstone	Mig		X	X	10
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	Curlew Sandpiper	Mig	C End	X	X	10
<i>Calidris ruficollis</i>	Red-Necked Stint	Mig		X	X	160
<i>Charadrius ruficapillus</i>	Red-capped Plover	Res		X		38
<i>Haematopus fuliginosus</i>	Sooty Oystercatcher	Res				112
<i>Haematopus longirostris</i>	Pied Oystercatcher	Res				100
<i>Heteroscelus brevipes</i>	Grey-tailed Tattler	Mig		X	X	1
<i>Limosa lapponica</i>	Bar-tailed Godwit	Mig	Vul	X	X	14
<i>Numenius madagascariensis</i>	Eastern Curlew	Mig	C End	X	X	30
<i>Sterna albifrons</i>	Little Tern	Res		X	X	1
<i>Sterna caspia</i>	Caspian Tern	Res		X	X	3
<i>Sterna nereis</i>	Fairy Tern	Res	Vul	X		18
<i>Thinornis rubricollis</i>	Hooded Plover	Res	Vul	X		20

**Table 1.** Shorebird and tern species recorded at Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach by BirdLife Tasmania February 1981 to present (n=13). Res/Mig denotes whether a species is Resident or Migratory. Breeding territories for resident species shown in Figure 1. The conservation status of five species under the EPBC Act is shown (C End is *Critically Endangered*, Vul is *Vulnerable*) as are their inclusion on the Marine and Migratory Species' appendices to the Act. The maximum numbers for each species are shown. The two species listed as *Critically Endangered* are highlighted.

Fairy and Little Terns have been recorded at Bagot Point, and the presence of fledglings on 7 January 2012 suggested that breeding may have occurred there. A solitary Little Tern was present on the same day, and may have been involved in a breeding attempt with a Fairy Tern, as mixed-species pairs are known from Tasmania (EJ Woehler unpubl. data) and elsewhere (Cox and Close 1977, Ross et al. 1999). In light of these observations, the elevated conservation status of Fairy Terns under the EPBC Act 1999, and the suitability of Bagot Point as breeding habitat, a precautionary approach is warranted, and Bagot Point should be considered as a breeding site for Fairy and Little Terns in Tasmania – in the absence of disturbance during the breeding season.

Six migratory Northern Hemisphere shorebird species have been recorded at Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach. These are Ruddy Turnstone, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, Grey-tailed Tattler, Bar-tailed Godwit and Eastern Curlew (Table 1). Of these, Curlew Sandpiper and Eastern Curlew are listed as *Critically Endangered* under the EPBC Act 1999.

The maximum counts of 110 Pied Oystercatcher and 112 Sooty Oystercatcher are 0.9% and 1.0% of the global estimates for these species, respectively (Wetlands International 2012a, b, Hansen et al 2014, Taylor et al. 2014). These counts meet the criteria for Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach to be of international significance for the two species (1% of global population estimates).



The maximum count of 20 Hooded Plovers exceeds the 0.1% criterion (6 birds), and establishes Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach to be of national significance for the species (>0.3% of the global population), and represents 0.67% of the EPBC-listed Eastern subspecies.

The maximum count of Eastern Curlew of 30 is close to the criterion of 0.1% of the East Asian – Australasian Flyway population estimate of 35,000 birds (Hansen et al. 2016). Meeting this criterion would establish Bagot Point to be of national significance for this Critically Endangered species.

### **3. Discussion**

Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach are of conservation significance for resident and migratory shorebirds. The two adjacent sites support two species of shorebird at numbers meeting the international significance criterion and two species of shorebird whose numbers meet or are close to the national significance criterion. It is appropriate for the responsible land managers (CLS and PWS, respectively) to manage Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach on the basis of the area meeting these international and national criteria.

The international significance of the adjacent Moulting Lagoon was recognised in its listing as an Important Bird Area (IBA) in addition to its status as a Ramsar wetland of international significance (Dutson et al. 2009, Woehler and Ruoppolo 2014). It is likely that there is movement of resident and migratory shorebirds and terns between the Moulting Lagoon IBA/Ramsar wetlands and Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach (Woehler and Ruoppolo 2014). These movements reinforce the need to manage Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach in recognition of their international significance.

It is appropriate to recognise Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach as components of a local network of coastal feeding and roosting habitats used by resident and migratory shorebirds depending on the tide, prevailing winds and weather conditions, and human disturbance regime. It is critical that shorebirds have alternative sites available to them if their preferred feeding or roosting sites are unavailable due to high tides, poor weather and disturbance arising from human recreational activities.

An increasing recreational human presence at Bagot Point in particular poses the greatest risks to resident breeding and migratory shorebirds. Recreational dog walking disturbs nesting, feeding and roosting shorebirds, and dogs off leash disturb shorebirds and are known to take eggs and chicks (BirdLife Tasmania unpubl. obs). The push to open Bagot Point for boat launching has the potential to destroy nests and eggs, and to kill chicks of nesting species.

### **4. Recommendations**

Based on the shorebird species present at Bagot Point and Sandpiper Beach and the threats they face, BirdLife Tasmania recommends the following actions in the short-term:

- ongoing surveys and low-level monitoring by BirdLife Tasmania to obtain contemporary population data for resident and migratory shorebirds, and for these survey data to be made available to Crown Land Services (CLS), and other relevant agencies including PWS and Glamorgan Spring Bay Council (GSBC),
- support by all land managers for community involvement in monitoring, community education and engagement activities and improving existing barriers and signage as required, and
- supporting a prohibition of vehicular access to Bagot Point.

The signage and an associated community education effort (eg information sheet sent out with rates notices) will address the primary threats to shorebirds in the area arising from recreational activities. Regular reviews of the area and its shorebird values will be required in light of the dynamic nature of Bagot Point due to storms and erosion, tides and weather events.

## Acknowledgements

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