

## Australasian Bittern (*Botaurus poiciloptilus*)

EPBC Status - Endangered



Threatened  
Species  
Recovery  
Hub

National Environmental Science Programme



Bittern chick. Photo: Matt Herring

The Australasian Bittern is a cryptic species that inhabits freshwater wetlands in the inland and coastal areas of south-eastern and far south-western Australia. It is currently listed as Endangered on the EPBC Act in Australia, threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation due to wetland draining and alterations to hydrology at very large scales. It also occurs in New Zealand and New Caledonia, where the species is also considered threatened, and is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

In an effort to ensure the species survival in Australia, BirdLife Australia and the Ricegrowers' Association of Australia Inc., in collaboration with several natural resource management bodies, have coordinated several monitoring and recovery projects. One of the most innovative projects is the "Bitterns in Rice Project".

Citizen science has made a significant contribution to Australasian Bittern conservation through the Bitterns in Rice Project, through raising awareness and engaging with the rice growing community in the Riverina, where a substantial proportion of the global population are thought to breed each year. By providing expertise into the experimental design phase of the project, allowing access to their land for professional surveys, and getting involved interpreting the findings of the project, the rice-growing farmers play a key role in the project's success. Unlike most citizen science projects that draw on volunteer effort predominantly for data collection, the Bitterns in Rice Project have integrated the principles of citizen science into the more strategic parts of the scientific process.

BirdLife Australia also coordinates their own Australasian Bittern project, which provides the opportunity for the general public to submit sightings of the species, based on either incidental observations or standardised survey methods. As a collective effort, the work that has been done on the Australasian Bittern over the last several years, provided support for the species to be up-listed on the EPBC Act from Vulnerable to Endangered in 2011. This is a concerning status but provides an opportunity to highlight the species significance and raise awareness about why the conservation efforts of citizen science projects above are crucial for long term recovery.

### Further information

[www.bitternsinrice.com.au](http://www.bitternsinrice.com.au)

[www.birdlife.org.au/projects/bittern-project](http://www.birdlife.org.au/projects/bittern-project)