

# Arid Zone Monitoring Species Profile

## Bush stone-curlew

*Burhinus grallarius*

### Language names

Arepiripe, Ilere, Ngamirliri, Pmilyura, Pmwelyarre, Wilu, Wiluru, Wirntiki

National status in the EBPC Act: Not listed

IUCN Red List: Least concern



Bush stone-curlew pair with young.

Image: Ian Morris



Bush stone-curlew tracks (arrow shows which the curlew is moving).

Image: Rick Southgate

### Animal Description

Bush stone-curlews are large, slender birds with grey to brown plumage, long legs and a long bill. They make loud haunting calls at night. The bush stone-curlew is seen singly, in pairs, or during the breeding season, in small flocks. They may be quiet and wary during the day, when they rest in the shade. If defending a nest, they make bold threat displays.

### Key threats

Although bush stone-curlews are not nationally threatened, they have become rare in parts of their range, especially in south-eastern Australia, mainly because of losing habitat, and being hunted by foxes and cats.

- Habitat being lost and changed
- Too much grazing by feral herbivores (livestock, rabbits and mice)
- Climate change (changing rainfall, temperature, droughts)

### Habitat

The bush stone-curlew is common in the tropics and rare and declining in southern Australia. It occurs in different types of country, including open forest, woodland, grassy plains, arid areas and along inland creeks and rivers, but prefers areas with intact woodland and ground habitat.

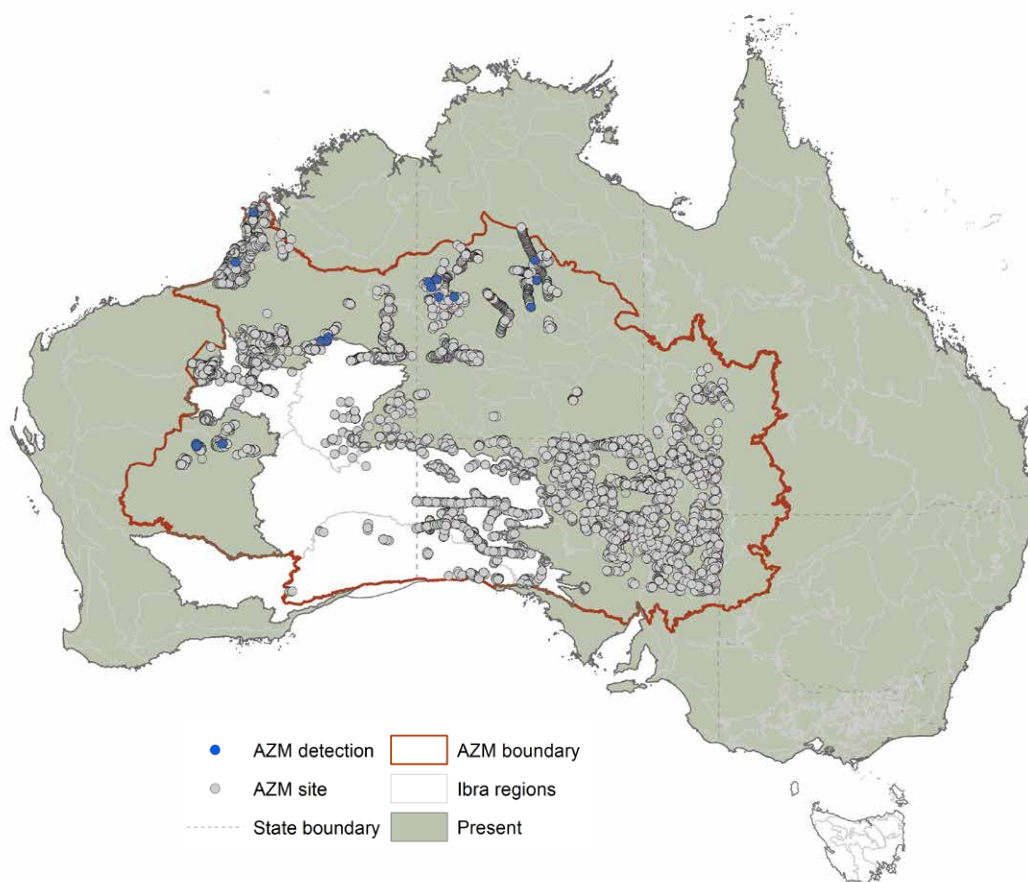
### Bush stone-curlew tracks

The prints of bush-stone curlews have three forward pointing toes with no back toe visible.

## Arid Zone Monitoring project findings

### Bush stone-curlew distribution

The map summarises the detections of bush stone-curlews over time in the AZM dataset. It shows that there are relatively few records of the bush stone-curlew (only 20 out of nearly 15,000 records are of bush stone-curlews), and that most of these have been made in northern and western deserts. Each blue dot shows a survey site where bush stone-curlews were recorded. The grey dots show all the other sites that were surveyed, but where bush stone-curlews were not recorded. These records were made by Indigenous Ranger groups, land councils, NGOs, government agencies and university researchers. Bush stone-curlews are also found outside the AZM project area, in the northern savannas of WA, NT and QLD, SE Queensland and in parts of NSW and Victoria (the shaded areas of the map). The information about the overall distribution in the map background is taken from Australian Faunal Directory<sup>1</sup>.



The map above shows data shared by data providers with the AZM project. The data are from track and sign surveys. This method is great for detecting species that live in sandy deserts, but not as good for species that prefer rocky habitats, or species with distributions that are mostly outside the central deserts. The method also works best for larger-bodied animals with tracks that are easily identified.

It is possible that extra surveys have been carried out that have not yet been shared. If you see 'gaps' in the maps that you could fill by sharing your data, let us know.

### Further information

Arid Zone Monitoring project:

<https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/arid-zone-monitoring-surveys-for-vertebrates-across-arid-and-semi-arid-zones>

### References

<sup>1</sup> Australian Faunal Directory. <https://biodiversity.org.au/afd/home>. Accessed June, 2021.



National Environmental Science Programme

This project received support from the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program.

The Arid Zone Monitoring project is a collaboration between the NESP TSR Hub and over 30 Indigenous ranger groups and Indigenous organisations, 8 NGOs and NRM groups, 5 government agencies institutions, and many individual researchers and consultants. The project has gathered track and sign data from across Australia's deserts, using it to map the distributions of desert species and their threats. The national database includes almost 50,000 species presence records from over 5300 unique sites and almost 15,000 site visits, over the period from 1982 to 2020. The project area was defined by using IBRA subregional boundaries - the project boundary captures Australia's desert subregions where track and sign-based surveys are commonly used. The project showcases the collective work carried out by all groups working across the arid zone, and lays the groundwork for creating ongoing, national-scale monitoring for desert wildlife.

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