

# Arid Zone Monitoring Species Profile

## Birds

Bird tracks are difficult to identify down to the species level in track-based surveys. This factsheet shows some bird tracks to help with identification in the field.

### Australian bustard (bush turkey)

*Ardeotis australis*

Bustard tracks don't have a back toe. They walk like supermodels, with each foot placed in front of the other.



Image: David Nelson

Australian bustard.



Image: Justine E. Hausheer, The Nature Conservancy

Bustard tracks.

## Emu

*Dromaius novaehollandiae*

Emu tracks are much larger than other bird tracks, with an especially long middle toe.



Image: Judy Dunlop

Emu with chicks.



Image: Sarah Legge

Emu tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).



# Bush stone-curlew

*Burhinus grallarius*

Bush stone-curlew tracks don't have a back toe. They are similar to, but smaller than, the tracks of bush turkeys (Australian bustards).



Bush stone-curlew.



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

# Malleefowl

*Leipoa ocellata*

Malleefowl (like bustards) walk like super models, with each foot placed directly in front of the other one. Their tracks could be confused with crow tracks, except that malleefowl tracks are larger, with straight toes that are splayed wider apart.



Malleefowl.



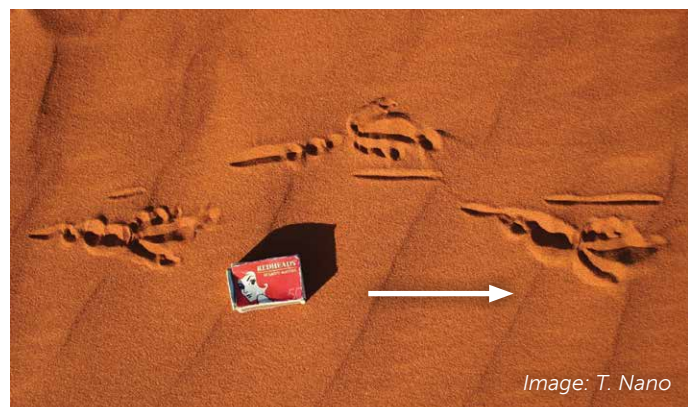
Malleefowl track (arrow shows which way it is moving).

# Crows

Crows and ravens have strong feet with clear footpads. They usually walk with their well feet apart, and sometimes they will hop. Their tracks can be confused with malleefowl tracks, but the back toes of malleefowl don't have clear footpads.



Torresian crow.



Crow tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).



# Pigeons

Pigeons have short legs and so their tracks are close together. Pigeon tracks often meander around as they search for seeds on the ground. They have three front toes and one back toe.



Image: Geoff Brown (Flickr)

Crested pigeon.



Image: T. Nano

Crested pigeon tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).

# Little buttonquail

*Turnix velox*

Little buttonquail tracks are quite easy to identify because they have three small forward facing toes and no back toe.



Image: Chris Watson

Little buttonquail.



Image: Sarah Legge

Little buttonquail tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).



Image: Ian Fraser

Place where buttonquail has been digging and foraging, called a 'platelet'.



# Babblers

Bird tracks, especially those of babblers and wrens, can be confused with hopping mice tracks. Although both species hop with both feet together ("bipedal hopping gait"), babbler tracks are longer and have obvious toes. The toes of a hopping mouse are not long and not easy to see.



White browed babbler .



Babbler tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).



Spinifex hopping mouse tracks for comparison with similar babbler tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).

## Miscellaneous unidentified bird tracks



Small bird tracks (arrow shows which way it is moving).



## Miscellaneous unidentified bird tracks



Image: Cecilia Temperli

Bird track (arrow shows which way it is moving).



Image: Cecilia Temperli

Bird track (arrow shows which way it is moving).



## Scats

Many bird scats look the same. Scats have a white splash and a paste of black or dark waste products.



Image: Naomi Indigo

*Small bird scat.*



Image: Gary J Warner

*Emu scat with quandong seeds.*

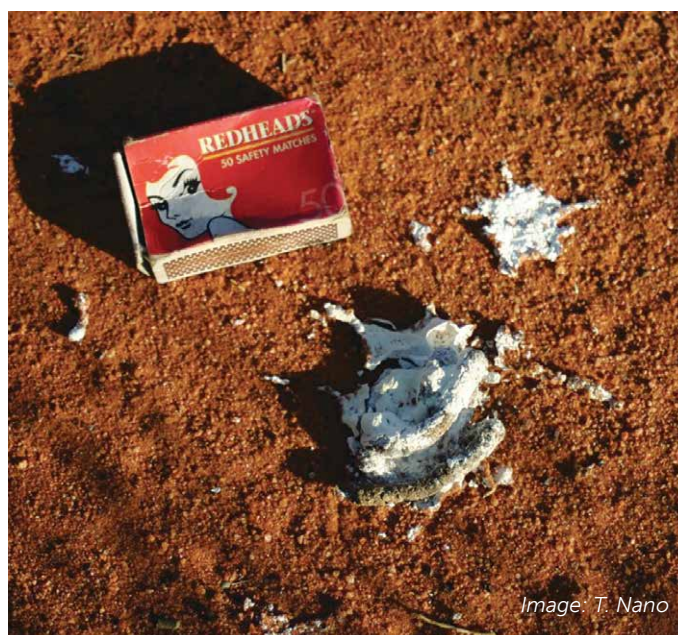


Image: T. Nano

*Bustard scat.*

## Further information

Arid Zone Monitoring project:

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



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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