Title Today Australia?s leading national bird conservation organisation, Birds Australia (BirdLife Partner), has launched its annual State of Australia?s Birds report. This year?s theme, Islands and Birds, provides just a snapshot as more than 8,300 islands occur within Australia?s jurisdiction. The report was launched by former Governor-General of Australia, Major-General Michael Jeffery, alongside Birds Australia President, Alison Russell-French. Ms Russell-French highlighted some of the treasures that are found on Australia?s islands and what is needed to protect them. ?Islands are some of our most important environments biologically?, she said. ?They are places that have a high degree of biological diversity and endemic species ? unique species that are found nowhere else on earth.? Julie Kirkwood, co-editor of the report, said that island birds are highly sensitive, and that of the 23 birds that have become extinct in Australia, 19 of them were found only on islands. ?Take a small, enclosed environment, add things like weeds, foxes, rabbits and rats - and extinction can happen?, said Ms Kirkwood. And the threats to our island birds continue today: well over half (58%) of our current list of 132 threatened birds are islanders. Climate change and invasive species are some of the biggest threats facing Australia?s islands. Birds Australia would like to see the development of a comprehensive quarantine system that would better protect islands from new pests and diseases. More survey and monitoring data are needed to identify priority islands and islands that need special management action. ?Ongoing investment in restoring high value islands is essential if we are to maintain these precious biological arks into the future?, Ms Kirkwood said. The year 2010 marks the International Year of Biodiversity. Recent global analysis concludes that biodiversity continues to disappear at an unprecedented rate, up to 1,000 times the natural rate of extinction, and that the threatening processes that cause biodiversity loss are continuing unabated or intensifying. By protecting islands, the conservation of a major part of the earth's terrestrial biodiversity can potentially be ensured by focusing conservation resources and actions within a relatively small total area. The State of Australia?s Birds report was launched at the State Library of Victoria. For a copy go to www.birdsaustralia.com.au/soab. BirdLife International's State of the world?s birds website provides a comprehensive overview of current and emerging conservation issues. Presented in a clear and exciting way, it is a synthesis of the work and knowledge of the BirdLife Partnership, as well as leading researchers and conservationists from around the globe. To find out more, please click here: www.birdlife.org/datazone/sowb