

Plight of wetland bird recognised in Australia

Title

Why is the Australian Painted Snipe being placed on the national Endangered List good news? It means that the beleaguered shorebird can finally receive the level of protection that it needs to survive. It's ironic that being listed as 'Endangered' is good news for the endemic Australian Painted Snipe. Fewer than 1500 of the birds are left in the wild and this week Australia's Federal Environment Minister Tony Burke added it to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act's 'Endangered' category following a nomination by researchers at BirdLife Australia. "Wetlands are critical to the species' survival.

Over the last 50 years important wetlands have been disappearing from our landscape because of inappropriate water management and development," said [BirdLife Australia \(BirdLife Partner\)](#) CEO, Paul Sullivan. "The population has nose-dived and this crucial listing will help us to protect remaining wetlands and restore important ailing wetlands to their former glory." Of immediate concern is a proposed expansion of a coal terminal at Abbott Point, near Bowen in Queensland, will cause significant degradation of important Australian Painted Snipe habitat. Up to 24 snipe were seen there last year. "This is a large number for a bird that's a bit of a loner" said Paul. "It highlights the importance of this internationally significant wetland for the species. It would be irresponsible to sit back and watch its destruction without a fight — the EPBC listing provides us with good ammunition. That's what it's there for."

The Australian Painted Snipe is a nomadic species which occurs only in Australia. It has been recorded dispersing to swamps in all mainland states and territories in search of habitat, though its stronghold remains the Murray–Darling Basin. Australian Painted Snipe relies heavily on temporary wetlands that provide a rich source of food after good rains. Once these dry out, the birds can be forced towards more permanent coastal wetlands. With the long-term outlook pointing to more frequent and more severe droughts, coastal wetland refuges such as Abbot Point will become increasingly important in the fight to stop the species from becoming extinct.