

Pied Oystercatchers at Tuross Head



Photo by John Cornish Tuross Head

In Tuross we are lucky enough to have a few Pied Oystercatchers. These cool looking birds are threatened - in danger of disappearing altogether from NSW, if their situation does not improve. Not so good!

The Pied Oystercatchers you see around Tuross are long term local residents who don't accept new comers easily (other Pied Oystercatchers). They also like to keep going back to the same place to feed, breed and sleep. A bit like us sometimes!

In Tuross we are the main threat to our Pied Oystercatchers. Because we like to use the same places to fish, walk and exercise our dogs in their only home, the shoreline.



Photo by John Cornish Tuross Head

Pied Oystercatcher are shorebirds that follow the tides, feeding on lake shores and beaches at low tide and resting 4-6 hours at high tide. They need lots of food, especially when they are breeding. They feed each night at low tide too.



Photo by John Cornish Tuross Head

These birds have sensitive strong red beaks and find their food by poking their beaks into the wet sand or mud to feel for shellfish and other small animals.



Photo by John Cornish Tuross Head

Around Tuross the Pied Oystercatchers nest on the sand islands in and also on the eastern shore of Coila lake, above the wet sand.



Photo by John Cornish Tuross Head

When they flee from danger, us or our dogs, the Pied Oystercatchers leave their nest and don't return until the disturbance is over. That is when the chicks get killed and the eggs get eaten.



Photo ©Priscilla Park, Birds Tasmania

Pied Oystercatchers only raise one or two chicks a year between September and February.



Photo by John Cornish Tuross Head

They start laying eggs in late September or early October and it can take nearly a month for the chicks to hatch. The chicks can fly within 2 months but their parents continue to feed them for a few more months. Successful breeding can take 5 to 6 months. During this time the parents share the task of sitting on their eggs, feeding their chicks and defend their territory. Pied Oystercatchers live for over 30 years and keep the same partner for life so the ones you saw last year will probably be the same ones trying to breed again this year.

The birds are scared by people, dogs, cats, horses, vehicles, and boats - when too close to their home.

What we do to protect the Tuross Head Pied Oystercatchers

- ***Keep your distance*** - at least 50 metres from know Pied Oystercatcher sites
- ***Keep your dog on the lead*** during breeding times - October to May
- ***Stay off the dunes*** - vehicles and bikes squash eggs
- ***Stay on the wet sand*** - when walking or running on the beach
- ***Report egg sittings*** to Amy Harrison NPWS 02 4476 0834 - who will mark the area with a barrier to stop us accidentally disturbing the birds again