



Bringing back the Bunyip Bird

Australasian Bittern Summit

Historic Hydro, Leeton

31 January - 3 February 2023

Summit
registration
package

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In the Wiradjuri language the word for Bittern is ‘Boom Boom’ or ‘Poon Poon’, reflecting its booming call.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Australasian Bittern Conservation Summit is held on Wiradjuri land.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging. We also recognise the unique, diverse and enduring cultures of Aboriginal peoples in NSW.

Riverina Local Land Services is committed through our Aboriginal Engagement Strategy to ensure there is meaningful engagement with Aboriginal people and communities in our region to develop partnerships and explore opportunities in natural resource management and other areas of our business.

A key goal for the Riverina region is connecting people and landscapes and this will be achieved through Ngangaanha – the Wiradjuri word meaning to look after, regard and care for Country.

About the Summit

The Bringing back the Bunyip Bird: Australasian Bittern Summit gives you the unique opportunity to connect with scientists, conservationists, wetland managers, birdwatchers and farmers who share a passion for the iconic Australasian Bittern.

Hosted by Riverina Local Land Services, the Summit will be held in Leeton NSW and will run from 31st January to 3rd February 2023.

The Bringing Back the Bunyip Bird: Australasian Bittern Summit is the first time such a conference has been held and will be considered by delegates as an amazing opportunity to see and hear about all things Bittern.

We are offering an interesting and engaging program with unique tours to the key Bittern wetlands of the Riverina including the internationally recognised Fivebough Wetland and Bittern-friendly rice crops.

Expert speakers from across Australia and New Zealand will cover a range of topics, including innovative monitoring methods, wetland management and Bittern-friendly rice.

Bitterns are considered a flagship species for encouraging and promoting healthy wetland management. There are many projects currently being undertaken to improve the long term outlook for this species.

The Summit will bring together all those interested in this curious bird. The event is an opportunity to find out what is happening and what can be done in the future for the long-term survival of the species.

REGISTER HERE:

<https://ccem.eventsair.com/2023-australasian-bittern-summit/registration>



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Did you know the booming call of the male Bittern can be heard up to two kilometres away?



The Background on Bitterns

The deep eerie boom of the male Australasian Bittern in spring and summer is thought to have given rise to the legend of the bunyip. Bitterns are listed as an Endangered species in Australia with about 1,300 birds remaining.

They are mainly found in south east Australia and New Zealand with small populations in Tasmania, south west WA and possibly New Caledonia.

The Narrungdera Wiradjuri people consider the Australasian Bittern to be a sacred bird because it is a messenger of one of their spirits called Wawe ('One who travels on the wind').

In the Wiradjuri language the word for Bittern is 'Boom Boom' or 'Poon Poon', reflecting its booming call.

They are stocky birds about 70cm tall with mottled brown feathers, pale green legs and prefer shallow wetlands, with a dense cover of reeds, rushes, sedges or cane grass.

Recent work in the NSW Riverina as part of the Bitterns in Rice project has found that large numbers are using the rice fields of the Riverina over the summer months for breeding purposes.

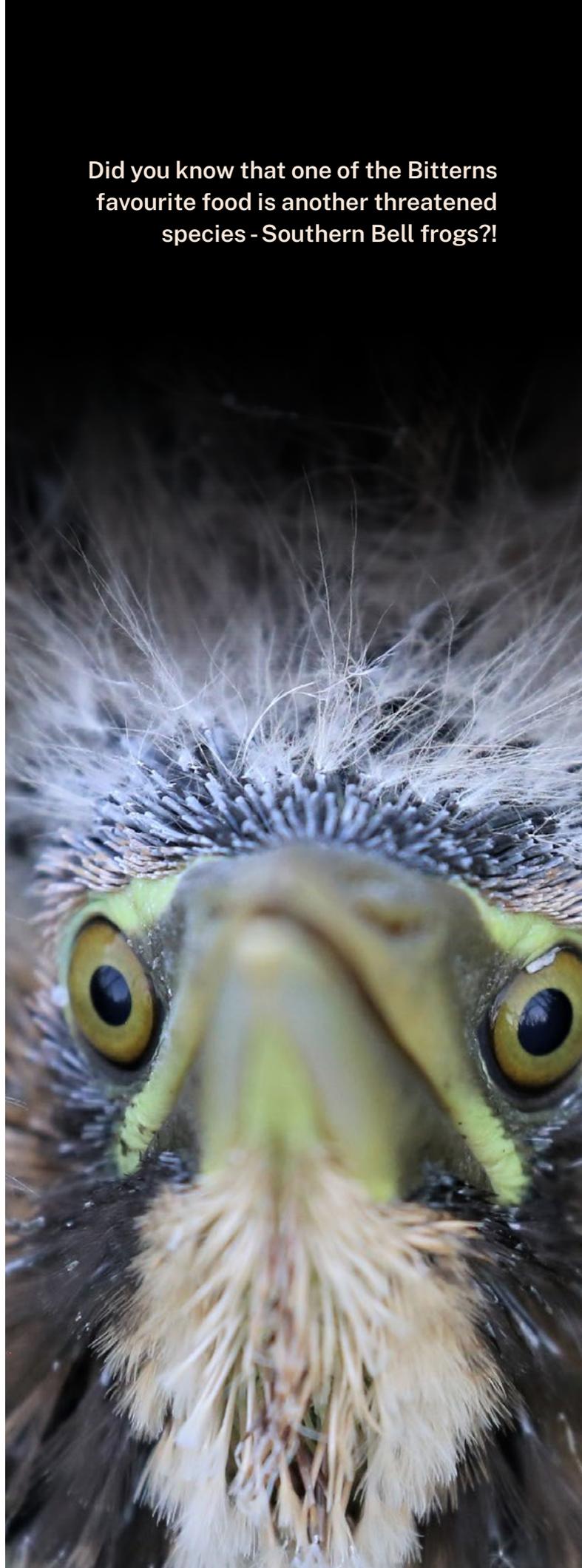
Bitterns are a sneaky, cryptic species and can sometimes be seen when they poke their heads up above the dense cover to keep an eye on their surroundings.

Loss of wetland habitat, reduced quality of wetlands and altered wetland vegetation cover have been the identified as the main threatening processes resulting in a decline in population numbers. Changed agronomic practices with 'delayed permanent water' in rice crops resulting in fewer successful breeding events and predation by foxes and cats are also considered key threats to species survival.



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Did you know that one of the Bitterns favourite food is another threatened species - Southern Bell frogs?!



Summit topics

- Regional status summaries
- New monitoring and research methods
- Bittern-friendly rice farming
- Wetland restoration
- Environmental water management
- Recovery plan implementation
- Wetland construction
- Breeding, feeding and movement ecology

Speakers

New Zealand

Emma O'Donnell, NZ Department of Conservation

Colin O'Donnell, NZ Department of Conservation

New South Wales

Ali Borrell, Murray-Darling Wetlands Working Group

Jen Spencer, NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

Matt Herring, Murray Wildlife / Charles Darwin University

Victoria and South Australia

Damian Cook, Rikali Ecological Consulting

Andrew Silcocks, Birdlife Australia

Bob Green, Birdlife South East SA / Avian Monitoring Services

Tasmania and Western Australia

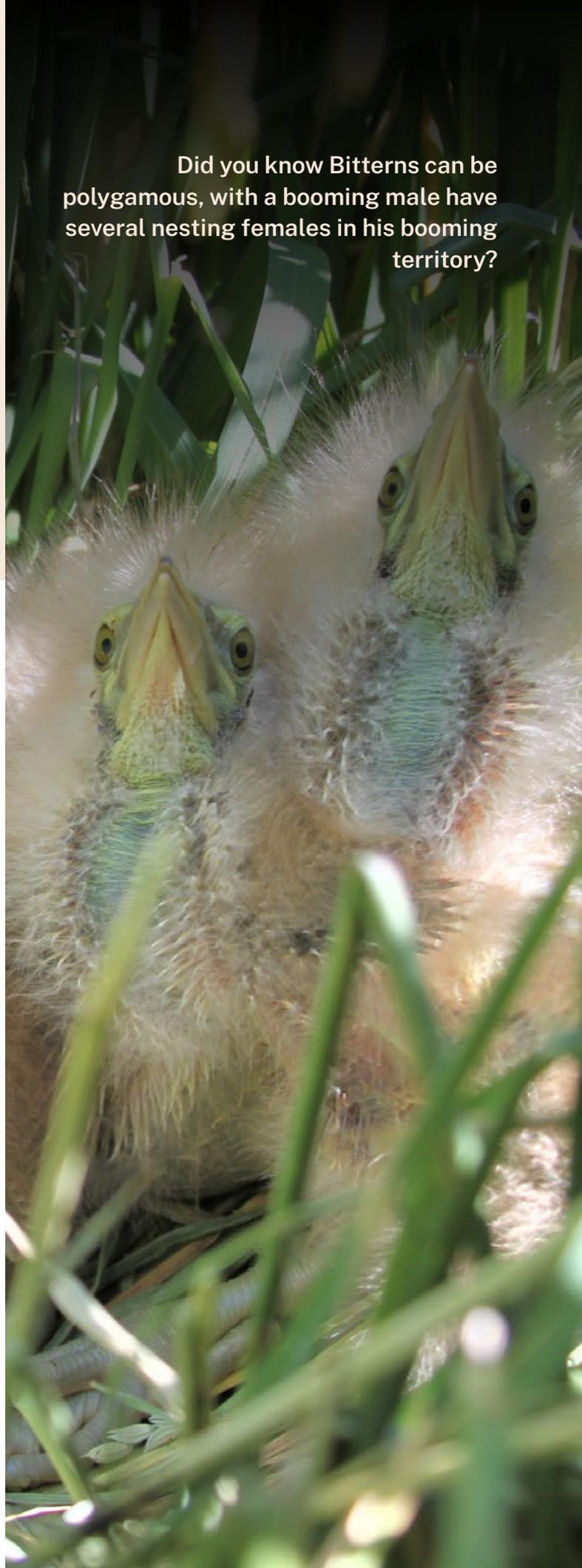
Liz Znidersic, Charles Sturt University

Sarah Comer, WA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions



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Did you know Bitterns can be polygamous, with a booming male have several nesting females in his booming territory?



Registration options

Full registration - \$220*. Partial registration - as follows

DATE	ITEM	DETAILS	RATE
Tuesday 31 January	Welcome Function	Casual BBQ dinner at Fivebough Wetland including transfers from Historic Hydro Motor Inn	\$35.00*
Wednesday 1 February	Summit Sessions	Historic Hydro Motor Inn: Full day of conference sessions including M/T, lunch and A/T	\$110.00*
	Summit Dinner	Three course Dinner at Whitton Malthouse. Includes transfers from Historic Hydro Motor Inn.	\$75.00*
Thursday 2 February	Field trips -see over for details	Tour 1 -Rice Focus Morning Tour 2 -Wetland Focus Morning Tour 3 -Rice Focus Afternoon Tour 4 -Wetland Focus afternoon	\$55.00*
Friday 3 February	Optional Extended Field Trips - see over for details	Yanga National Park Barmah Millewa	No charge

*All GST Inclusive



Our event partners and sponsors

We are grateful for the support of our event partners and sponsors, people who see the value in what we are doing. Thanks!

- SunRice (event partner)
- National Landcare Program (event partner)
- Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (event partner)
- Coleambally Irrigation Cooperative Limited (silver)
- Murray Irrigation Limited (silver)
- Murrumbidgee Irrigation Limited (silver)
- Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (bronze)
- Murray Darling Basin Authority (bronze)
- Agrifutures (bronze)
- Rice Growers Association of Australia (bronze)
- Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group (bronze)
- Charles Sturt University (bronze)
- Threatened Species Recovery Hub (bronze)
- Yenda Producers (field trip)
- Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (field trip)
- Leeton Shire Council (field trip).

Field trips

We are offering a number of alternatives so that everyone has the opportunity to see the best the Riverina has to offer.

Wetland Focus tours will include the Ramsar listed Tuckerbil Wetland, Turkeys Flat Wetland, Campbells Swamp and a Bittern-friendly rice crop.

Rice Focus tours will include one of the wetlands and three Bittern-friendly rice crops.

Wetland Managers and rice farmers involved in growing Bittern-friendly rice will be in attendance.

All field trips will depart from, and return to the Historic Hydro Motor Inn. Morning trips will depart at 5.30am and return at midday. Afternoon trips will depart at 3.30pm and return at 9.00pm.

Please be aware that each field trip is limited to 30 and you are welcome to go on both morning and evening tours however preference will be given to your first choice.

Optional Extended Field Trips

The extended tours will be arranged for Friday 3 February if there is sufficient interest. The idea is that you will make your own travel arrangements and rendezvous at:

Deniliquin at 3pm for the Barmah Millewa tour.

Balranald at 3pm for the Yanga tour.

Local National Park Rangers and others working in these areas will then lead you on a tour of these unique and wonderful places.



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Did you know Bitterns have been recorded using pieces of grass to lure fish to catch?



Accommodation bookings

Delegates are to make their own accommodation and travel arrangements.

Accommodation options can be found at the [Leeton Tourism website](#) or you can obtain local advice from Leeton Tourism staff by calling 02 6953 6481. You are advised to book early as accommodation is limited in Leeton.

Please note that accommodation at the conference venue (the Historic Hydro) is already booked out.

Accommodation can also be booked at the DPI run Amaroo Motel at Yanco Agricultural Institute (which is not listed on the Leeton Tourism site) by calling Leonie Napier on 02 6951 2611 or email yai@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Accommodation is also available at the Whitton Malthouse with many options also available in nearby Narrandera.

Cancellation Policy

Should you elect to cancel your registration a full refund, less a \$55 cancellation fee or 25% (whichever is less) per registration, will be made on any cancellations received by Friday 13th January 2023. No refunds will be issued for any registration cancellations made after January 13th, although substitutions of delegates will be accepted. All cancellations must be made in writing to the conference coordinator.

Event Cancellation

If COVID-19 restrictions stop the Conference being conducted it will be postponed to an appropriate future date and venue. All registrations and payments will be held over to the new dates. Should you not be able to attend the new dates a full refund will be provided.

Condition of Entry

It is a condition of entry that no delegate may disrupt the order of events or intent of the program. Anyone considered to be disturbing the program intent will be asked to leave. Only pamphlets and brochures approved by the event organisers may be distributed.

Registrations and Bookings can be made online at the [CONFERENCE WEBSITE](#).

<https://www.ils.nsw.gov.au/regions/riverina/projects-and-programs/bringing-back-the-bunyip-bird-australasian-bittern-conservation-summit>

Further details

Bradley Hayden, Conference Co-ordinator
Australasian Bittern Summit
M: 0412 461 392, E: bradley@ccem.com.au

Did you know Leeton was designed with the assistance of noted American architect Walter Burley Griffin?



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Stories from the field

“One of the things I really love about Bitterns is their complete disinterest in being photographed. These birds are the opposite of posers; I am yet to see one hanging around hoping for its photo to be taken.

“Instead, when you get too close to their personal space they fly off directly away from you and consequently I have quite a collection of Bittern bum photos.”

Damian Cook, Rikali Ecological Consulting

“Bitterns are like highly-trained wetland ninjas. They still amaze me with their cryptic abilities.

“A colleague and I were once flummoxed by a radio tagged Bittern that was outmaneuvering us in the short grass of a grazed paddock. We knew it was there but just couldn’t understand why we couldn’t see it given the grass was so short.

“Eventually, after much head scratching, we caught a glimpse of its bill poking up out of the grass. It had evaded us by lying flat on its belly, neck stretched out, and crawling forward using its knees.”

Emma O’Donnell, NZ Department of Conservation

“Catching Bitterns with a net gun is hard enough but getting a female had become our holy grail. One day, Inka Veltheim and I had settled for another male caught in a cage trap and we were quietly sitting down attaching the satellite transmitter when a female walked past within two metres of us!

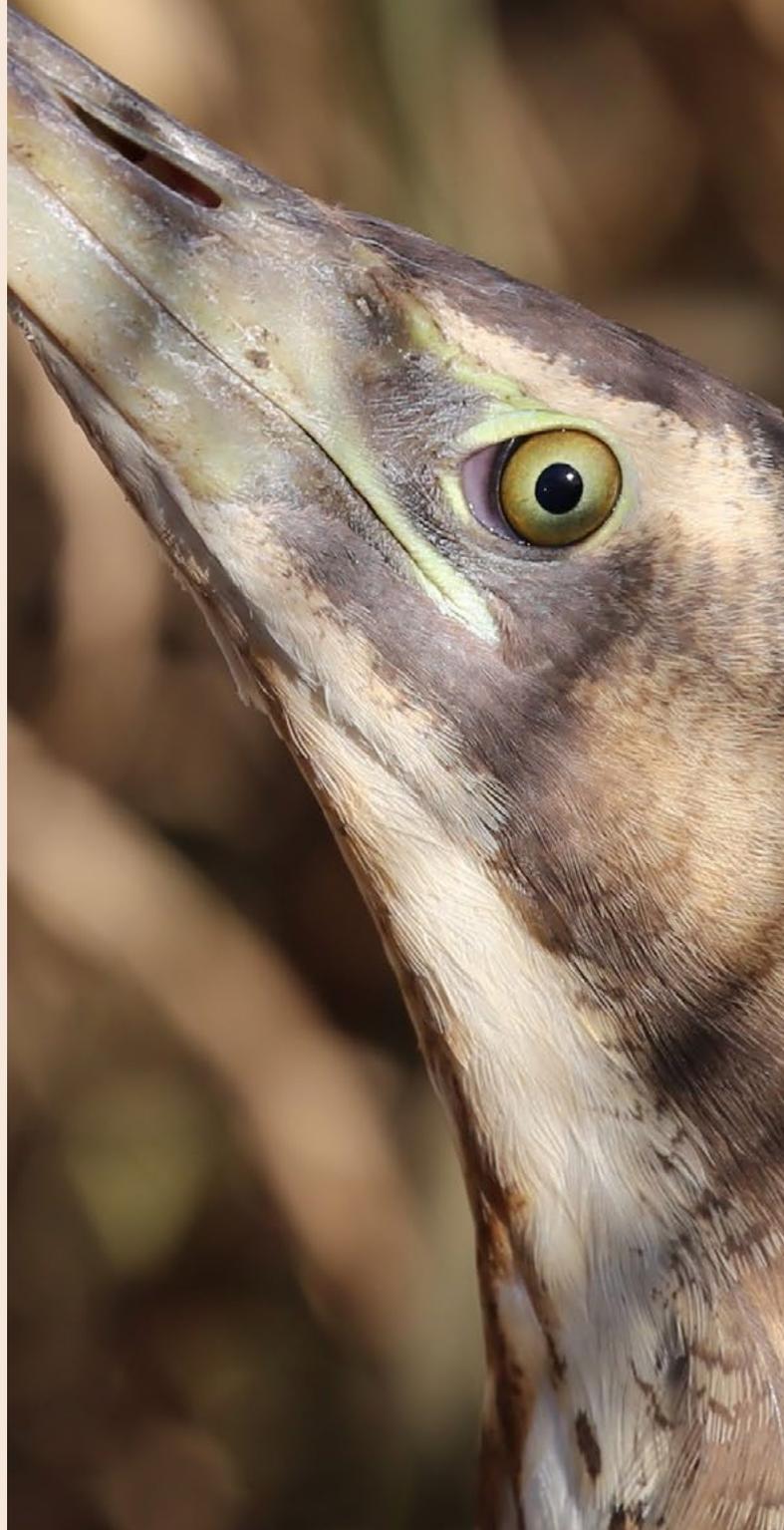
“Rather than being intuitive that we were preoccupied, we later realised she was in some sort of copulation-fueled trance. We still haven’t caught one!”

Matt Herring, Murray Wildlife / Charles Darwin University



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Did you know that Bittern feathers were once highly sort after for fly fishing?





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Murrumbidgee Irrigation



Murray Irrigation



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