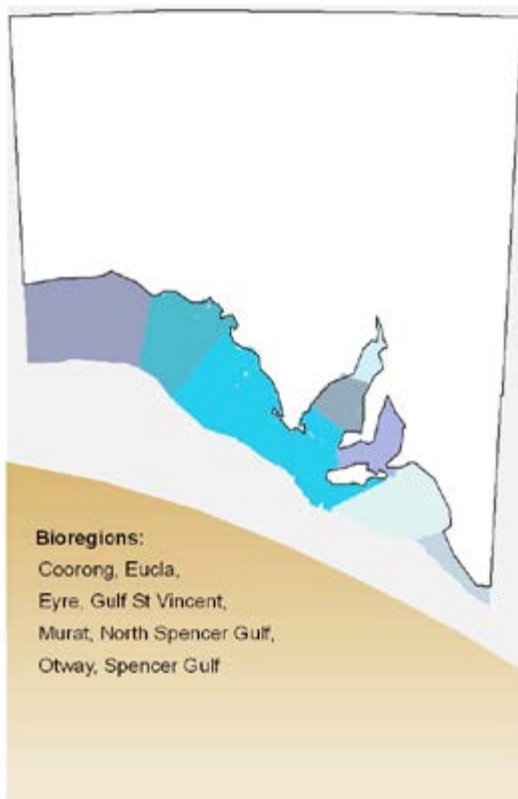


# Greater Crested Tern

*Thalasseus bergii*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Greater Crested Terns are medium sized, slender terns that are widely distributed. They are commonly found in near-coastal environments and estuaries, but also inhabit lakes and rivers inland.

Also commonly known are the Swift Tern or Crested Tern they can be seen singly, in small groups or large flocks and sometimes form large flocks with other bird species.

Purposeful in flight, Greater Crested Terns are sometimes referred to as the 'swallows of the sea'. They are coloured grey on their wings and back, with white necks and underparts and black legs and feet. They have a forked tail and narrow, strongly angled wings. Their black shaggy crest and long yellow bill allow them to be easily distinguished from other terns.

Greater Crested Terns are 40-50cm in length with a 90-115cm wingspan. Although similar in shape and proportion to their relative, the Lesser Crested Tern, they are bigger and bulkier with a different profile in flight.

## Diet

These birds dive from heights of five to eight metres when foraging but only penetrate a few centimetres below the surface of the water.

Their diet includes small fish such as Sardines, Australian Anchovies and Leatherjackets.

## Breeding

Greater Crested Terns are residential rather than migratory. When the time comes to breed, Greater Crested Terns form large noisy colonies on small offshore islands. Nesting on islands makes it easier to protect their eggs because there are fewer predators like foxes and feral cats. Terns are ground nesting birds that lay their eggs in shallow scrapes (depressions in the ground). The eggs are then incubated by both parents.

## Habitat

Greater Crested Terns are widespread around the coasts of the Indian Ocean, Southern Ocean and west-central Pacific Ocean. They may rest on the surface of the sea in calm weather but during storms they shelter behind dunes, rocks and vegetation.



### Threats

Threats include predation by feral animals (foxes, cats, dogs, and rats) and Silver Gulls. Commercial fisheries have also created some concerns for Greater Crested Terns as they attract large numbers of gulls that compete for food and habitat. Pollution of the marine environment is another threat, along with the disturbance of nests that can be caused unintentionally by inquisitive tourists and fishermen, or intentionally during acts of vandalism.

Greater Crested Terns hunt small fish by sighting them from the air and then diving into the water and grabbing them by the head.

### Conservation

You can help protect the Greater Crested Tern by:

- organising a day to pick-up litter on your local beach
- not getting too close to tern nests as disturbance can distract them from caring for their young
- being careful what you wash down the drain – stormwater ends up in the ocean.



Photo by Peter Canty

Greater Crested Tern



Photo © SATC, Craig Ingram

Greater Crested Tern

## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

**Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100

**Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700

**Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900

**Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

**Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289

**Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436

**Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255

**Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176

**Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524

