



The

# WONDER WEEKLY



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Published by the Peter Underwood Centre

October 19, 2020

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# EPIC FLIGHT



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IF you have been to Tasmania's northern or eastern coastlines, or the Bass Strait islands recently, you may have come across a rather curious-looking bird.

The eastern curlew, *Numenius madagascariensis*, is the largest migratory shorebird in the world. It is amazing to think these birds, which visit Tasmania between late August and March each year, travel all the way from their breeding grounds in Russia, Mongolia and China.

About 73 per cent of eastern curlews 'winter' in the coastal wetlands of north-eastern and southern Australia.

They stop off at locations in the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and

Indonesia on the way. Using the Sun, stars, the Earth's magnetic field, and landmarks, they navigate the hazardous journey of about 12,000km or more to our mud and sand flats each year.

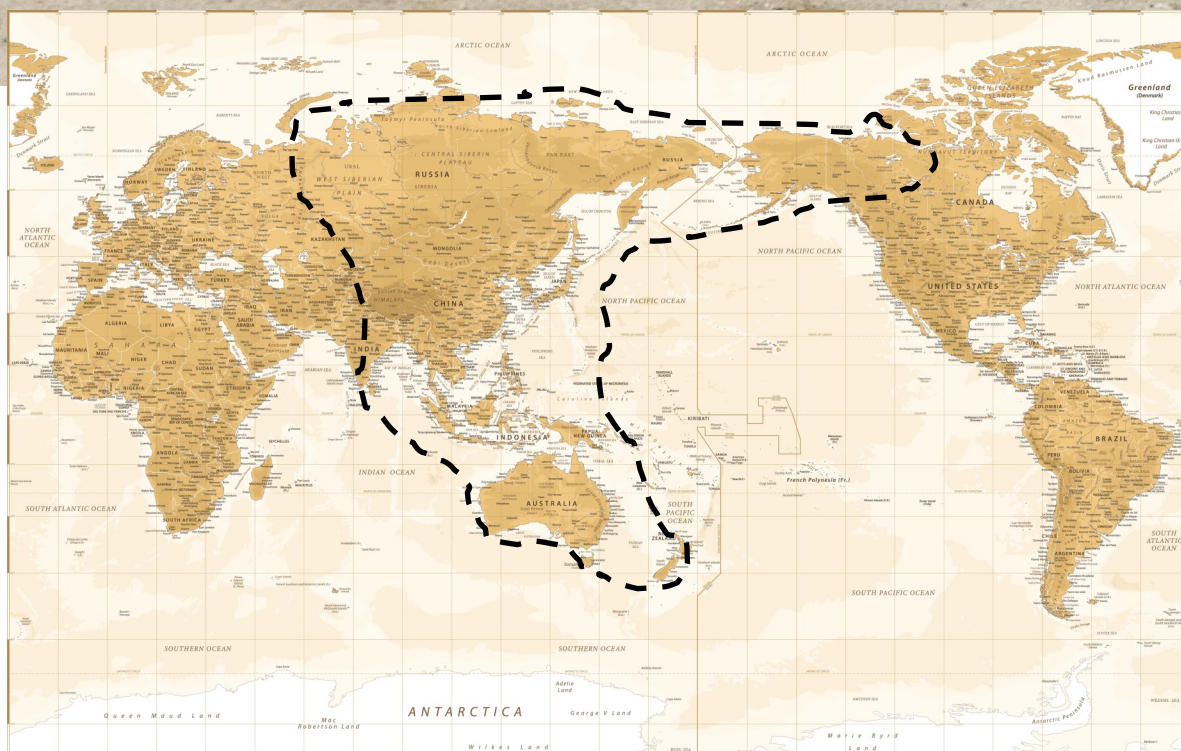
And they will be making the return trip in a few months time.

In fact the eastern curlew is sometimes called the 'moonbird', because it can fly the distance between the Earth and the Moon in its lifetime.

Unfortunately migratory shorebirds are in decline.

Habitat loss, human disturbance, and hunting on breeding grounds and at migration stopover points, and are among the reasons.

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**FREQUENT FLYERS:** The graphic above roughly represents the East Asia - Australasia Flyway area. Millions of migratory waterbirds, including the eastern curlew, top, make the incredible journey between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres twice a year.

Pictures: iStock/JohnCarnemolla/ dikobrazy

"Education perhaps more than anything else is a passport to a better life." - Peter Underwood AC

# A juggling challenge



## How to make your own beanbag balls

You can pretty much juggle any small balls, but beanbag balls are a lot easier.

Tennis balls, for example, are a bit too bouncy.

Most of you won't own beanbag balls, but rather than heading to the store to buy some, you can make your own.

All you need is rice, small plastic freezer bags and balloons.

To make a juggling ball, put some rice into a plastic bag and twist the end to create a ball shape.

Wrap the leftover end of the bag around it.

Then snip the end off a balloon, and stretch it over the rice ball.

Repeat this process with another balloon, covering the hole left by the first balloon.

If you use different coloured balloons you will end up with a cool design.



Pictures: iStock/ Halfpoint/ ajt

HAVE you ever tried juggling?

Most people have at one time or another.

It is a tricky skill to learn, but like most things, if you practice you will improve.

And it is much easier if you use the right technique.

### STEP ONE

Imagine there are two points about 30cm above your head and shoulder width apart, as shown in the image.

Start with one ball in your right hand and try throwing it to the left spot and then catching it with your left hand.

Then throw the ball with your left hand to the right spot, and catch the ball with your right hand.

If your aim is correct, you will notice that you need to catch the ball slightly outside your shoulder.

Bring the ball back inside your shoulder to throw it.

### STEP TWO

Now using the same technique, introduce a second ball.

Throw the ball in your right hand first, and when it reaches the left spot and begins to drop, throw the second ball in your left hand to the right spot.

Keep your focus on the two spots, and try to develop as even

a rhythm as you can.

### STEP THREE

You guessed it—three balls. Obviously this is when it gets a lot tougher.

Start with two balls in your right hand and one in your left.

Other than that, the technique is the same.

Throw one of the balls in your right hand to the left spot, and as it begins to drop throw the ball in your left hand to the right spot.

Right, left, right.

If you make it to six catches you can declare yourself a juggler, and the circus awaits.

But whether you manage one ball or three, the main thing is to have fun.

Dropping the ball is part of juggling, so don't be discouraged.

Children's University Tasmania members can earn stamps in their passports for this challenge at the discretion of their school coordinators.

**HELPFUL TIP:** If an adult family member has a phone with a camera, ask them to video you juggling and then watch it back.

It is a great way of improving your technique.

For example, you will be able to see whether you are throwing the ball to the correct spots.

## The epic flight of a brave feathered visitor

### From Page 1

It is estimated that 80-90 per cent of the eastern curlew population has been lost.

In Tasmania, eastern curlews are on the endangered list.

Eastern curlews are known for their distinctive call, a sad sounding 'curlew', and their long downward-curving bills, which they use to probe in the mud to find their favourite food source, crustaceans and molluscs.

They move between high-tide roost sites and tidal mud and sand flat feeding areas.

They are extremely wary, and take flight at the first sign of danger.

So if you do spot an eastern curlew, or any other shorebird for that matter, be sure to keep your distance.

And if you are walking a dog, keep them on the leash.

Australia has 15 species of resident (breeding) shorebirds, 36 regular migrants and 16 species that visit occasionally.

All but one species of the shorebirds

(the double-banded plover migrates from New Zealand) that migrate to Tasmania, breed in northern China, Mongolia, Siberia and Alaska during June and July each year.

The migration route travelled by these birds is known as East Asian-Australasian Flyway - a super highway for birds which extends from Arctic Russia and North America to the southern limits of Australia and New Zealand.

Others shorebirds which travel great distances to Tasmania include ruddy turnstones, sharp-tailed sandpipers, bar-tailed godwits, whimbrels and red-necked stint.

The bar-tailed godwit has been recorded flying 11,000km non-stop from its refuelling stop on the mudflats of the Yellow Sea in China.

Tasmania's mudflats - such as Orielson Lagoon, between Midway Point and Sorell - are therefore a really important location for shorebirds, and for scientists to study shorebirds.

Birdlife Tasmania has been monitoring numbers for more than 50 years.

## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

There are seven small differences between the first tiger and the second one. See if you can spot them, then check the solution below.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Tigers generally live alone. The largest tiger, the Manchurian tiger, can reach 4 metres in length and weigh almost 300 kilograms. Tigers are ambush hunters and are capable of killing animals up to 200 kilograms in weight.



Artwork: [www.johnpollyfarmer.com.au/](http://www.johnpollyfarmer.com.au/)

**SOLUTION:** 1. Ear missing, 2. Eyebrow missing, 3. Tip of tail changed, 4. Front paw longer, 5. Fur on chin longer, 6. Stripes on back leg missing, 7. Stripes on back changed.