

# Great Sandy Strait (GSS) Ramsar Values

To be classed as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar Site) a wetland must meet at least one of nine qualifying criteria.

**Our Great Sandy Strait meets six!!**

A wetland should be considered internationally important if it:

## **Contains a representative, rare, or unique example of a natural or near-natural wetland type found within the appropriate biogeographic region (Criterion 1)**

GSS is an outstanding example of a sand passage estuary and is in a relatively undisturbed state. Large, well developed expanses of sand and mud flats, salt flats, mangroves and seagrass beds are widespread along the Strait. Such passages are rare in Queensland but less spectacular passages occur elsewhere in the South East Queensland bioregion. Also, the rare patterned fens occur in perhaps only one other part of the biogeographic region, and are not known anywhere else in the sub-tropics worldwide.

## **Supports vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered species or threatened ecological communities (Criterion 2)**

The GSS Ramsar site provides feeding grounds that are frequently or occasionally used by six species of threatened marine turtle (Green, Loggerhead, Hawksbill, Flatback, Leatherback and Pacific Ridley Turtles). Other threatened species that occur in the site include Dugong, Humpback Whale, Water Mouse, Illidge's Ant Blue Butterfly, and the Oxleyan Pygmy Perch.

## **Supports populations of plant and/or animal species important for maintaining the biological diversity of a particular biogeographic region (Criterion 3)**

The GSS Ramsar site supports at least 38 species of shorebird, 104 species of fish, 27 species of mollusc, hard & soft coral species, 11 species of mangrove, and 7 species of seagrass. The mangrove communities within the Strait represent a transition between essentially temperate and tropical species.

## **Regularly supports 20, 000 or more waterbirds (Criterion 5)**

Wetlands along GSS regularly support in excess of 20 000 migratory shorebirds. On several occasions counts between 30,000 and 40,000 shorebirds have been recorded.

## **Regularly supports 1% of the individuals in a population of one species or subspecies of waterbird (Criterion 6)**

Wetlands along Great Sandy Strait regularly support more than 1% the total world population of the following species: Eastern Curlew, Grey-tailed Tattler, Lesser Sand Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Whimbrel, Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied Oystercatcher, Greenshank, and Grey Plover.

## **Is an important source of food for fishes, spawning ground, nursery and/or migration path on which fish stocks, either within the wetland or elsewhere, depend (Criterion 8)**

The GSS tidal wetlands are extremely important for protection of, and source of food for, juvenile and adult fish, prawns and other crustaceans. It is highly valued for commercial and recreational fishing.