

# Bittern Friendly Rice Growing Tips

*The endangered Australasian Bittern arrives in rice crops about two months after sowing and begins nesting once there is sufficient cover. These tips are based on the key findings from the work to date of the Bitterns in Rice Project. They are for rice growers in the NSW Riverina that are keen and able to help conserve this special bird.*

**1.** Aerial-sown (or spreader-sown) crops are strongly preferred by bitterns, probably because of the earlier inundation.

**2.** Earlier sown crops have greater chances of supporting bitterns. The rice season already means bittern breeding is delayed.

**3.** Banks with thick cover (e.g. Barnyard Grass) are used by roaming chicks to hide in, and by adults, especially when rice is young.

**4.** Largest bays are favoured but the additional edges of small bays may also be important so a combination is likely best.

**5.** Small stands of Cumbungi in toe furrows and the crop itself are frequently used by bitterns for roosting and feeding.





## Bitterns in Rice Project

*Our vision is to demonstrate how farming and endangered species conservation can work together.*

*These tips are a work in progress and include our collective knowledge in May 2014.*

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**6.** Reduced pesticide use in and around crops will probably increase prey availability. Bitterns feed on frogs, fish and invertebrates.

**7.** Providing habitat in natural wetlands, farm dams, drains and other areas will help bitterns, especially between rice seasons.

**8.** Control of foxes and cats may increase bittern breeding success by giving the mobile chicks a better chance of surviving.

**9.** Avoid disturbance. Bitterns are very secretive waterbirds and can be sensitive to the activity of people, dogs and machinery.

**10.** Keeping tabs on the Australasian Bittern and learning about them helps develop the best conservation measures.