



EDITION 25 - WINTER 2021

## VICTORIA

### A REMARKABLE YEAR – MORNINGTON PENINSULA 2020-21

Mark Lethlean, President Friends of Hooded Plovers Mornington Peninsula Inc

Our 2020/21 breeding season had all the hallmarks of being something very different. Of course, there was the hard Covid lockdown, but many of our volunteers reported that at times the beaches were actually busier than ever, as the crowds from suburban Melbourne had nowhere else to go.

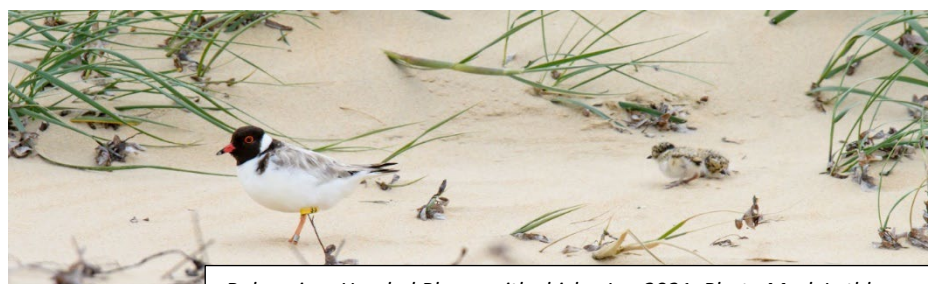
Then there was the La Nina weather pattern- a summer that was wetter, windier and absolutely cooler than we had experienced in a long while. No prolonged periods of excessively high temperatures that slowly fry the exposed eggs of repeatedly disturbed nests. There was more kelp and seagrass being washed up on the beach which hosted a much higher density of shoreline invertebrates. Our chicks didn't need to explore far and wide for a feed. Then we had beaches that had never hosted breeding birds before that had extraordinary success. And of course, there was just dumb luck. A host of nests that were not destroyed by big swell and high tides just on the point of hatching.

The Mornington Peninsula has historically been described as a biological sink for the Hooded Plover. A region that is keenly sort after for high-impact ocean-beach territories but where breeding success has been extremely poor. Our birds' nest in the busiest National Park in the state.

Gunnamatta Oct 2020. Photo Mark Lethlean



So, after years of less than adequate results, with hardened volunteers attuned to our annual disappointment and to the refrain of 'what-might-have-been' - we finally struck gold. We have 30 active breeding pairs and we achieved 21 fledglings, including 2 clutches of 3 chicks that fledged and one pair who then managed to fledge a fourth chick. These are unheard of events on the Mornington Peninsula! We achieved a fledgling rate of almost 45% and fledglings/active site rate of 70%.



Balnarring, Hooded Plover with chicks, Jan 2021. Photo Mark Lethlean

Compare this to our performance over the past 14 years with an average fledgling rate of 18% and fledglings/active site of 26%. In 2013/14 we had only a single fledgling for the entire season and for each of the past two seasons, only managed six fledglings.





The investment in Hooded Plover conservation on the Mornington Peninsula has been immense. Parks Victoria provide a dedicated ranger and during the peak of the summer several seasonal rangers to complement the work of between 10 to 15 active on-ground volunteers. It is an investment that is always in question and fluctuates from year to year depending on what funds that can be squeezed from an ever-diminishing pool.

Although this success asks even more questions of our strategies, management and disbursement of funds, it at least gives many an opportunity to take a well-earned sigh of relief knowing that the ever-expanding conservation threats and issues will once again be there for us to address next season.



*Juveniles from Rye. Photos Mark Lethlean*

## HOW DID THEY FARE? FAIRY TERNS IN VICTORIA

Dr Amy Adams, Coastal and Wetlands Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

At the end of March, staff, volunteers, land managers, funders and members from the Victorian Fairy Tern steering committee met for the first end of season Victorian Fairy Tern debrief. A total of nine breeding attempts were recorded at eight sites within Victoria. The largest colony consisted of 500 Fairy and Little Terns and the smallest was a single pair. Only one colony was successful in producing fledglings (the mixed colony of 500 birds) where 55-60 Fairy Terns and 35-40 Little Terns fledged. It is thought that the size of this colony contributed to the successful breeding event, with mass defence of the colony from aerial predators occurring. Most of the failed nesting attempts were due to tidal inundation however some nests failed due to fox and raven/gull predation. A special thank-you to the Friends of French Island (FOFI), Phillip Island Nature Parks (PINP) and the Geelong Field Naturalists Club for assistance with continued monitoring and reports of sightings throughout the breeding season.



*Incubating Fairy Tern. Photo Shane Tuffery.*





In April, I hosted a national Fairy Tern meeting with representatives from the various Fairy Tern projects around Australia (Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia, Western Australia) as well as representatives from the Federal Government, State Departments, and the VWSG. The objectives of the meeting were to provide season summaries as well as to present new resources/developments and discuss future research needs and priorities for the species. The Recovery Plan for the species which went out for public consultation in Dec 2019 is near completion which will be a great addition in the fight to conserve Fairy Terns around Australia. If anyone knows of Fairy Tern conservation efforts or monitoring that may be occurring that hasn't yet connected with our team, please let us know so that we can learn more about the species and recovery efforts through sharing of information.



#### PHILLIP ISLAND UPDATE- DEC 2020

**Correction: Word About the Hood – Newsletter Ed 24 accidentally missed including the Phillip Island Dec 2020 update, a small article has been included to make up for the mistake. Our apologies for any inconvenience.**

Jon Fallaw, Shani Blyth, Mitch Burrows, Helen Masters – Phillip Island Nature Parks

The first nest of this season was found 30/08/20 at Anchorage Road and amazingly they fledged three chicks (Yellow 78, Y79, Y80). This was fantastic news as it has been five long years since the pair EZ Left (Orange) and unbanded last fledged chicks (08/11/15 two chicks). In the last four years they have had 14 nests, 18 chicks, none fledged, and the 2018-19 season was the most difficult where they nested 6 times, had 6 chicks all fail. The pair perhaps buoyed by the early fledging success they nested again with 3 eggs on the 12/11/20 however the nest only lasted twelve days before disappearing.

Unable to find 051-58072 - Mike Weston's oldest Hooded Plover? On the 10/09/20 Dan Lees saw six hoodies at Magiclands, Y66 with LT Right (Orange), CH Left (Orange), RL Left (White), JL Right (White) and an unbanded bird. We think that LT Right (Orange) band number 051-58072 may have died soon after this sighting as we have no further record. What is so special about Orange LT is that it was banded by Mike Weston as a chick at Rye on Wednesday 18/03/1998, originally colour-banded Blue Yellow / Yellow metal. So, it was 8213 days or 22 years, 5 months, 24 days between banding and disappearing. So, it was 22.5 years old, which may be a record for a Hooded Plover?





To add to the story, Yellow 66 (Y66) was one of three chicks banded at Surf Beach Phillip Island on 22/02/19. A report via Steve Johnson that Bass Coast volunteer Libby Christison sighted Y66 on 14/08/20 with an unbanded sub-adult on the rock platform at Harmers Haven. A month later (18/09/20) it was back on Phillip Island at Magiclands and had a one-egg nest; we think with Orange LT's unbanded partner just a week after Orange LT was last seen.



*Left: Fledged chick relaxing at Anchorage Rd 17/11/20. Centre: Shani, Francis and Lachie releasing chicks. Photos Jon Fallaw. Right: Orange LT at Magiclands. Photo Dan Lees.*

The fox trapping and baiting program to buffer Phillip Island against reinvasion by foxes continued on the Anderson Peninsula during spring. A den, cubs and four foxes were destroyed along the San Remo foreshore reserve. Y32 and unbanded nested and although Phillip Island remains fox-free, during the 2019-20 financial year, 104 feral cats were removed from Phillip Island Nature Parks reserves and 17 feral cats to December this financial year.

## PHILLIP ISLAND UPDATE MAY 2021

[Jon Fallaw](#), [Shani Blyth](#), [Mitch Burrows](#), [Tom Nixon](#), [Helen Masters](#) – Phillip Island Nature Parks

On Phillip Island, 11 hoodie chicks fledged during the 2020-21 breeding season. The average fledged per season over the last 29 years of monitoring is 7.23 chicks (highest = 17, lowest = 0). This season 18 pairs had 46 nests, 101 eggs from which 28 hatched. The 11 fledged came from 7 nests. There was a much higher fledging success before the major holiday crowds hit the beaches. The first 12 nests produced 9 chicks, 8 of which fledged by 06/01/21, while the remaining 34 nests produced 19 chicks of which only 3 fledged. All fledged chicks were banded and have a yellow leg flag numbered between 72-92, and feather samples were taken to determine sex.

Commencing this season was a small-scale study using remote cameras to try to determine causes of nest failure. The plan is to monitor up to five nests per season. Due to delays in getting permits and permissions sorted, the first cameras were not deployed until 11/02/21. Intern, Amanda DiFuccio, set cameras up on three nests and although no nest predation was recorded, several potential predators (cat, Pacific Gull, raven, and magpie) were recorded in the images along with wallaby, rabbit and even Eastern Barred Bandicoot.





We are most grateful to Mornington Peninsula and Birdlife for their attempts to catch Yellow 81 at St Andrews Beach from 15/01/21. The juvenile from Crazy Birds was first reported by Roz Jessop at Kitty Miller Bay with a right foot entanglement on 20/12/20. Y81 was again seen at Flinders by Penny Johns on 23/02/21 still hopping about and hopefully able to cope with the injured foot.

At about the same time, one of Y81's parents also had an entanglement and Steve Johnson dropped everything to come over to catch on 14/01/21. There were several issues related to the decision to go ahead and catch. Photos indicated that it was *Amphibolis* seagrass, it looked as if it may drop off naturally and part of it had broken off during the week of monitoring, the bird was observed feeding, flying, and was incubating a three-egg nest. The decision to go ahead with the catch was on the basis that the entanglement may have been more complex than we could observe, and saving an adult bird was the highest priority. The bird was caught on the first pass through the trap and fortunately we did go ahead as the seagrass had pierced the lower abdomen requiring a trip to Newhaven Vets, and it only weighed 83g. We think that it was near exhaustion and that intervention was in the nick of time.



Amanda setting up a camera at Flynn's Beach. Photo Jon Fallaw



Left: Yellow 81 displaying a foot injury/entanglement. Photo: Mark Lethlean. Right: Entangled adult Hoodie. Photo: Tom Nixon.

Other BNB on Phillip Island, at least four pairs of Pied oystercatchers (*Haematopus longirostris*), four pairs of Sooty oystercatchers (*Haematopus fuliginosus*) and one Red-capped plover (*Charadrius ruficapillus*) breeding colony of three breeding pairs consisting of at least ten individuals, were also recorded in the 2020/21 breeding season. One Pied oystercatcher chick was confirmed to fledge successfully, however, no fledglings were confirmed for Sooty oystercatchers or Red-capped plovers, which may have been due to a lack of monitoring capability.





## COVID-19 PANDEMIC, 2020-21, NOT A GOOD SEASON FOR THE BASS COAST (INVERLOCH TO SAN REMO)

Stephen Johnson, Coordinator Friends of the Hooded Plover Bass Coast

The Bass Coast coastline yielded its worst outcome since the BNB Project commenced back in 2006. We have never fallen as low as five Hooded Plover fledglings. Our ten-year average (2010-2020) is 12.5. Will this season's return be the new normal or will the amazing little Hooded Plovers bounce back?

Apart from the ever-present tide, fox and raven takes, what went wrong this season? Two standout features were the main contributors. Covid-19 response behaviours and plain bad luck with five chicks advancing into final days just before fledging but failing to go on and make it into the juvenile ranks.

Early in the season Covid-19 restrictions on people movement and suspension of Volunteer Monitoring effectively gave the beaches back to the Hoodies and they must have really enjoyed the lack of human disturbance. Things were shaping well for them. Then at midnight on the 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020, the Ring of Steel around Melbourne was lifted after 123 days of shutdown for Melbourne-based Victorians and thereafter an unprecedented invasion of beach visitors every weekend right up to the Christmas holiday season and beyond continued. This was an unrelenting amount of beach visitors pouring onto the Bass Coast for recreational relief. Constant disturbance to incubating birds and breeding patterns was the outcome. At the height of visitation, breeding pairs at the coastal towns could not cope and simply disappeared off their territories for several weeks before slowly returning when things settled a little. Their breeding season had been tilted from one extreme to the opposite extreme. As late in the season as 17/4/21, we had only three fledglings, a rare occurrence for the Bass Coast. A re-assessment of the Sandy Waterhole site on the George Bass Coastal Walk speculated two of a three-chick brood which all reached fledge age had subsequently fledged and left the site without a reported flight sighting.

Our catch and band tally for the season was two fledglings and two adults. The fledglings were EA White from Williamsons Beach West along with BM White from Sandy Waterhole. Our two adults were an unbanded pair of breeders from Wilsons Road West Cape Paterson AW White and DZ White.

Despite a disappointing season, we did have one good positive from our first Covid season. On 21<sup>st</sup> March we had an excellent showing of interest by enthusiastic residents from the new Cape Paterson Eco Village housing estate who attended a Workshop on Hoodie Volunteering. It was delivered by Kasun Ekanayake from Birdlife's Beach-nesting Team and several volunteers have since enlisted for next seasons monitoring of their local beach. This will meet an urgent need for these beaches are rapidly becoming heavily visited all year round.



*New Leg Flaggings for Bass Coast. Photos: Steve Johnson.*



## PERSISTENCE, PAIR SWAPPING AND SINGLE PARENTING; A TALE OF TWO SOUTH GIPPSLAND HOODIE PAIRS

Jonathon Stevenson, Friends of the Hooded Plover South Gippsland

While it was another lean season in South Gippsland, the exciting news was the fledging of three chicks to two pairs. It's been some years since any recorded fledgling successes in South Gippsland, so this was good news.

And those two have interesting tales to tell. The first pair's tale starts on Squeaky Beach at Wilsons Promontory NP with the return of flagged female SY after the winter break.



*SY and original 20-21 partner, Squeaky Beach.  
Photo: Jonathon Stevenson.*

SY was flagged on Squeaky Beach in 2013. She has returned ever since, partnering with unflagged males after her original partner disappeared. This season, she was seen on site in early October with an unbanded male. Then, only a week later she was gone, "replaced" by an unbanded bird. Fortunately, she was soon sighted with an unbanded partner on Norman Bay. Regardless of what pair interactions happened on Squeaky, there was now a pair on Norman Bay, the first for many years.

They got straight into breeding! Just before Christmas, a three-egg nest was detected, fenced and signed. They incubated over the busy January period, successfully hatching 3 chicks in late January. All was well for about two weeks and then more drama, SY disappeared! Her partner was now a single

dad. About this time one chick also vanished. We assumed SY died, but we'll never know how she died. But the dad was an excellent single parent and his chicks grew quickly. Both fledged in early March, the first from Norman Bay in 10 years. The fledglings were caught and flagged PV White and TR White. So, while SY may have gone, at least we can follow the progress of her offspring.

Across the water at Waratah Bay were two more pairs being regularly monitored. Waratah Bay 3 and 4 (WB3 and WB4) were neighbours. Of the four birds, three were flagged; ET Orange (male, flagged 2014 on Cotters Beach, Wilsons Promontory) and VX Orange (female, flagged 2013 at WB3) occupying WB4 site, and CB Orange (male, flagged 2011 on Cutlers Beach, Bass Coast) with unbanded at WB3.

Both pairs tried really hard, but storm tides claimed their early nests. Both pairs seemed to learn and started nesting higher in the narrow dunes. In late January WB3 started their third nest for the season, and soon after, WB4 started their fourth, a two-egg clutch. Both nests were well above the high tide and things looked promising. But disaster struck pair WB3 right on hatching time. It appears a magpie took the eggs before the chicks could hatch. But persistence paid off for pair WB4 and the two eggs hatched. VX and ET were now busy parents, keeping watch for danger, of which there was a plenty. Despite being a no dog area within Cape Liptrap Coastal Park, off lead dogs are a problem.

One chick disappeared, but the second made it to fledging, despite being AWOL on a check just prior to fledging causing much concern. While being flagged (VW White), we checked out a bald patch on the back of its head, evidence of a very





near miss with a predator. Hopefully, VW won't have any close encounters and will be seen in years to come holding territory with a future partner.

Many thanks to everyone who helped monitor the South Gippsland pairs and here's hoping for more fledgling's next season.



Left: Soon to be VW White (left) with parents; orange VX and ET. Right: Fledgling VW White airborne over the water. Photos: J. Stevenson

## HOODED PLOVER UPDATE – FAR EAST GIPPSLAND (AREA 2: MUELLER RIVER TO LAKE TYERS)

Len Axen, Volunteer, BirdLife East Gippsland

Despite the restrictions that Covid 19 and the East Gippsland bushfires placed on access to much of the coastline east of Sydenham Inlet/Bemm River, a 2020 BNB biennial count did take place in November. A small team of longstanding volunteers, local DELWP personnel and Parks Victoria staff using ATVs accounted for the following results: 34 Hooded Plovers, 77 Pied Oystercatchers, 7 Sooty Oystercatchers, 49 Red-capped Plovers and 8 Little Terns.

Very few Hooded Plover nest scrapes, active nests or chicks were observed. Overall numbers were lower than in previous years but severely eroded beaches that were wide, flat and lacking in debris contributed to the lack of potential nesting sites.

After Christmas, a BNB team came to Marlo with a view to "flag" a range of Hooded Plovers in order to gain a better understanding of their age structure, movement, and to determine if there were any significant genetic differences to those further west in Victoria. Five adult birds (**AC, LJ, DP, CK and WO**) were captured/recaptured, systematically measured and weighed with blood samples taken before release. A further 7 HPs were also "flagged" at Mallacoota. **WO** who was originally "flagged" in Southern NSW attempted to breed in both states last year. Observations such as this provide invaluable information to the collective knowledge and understanding of our flagship shorebird. The BNB team hopes to return during 2021/22 and "flag" HP fledglings as they are more likely to disperse and breed elsewhere along the coastline.



Hoodie WO. Photo Jacquie Axen





## MALLACOOTA AND CROAJINGOLONG COAST REPORT: MAY 2021

Leonie Daws, Volunteer Mallacoota

In the December 2020 edition of *Word About the Hood* we reported on the feisty Betka Beach pair, who sat out the bushfire to raise two chicks in the latter part of the 2019-20 season, and then nested early in the 2020-21 season, successfully raising another chick before Christmas. It turns out this was just the beginning. This pair subsequently raised two more clutches - six fledglings in all for this season!

In addition to the Betka pairs' success, a pair at Shipwreck Creek raised 3 chicks to fledging and a pair at Seal Creek raised two clutches with at least 4 successful fledglings. This gives a total of 13 fledglings for Mallacoota and the Croajingolong Coast, which is more than has been recorded here in any season previously. In fact, it is more than the total fledglings previously recorded here.



*Betka adults and juvenile in flight. Photo Leonie Daws*





We have reflected on the potentially beneficial outcome of the bushfire and the Covid 19 lockdowns, with restricted access to the local beaches resulting in less disturbance. In the instance of Betka Beach, repeated heavy rainfall events which kept the estuary open, and the cooler summer season, provided the birds with additional protection, discouraging returning tourists from encroaching on the nesting site.

We were pleased to welcome members of the Beach-nesting Birds Project Team, who visited Mallacoota in February, and our local group enjoyed participating as observers in the successful banding of four adults (orange flag YE and white flags CE, LK and SL) and three juveniles (White flags EB, LD and ML).

In recent weeks there has been quite a lot of activity at Betka Beach. All the juveniles except one have moved on and only one of the locally banded adults continues to be observed regularly. At least one bird banded on the NSW South Coast (black flag A5) has been sighted in a group of four adults.

We look forward to the additional insights that may be available as a result of the banding expedition and extend our thanks and good wishes to Grainne, Meg, Renee and Kasun.



*Left: Meg and Nicole release Betka juvenile LD. Centre: Birdlife team & Mallacoota vols check Hoodies at Betka Beach. Right: One juvenile yet to leave home. Photos: Leonie Daws.*

## NEWS FROM THE FAR WEST

Toni Ryan, Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West Vic

The hoodie season in the far west has been one of the most challenging seasons that we have encountered since the introduction of the hoodie program.

The pandemic brought with it some significant change in human behaviour on our beaches, which became the preferred place of recreation for many visitors and locals escaping lockdown restrictions, plus dogs and children. There was little escape from human impacts for the hoodies.





Many of the hoodies that successfully managed to hatch chicks before Christmas had also had to contend with constant high tides and difficult weather, which resulted in significant loss of eggs and chicks.

Fortunately, our volunteers were bolstered with crew members from DELWP Work for Victoria Program, who provided much needed energy and enthusiasm to keep up with new nests, fails, and refencing/signage over the height of the season. It was pleasing to see that DELWP had given the hoodie program priority during the WFV program period, along with other environmental works on the coast, including removal of South African coast daisy weed that is now infesting much of our coastline.

We looked to be heading for a great finish to the season but sadly experienced powerful seas with swells to 12 metres, sweeping our final nests and chicks away with the crazy tides. Our season ended with significant dune erosion on our narrow beaches, massive seaweed deposits piled high and into the dunes, also plastics and flotsam littering the shoreline.

Our dedicated volunteers monitored around 56 breeding sites over the season, and managed to get 16 fledges through, some of them by the tips of their feathers!

Many thanks to Dan and Sonia from BirdLife for their support over the season, Robyn Bush from Parks Victoria and the Work for Victoria Crew who all had their sleeves rolled up.

Our next season challenges are already looming, in particular the planned construction of rock walls along East Beach in Pt Fairy where four Hooded Plover territories will be potentially decimated.

Climate change is already here in the south west, we need our land managers to rapidly adapt to these changes and prioritise shorebird habitat and ecological systems over infrastructure protection and coastal exploitation.



*Hoodie on the lookout on the dark volcanic rocks widespread throughout western Vic. Photo: Dan Lees*

## SHIPWRECK COAST

Kerry Vickers, Volunteer, Shipwreck Coast

The nine known resident pairs along the Shipwreck Coast faced the usual array of threats and experienced difficult conditions during the season, resulting overall in low breeding success. It should be noted though that four of the fifteen sites remained virtually unchecked due to access issues (condition of tracks and paths).

Three of the resident pairs made three or more breeding attempts, but only one of these pairs, residents at a popular tourist location, was ultimately successful. Two of their chicks fledged early, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November and then two more fledged three months later on the 9<sup>th</sup> of February.





The success of this resident pair is no doubt largely due to their clever selection of nesting sites. In mid-December, because of their behaviour, we suspected they had a nest, but after an exhaustive search of the beach, could not find it. Grainne and Renee happened to be down soon after on a banding trip, and before visiting the site on foot, set up their scope at a nearby lookout. One Hoodie was spotted moving about on the sand, and to everyone's surprise, its partner was observed on a nest on top of a long flat rocky shelf, at a point about 3 metres above the beach. This prompted the hurried creation of a new sign, 'Please Do Not Climb Rock', and thankfully people steered clear of this unusual nest site during the coming weeks.



*Nest on the rock. Photo: Kerry Vickers*

The resident pair managed to keep their elevated nest hidden from predators, including foxes, gulls, ravens and even a Peregrine Falcon and all three eggs eventually hatched. Watching the chicks scramble down the steep sided rock would have been something to see, perhaps it was more of a jump, bounce and land with a thud! In all events, three healthy chicks were reared there, two of which fledged successfully.

Grainne, Renee and Meg made two banding visits during the season, and banded three Hoodies, including the pair that successfully reared four fledglings in total. These are the first banded birds here for some years, and this will no doubt add value to the data gathered and make the monitoring more interesting.



*Left: Amelia, Grainne and Renee. Centre: Grainne banding BV. Right: Incubating hoodie on top of rocks. Photos: Kerry Vickers*





The season came to an abrupt end along here with a series of high Autumn tides which carved out several metres of sand in some places from the beaches and dunes. Fences were bowled over (though we managed to retrieve them), and it appears at least one nest was washed away. Subsequent high tides put a halt to any further late season nesting attempts.

During a season marked by low breeding success overall, the exploits of the successful resident pair provided a highlight. In future we will definitely be looking up as well as down when monitoring Hooded Plovers along the Shipwreck Coast!

#### FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER SURF COAST 20/21 SEASON UPDATE

Bron Ives, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast

The Hoodie parents at Red Rocks may not be aware of this great news, however, they are the first breeding pair in over a decade to rear a chick to fledging stage at the challenging Point Addis site in the Great Otway National Park. What a feat for these birds - and those who helped them - particularly given the long hike in to the nesting site, the snakes on the track, the steeply sloping beach and the millions of relentlessly menacing March flies this year. But these challenges were minor to those faced by the hoodies, thankfully they navigated them all with skill and wile to successfully raise BZ, their recently flagged juvenile.

We had 9 breeding pairs on the Surf Coast this season, 17 nests, 5 chicks and 1 fledgling. The Moggs Creek birds faced a lot of disturbances with the new bridge works and high tides, and the first-time nesters at the new site near the Fairhaven Pole House patiently endured massive summer crowds. The Fairhaven Mad Max pair lost five nests - with the eggs of one nest being blown away in a storm only to have the birds retrieve them the next day and make a new scrape further down the dune, abandoning it four days later. Despite these losses there were lots of good times. In particular, the first local sighting of SZ since she fledged at Fairhaven in 2018 - she had partnered up and was nesting at Guvvos.



*Left: SZ at Guvvos. Centre: PJ under watch by EV. Right: Red Rocks fledgling, BZ. Photos: Bron Ives*

Then there was great excitement with the arrival of some unknown juveniles. The first was PJ White from Montforts Beach, Mornington Peninsula. PJ was spotted with local juvenile XT at the Fairhaven Surf Club where an adult bird, EV, kept watch over a small group of juveniles for several months over winter. The next visitor landed at Moggs Creek early





one morning - 81 Yellow. A flurry of messages revealed that 81 Yellow had quite a story to tell. It fledged at Crazy Birds Beach, Phillip Island just before Christmas, flew to Flinders, then St Andrews Beach, got its leg entangled somewhere along the way and was monitored by volunteers and Birdlife, arriving at Moggs Creek in February - and within a few days little 81 Yellow flew all the way back to Flinders! Thanks to Phillip Island Nature Parks and Birdlife's banding and flagging program we get fascinating glimpses like this into the movements and lives of these birds.

Our fresh and well-seasoned volunteers reported really positive conversations and cooperation with beachgoers this season, overall, we thought the advocacy efforts over previous years were now paying off. We continued to connect with our local communities through the new Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast Facebook page set up by Parks, and the new A-boards (generously funded by local environmental groups ANGAIR and Friends of the Eastern Otways) kept dog-walkers updated on hoodie happenings before they hit the beach. The hang gliding groups and the Surf Clubs at Fairhaven and Anglesea were really helpful, a number of new volunteers were recruited, we held a Dogs Breakfast and also sent out three newsletters during the season. Interest in the nesting hoodies was high and the Dog Exclusion Zones set up by the Great Ocean Road and Parks Authority, GORA were highly effective. The GORA and Parks land managers worked hard to protect the hoodie chicks with us, even putting up signage and fencing at short notice over Christmas and the New Year.

At times it's a hard game we've chosen to play, losing eggs and chicks takes its toll on the birds and us, but the success of even one fledgling is nurturing, and as we all now realise after the lockdowns - having visitors is pretty special too.



Left: New A Frames Red Rocks. Right: Archie and Sammie. Photos Bron Ives

## THANK YOU, ANDREA

Meg Cullen, Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

After many Hooded Plover Breeding seasons, the time has come for Andrea Dennett to step down from coordinating the Friends of the Hooded Plover Bellarine. Andrea has been involved in the project for well over a decade, spending most of that time as Regional Volunteer Coordinator on the Bellarine Peninsula. We have all been so lucky to have such a dedicated coordinator who has done a fabulous job in countless ways. Andrea is a true leader, an effective and respected advocate, a powerhouse when it comes to networking and has connected so many locals to this project. Just a couple of examples include establishing and running the Hooded Plover volunteer Facebook page since 2012, a place to share all things Hooded Plover (with almost 2000 followers!), compiling wardening rosters at the busiest time of year, filling nearly every





hour of daylight, to help chicks make it through to fledging, attending and assisting at so many workshops, debriefs, conferences and beach walks, not to mention representing at coastal forums and connecting us with other environmental groups, and she has also helped feed us during those events with a steady supply of Starfish Café muffins! Andrea is the Queen of Connections; she spots linkages and within seconds has sent a message or group email to bring people together. We thank Andrea immensely for her tremendous contribution in helping us all conserve Hoodies on the Bellarine and beyond, and thankfully we aren't saying goodbye to Andrea as a volunteer and will still get to work with her!

Andrea has also been mentoring the new VRC for the Bellarine Peninsula, Tash Verspeek, who has been actively involved in the Beach-nesting Birds project for the last few years. We welcome Tash, wish her all the best in this role and look forward to working with her for many Hoodie seasons to come!



*Andrea, Steve Smithyman from City of Greater Geelong and Jennie Turner from FoHP Breamlea. Photo G Maguire. Grainne, Andrea and Liz Ferguson after rescue of an entangled hoodie at Ocean Grove. Photo Renee Mead. Laura Glenister, Glenda Shomaly, Andrea, Julie Riley.*

## BELLARINE PENINSULA SEASON WRAP

**Tash Verspeek, Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Bellarine**

With an extended Hoodie breeding season, the dedicated Bellarine Volunteers and land managers were kept very busy right up until late April. Thankfully our reward was to have 6 successful fledglings!!

Threats were aplenty and up until mid-December, there was nothing but failed nest sites on all 10 Breeding Pairs Locations. Thankfully from mid-December to late April, things turned for the best for 5 Breeding Pairs. We have all seen our beaches overcrowded with beachgoers this season, looking for a place to forget about the restrictions of 2020. Without the work of volunteer and land manager efforts, setting up signage and Exclusion Zones at some sites, the result could have been quite grim. The total for the season: 10 Breeding Pairs, 34 Nests, 88 Eggs, 18 Chicks, 6 Fledglings.





Left: Flagged fledglings. Photo: Carole Poustie/ Christine Rees. Right: Andrea, Tash and Dan in the field. Photo: Christine Rees

### Appreciation

- Four new volunteers added to our success this year. Christine Rees, Carole Poustie, Rhonda Anderson and Ingrid Parnell. Your volunteering efforts this season have been much appreciated. Special mention to Christine (wardening, rostering, emailing council Extraordinaire!!) and Carole Poustie (Legendary HP Photography)
- John Murray took care of the nesting site at Turtle Rock with signage, monitoring and wardening of PL and Unbanded that produced 2 fledglings! Epic!

### Reflection

- Volunteer, George Appleby's discovery of a nest at Lake Murtnaghurt in February. The pair turned out to be XU and VL, who in the previous season, had a nest almost in a direct line on 13th Beach. Unfortunately, this nesting site had failed at some point over the following week, but it was still worth noting due to its unusual nesting location!
- KW found alive and well! Andrea was fortunate to stumble upon the MIA KW White aka 'Sweet Pea' with her new 'bestie' LN. These two have been seen together previously but their usual haunt is around 5W at Collendina. KW hadn't been seen for over a month!
- The Stuff of Nightmares! Carole and Rhonda reported a totally uncontrolled dog at 30W on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February. They went down to try for a photo of the newly fledged juvenile and an off-leash dog appeared on the beach relentlessly chasing the fledgling, along with both parents, for at least five minutes before the owners arrived. The owners were apologetic after it was explained to them about the situation with hooded plovers.





*Left: Nest at Lake Murtnaghurt. Photo: George Appleby. Centre Left: Unleashed dog at 30W Photo: Carole Poustie. Centre Right: Bellarine HP Teams working together. Right: Andrea and Tash. Photo: COGG*

*Thanks Andrea!*

A final word of acknowledgement, appreciation and thanks goes to Andrea Dennett. Andrea is stepping down from her role as Regional Coordinator at the end of this season. I will step into this role for the start of 2021/2022 season.

Andrea has contributed more than a decade of supporting the local HP volunteers and has done a brilliant job in educating and raising awareness through all means of social platforms of the plight of the hoodies. You really are a Hoodie Superhero and deserve a break!

## FOHP BREAMLEA MAY, 2021

Julie Riley and Jennie Turner, Regional Coordinators, Friends of The Hooded Plover Breamlea

The COVID period offered Friends of the Hooded Plover Breamlea different opportunities and challenges from our normal activities such as monitoring our local hooded plovers during their breeding and off-seasons.

Unable to actively work on the beach with other volunteers, we took the opportunity to engage with local and state government authorities to advocate for beach-nesting birds and migratory species via a number of submissions to policy development, in particular:

- Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into ecosystem decline
- Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for growing populations, in conjunction with Breamlea Coastcare
- Surf Coast Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) Draft Statement of Planning Policy (SPP)





- COGG Domestic Animal Management Plan survey 2021 - 2025
- Online survey for Monash Climate Change Communication Research hub – impacts of climate change on Breamlea/Bancoora hoodies

**The main challenge:** During COVID lockdown it became immediately apparent that people from the surrounding new suburbs were choosing our beaches to exercise. This resulted in dramatic increase in the numbers of joggers, dog walkers and surfers and also catastrophically impacted the dunes. We were extremely concerned for the preservation of our hoodie breeding habitat.

We therefore combined remotely with Breamlea Coastcare to provide valuable input to the City of Greater Geelong (COGG) program of dune restoration which resulted in installation of fencing and signage to protect vegetation and breeding habitat at many sites along the dune.



Dune restoration Map. Photo City of Greater Geelong



Protect the dunes sign and fencing at Breamlea. Photo Jennie Turner

We also built on our excellent working relationship with the land manager for Black Rock, Barwon Water. Fortunately, as a regional area we were able to undertake an appropriately social-distanced field trip with Barwon Water staff, Karina Perotti and David McKinnis to pinpoint what could be done to mitigate the incursions from increased visitor numbers to this sensitive and previously remote Hooded Plover breeding site.

**Banding birds:** After no breeding success this season, a reward for all the paperwork finally arrived after lockdown with a day on the beach with Renee and Dan attempting to band several birds. We were finally successful in flagging one of our elusive, resident Black Rock birds, BJ.



Banding of BJ Black Rock Dec 2020 Photo Christine Rees.