

Word about the Hood

South Australia Update

YORKE PENINSULA SEASON UPDATE

Nanou Cabourdin, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Yorke Peninsula

This breeding season is one of the worst one in recent time for the Hooded Plovers. Only three chicks (possibly four) were able to reach maturity this year, on the whole of the Yorke Peninsula

At the beginning of the breeding season the Hooded Plovers had to face nest flooding due to super high tides during windy and stormy days and nights.

Along Point Turton a higher than normal, eggs and chicks were lost to Feral cats and foxes (one was captured by a camera on the 9th of January, eating the eggs on the Esplanade).



*Hoodie and Pied Oystercatcher in the Algal Bloom foam at Flaherty's Beach.
Photo: Nanou Cabourdin.*

Then after the west coast was hit by Algal Bloom, the adults could feel the lack of food available and they stopped breeding and often moved from their territories. An interesting survey was done at Berry Bay after the bloom had passed. We dug at 4 different spots on the beach. We shook the sand via different sized sieves and we were supposed to collect all the various invertebrates, (food for the beach nesting birds) but we found only one alive. On a healthy beach we should have found at least around 20 plus. This really demonstrated how lethal the bloom is, like an underwater bushfire, destroying everything that gets in its path.

HOODED PLOVER BREEDING ON SE COASTAL LAKE

Jeff Campbell, Friends of Shorebirds SE Inc.,

While carrying out our biannual shorebird count of Lake George, near Beachport SA, we sighted a pair of adult Hoodies with a 5-to-10-day old chick. As the location was 1 to 1.5km from the coast through sand dunes and thick vegetation, it would seem very unlikely that the chick came from the coast. Rather, the adults had nested at the lake. As far as I can ascertain this is the first known breeding event on a coastal lake in the South East of South Australia.

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Site where 2 adult Hoodies and a chick were found, Lake George. Photo: Jeff Campbell.



Hooded Plover Bicentenary Tower. Photo: Jeff Campbell.

There have been several other known non-coastal Hooded Plover breeding records in the South East. In previous years Hooded Plovers nested in Canunda National Park in two sites, one on a rocky hill and another in a sandy area, around 1km and 0.5km from the coast respectively (Iain Stewart pers.com.).

In December 2023 a pair of Hooded Plover nested beside a track in a partially cleared, uncontrolled, camping area at the end of Paradise Road, east of Port MacDonnell. The nest approximately 900m from the beach, contained 3 eggs, and was fenced by a local DEW Ranger. To our dismay 2 of the eggs were broken “accidentally” by a young girl playing with a toy plastic gun! The adults deserted the nest and remaining egg soon after.

I have been informed by Kasun Ekanayake (BirdLife Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer) that a pair nests at Inneston Lake on the Yorke Peninsula and they have done so for the past 7-8 years. The first ever South Australian record also came from Yorke Peninsula in Listers Lake, a salt lake, which is about 15km inland. There are also a few salt lakes on the Eyre Peninsula where breeding is recorded every year.



Hoodie nest adjacent to campground east of Port MacDonnell. Photo: Sarah Campbell.

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SOUTH COAST FLEURIEU, TUNKALILLA BEACH TO GOOLWA, SEASON UPDATE

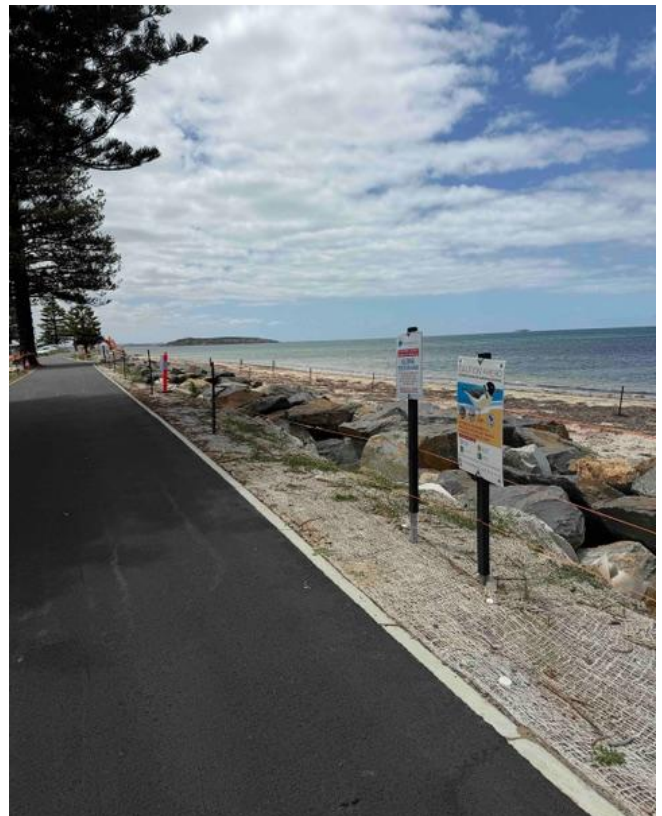
Sue and David Thorn, Volunteers, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula (Tunkalilla to Goolwa)

It has to be said that this season has been devastating for Hoodies on the Fleurieu South Coast Region. Despite the Toxic Algal Bloom, we have managed to fledge four chicks. Our volunteers survey 18 sites. Only six of these sites had the 15 nest attempts recorded this season, a worrying drop in results when compared with the previous season. 2024-25 season saw us with 51 nest attempts and nine fledglings. We appear to have lost eight flagged Hoodies, across the season and the BNB team are looking into whether these Hoodies have been recorded on other territories. One could assume that unflagged Hoodies have been lost or left our region. Our actual Hoodies numbers are very low, and the nine remote beach sites have only had a couple of birds seen and no nest attempts.

The remote beaches from the Victor Harbor Bluff going west to Tunkalilla beach bore the brunt of the Toxic Algal Bloom, with thick strong sticky foam covering these beaches up to the dunes at times. Grainne and Kerri have flagged several Hoodies this season. The Banding program has enabled our volunteers to keep track of the many unusual changes of Hoodie pairings that have happened through this season and so the history of our Hoodies can be traced from season to season.

Shore Restoration work was done on roughly a kilometre of foreshore at the Yilki area, (Victor Harbor) our Yilki Hoodies decided to use this "Closed to the Public" works area for their four nest attempts. With permission from Council, we volunteers donned our Hoodie vests and put up fencing and signage but some walkers and their dogs still walked this closed beach. The third and fourth nest attempts stopped the finishing of this work as we are dealing with a Threatened Species. The Works Personal and Council Rangers became hopeful that these Hoodies would succeed but though the Fourth attempt produced one chick it failed after eight days.

Another of our BNBs, the Sooty Oystercatcher had breeding success this season. We were able to simultaneously confirm two separate families, each with a juvenile present. The male bird in each group has these beautiful yellow/orange claws looking like painted toenails! We are wondering if we have a subspecies in the making and we will be following these Sooties very closely to see whether the juveniles will acquire the same traits.



Shore restoration work undertaken in Yilki area (Victor Harbor). Photo: David Thorn.

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Sooty Oyster Catcher with yellow/orange claws. Photo: Rosalyn Shirlaw.

FLEURIEU PENINSULA SEASON UPDATE

Wendy White, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula Central

In the 2024/25 breeding season, the Fleurieu and Metro coast beaches had 111 nests, 68 chicks and 16 fledglings, a good season overall. This season (2025/26) we only had 23 nests, 15 chicks and four fledglings. Was this decrease in breeding due to the Algal Bloom or were there other reasons?

Weird Hooded Plover behaviour was certainly a major observation this season with Hoodies disappearing, swapping partners, abandoning nests, flocking out of season and just not being on site.

Along with the Algal Bloom we had to contend with huge tides in spring washing away many nests. At Normanville the tides wiped out all the seedlings volunteers had planted a couple of years ago. If that was not a big disappointment at the beginning of the season, it just got worse. The resident Hooded Plover at Normanville NC, (flagged in 2019) had two failed nest attempts, one nest was abandoned the day it was due to hatch, before completely disappearing. RJ then appeared on the scene and was able to hatch two chicks, unfortunately they did not survive their first week.



Hoodies flocking out of season at Snapper Point. Photo: Barry Symes.

It was interesting to note on the Myponga to Cape Jervis beaches the only nests to hatch chicks were near an estuary. In other areas the birds did not seem to be around as much as usual. Did this indicate that their food supply from the estuary's was more abundant, whereas along the water's edge it was depleted because of the Algal Bloom?

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Carrickalinga Beach breeding sites were affected by significant dune erosion in May and July 2025, and the Algal Bloom until mid-December 2025. Foam was constantly observed, and tens of thousands of fish were washed up, primarily juvenile Leather Jackets. This resulted, unusually, in a substantial number of Crested Terns (>300), Pacific Gulls and Sliver Gulls staying in the area. The Pacific and Silver Gulls foraged along the shoreline for dead fish or those still alive and being washed up. Whilst mating was observed on a handful of occasions, and three scrapes prepared, no eggs were found in the subsequent few days. It was also evident that foxes were working through the dunes and upper beach each night, as tracks were consistently present.

Carrickalinga Beaches experienced heavy wave action and tidal inundation into the dunes, so there was no protected areas for the Hoodies to roost. In terms of observed behaviours, it appeared early in the breeding season, when the algal bloom was most prevalent, that the Hoodies were not foraging as much along the shoreline. They generally seemed to be foraging on the dryer sand around dried seaweed patches. As the bloom subsided the Hoodies were observed foraging as per usual along the shoreline. It was also evident that when the big westerly storms blew directly into the beaches the Hoodies moved south towards South Shores/Yankalilla River mouth, where a reef and shallower waters resulted in less wave action high on the beach, offering some protection.

This Hooded Plover breeding season was characterised by an emotional roller coaster. The Algal Bloom was clearly visible on the beaches on the South Coast. It was devastating to witness thousands of washed-up marine animals. The Hoodie breeding season started as usual. However, the beaches soon became predated by ravens and foxes. Hoodie behaviours also changed with numerous banded birds disappearing while the survivors appeared unsettled, evidenced by multiple partner swaps and lack of breeding attempts later in the season. The Algal Bloom impacted the wellbeing of marine life, coastal wildlife and humans alike. We all suffered in one way or another.

Scientific evidence is yet to be established regarding the direct effect of the Algal Bloom on Hooded Plovers, but we all believe from our own observations that it had a big impact, along with erosion from the high spring tides on this breeding season.

Thank you to HP monitors from Olivers Reef, Normanville and Carrickalinga for their contribution to this article and thank you to all volunteers who continued to monitor through these difficult conditions.

BREEDING EVENT AT SOUTH PORT

Ash and Sue Read, Volunteers, Onkaparinga

A large sand spit forms where the Onkaparinga River meets the sea at South Port. Hoodies nested here in the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 seasons but 12 years elapsed without any subsequent nesting activity until a pair had a single nest in the 2024-2025 season. Unfortunately, the nest failed to hatch.

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South Port nest location. Photo: Julia Roetman.

This season no nests had been reported in the Onkaparinga region after experiencing severe beach erosion in May and June and likely impacts from the Algal Bloom. However, late in the season, on 4th of February 2026 a nest with two eggs was discovered on the spit. This was unusually late for a nest in this region. The Onkaparinga Council team were informed and the nest was fenced and signs erected that afternoon.

On the 12th Grainne Maguire banded one of the nesting pair (SP Right Green) making it easier to sort out the birds' behaviour as there was often only the incubating bird present. It was later discovered that the non-incubating bird was

foraging at a regular location several hundred metres upstream of the spit. On several occasions nest change-overs were observed where the incubating bird flew upstream to the foraging location while at the same time its partner was flying in to take over incubation (they must have synchronised their watches).

On 22nd Feb two chicks hatched. Being a Sunday volunteers quickly erected several temporary banners and signs to inform beachgoers that the chicks had hatched. After being informed of the hatching, Julia Roetman from Birdlife contacted the Council and two Rangers soon appeared at the beach as the volunteers were leaving. It turns out that the nest was two weeks old before volunteers discovered it. The next day large banners were erected by the Council. Thanks to the Council Rangers who regularly visited the site over the next few days.

The next morning volunteers discovered the family on the riverbank opposite the spit. The one-day old chicks had swum across the Onkaparinga River and were foraging along the water's edge with the parents keeping a close watch over them. This location better suited the chicks as it had both shelter and a food source. Later in the day, volunteers saw the family had started to move upstream but then they turned back.



South Port Family. Photo: Sue Read.

This involved the chicks walking along the riverside and swimming when the terrain was too difficult. The volunteers were able to video the chicks swimming along with the current.

On the 24th the adults were observed chasing a small group of Red-necked Stints away from the foraging area and then flying across to the spit where the chicks were (they had swum back across the river). Unfortunately, the chicks were not seen again later that day and subsequent searches found no trace of the chicks. The cause of their demise is not known.

With the dedication of the volunteers and a recently flagged Hoodie we are learning a lot about this breeding site and breeding pair. We hope the pair return to nest again next season and we look forward to following the movements of SP Right Green.

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KANGAROO ISLAND HOODIES TOUGH IT OUT

Jean Turner, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island

The 2025-26 breeding season has proved unusual and difficult for Kangaroo Island's (KI's) Hooded Plovers. Ongoing extreme high tides, and persistence of the algal bloom since March 2025, added extra pressure beyond the usual challenges. We have no direct evidence of algal bloom impacts on our Hoodies. However, it seems likely that some of their inter-tidal invertebrate prey declined. With less prey available, some birds may have struggled to reach breeding condition, or to regain condition after failed attempts.

Of 48 sites monitored this season, breeding was recorded at 23 sites. Only five Hoodie pairs fledged chicks, producing a total of nine fledglings. The Vivonne Bay Harriet estuary pair hatched our latest chicks in the second week of March. Monitoring on 9/04/26 confirmed one chick has nearly fledged. Fingers crossed!

Hoodies were present at 24 sites where no breeding was recorded throughout the season. In some cases, pairs made scrapes but didn't progress to egg laying. In one breeding territory no Hoodies were recorded at all.

Despite the challenges, we are thrilled with this season successes! The ever-reliable Antechamber Bay north pair fledged two chicks on their second attempt. After failures in previous seasons, Brown's Beach West pair fledged three chicks from their first, and only, breeding attempt.

Emu Bay's estuary pair were a complete surprise. After a run of failures and absences in previous seasons, this pair fledged both chicks from their two eggs. Driving is permitted on this beach, so their success relied on great community support and timely management by volunteers and KI Landscape Board staff.



Evidence of vehicles doing beach donuts at Emu Bay estuary, near the Hooded Plover nest and chick habitat. Photo: Alex Comino.



Emu Bay estuary pair fledged two beautiful juveniles. Photo: Ian Buick.

Brownlow Avenue Beach pair in Kingscote were another big surprise. Hoodies have been seen here in recent years, but this is the first season we've recorded breeding. Their nest was well-hidden, three chicks hatched and one fledged. A great result at this busy dog-walking beach! The Snelling Beach Hoodies also pulled one out of the hat, fledging a chick on another busy KI beach. In summer, vehicles are parked side-by-side along the length of the beach, with people and dogs galore. Volunteers put in great management, and the estuary provided a safe refuge to raise the chick.

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*A family holidaying at Snelling Beach helped local volunteer Caroline Paterson with Hooded Plover nest protection.
Photo: Caroline Paterson.*

Some usually reliable breeding pairs like CR White and partner at Browns Beach Crabby Jack's site, abandoned breeding after their first attempt failed, but remained in their territory. Others, like Hog Bay's HD White and partner departed after a failed attempt and haven't been seen since. Pennington Bay's banded bird, RR White, took off after last breeding season to explore KI's rugged south coast, popping up at Vivonne Bay, D'Estrees Bay, then Antechamber Bay. Wonder where will RR and other missing flagged birds appear next? Something to keep us busy over winter!