2026 NATIONAL BEACH-NESTING BIRDS CONFERENCE, GOOLWA SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SPEAKERS AND ABSTRACTS

Presentation Title: Twenty years of Beach-nesting Birds Conservation: Achievements and Challenges

Authors: Dr Grainne Maguire and Dr Meg Cullen, BirdLife Australia

Abstract: Australia's beach-nesting birds exemplify human–wildlife conflict. These cryptic species breed on beaches heavily used for recreation, making them highly vulnerable to disturbance. As coastal use intensifies and coastal resilience is reduced through habitat modifications, developing recovery solutions that are sustainable and adaptive, presents a major challenge.

BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Bird Program has spent 20 years mitigating human-based threats through citizen science and partnerships with coastal managers. Solutions are evidence-based, combining ecological data with social science insights to drive behaviour change. Research addressing knowledge gaps supports this adaptive management approach.

In addition, the program plays an important supporting role in addressing non-human threats, such as predators, weeds, and habitat modification, by building baseline datasets, assessing the scope and severity of threats to guide management priorities, researching species' ecological requirements, and providing evidence-based advice to land managers and community groups on mitigation approaches that avoid unintended impacts on beach-nesting birds.

While population monitoring for the Hooded Plover is revealing a positive shift in trajectory, threats persist, and new threats continue to emerge, including some for which no effective management solutions currently exist. Lasting recovery will require a long-term commitment to coastal rehabilitation to strengthen population resilience.

Presentation Title: Hope is not a plan… some thoughts on planning for coastal birds

Authors: Tony Flaherty, Green Adelaide

Abstract: Tony will discuss a recent review of regional coastal action planning, with a focus on improving how beach-nesting birds are incorporated into coastal management and conservation strategies. The presentation will explore key learnings from the review process, highlight opportunities for stronger integration of biodiversity considerations into planning processes, and outline several emerging issues affecting beach-nesting bird populations and coastal habitats. Attendees will gain insight into current challenges, evolving management approaches, and the importance of coordinated regional action in supporting vulnerable coastal species.

Presentation Title: Power of Collaboration

Authors: Dustin Georgeson, Monika Rhodes, Raechel Lewis, Sophie Rawson and Jared Wilson from City of Victor Harbor and Alexandrina Council

Abstract: A short interactive panel discussion on how consistency and approach matters, facilitated by Dustin this will not be your average presentation!

Presentation Title: Quantifying demographic threats to beach-nesting birds in the CLLMM: a case study of Pied Oystercatcher/Prukal

Authors: Dr Thomas Prowse, Adelaide University

Abstract: Beach-nesting bird species reproduce on beaches and dunes and are vulnerable to threats from both the land and the sea. Their breeding habitat is increasingly threatened by human development and recreational use, invasive and native predators, and sea level rise and extreme weather events (including storm surges) driven by the overarching impacts of climate change. In the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region, community consultation identified that vehicle access to beaches and protected areas, and its impact on beach-nesting birds, were a key concern of community groups.

This project aimed to investigate the relative importance of different disturbance processes for beach-nesting birds along Coorong Ocean Beach, using pied oystercatcher (*Haematopus longirostris*) as a model species. We monitored pied oystercatcher nests and the surrounding environment over two breeding seasons using trail cameras. Simultaneously, we studied the movement and nesting behaviour of pied oystercatcher using GPS telemetry.

Our monitoring revealed a low, steady vehicle traffic along Coorong Ocean Beach during the vehicle closure operating between October 24 and December 24, reflecting commercial fishing activities. However, vehicle traffic peaked at around 18 vehicles per day along Ocean Beach in late December and early January, likely reflecting additional recreational vehicles after the public driving restrictions were lifted.

Over two breeding seasons, predation by foxes was the greatest single cause of nest failure for pied oystercatcher on Younghusband Peninsula. In total, 25 % of nests were destroyed by foxes, suggesting more intensive or coordinated fox baiting might be warranted along the peninsula. The daily nest mortality rate increased with nest age, which could reflect predator learning or increased nest detectability later in the incubation period.

During the day, GPS-tagged pied oystercatcher more regularly incubated their eggs as temperatures increased. At night, in contrast, nest occupancy by tracked oystercatchers declined with increasing temperature. These results are consistent with pied oystercatchers needing to incubate eggs to prevent overheating during warm days, and to prevent chilling during cold nights. On warm nights, pied oystercatcher also ventured further from their nests (presumably to forage) and were more likely to use the Coorong North Lagoon. The latter result highlights that maintaining the ecological condition of the Coorong might be of similar importance to breeding pied oystercatcher as beach-focused management strategies.

Presentation Title: Fairy Tern Protection in the Coorong / Tuwit Ngolaun Kurrangk Yarluwar Ruwe (Ngarrindjeri translation)

Authors: Kerri Bartley, BirdLife Australia and Yarluwar Ruwe Ranger Team

Abstract: The 'Protecting Critical habitat for Beach-nesting Shorebirds and Seabirds project' is being co-delivered by Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation, Yarluwar Ruwe Rangers and BirdLife Australia in the Coorong National Park. The main goal of the project is to support beach-nesting shorebirds and seabirds at the Murray Mouth and along 30 kms of the Coorong ocean beach focussing on increasing breeding success for the Endangered Fairy Tern and Vulnerable Hooded Plover. BirdLife Australia with Traditional Owners, the Ngarrindjeri and Ramindjeri people have been working closely to conserve Fairy Terns by increasing site protection to support breeding success at the Murray Mouth for the past 3 breeding seasons.

Presentation Title: Recovery, not just survival: what the IUCN Green Status of Species may offer beach-nesting bird conservation

Authors: Glenn Ehmke, Charles Darwin University

Abstract: For some beach-nesting bird species, population trends are moving in the right direction. But what does an improving trend actually mean — and how do we know when conservation has genuinely succeeded?

The IUCN Green Status of Species is a new assessment framework, complementary to the Red List, that asks two questions conventional tools do not: how recovered is a species, and how much has conservation contributed to that state? Where the Red List measures extinction risk, Green Status measures recovery and quantifies aspects such as conservation dependence — providing a richer picture of what long-term conservation effort achieves and where a species is on the recovery pathway.

However, like for extinction risk assessments, we need to be able to prove what we contend. Green Status assessments depend on both quantitative data and structured expert input.

Using a worked example, drawing on long-term monitoring for the Eastern Hooded Plover, we'll show why beach-nesting birds may be prime candidates for quantifying things like conservation legacy and dependence through the IUCN Green Status assessment process and why this may be a critical tool allowing us to 'keep our foot on the gas' of conservation actions.

We'll outline what comes next in the process, highlight how long-term monitoring contributes to conservation assessments and why the knowledge held by practitioners and community members at events like this one may be central to getting assessments right.

Presentation Title: Our Plover Coast - Targeting grassy weeds and restoring *Spinifex* dunes for improved habitat for beach-nesting birds

Authors: Caroline Taylor, Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

Abstract: Our Plover Coast project focuses on removing grassy weeds and restoring native coastal vegetation at 20 priority Hooded Plover nesting beaches on the Fleurieu Peninsula. Hooded Plovers breed on ocean beaches from August to March, relying on the presence of native plants like *Spinifex hirsutus*, which forms ideal nesting habitat.

Introduced in the late 1800s to stabilise dunes, weedy grasses have since spread widely across southern Australia. These invasive species outcompete native plants and alter dune structure, reducing suitable nesting, roosting and foraging areas. On the Fleurieu Peninsula, storm surges and invasive grasses (such as sea wheat, pyp, marram and sea spurge) pose major threats to nesting sites. Native deep-rooted grasses like *Spinifex* naturally stabilise dunes, buffer storm impacts and support beach-nesting birds. Trials identified effective weed-control methods, and more than 20,000 Spinifex association plants have been grown and planted by volunteers.

As a result, dunes and nesting sites are returning to a more natural profile, improving habitat for the recovering Hooded Plover population. The project now provides a model that can be applied across southern Australia. This work brings together land managers, partners, volunteers and the community to restore coastal dune ecosystems and help secure the future of this threatened species.

Presentation Title: Geomorphological and Ecological Changes on the Younghusband Peninsula and Impacts for Birdlife

Author: Professor Patrick Hesp, Adjunct Professor, Southern Cross University, Lismore, NSW; CEO Dune Doctor Pty, Ltd.

Abstract: This talk will primarily focus on the significant historical and recent geomorphological and ecological changes that have taken place along parts of the Younghusband Peninsula, South Australia. Changes include significant vegetation colonisation of most of the formerly active, mobile transgressive dunefields post- 1970's, large scale shoreline and dune erosion along the 42 Mile region with the evolution of an entirely new transgressive dunefield, and massive invasion of *Thinopyrum junceiforme* (sea wheat grass) and *Euphorbia paralias* (sea spurge) in the dune system. Some impacts of these changes to birdlife will also be discussed.

Presentation Title: New York City Plover Project

Authors: Chris Allieri, NYC Plover Project

Abstract: Chris Allieri is the executive director and founder of the NYC Plover Project, an organization he founded in March 2021, to protect endangered Piping Plovers that nest along the busy beaches of the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens. Chris noticed during the beginning of the pandemic, the widespread threats facing piping plovers on a beach in NYC and was shocked that no protection was in place for them. After documenting many threats and advocating with local authorities for more action, he then decided something needed to be done. The NYC Plover Project recruited a few dozen volunteers and formed a partnership with the National Park Service, which oversees Gateway National Recreation Area. In their first summer, volunteers were out on the beach connecting with beachgoers. By the end of their second season, there were over 75 volunteers who clocked nearly 4,000 hours of volunteer time! In their third season, they won the national George and Helen Hartzog Award for Outstanding Volunteer Excellence! Hear from Chris about this amazing project to protect Piping Plovers!

Presentation Title: Spatial and temporal movement patterns of Fairy Terns in southern Australia: insights from GPS tracking

Authors: Dr Thomas Prowse and Ruth Cope (Adelaide University), Assoc. Prof. David Paton (Adelaide University, BioR Australia) and Dr Fiona Paton (BioR Australia)

Abstract: Understanding movement patterns and habitat use through GPS tracking can provide important insights for conservation planning, particularly for threatened species. The Australian Fairy Tern (*Sterna nereis nereis*) is listed as Endangered in South Australia, with the South Australian population heavily dependent on the Coorong Lagoons for breeding and foraging habitat. However, movements during the non-breeding season remain poorly understood. This study is the first to use GPS devices to document daily foraging behaviour, identify important roosting locations, and capture long-distance dispersal events of Fairy Terns. A total of eleven GPS tracking devices were deployed on Fairy Terns in the Coorong South Lagoon across two breeding seasons, including three deployments in 2025 and eight in 2026. Early results suggest that the leg-loop harness attachment is better suited to the species. GPS devices were attached using a body-loop harness during the 2025 season and transmitted data for 15 – 36 days, while 2026 individuals have currently been tracked for 28 – 80 days using leg-loop harnesses, with several devices still active.

Preliminary findings identified key roosting locations throughout the Coorong, important foraging hotspots, and distances travelled between foraging and roosting sites over diurnal cycles. The study also documented long-distance dispersal events from the Coorong to South East South Australia. Further research is required to better understand the impacts of GPS tracking devices on Fairy Terns, including the potential for nest abandonment following attachment. Continued long-term monitoring will improve understanding of Fairy Tern movement ecology and help inform future conservation and management both within South Australia and nationally.

Presentation Title: Shifting the Tide: Using Legislation to Protect Our Beach Nesters

Authors: Han Auld and Rachel Hansen, Conservation Regulator

Abstract: Operation Save Our Hoodies has been a staple in Victoria for five years, but how has legislation protected birds on beaches? This session goes past the signage to look at the work of the Conservation Regulator. We'll show you how Authorised Officers use investigative techniques to track threats and enforce the law, highlighting that protecting a tiny bird often requires the help of a village. We'll break down how Authorised Officers move from beach patrols to evidence-based enforcement, demonstrating how environmental law is practically applied to shield nesting sites from human impact.

Presentation Title: Signs on the intertidal zone: Do they last?

Authors: Kasun Ekanayake and the Beach-nesting Birds team, BirdLife Australia

Abstract: A trial of signposts in the intertidal zone was conducted in 2025 to assess the effectiveness of two types of posts in withstanding tidal energy. If successful, these signposts with chick signs were to be installed at sites where Hooded Plover chicks venture down to the water's edge and rock platforms, outside of the traditional fenced areas higher up on beaches. This would improve the effectiveness of protected zones by raising awareness among beach users to refrain from lingering in areas where chicks tend to forage at low tide. During the trial, galvanised steel posts performed better in withstanding elements compared with timber posts. Both types of posts were heavy, but timber posts were slightly lighter. Therefore, it might not be feasible to use them at sites were volunteers install breeding site management. They could potentially be used on relatively low-energy beaches and at sites where land managers can assist with transportation.

Presentation Title: Coastal Birds, Raising Awareness & Collaboration

Authors: Roslyn Shirlaw, BirdLife Australia volunteer

Abstract: Since 2023 BirdLife Australia volunteers, in collaboration with U3A South Coast (Victor Harbor, SA), have been raising awareness about coastal birds with a specific focus on Beach-nesting Birds. This is achieved by offering U3A members a series of educational presentations and field trips that explore the lives of selected species. In addition, we consider how everyone can all contribute towards the birds' survival, including local volunteer work. This initiative has positive outcomes for all involved.

Presentation Title: Preparing for H5 bird flu on our coasts and wetlands

Authors: Tanya Loos, BirdLife Australia

Abstract: Thankfully Australia is still free of H5 bird flu (HPAI H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b), affording us a valuable opportunity to prepare for the possible impact on our coastal and wetland bird populations. BirdLife Australia has been working with partners on various tools and projects in the preparedness effort. These include tools that assess H5 bird flu risk across regions and species (AviFluMap), the creation of a new feature in Birdata that allows for the recording of sick, injured and dead birds, and a susceptibility and mitigation assessment for the Australian government. Tanya Loos, BirdLife Australia's Avian Influenza Response Coordinator will present on these projects highlighting relevant findings and tools for the BNB community.

Presentation Title: The wellbeing impacts of the Harmful Algal Bloom

Authors: Brianna Le Busque (presenting), Carla Litchfield, Laura Falkenberg, Craig Williams, Adelaide University

Abstract: Extreme marine events can generate cascading ecological and social consequences, yet the human wellbeing dimension of these events including harmful algal blooms (HABs) remains under-recognised within HAB science and management. During South Australia's unprecedented 2025 HAB, we examined psychological responses among residents (N = 628), providing the first empirical evidence of how a large-scale marine ecological crisis can disrupt mental health and human–nature relationships. This presentation will explore the results and also use this case study to shine importance on including social science data in environmental contexts.

Presentation Title: Thirty years of monitoring reveal major declines in Western Hooded Plover abundance at Yalgorup Lakes, WA

Authors: Bill Russell, Dr Sonia Sanchez (BirdLife Australia), Marcus Singor

Abstract: Long-term monitoring is essential for detecting population change, yet Western Australian shorebird populations remain poorly studied. We analysed nearly 30 years of Hooded Plover (*Thinornis cucullatus tregellasi*) monitoring data from Yalgorup National Park, a Ramsar-listed wetland system and key stronghold for the western subspecies.

Across 12 monitored sites, adult abundance declined by an estimated 75% between 1996 and 2024, from 76 to 18 individuals, with declines recorded across almost all lakes. Breeding success at Yalgorup was moderate relative to eastern populations, suggesting local reproductive failure alone is unlikely to explain the decline. Banding resightings confirmed movements of over 150 km between Yalgorup and inland salt lakes, indicating strong connectivity with inland breeding populations.

Our findings suggest the decline may reflect broader pressures affecting inland habitats, including altered hydrology, salinisation, and predation. This study provides the first quantitative evidence of substantial decline in a major Western Hooded Plover population and highlights priorities for future monitoring, research, and conservation management.

Presentation Title: Testing the food resource hypothesis in Western Hooded Plover territory abandonment

Authors: Kirrily Hastings (Edith Cowan University), Prof. Mike Weston (Deakin University), Dr. Sora Marin Estrella (Edith Cowan University), Assoc. Prof Robert David (Edith Cowan University)

Abstract: Beach-nesting shorebirds occupy a highly specialised ecological niche, narrowly wedged between the sea and the coastal hinterland - a zone increasingly impacted by human activity and climate change. Retractions in breeding range in such specialised environments may imply an altered habitat quality, differences in prey availability or reflect population declines that reduce the use of optimal habitats. Understanding how cues relating to prey availability and nesting and shelter micro habits influence breeding territory selection is essential for strategic conservation assessment. This study tested the food resource hypothesis in the vulnerable Western Hooded Plover in a southwestern Australian population with a history of breeding territory abandonment. Across 15 beaches over two seasons we sampled prey availability using pitfall traps and sediment cores. Feeding and resting micro habits were assessed and DNA meta barcoding used to investigate diet. Dietary items included 92 invertebrate species from 29 genera, and amphipods, dipteran flies, coleopteran beetles and isopods were the most frequently consumed taxa. In contrast to their highly varied diet, these shorebirds made specific habitat selections, strongly favouring lower beach and fresh wrack for diurnal foraging, and dry wrack for resting. Wrack cover was greater on occupied beaches, but prey abundance was similar between occupied and abandoned beaches, demonstrating no obvious spatial limitations in prey. These results highlight that kelp wrack imparts both shelter and foraging microhabitat benefits for this species, and that factors beyond prey availability may drive territory abandonment.

Presentation Title: A long-term study on the coastal breeding vulnerabilities of Banded Dotterel

Authors: Ailsa McGilvary-Howard (The Banded Dotterel Study Kaikoura)

Abstract: Kaikoura, an area of exceptional marine biodiversity on the East Coast of the South Island, NZ, has a dense population of beach-breeding banded dotterels which had, up until the last decade, been largely overlooked or ignored by residents and visitors alike. Informal observing in the 2013 and 2014 seasons suggested nesting productivity in the area was extremely low, and formal monitoring began in 2015 to measure productivity, identify reasons for nest failure, and mitigate this failure wherever possible. Advocacy began immediately through community education, combined with national, and social media engagement - with the species gradually gaining wider conservation support. The profile of the species has risen significantly throughout NZ with many other banded dotterel groups springing up We are on the cusp of publishing 10 years of robust breeding data and our results are deeply concerning, with cat predation being of greatest concern. It is essential to publish this data so Banded dotterel vulnerability can be factored into the decision making in the development of the coastal space, and in braided rivers, the other species stronghold. We are working hard to protect this species which is treasured by both our countries. A recent bright light from our advocacy has been the development of a local bylaw to support the species in the coming seasons; it also mandates the chipping and snipping of cats. We continue to advocate for the night-time containment of all domestic cats.

Presentation Title: Monitoring and Management Little Tern nesting colonies on Nywaigi country, North Queensland

Authors: Elliott Cassady and Aramai Cassady (Mungalla Aboriginal Business Corporation), Simon Kennedy (Birdlife Australia)

Abstract: Nywaigi country is home to a significant proportion of North Queensland's Little Tern nesting colonies, with nearly all the Little Terns fledged in North Queensland from this region in 2025-26. The Tasman Little Tern (*Sternula albifrons placens*) is listed as Vulnerable nationally with a population of around 1200 adults, of which an estimated 5-10% nest in this region.

Birdlife Australia and Mungalla Aboriginal Corporation have been monitoring these birds since 2022, gathering information on fledging rates, nesting habitat preferences and threats and installing fencing and signage with the cooperation of the Hinchinbrook Shire Council.

We present results of the monitoring from 2022-26 and discuss cultural context, management issues and future plans. We also discuss the presence of large numbers of non-breeding Indo-Pacific Little Terns (*S.a. sinensis*) that also forage and roost with the breeding birds.

Presentation Title: Evolving escape: evaluating the role of natural selection on anti-predator behaviour in threatened birds

Authors: Ettore Camerlenghi, April Timmis, Grainne Maguire (BirdLife Australia), Mike Weston, Matthew Symonds from Deakin University

Abstract: Avoiding predators is critical for survival, yet we still know surprisingly little about how escape behaviour evolves in wild animals. In Australia, predation by native and introduced predators, together with increasing human disturbance, has contributed to the decline of many threatened species. One of the most widely used measures of escape behaviour is flight-initiation distance (FID), the distance at which an animal flees from an approaching threat. Although FID varies greatly among individuals and populations, and is often assumed to be adaptive, there is still little direct evidence showing how natural selection acts on this behaviour. This project will investigate how natural selection shapes escape responses in the hooded plover (*Thinornis cucullatus*), a vulnerable Australian beach-nesting bird. Specifically, it will examine how exposure to predators and humans influences FID, whether differences in FID affect survival and reproductive success and the extent to which escape behaviour is heritable. By combining behavioural, ecological, and evolutionary approaches, this research will provide new insights into the evolution of anti-predator behaviour and help improve conservation strategies for threatened wildlife.

Presentation Title: Investigating the influence of urbanisation and landscape characteristics on the presence and behaviour of oystercatchers

Authors: Emma Vanderzons, Dr Ryan Baring, Dr Diane Colombelli-Négrel (BirdLab, Flinders University)

Abstract: As human populations increase and move towards the coast, coastal environments are becoming increasingly more urbanised. This has important implications for shorebirds as coastal ecosystems provide them with important habitat and feeding opportunities. Here, we investigated habitat selection and usage of two Australian Oystercatchers (Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers) along four major coastal regions in South Australia that varied in levels of urbanisation and human disturbance. We surveyed 150 coastal beaches and recorded oystercatchers' presence and, behaviours to determine site usage (foraging and roosting vs breeding). We also recorded habitat characteristics (i.e., landscape features and urban development), food availability (from sediment samples), and human activities. We found that only 10% of the sites were used for breeding while 26% were used for nesting/roosting. The remaining 64% were unused by the birds despite previous historical records mentioning their presence Oystercatcher presence and usage of the sites were strongly influenced by both food availability and the degree of urbanisation. These results demonstrate that even species considered highly urbanised, such as Oystercatchers, remain responsive to urbanisation levels.

This understanding strengthens our ability to identify the factors shaping shorebird presence and behaviours and to guide more effective management and conservation strategies.

Presentation Title: A different sort of Fairy Tern breeding colony at Hutt Lagoon, WA

Authors: Alice Bishop, Moira McKinnon and Mike Clarke from Birdlife Midwest-Geraldton

Abstract: Fairy Tern have been attempting to breed along the mud levees of BASF algae plant, Gregory, Hutt Lagoon since 2000. This is despite repeated failures year after year largely losing eggs to predation. The saline lake site is 1.5 km from the ocean and from a consistently good supply of summer fish. In 2022 actions at the algae plant included removing the ends of a mud levee in order to turn two separate ponds into one larger pond creating a long thin island. Fairy Tern have nested at the site since, with a maximum number of up to 250 adults observed at the island during December. Nests are <0.5m to 2 m apart, on flat dirt, or amongst rocks. Courting, nest building, egg incubation and chick rearing all continue into February. Earliest fledglings are around New Year's Day. Twenty eight and 22 fledglings were recorded over '22 -'23 and '24 - '25 breeding seasons (maximum twice weekly surveys), about 25% of the approximated number of nests. Swamp Harrier were observed taking fledglings at the mud levees as well as young chicks at the "island". Fledglings and mobile chicks hide from avian predators in rock crevices and "caves". Hatchlings are left exposed. Ruddy Turnstone have not been observed to predate eggs or chicks, but steal all fish brought by parents. Silver Gull, Pacific Gull, cat and fox been observed on camera traps at the levees. Fairy Tern fledglings have been observed swimming in the saline pond.

Presentation Title: Keeping our Eyes on the Pieds! Pied Oystercatcher Monitoring on Kangaroo Island

Authors: Jean Turner (Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island / BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Birds Volunteer), David Potter (BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Birds Volunteer) and Dr Keith Jones (South Australian Shorebirds Foundation and BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Birds Volunteer).

Abstract: The Australian Pied Oystercatcher is a beach-dependent resident shorebird found all around the Australian coast. The population is estimated at 12,000 to 14,000 adult birds. Pied Oystercatchers are listed as Rare in South Australia (National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972). Kangaroo Island (KI) supports more than 1% of the national population and they are a trigger species for KI's Key Biodiversity Area. A systematic count of shorebirds around the KI coast in 1994 recorded 472 adult Pied Oystercatchers. Since 2015/16, BirdLife Australia volunteers have done regular seasonal counts of Pied Oystercatchers on KI. Over this period the cumulative mean population count has averaged around 200 adult birds. Breeding pairs have been monitored intensively since 2018/19. Breeding success, as percentage of chicks fledged for total eggs laid, appears to be declining. The population age structure is unknown, as is recruitment of juveniles into the adult population. To learn more about our local Pied Oystercatchers, KI BirdLife Australia volunteers have collaborated with the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation and the Victorian Wader Study Group (VWSG), on a banding study. Since 2023, 87 Pied Oystercatchers of different age-classes have been banded and leg-flagged by VWSG volunteers. Monitoring of

flagged birds has confirmed chick survival, movements of fledged juveniles, breeding site fidelity and success of individual adults, partner swaps, and movements between breeding territories and flocking sites. Our past monitoring provides a baseline to compare the 2025/26 breeding season and detect potential impacts of the 2025 Harmful Algal Bloom on KI Pied Oystercatchers.

Presentation Title: The Secret Life of Beach-Nesting Birds: Using Remote Sensing Cameras to Understand Threats and Nest Survival

Authors: Melissa Sheedy, BirdLife Australia

Abstract: What happens at a Hooded Plover nest when nobody is watching? What really causes a nest to fail? Remote sensing cameras help answer questions like these, revealing hidden pressures faced by Australia's beach-nesting bids. Early studies found that predators were responsible for most nest failures, with both ravens and foxes confirmed as major threats to breeding success. Cameras captured moments rarely seen by volunteer monitors, such as chicks hatching at night, parents defending nests from predators, and impacts of tides, storms and human disturbance. Such research continues to play a pivotal role today in the Beach-nesting Birds Project in our understanding of nest success, chick survival and predator activity. These insights directly inform adaptive management actions such as predator control, nest protection and targeted community education, and guide us in making more effective decisions for beach-nesting bids.