



EDITION 25 - WINTER 2021

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### REFLECTIONS ON THE KANGAROO ISLAND 'HOOD'

Jean Turner, Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island

2020 changed life dramatically for Kangaroo Island's (KI's) beach-nesting birds, not necessarily for the better.

Winter is usually a quiet recovery time for birds and people alike, but in 2020 many mainlanders opted to spend the Covid-19 lockdown at their holiday homes on KI. Then as restrictions eased and borders opened, tourists flocked over in numbers rarely seen in winter. Kangaroo Island had become the new 'Overseas'.

Unprecedented numbers of walkers, dogs, campers, drone-fliers and fishers meant that beach-nesting birds were subject to higher-than-usual levels of disturbance. Pairs at more accessible breeding sites suddenly found their peaceful, solitary incubations disrupted by people and off-leash dogs. Wild spring weather and super-high tides buried some nests in sand and swept others away to sea. But at least these conditions deterred illegal driving on beaches!

Overall, Hooded Plover and Pied Oystercatcher pairs had more failed attempts than previous years; but ultimately most pairs succeeded. At least three Hooded Plover pairs hatched and fledged three chicks each – something I hadn't seen or heard of before.

We've come to expect a lot of the Hog Bay (Penneshaw) Hoodies but this season was a real 'nail-biter'. The pair hatched only one of three eggs in their first attempt; that chick got so close to fledging before it disappeared. In 'Round 2', three chicks successively dwindled to one. It seemed impossible the remaining chick could survive summer holiday crowds - but miraculously it did! In another real 'win', an influential local started voluntarily leashing her dog on the beach.

Stokes Bay's Hoodies didn't fare so well, losing multiple clutches to disturbance. Then their summer holiday chicks suffered being picked up and handled by curious children. Our local volunteer worked hard to warden the chicks through, spending every day at the beach politely educating visitors about Hoodies, but sadly it ended in heartbreak!

Pied Oystercatchers surprised us with the places they made nests; creative options included a cliff-face ledge, a building site 100m from the beach, and 60m into a grazing paddock. Some pairs succumbed to increased disturbance, fledging only one chick out of two, or failing altogether. Others succeeded where they had previously failed.



*Hog Bay Hooded Plover adult with 3 chicks, Dec 2020. Only one chick survived to fledge. Photo Jean Turner*



The boundary fence at Cape Rouge has been a real game-changer, keeping sheep off the beach for the first time in years. Funded through the Letcombe Foundation and erected by a local contractor with local volunteer help, it meant that Pied Oystercatcher nests survived rather than being trampled. Although monitored infrequently, we know at least one Pied Oystercatcher chick fledged. Yay!

Illegal driving on beaches increased significantly this season. The worst event occurred after beach-nesting birds had finished breeding, when vehicles driven illegally along Brownlow Beach caused the death of at least 20 migratory Red-necked Stints and some Black Swans. Imagine the horror of people going for their regular morning walk finding these fragile, crumpled birds on the beach! Birdlife Kangaroo Island branch and many concerned citizens are working hard for improved signage, increased education and greater compliance on beaches.

Thanks to all our dedicated monitoring volunteers - hopefully things settle down in 2021-2022!



Left: "Battler"- This chick did fledge and was the sole survivor of 5 nesting attempts made by the pair. Photo Jane Renwick.  
Right: Hog Bay Hooded Plover adult with 3 chicks, December 2020. Only one chick survived to fledge. Photo Jean Turner

## SOUTH EAST SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Jeff Campbell, Friends of Shorebirds South East

Friends of Shorebirds SE (FoSSE) members have been very busy with all thing's shorebirds, both migratory and resident beach-nesting species, in the recent past despite the complications bought on by the various Covid-19 restrictions.

The resident beach nesting shorebirds in the South-east of SA have had mixed success in producing fledged young in the recent breeding season. Although Hooded Plovers had their difficulties this past breeding season a recent Hooded Plover count carried out by FoSSE, covering an approximately 220 km stretch of the coastline from The Granites north of Kingston SE to the Victorian border, found 24 fledged young. Counts of the area have been carried out in April/May since 2010 and





this was by far the highest total of fledged young in that time. It is of course possible that some of these birds may have come from outside the count area, however it is still an excellent result.

Three pairs of hoodies have been closely observed this breeding season and have produced some interesting results. One pair is quite well known as it has its own Facebook page – @robeneighbourhoodie, set up by FosSE volunteer Cath Bell. For the first time since 2015, this pair managed to fledge young, not just one but three. This was despite the enormous hurdles they faced, with the young hatching just two days before Christmas during the busiest summer period ever, with the arrival of 13,000 tourists to the small coastal town and beaches. In the intervening years, the birds had laid at least 26 eggs, over nine nesting attempts with no chicks surviving to fledge. The success was due in no small part to the local volunteers and community residents who watched over the birds and reinstated fences when they were pulled down. The District Council of Robe were also helpful with new dogs on leads signs and staff presence. The three young birds were banded and flagged HW, HS and HP just before they fledged.



*The two surviving fledglings of AH pair. Photo: Sarah Campbell. Dog walker signage at Long beach Robe.*

Two pairs nested in the Port MacDonnell area and have engaging histories. One of the adults in the pair which nests at Danger Point was originally caught as a chick by Grainne in April 2015 at the abalone farm near Port Fairy in Victoria. This bird was first seen at Danger Point near Port MacDonnell in February 2016 and has raised at least one fledgling every year at that location since then. This year they almost managed to raise three chicks to fledging age on their third breeding attempt. Two of these chicks fledged but the third was found dead on the beach just a few days earlier. The chick was taken to a local vet and then sent for a necropsy. In both cases it was said that it had been killed by an unknown predator. The other pair, nesting close to Port MacDonnell on a very busy beach, managed to fledge one young which was banded and flagged DP. One of the pair was banded and flagged (OWYM) as a juvenile in January 2015 near the Victorian border.



*Left: Cath Bell, Holy Prest and Vicki Natt with the three Robe fledglings. Photo: Cath Bell. Right: Hooded Plover OWYM. Photo: Sarah Campbell.*

In July of that year, it was seen and photographed on the Sir Richard Peninsula near the Murray mouth, some 440 km from the banding site. It was seen again back near the Victorian border in November the same year and has bred somewhere in our area each year since then.





## EYRE PENINSULA

Rachael Kannussaar, Landscape Officer, Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board

On the Eyre Peninsula, BirdLife volunteers together with Eyre Peninsula Landscape Officers have been fortunate to continue monitoring 25 priority Hooded Plover nesting territories. These territories are located across the Eyre Peninsula region between Ceduna on the west coast and Cowell on the east coast. This increased level of monitoring has been made possible during the 2020-2021 nesting season thanks to two projects supported through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, BirdLife's Protecting the Hooded Plover NLP project, and the Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board's Saltmarsh Threat Abatement and Recovery NLP project.

High tides caused many difficulties for pairs early in the nesting season, while the presence of introduced predators has been a likely contributor to difficulties in nests hatching and chicks fledging in the second half of the season. The summer period also saw an unprecedented increase in visitation to Eyre Peninsula's coastline, with a significant increase in camping and ORV travelling along our coastline. In some coastal areas, visitation more than doubled that of previous summer periods.

Following a successful fox control program with two coastal landholders near Port Neill in December last year, Landscape Officers expanded on this intervention work in March this year by implementing a broader program along the coast between Black Rocks north of Port Neill and Bolingbroke south of Tumby Bay. Staff worked with eight landholders adjacent more than 20 km of coastline, benefiting ten known Hooded Plover nesting territories in this area. Baits were laid on private property adjacent to the coast at 28 locations. Fox baits were taken from 16 of these, some more than once giving an indication of the high number of foxes in the area. In addition, a fox den mapping and treatment program has commenced to ensure best practice fox control is implemented.



Left: Fox captured on a remote sensing camera installed at a coastal fox bait station near Tumby Bay. Right: Feral cat captured on a remote sensing camera installed adjacent to a Hooded Plover nesting territory in Venus Bay Conservation Park.





Remote camera monitoring for feral predators is being undertaken over 1700 hectares in Venus Bay Conservation Park to support management of the Entrance Beach Hooded Plover breeding site. Cameras have been strategically deployed throughout the park and in a buffer area around the nesting territory to explore the threats present and beach user access. The data from the remote camera network is reviewed monthly and is supported by information from Felixer grooming traps within the park, which use rangefinder sensors to distinguish feral cats from non-target wildlife. If a target animal is detected, the Felixer deploys a spray of 1080 gel which is fatal to feral cats when ingested from the fur via grooming. The Felixer also has the capacity to photograph all animals detected, including non-targets. Data from the remote cameras and Felixers has been used to undertake several targeted feral cat trapping programs in hotspot areas.

Education has also been a focus for Eyre Peninsula's Landscape Board officers so far this year. A number of successful events have been held with a range of groups across the Eyre Peninsula, including the Lower Eyre Peninsula homeschool group, Streaky Bay Area School, Tumby Bay Area School and the Whyalla community via school holiday sessions. Groups have been engaged in role play activities to help demonstrate Hooded Plover behaviour and the multiple threats they encounter while nesting and raising chicks along our coast. Activities incorporated into these sessions included the Hooded Plover floor game (snakes and ladders style!), playdough shorebird sculpting and creating Hooded Plover habitat collages to help reinforce the importance of a healthy coastal habitat.



*Left: Streaky Bay Area School Year R/1 students sculpting Hooded Plovers and their eggs. Photo Libby Hunt. Centre: Whyalla residents creating Hooded Plover habitat collages during school holidays sessions. Photo Barbara Murphy. Right: Lower Eyre Peninsula home school group engaged in a role play activity at Redcliffs Camp. Photo Rachael Kannussaar*

A training workshop was also held on the coast at Redcliffs Camp for new volunteers from the Southern Eyre Friends of Parks Group interested in territory monitoring. The Lincoln National Park is lucky to have a number of Hooded Plover nesting territories, with a number of these only monitored every two years for the Hooded Plover biennial count. 13 new volunteers have now been trained in territory monitoring, with the aim to monitor territories in the park more regularly. With continued support from the National Landcare Program, Landscape officers, BirdLife and their volunteers, look forward to continuing to increase our regions data set through regular monitoring. Targeted intervention work at breeding sites will also remain a focus for the season ahead.



*Hooded Plover training workshop. Photo Rachael Kannussaar.*





## A SNAPSHOT OF THE 2020/21 HOODED PLOVER BREEDING SEASON ON YORKE PENINSULA

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

Last year we had a better than usual season (2019/20) producing 20 fledglings, but this season didn't start as well, as most of the early nests got washed out by an unusually high tide. This spring we had quite severe weather with more extreme high tides and ferocious winds. Some flat beaches developed a ridge as high as one metre in some places.

For the biennial count, I surveyed 4 routes and I loved it as I kept discovering beautiful new beaches and also seeing lots of migratory shorebirds. During my survey I encountered 22 hooded plovers over a total of 15 km which I think was pretty good, maybe a reflection of last year's good season.

I regularly look after four pairs around Point Turton and at the beginning they all had nests until 3 of them got washed out early in the season. The nest that survived was from a pair that successfully raised a chick to fledging last year from that same position. They must have remembered that it was a good spot, as people don't usually like to tread in the middle of thick seaweed. One chick successfully fledged this year too! My second pair is on a really busy beach that unfortunately allows vehicle access. I have to fence and sign their nests as soon as I spot them if not, they would be easily squashed! This year they had to cope with the increase of visitors to the peninsula since Covid closed interstate borders. They attempted 3 times this year and they had chicks from 2 of the attempts, but both broods failed before fledging.



Left: Nest on thick seaweed at Esplanade. Right: Fledgling at Esplanade. Photos Nanou Cabourdin

My third pair is outside the town in a more remote area, they have less problems with dogs and humans but ravens are a big problem. The camera placed by a trained BirdLife Australia volunteer recorded a raid. Two seasons ago I recorded this pair trying seven times but they never had chicks. This year they finally succeeded having two chicks, but they didn't last more than a week. My last pair lives on a beach which is slowly disappearing due to high tides and a council-built rock wall to prevent erosion. Their first two nests got washed away, then they successfully had one chick that fledged. Straight after they were nesting again, they managed to raise another fledgling from that clutch!

In total on the Yorke peninsula, we had 17 fledglings recorded this season in the portal and 3 more reported on our Facebook group, so a total of 20, which is on par with last year.





## LAST HOODED PLOVER CHICK – HINDMARSH RIVER MOUTH 2020-21

Roslyn Shirlaw, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula South coast

As dawn approaches a feral fox scampers home with two Hooded Plover chicks in his belly.

On the beach the parents and one surviving chick forage near a river mouth, opened by council workers days before. Nearby, excited seagulls enjoy a bountiful breakfast as small fish ride the river's current out to sea. Gleefully the tiny chick, only three days old, darts across the wet sand responding to calls from its ever-vigilant parents.

Suddenly, the parents' calls become urgent. Their body language frantic. The chick freezes to hide. Without warning, an off-lead dog chases the silver gulls and an inattentive beach walker separates the family.

When danger subsides, the parents perceive the opposite riverbank is safer. They call their flightless chick to swim across the river, sparking the curiosity of a neighbouring silver gull. Within seconds the chick's swim is cut short.

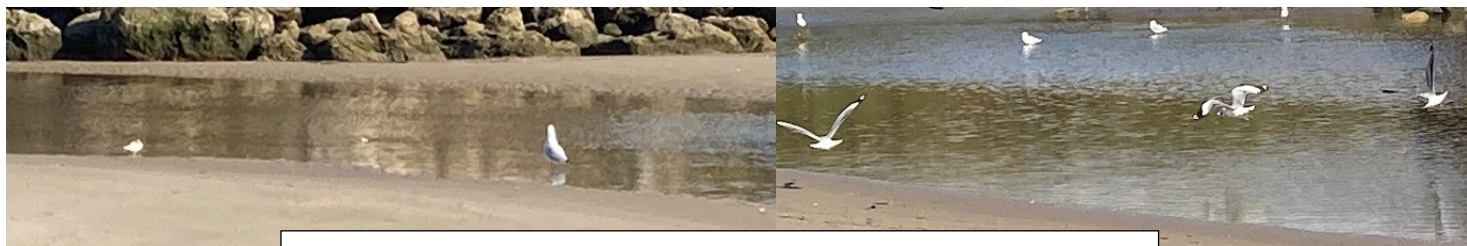
I cry out. It is too late. The chick is in the seagull's beak.

Another life lost. Another chance gone for an endangered species to survive. As the parents desperately search for their beloved chick, the reality is overwhelming. All four nests this season, have failed.

As daylight intensifies, I realise; the consequences of human action, and inaction, ripple across time and space influencing what survives and what thrives.



*Fox prints through the site.  
Photo: Roslyn Shirlaw*



*The chick begins to swim across the estuary. Silver gulls attack. Photos Roslyn Shirlaw.*





## OKAPARINGA REGION – FLEURIEU PENINSULA

Sue and Ash Read, Volunteer Regional Coordinators, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula Onkaparinga Beaches

Despite a disappointing start to the 2020-21 season, we ended our last article on an optimistic note with 3 nests doing well at time of writing. Our optimism proved correct with all 3 nests producing fledglings (2 from Maslin Beach and one each from Port Willunga and Port Willunga South). These were followed by success at Ochre Cove bringing our total for the season to 5 fledglings, equal to the best result in the 12 seasons monitoring the hoodies. Even more pleasing was that the fledglings were spread over 4 different beaches. Highlights were the 2 fledglings for RV and partner at Maslin Beach, their first in their 3 seasons together and the pair at Port Willunga (DP and HV) who have been together for 8 seasons, but had not had a fledgling since 2016.

SR and partner at Sellicks Beach, a vehicle-legal beach, hatched three chicks in their third attempt. Volunteers directed traffic through the site to enable the chicks to feed safely on the beach. Looking for a safer feeding area, the parents took the chicks to a stagnant pool from the outflow of the Aldinga Washpool, but volunteers had to rescue the chicks on several occasions when they got stuck in the thick algae present. The chicks disappeared over a 12-day period, with Silver Gulls a major suspect for their demise.

The grass isn't always greener... Following the regular presence of foxes on the beach, the pair moved from Ochre Cove to the far northern end of Maslin Beach. Although it was a suitable nest site, soon after the eggs hatched the birds realised it was too hazardous for their two chicks due to off-leash dogs. After the loss of one chick, they started to move the remaining chick back to Ochre Cove, a task made difficult by the 150m of boulders at the base of the headland that separated the 2 sites. They succeeded in escorting the 5-day-old chick through the boulders with one adult scouting the route and the other guiding the chick as it struggled through the rocks. It took several hours but eventually the chick reached Ochre Cove where it fledged a month later.

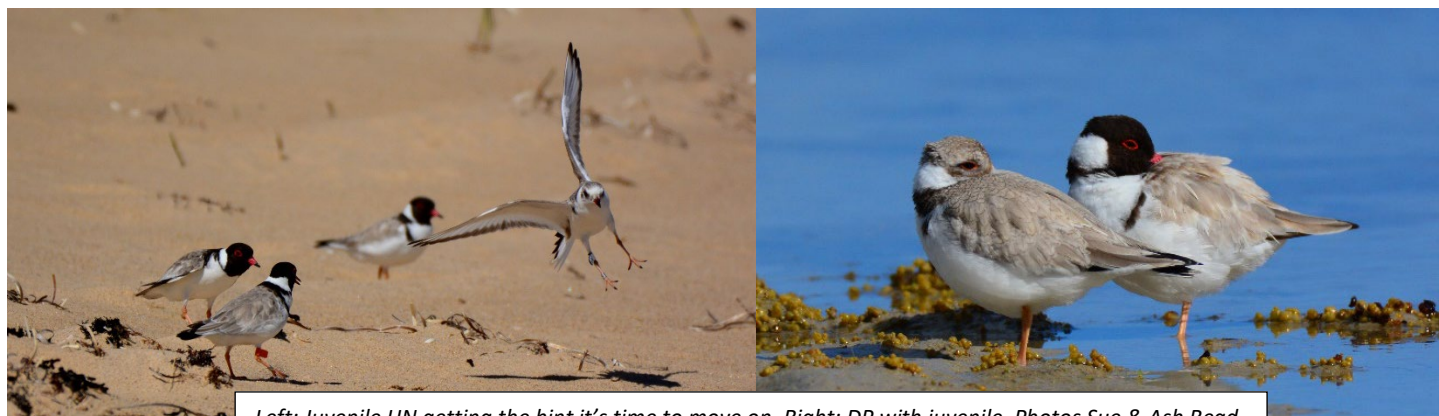


Left: KV one of the juveniles from Maslin Beach. Right: Ochre Cove showing rocks that chick crossed. Photos: Sue and Ash





A nest was found at Aldinga North during the Biennial Count. We did know that a pair had taken up residence there. When a volunteer returned the next day, they found the nest had been washed away by the high tide. The pair then nested further south at Aldinga Beach, a site where vehicles are allowed. This pair also realised that a successful nest site does not always make a successful location to raise chicks. When the chicks were only two days old the adults escorted the chicks about two kilometres to their original nest site at Aldinga North. Volunteers accompanied the move to ensure all went well. Unfortunately, this did not have a happy ending as both chicks disappeared within a week of their move.



*Left: Juvenile HN getting the hint it's time to move on. Right: DP with juvenile. Photos Sue & Ash Read*

## FLEURIEU PENINSULA SOUTH COAST UPDATE

### Sue and David Thorn, Volunteers, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula South Coast

For the 2020/21 season, our southern coast had 56 nests (132 eggs), with 44 of these were lost at egg stage. In total, six chicks fledged. Yilki had 7 of those nests with 18 eggs laid, none producing chicks. Five flagged/banded adult hooded plovers were lost on different beaches, and not seen again during the season, subsequently two beaches remained vacant for breeding for the whole season.

A very interesting situation developed at the Basham's Beach site. At the beginning of October, MS and partner hatched two of their three eggs, and the family was frightened east from their nest site, and they came into contact with SA (metal only) and partner UE from the neighbouring site, Middleton West. The 4 adults became aggressive to one another and the chicks became separated, MS and partner taking one chick west back to the hatching site, and SA and UE keeping the other chick with them, and doing all the right things, for example, brooding the chick and chasing silver gulls away.

MS and partner moved with their one chick west onto Basham's Main Beach, something they always do to rear their chicks. Meanwhile SA and UE were still nurturing the adopted chick, but two days later the chick was no longer present, presumed lost. We found MS and partner with their chick happily feeding on Basham's Beach and this chick became our first fledgling for the season.





In September BX and partner's second nest hatched three chicks, over time two chicks were lost, and in the fourth week the third chick was seen being attacked by a Pacific Gull, by a ten-year-old boy. The chick was taken into care at the Goolwa Wildlife Centre, it was found to have several injuries, and after several weeks of treatment became a limping chick. It was released onto Basham's Beach, having fledged successfully, though still with a limp, we continued to monitor this juvenile over the next few weeks, sending reports with photos to the Goolwa Wildlife Centre, who had done such a wonderful job of recovery for this limping juvenile. The lame juvenile joined up with our first fledgling (from Basham's Beach), they were eventually chased off by MS and partner, who were incubating a nest close by and getting ready to bring their hatchlings onto this territory.



*Top juvenile at 73 days old, bottom lame juvenile at 54 days old. Photo David and Sue Thorn*

## MYPONGA TO LANDS END ON THE FLEURIEU

Wendy White, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula (Myponga – Lands End)

A great many challenges faced us this year on the Fleurieu, the main one being COVID!! Between Myponga and Lands End we had at least two fledglings, one at Myponga and the other at Normanville South. It was interesting that at both these sites the nests were very close to estuaries and the chicks spent a lot of time feeding along the banks of these estuaries. Myponga Beach is a lovely, sheltered beach situated 54 km south of Adelaide and is accessed along a 4 km dirt road. The actual beach is 450 m in length and has been home to EY and US for the last couple of breeding seasons. However, this season we were very surprised to find two unbanded birds nesting on a pebble bank at the other end of this small beach. In November both these birds were caught and flagged (WM and YK) and they had a couple of nesting attempts. Unfortunately they were not successful and were often seen down the other end of the beach with the estuary pair. Perhaps Hoodies are finally learning to share their nesting sites!! It is great to have a new volunteer at Myponga Beach and also the help of a Mid Coast volunteer who kindly visited the site on many occasions.

Overall, we had a decline in the number of nests and chicks this season on our ten beach sites, with just one more fledgling at Normanville South towards the end of the season.

I would like to thank the new volunteers who joined us this season and all the current volunteers for their dedication in monitoring and look forward to working with them again next season!

This mural (right) is featured on the wall of the Normanville supermarket, designed, organised and painted by Nicole Black with help from Chelsea Nicholls and other young artists, funded through Country Arts SA & Yankalilla Council as part of the Youth Scape Project. It is very eye-catching!

