



EDITION 26 – SPRING 2021

The 2021/22 breeding season has had another bumpy start in terms of highly variable weather in some parts of the coast, turbulent seas and storms prolonging the start of nesting for many pairs and of course, the challenges of maintaining comprehensive monitoring amidst lockdowns and pandemic restrictions, particularly in Victoria. However, another season is underway and we all prepare ourselves the best we can for the future months of peak breeding and the potential for elevated threats on our beaches, as Australians holiday 'locally'.

The Beach-nesting Birds team has been devoting much of their time this winter and early spring, to engaging heavily in consultations around Victorian Catchment Management Authority/South Australian Landscape Board strategic planning, submissions regarding impactful coastal developments or policies, and to developing a Conservation Action Plan for the Hooded Plover (Eastern) in consultation with the many partners involved in threat mitigation or directly with the species across the four states. We have also been working behind the scenes on all the data our citizen scientists and partners collect, to prioritise sites for compliance patrols as part of Operation SoHo (Saving our Hooded Plover) to run across coastal Victoria this season.

This edition we farewell two of our wonderful Beach-nesting Bird team members, Aleisa Lamanna and Sonia Sanchez. Aleisa Lamanna has worked at Birdlife for over a decade and in this time has been a powerhouse of conservation activity. Aleisa navigated complex stakeholder relationships and could garner confidence in the conservation outcomes we wanted to achieve in the most hesitant of stakeholders. Aleisa has managed a range of incredibly valuable projects with Birdlife, including large scale habitat restoration projects, shorebird and beach-nesting bird projects and been an influential voice in integrating shorebird needs in the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary management and conservation action plan. Aleisa will be greatly missed, especially her valuable insights, support and contributions to the Coastal Birds program. Aleisa leaves Birdlife to take on a new and exciting role with Port Adelaide council as their Living Environment Planner, where she will be putting her brilliant community engagement skills to use to achieve Port Adelaide's urban greening targets. She will be fantastic at this no doubt and we wish her every success.

Sonia Sanchez began working with us as a volunteer over four years ago, and we were fortunate to have the opportunity to employ her in 2019 to deliver a number of (gruelling!) research projects. Sonia brought a diversity of skills to the team. She could walk 25 km on soft sand in the blasting winds of Southern Victoria to survey remote coastline and set cameras; then in the office she'd be designing exciting communications plans with the savviness of a Millennial, and in the next breath, writing scripts in R and analysing disturbance data that she and Dan collected in the Belfast Coastal Reserve. We will miss having Sonia as part of our team and if we could have extended her position, we'd never have given her up. Sonia has headed to an exciting role at the University of Adelaide. She has been offered a fixed-term research position to do habitat modelling of water birds in South East South Australia to understand habitat requirements and responses of bird populations to different environmental changes, like water levels and temperature. We hope to maintain connection to this exciting research as the *Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin* project collaborates closely with our Migratory Shorebirds team.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of our newsletter and can gain some inspiration from some of the ideas that are being rolled out in different areas to tackle the conservation challenges facing beach-nesting birds.



Lois Greene, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria.

I have been a Hooded Plover volunteer in Victoria since January 2011 but I'm now moving to Northern NSW to be near family. I will be taking with me a lot of wonderful (sometimes sad and frustrating) memories from my time with the Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula. I feel privileged to have made so many wonderful friends from all walks of life. An amazing array of talented people and I have learnt many new skills. All this because of my avid interest in birdwatching and being in the right place at the right time.

On my way to Gunnamatta to see what birds I could add to my list, I chanced upon a sign about a Hooded Plover pair and their fledgling at Boags Rocks. Curiosity got the better of me, so I set off for the beach. When I got there, there were a group of people sitting on the sand in a circle led by Grainne Maguire. Grainne saw I had my binoculars and invited me to join them. This was to be my first experience at being involved in a hoodie banding. Needless to say, I was hooked. Grainne, Tanya and Diane Lewis (President of FoHP at the time) were quick to have me trained up as a volunteer and not long after I had my own territories along with John Franklin. The beach we wardened was Beach 16 (John moved away last year). We had 2 pairs, well Heyfield's East territory was a little unusual as it had an unbanded male and 2 banded females, often incubating a total of 6 eggs. We placed a camera on the nest and sadly JB was taken by a Nankeen Kestrel, so she never managed a fledgling on my watch.

Over the years I helped Jo Hansen and Elizabeth Grierson warden their 5 pairs on the long stretch from Rye car park to Brewster's Rd and they would help me, especially when we had chicks and we had to be there every day. I also had the back up of Janece Alexander and have now passed the reins to Carlie Adamek.

I became involved in many other related activities. I ran a Hoodie Awareness Stall at our local Boneo Market. Along with volunteers we would interact with the public, give out brochures, sell hoodie merchandise, sign up the occasional new member and give out Wing Thing books to the children. I would borrow BirdLife's badge making machine to make hoodie badges for the children. That was always so popular!

I have been a committee member of FOHP for 8 years and briefly stood in as secretary to help out. I also helped Chris Willocks and Jo Hansen when they gave talks and activities in Primary school classes. When needed we would help with 'Kids Teaching Kids' at Pt Nepean.

I volunteered at Environment Week at the Briars every March for one week. I was in charge for the last two years that it ran. It proved exhausting but fun and educational and we were so grateful to the volunteers who put up their hands to help. We could make up to 400 hoodie badges over the week with primary school students who came through our marquee, and we also did talks and hands on activities. Jo Hansen and I helped with PV Junior Ranger programs over the school holidays, mostly with Holly Barker, Rosebud Hoodie Park Ranger.



Lois releasing EE Right (White) at Heyfields with Kasun. Photo: Mark Lethlean.



Volunteer spotlight

My highlights are too numerous to count. I have seen 5 chicks fledge on my territories, 3 just last season. One to new parents who took over Heyfield's West when EE female passed on and two to AZ and partner. They are miracles especially when in 2017 the Heyfield's East week-old chick was taken from the beach by a woman who thought it was abandoned. Fortunately, she contacted Malcolm Brown who told her to take it straight back to where she found it. I was contacted and with John Franklin we went to the beach and much to the relief of the parents, the two chicks were running around on the beach. They went on to fledge on the 30th of December 2017.

Another highlight was meeting Sean Dooley on a windswept beach when two other volunteers and I were privileged enough to join Grainne, Renee and Glenn when they banded the Boags Rock fledgling, BR. We even appeared on Sean's video!

It was a privilege to be part of the team that commissioned artist Jimmy Dvate to paint a mural on the toilet block wall at Sorrento back beach. The mural depicts the life cycle of the hooded plover and we proudly went there every day as Jimmy worked on the mural as we talked to the general public who stopped to admire the art. I also loved being involved in banding outings. When Kasun caught one of the adult newcomers at Heyfield's West early this year I named it in honour of its predecessor EE Left (Orange), now EE Right (White).



Launch of the Sorrento Hoodie mural (Lois on far left). Photo: Noel Greene.

I'm proud of what I have achieved, and that chance encounter with Grainne set me more challenges than I ever thought possible. It's been a fantastic journey and I'm sure I'll continue my work up North. Look out Beach Stone-curlews - here I come!

Chris Willocks, Vice-president, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc.

FoHP MP are very sad to bid farewell to Lois after more than 10 years in our group. She has an outstanding ability to find birds, interpret behaviour and ensure their welfare. That the Hoodies on the Mornington Peninsula had such an outstanding breeding season seems a fitting sendoff, and we are thrilled that the Heyfield pairs FINALLY rewarded her with 3 fledglings. So well deserved after all her efforts.

She has been the chief organiser for so many market and street stalls that promote Beach-nesting birds. She filled her car with tables, shelter, chairs, signs, tables and lots of pamphlets, cards, and badges. Her wonderful friendly nature always made strong community connections and consequently she has been the go-to person when we needed community work done. Her ability to connect with all people flowed into education as she visited schools, Parks Victoria events and trained new volunteers on the beaches. Everyone who worked with you, has been impressed by your commitment, knowledge, passion for conservation and willingness to share and learn. Lois, we hope you will always remember your connection with FoHP MP and remain in contact. You are part of our Hoodie family. Your enthusiasm for all things Hoodie has been infectious. We shall miss you. We also know that Beach Stone-Curlews are calling you!

Jo Hansen, Treasurer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc.

It was Lois's warm and friendly manner at Boneo market that gave me the confidence to join the Mornington Peninsula group. Her mentoring walks taught me so much about the birds and began my Friends journey. She introduced me to many interesting places for bird spotting across the Peninsula during the off season and her encyclopaedic knowledge of birds has me in awe. She has such a passion for the birds which can cause her both distress and great joy.



Land manager spotlight

GARRY GRIFFITHS, CITY OF CHARLES STURT, ADELAIDE SA

Written by: Aleisa Lamanna, BirdLife Australia/Green Adelaide Staff who has had the privilege of working alongside Garry for 7+ years.

The City of Charles Sturt is one of Adelaide's metropolitan Council's which has a stretch of 11.5km of some of the most populated coastline in Adelaide, from West Beach in the south to Semaphore Park in the north. The City of Charles Sturt beaches are very popular among locals and visitors and can be a crowded place during summer holidays. These city beaches are a tough place for any beach-nesting bird, but luckily, since 2014, they've had a fairy Godfather!

Enter Garry Griffiths, Charles Sturt Council's Natural Resource Management & Open Space Liaison Officer. Garry first started in his fairy Godfather role by putting up long stretches of fence to help protect and bring awareness to a Red-capped Plover colony on the Council's most northern beach (Semaphore South). Under the guidance of the BirdLife Australia/Green Adelaide team who monitor the red-caps, Garry became educated, and we'd like to think enchanted by the tiny beach-nesters. This particular colony of Red-capped Plovers has virtually every threat and disturbance you can think of thrown at them. From the organised packs of dogs regularly walked off leash (German Shepherd dog walking club), to sky divers landing within metres of their nests, to mining-sized dump trucks and vehicles removing sand from the beach where they nest. Garry understands the threats to breeding success well and has supported the Beach-nesting Birds program since 2014 by assisting volunteers and spreading awareness within his Council as well as on the beach, but by far the most impactful support has been his willingness and readiness to drop everything (within reason) and protect a nest through fencing and signage.

The City of Charles Sturt is unique in that it supports fencing and nest protection for both Red-capped Plovers and Hooded Plovers. Through a recent by-law amendment, they now also have a by-law requiring dogs to be on a leash within 100m of a sign indicting a nesting site for both species. A fantastic legal action for the conservation of beach-nesting birds. If it was not for Garry's keen interest in conservation and protecting the Red-capped Plover nesting habitat almost 8 years ago, I don't believe we would be as advanced in our conservation and awareness efforts as we are today. The Council also support the Beach-nesting Birds program through a social media page 'Pets of Charles Sturt' where they promote responsible dog ownership including on the foreshore and where nesting birds are present. We are incredibly grateful for the support received from the Council and especially grateful for Garry Griffiths, the fencing legend, and fairy Godfather to the BNB'S!



Land Managers Matt Endacott (L) and Garry Griffiths (centre) with Emma Stephens BirdLife Staff after installing a new fence at West Beach, Adelaide. Photo: A. Lamanna

BRETT DIEHM, TEAM LEADER NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, BARWON COAST VIC.

I work for Barwon Coast Committee of Management Inc., and as a team we oversee the management of 15 kilometres of coastal Crown land on the southern Bellarine Peninsula. We work collaboratively with other agencies, volunteer organisations and members of the public to gain understanding and empathy for the Hooded Plover.



Land manager spotlight

Barwon Coast provides financial support towards signage, materials and the engagement of a Council Environment Ranger. Our staff also provide protection and education programs and contribute to the BirdLife Australia program through reporting and planning.

More recently Barwon Coast initiated the Temporary Exclusion Zones during the breeding season, developed a 'Safe Pets, Safe Wildlife, Safe People' activity booklet, and assisted the development of the 'Welcome to our Hood' educative signage project. Our education programs engage students on beach-nesting birds, the importance of being a responsible pet owner and simple actions that can help the birds survive.



Safe pets activity booklet front cover, Barwon Coast

Our whole of organisation is aware of the plight of the beach-nesting birds, with approximately 17 employees actively involved in the field or education, to strengthen protection measures. We gain additional field support from the City of Greater Geelong Environment Ranger, Animal Management officers and around 15 volunteers of the Friends of the Hooded Plover Bellarine team.



Barwon Coast staff erecting hoodie sign

Of my 18 years with Barwon Coast, 14 of those have included Hooded Plover management. I am directly involved in planning, signage development, monitoring, photographic records, and education programs. In addition, I have for the past 3 years been the Borough of Queenscliffe Point Lonsdale Hooded Plover Liaison and Management volunteer working with approximately 10 other volunteers.

The Bellarine Peninsula is one of the fastest growing regions, with increased visitation numbers, compounded by higher numbers of dogs on beaches presenting ongoing conservation difficulties. These impact on the bird's abilities to successfully incubate eggs, and should a chick hatch, the survival challenges are never ending. The more recent loss of the primary dune prevents the birds from seeking safer breeding sites in the dunes, exposing the scrapes and the chicks to high tide impacts.

BirdLife Australia provide best practice management advice and access to current knowledge, enabling quick and effective response times, ensuring Barwon Coast respond with confidence in an effective and efficient manner.

Working collaboratively strengthens community messaging across a broader landscape that contributes towards behavioural change by beach users. We have seen a slight change in public attitude towards the Hooded Plover volunteers with many beach users engaging with them to understand how their actions may impact on the protection of the birds.

Evidence shows that a stronger network supporting each other collectively can make a difference.

One of the achievements for beach-nesting bird conservation that Barwon Coast is most proud of is supporting and working with dedicated volunteers who commit long hours ensuring the birds safety in all weather. Without the volunteers, the program would not be as successful. A personal highlight is the strength and resilience of those dedicated to protecting beach-nesting birds. Not only to see a chick hatch, but the golden ticket of seeing one fledge. The fledgling recorded at Ocean Grove after 24 years was definitely a highlight.



BUSH KINDY PLOVER APPRECIATION DAY

Deb Laver, Volunteer Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island

The Kangaroo Island Children's Services are now into their second year of a bush kindy program, and with a beautiful island like Kangaroo Island we are spoilt for choice in places to visit! Surrounded by coastline, beach-nesting birds hold a special place for many Islanders and it just so happened that Plover Appreciation Day fell on our scheduled bush kindy day this year.

The children have been enjoying their visits to their local beach Emu Bay, popular for Hooded Plovers but unfortunately equally popular for all those leisure pursuits that challenge their survival including cars on beaches and off-leash dogs. Despite this, we are training our own little band of "wildlife rangers" through our beach kindy program who we hope will take these conservation messages of sharing the beach with our wildlife home to their families and friends.

We celebrated the day exploring the beach, using our binoculars to see what birds we could spot. And although we didn't spot any Hooded Plovers, we did take the time to teach the kids about the importance of taking care when walking on the sand by playing a little game adapted from the popular kids' game "red rover". Using mock plover eggs, the kids could appreciate just how easy it was to accidentally tread on them. As we do each year, we played our favourite canvas Hooded Plover board game from the trusty Birdlife Wing Thing activity book, which over the years has served us well. The photo attached is the kids playing the board game using treasures they found on the beach as counters. We are now looking forward to once again participating in the great Aussie Bird Count!



Photo: Deb Laver

HOODIE DISPLAY AT MARINE DISCOVERY CENTRE

Charlotte Devine, Student Immanuel College



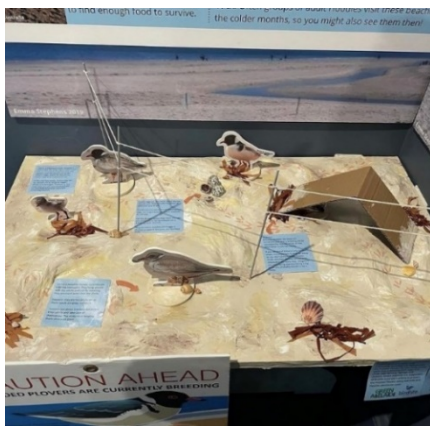
Charlotte with the Hooded Plover Display. Photo: Carmen Bishop

My name is Charlotte Devine, and I am in year 9 at Immanuel College. From a young age, I have been concerned about the human impact on native Australian plant and animal species, and I am passionate about protecting them. For my school community project, I decided to get involved with BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds Program, especially with the Hooded Plover protection efforts at local beaches. When looking into it, I discovered that the key to raising Hooded Plover breeding success was education. So, I decided to contact the Marine Discovery Centre (MDC) at Henley Beach, which is a centre dedicated to providing young children with knowledge about our local seas and coasts. As it is located at Star of the Sea Primary school, I visited the centre a lot during my years at this school. I remember learning about multiple coastal and marine species and how they depended on each other to create a thriving ecosystem. I knew that through the MDC, I could educate local beach-users about the hoodies and help the centre with its missions and values too.

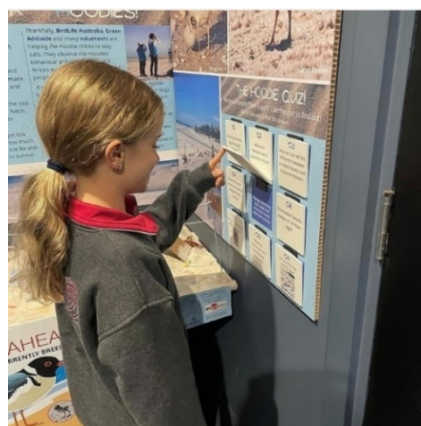


Together with volunteers from BirdLife Australia, we came up with designs for an interactive display that could teach the children and their parents who visit about the Hoodies and how we can help protect them. With the help of Smart Posts, a professional sign writing company, I printed out boards with information, large images and a quiz for kids to test their knowledge. I also used papier-mâché, paint, seaweed and shells to model a beach on a low table. By adding an A-frame shelter, fence, sign, and figures of Hoodie adults, juveniles, chicks and eggs, I turned it into a model of a typical Hoodie breeding site. In its first couple of months at the MDC, my display has already received a great response.

With this display, I hope to share the message of what makes Hoodies so special and worth protecting. I also hope that children and adults alike can spread the word about the Hoodies and make connections from my display to real-life Hoodies and breeding sites when they come across one. This will hopefully be resulting in more beach-users giving these bird's the space they need to continue on for generations to come.



*Hooded Plover display close up on table,
Photo: Carmen Bishop*



*Olivia Devine lifting quiz flap to reveal
answer. Photo: Lisa Devine*



"Wow this is so informative, I never knew what those birds were" (visiting child)

"Oh, look they are so cute, I didn't know they were so fragile. We have to protect these hoodies" (visiting child)

"This is amazing, I can't believe a 14-year-old created this display" (visiting parent)

PLOVER APPRECIATION DAY

Karen Wootton, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc

Ocean beaches aren't empty spaces awaiting frisbees, towels, umbrellas and picnic baskets. Long before the summer crowds descend and human feet blur the sand, tiny, three toed prints dance lightly across its surface.

Hooded Plovers have begun their breeding rituals, pairing up, claiming territories and making shallow scrapes where they lay freckled eggs carefully hidden among dry, brown seaweed and cuttlefish shell. In this challenging environment our precious, threatened hoodies are indicators of coastal ecosystem health and fragility. Simple, thoughtful actions can have a significant impact on their breeding success so that, far into the future, they can twinkle toe along the shoreline. Our beaches can be enjoyed and nurtured, one does not exclude the other. Please share the beach and give hoodie families the space they need to raise their cotton ball chicks. Wouldn't it be awful if the beach was just an empty space?



OLYMPIC EFFORT ON PLOVER APPRECIATION DAY

Sonia Sanchez, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, Birdlife Australia



Another spring, another hoodie season and another Plover Appreciation Day – a day to celebrate all plovers and raise awareness of their plight. One day six years ago, our very own Grainne decided plovers needed a day and so, since 2015, Plover Appreciation Day has been held on September 16th. Using mainly social media to share plover-related information to educate the wider public and raise awareness, this

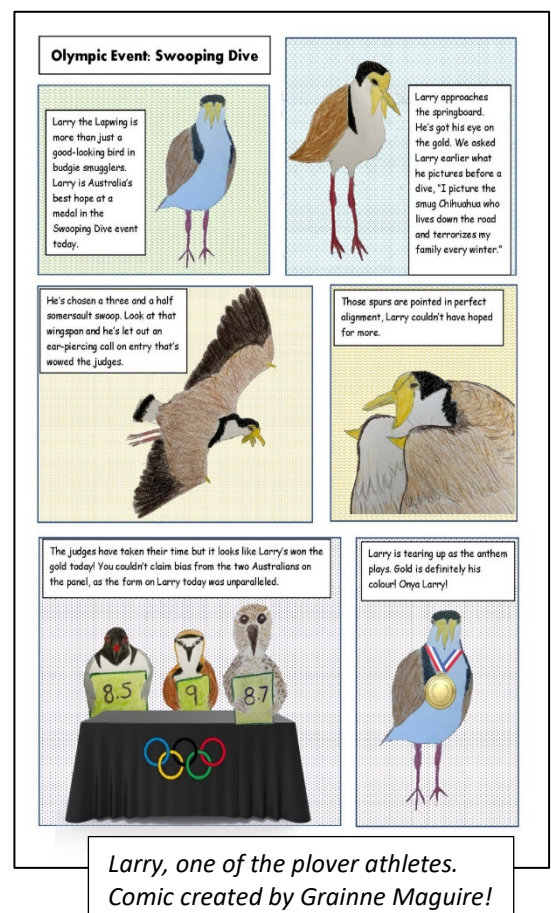
event has grown more and more every year, now reaching millions of people across the world!

The outreach of Plover Appreciation Day this year was wild! The #PloverAppreciationDay hashtag reached 4.7 million people on social media, almost doubling last year's reach, and over 65,000 engagements with plover content. That is a lot of people! Our other hashtags #PAD2021 and #PloverOlympics also had plenty of action (more on plover athletes below!). When you think about it, this huge reach is a great result and opportunity to raise awareness of the plight of plovers around the world. In the end, plovers are a diverse bunch, but many threats are shared globally.

Analysing our own performance, BirdLife Australia socials reached more than 100,000 people! The Beach-nesting Birds socials did pretty well too. Our Plover Appreciation Day content reached thousands of people and generated more than 4,000 engagements across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Excitingly, we also made some new friends – 165 more people started following our socials in September!

This year we wanted to tribute the diversity and strengths of all plovers around the world, so we couldn't find a better theme than Plover Olympics!

We all have seen perfect Masked Lapwing Dives, creative Red-capped Plover floor routines like broken-wing displays and what about the 500+ marathons that some Grey Plovers fly every year? Plovers are Olympic beasts! We loved seeing people from all around the world sharing [Olympic profiles](#) of their favourite plovers and their results in our [quiz](#) – Which Olympian Plover are you? – guess what? No one from the BNB team got Hooded Plover! We followed world-class endurance athletes in their annual [Migratory Marathon](#); fell in love with Larry (aka Masked Lapwing), who wowed us all in the [Swooping Diving event](#); saw small plovers showing off their clever distraction displays in the [Artistic Gymnastics – Floor event](#); and held our breath in the





[Freestyle Wrestling](#), with our beloved Hooded Plover and its North American friend, the Piping Plover. It was a heck of a day!

Thank SO MUCH everyone who got involved and made the great success of Plover Appreciation Day possible! Special shout out to our overseas friends [Ontario Piping Plover Conservation Program](#) and [Wader Quest](#) who are always on board with our quirky ideas to celebrate the day. If you missed the date, don't be sad, the great thing about social media is that the plover content is not going anywhere! You can still catch up by checking the #PloverAppreciationDay hashtag any time.

How far will the Plover Love get next year?!



Left: Some Olympic Plover profiles from plover lovers around the world (L-R: Jennie Turner- FoHP Breamlea, Selena Flores, NYC Plover Project, and Carole Devillers. Right: Ontario Piping Plovers got people to guess which sports their plovers were competing in.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Daive Gaglio, Documentary maker and Birds South Australia committee member

I've been captured by our breathtaking seascapes, and extraordinary and unique coastal wildlife from the very moment I moved to South Australia about four years ago.

I was impressed by the effort provided by community groups, local councils and environmental organisations to protect this fragile ecosystem. Pristine beaches and stunning coastal ecosystems are an important and irreplaceable natural asset, as they support the survival of several species of animals including beach nesting birds and migratory shorebirds.

I was puzzled though when I saw for the first time a vehicle driving on one of these beaches. As a keen birder and photographer, I experienced first-hand the detrimental impact on and disturbance caused to flora and fauna. As a



conservation biologist it was my intention to raise awareness among the community, including off-road vehicle users, about the potential ecological damage and associated costs, especially the one caused by off-the-track driving. I was just looking for an opportunity.

That opportunity came when I started volunteering for the BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Birds program and joined the Birds SA management committee when I soon realised that I was not alone thinking that this issue needs to find effective solutions.

The problems were already identified in March 1977 when the Australian Government published a major report on the detrimental impact that off-road vehicles were having on the Australian environment. 42 years later an Inquiry into the use of off-road vehicles, conducted by the Natural Resources Committee of the South Australian Parliament enabled a more recent update on off-road vehicle issues, confirming that they were becoming more pervasive throughout the State and called upon the South Australian Government to pursue seven key recommendations. BirdLife Australia made a submission to this Inquiry, as well as other environmental organisations such as Birds SA.



These submissions contained scientific and graphic evidence of damage caused by off-road vehicles to critical bird habitats, including endangered species such as the Hooded Plover. Unfortunately, there has been no obvious action to date from the State Government on the seven major recommendations from the Inquiry which were tabled in State Parliament in mid-2020.

As a filmmaker I thought that the production of a short documentary could be used for educational purposes to raise public awareness of the damage to coastal ecological systems resulting from inappropriate off-road vehicle use, as well as, firing up action to address the issues identified in the Off-road Vehicle Inquiry conducted by the State Government in 2019.

For over one year I have recorded several interviews with community and interest-group representatives and collected a wealth of footage. It has been a great experience to collect footage of migratory shorebirds and beach nesting birds, and quite distressing experiencing through my camera viewfinder the impacts of inappropriate off-road vehicle use. However, I knew that these would have been crucial visuals to engage the audience to a deeper emotional level.

The documentary, titled **On The Right Track** is now completed and available for viewing [here](#). The documentary has already received a lot of positive feedback and needs to be shared far and wide in order to implement urgent changes to the current uncontrolled system. The Documentary contains material showing the good work being done by volunteers and some local Councils to better protect birds as well as some of the irresponsible off-road vehicle behaviour which is of great concern for all including responsible off-road drivers.

The Documentary reiterates one of the key messages promoted by BirdLife Australia *“Our beaches aren’t just our playgrounds – they are also incredibly important breeding and feeding habitats for some of Australia’s most threatened birds”*



FORAGING ECOLOGY AND DIET OF RCPs IN THE COORONG, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Katelyn Markos, Honours Student at the University of Adelaide

I have always had a passion for wildlife, particularly birds, and was lucky enough to further this passion through my Honours degree at the University of Adelaide. For the past year I have been researching the foraging ecology and diet of Red-capped Plovers in the Coorong, South Australia.

I completed two great sampling trips in the Coorong, one during spring and one in winter. During these trips I spent three days at each of three site locations, studying the foraging behaviour of Red-capped Plovers and picking up their poo. You may be thinking why am I collecting Red-capped Plover poo? I am actually doing this to find out what they are eating in the Coorong. DNA metabarcoding was completed on the scat samples and their prey was identified from a reference sequence database. I am still completing this analysis, but soon I will be able to provide my results.

In the meantime, I can tell you a bit about the results of their foraging behaviour. I found that the Red-capped Plovers tend to forage predominantly at the shoreline, and secondarily, further than 6 metres from the shoreline. Numerous factors could affect where they forage on the beach, but I largely believe it is related to the presence of other shorebirds, water level, prey availability and weather variables (e.g., wind). When other shorebirds were present, particularly Red-necked Stint, they tended to forage with them at the shoreline and when the water level was high, particularly in winter, they tended to stay at the shoreline and not venture too close to the vegetation. Additionally, I studied the peck rates of the foraging Red-capped Plovers. I did not find any significant difference with their peck rates between the two seasons. However, peck rates varied between sites, which may indicate variability in prey abundance, with higher peck rates suggesting greater prey density.



Photos: Rowan Mott



I also found a significant difference in the abundance of Red-capped Plovers at my three sites in autumn compared to winter. In winter I saw quite low abundances of Red-capped Plovers and some days I didn't see any at all. The water level in winter was extremely high and there were extensive algae mats present on some of the beaches. This can affect the plover's foraging habitat by reducing mudflat areas and suppressing food sources. Chironomids are known to be an important food source to shorebirds in the Coorong. Although they have declined in that past during the millennial drought and in more recent years have been affected due to algae blooms. This reduction in macroinvertebrate abundance is believed to be the predominant driver in shorebird abundances in the Coorong.

Through studying the foraging ecology and diet of Red-capped Plovers, I will help to provide information for future management and conservation in the Coorong. I hope that this management will improve Red-capped Plover numbers and assist other shorebird species that inhabit the Coorong.



Photo: Katelyn Markos



TURN IN A FAIRY TERN IN VICTORIA

Dr Amy Adams, Coastal Birds Program Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

As the breeding season gears up to begin for Fairy Terns (and Little Terns) here in Victoria, we are once again getting ready to monitor Fairy Tern nesting sites around Victoria. We have two Fairy Tern monitoring projects in Victoria, one in Western Port and Port Phillip Bay and one in East Gippsland. While we have dedicated volunteers and land managers associated with these projects keeping an eye out for breeding activities over the coming months, we are also calling on members of the public, especially those out on the water, to help be our eyes and be on the lookout for any breeding birds when we can't be out on the water ourselves! There are several tell-tale behaviours that birds are breeding or getting ready to. When colonies are establishing, often birds can be seen performing aerial display flights where they chase after one another, often with fish in their bills, and will be calling loudly. The breeding season is often the only time you will hear Fairy Terns being vocal! Fish wiping is a behaviour where the male stands directly behind a female with a fish in his bill and repeatedly moves his head from side to side while the fish makes contact with the female's back. This typically results in courtship feeding where the male will feed the fish to a female, often while he is standing on her back ready to copulate. And if you find yourself being swooped and called at loudly (by any tern species) you are too close to a nesting area and you should carefully leave the area as there are likely to be camouflaged eggs or chicks nearby. So now it is your turn to help save the terns this summer by reporting any sightings of Fairy Terns, especially if they are performing any of the above behaviours, as soon as possible to beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au.

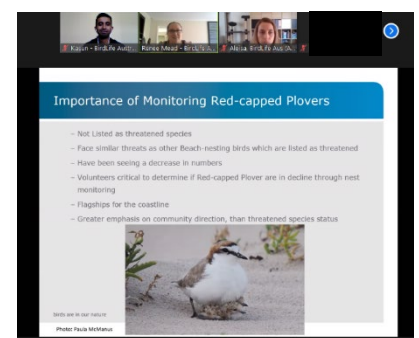


Left: Courtship feeding. Photo: John Hutchison. Right: Fish wiping. Photo: Claire Greenwell

FIRST NATIONAL RED-CAPPED PLOVER MEETING

Renee Mead, Beach-nesting Birds Program Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

So, to Red-cap, I mean re-cap, we held our very first National Red-capped Plover meeting in late August. This was an opportunity for those land managers and volunteers to come together from all around Australia to discuss everything Red-capped Plover! From the latest research, to learning more about where conservation efforts are occurring around Australia, all the resources that have been made for Red-caps, and of course, all the conservation issues that are facing





Science and research

our little Red-caps. We had representatives from Western Australia, South Australia and Victoria and it was a great way to bring everyone together to meet one another online. We will be holding the next Red-capped Plover Meeting after the breeding season (March/April). If you're interested in attending, as you monitor, manage or want to get involved with Red-capped Plovers, please contact renee.mead@birdlife.org.au

RESPONSE OF INCUBATING HOODED PLOVERS TO HUMAN THREATS IN WESTERN VICTORIA

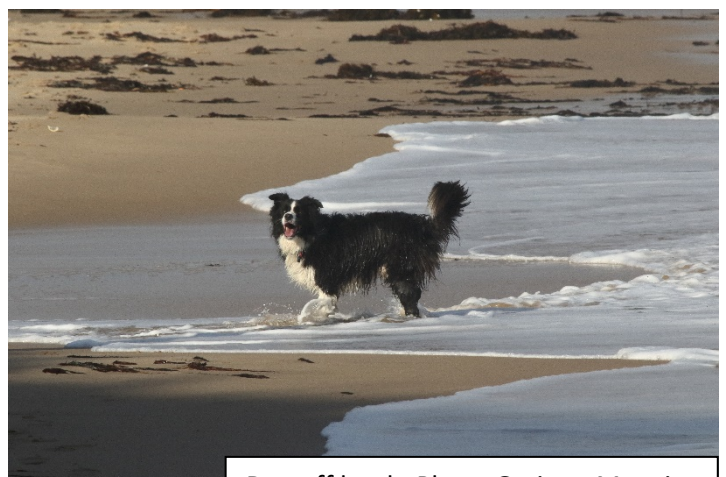
Sonia Sanchez and Dan Lees, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officers, Birdlife Australia

As most of you know, Dan and I (Sonia) have spent the last 2-3 seasons collecting data on human-related disturbance to incubating Hooded Plovers in south-west Victoria. This project was funded by DELWP Victoria and Parks Victoria, as part of the Belfast Coastal Reserve Management Plan 2018 implementation, to investigate how Hooded Plovers respond to human threats and inform the hoodie regulations of the Plan. Today, we're excited to share with you the main findings of this research! Before we move on, we'll give you some background.

Shorebirds respond to humans and their furry friends as if they are predators, and Hooded Plovers are no exception. These human threats interrupt the normal behaviour of the bird, causing a 'disturbance', defined in our study as the behavioural response of the bird to human stimuli. In response to an approaching threat, an incubating shorebird can flee the nest, leaving eggs vulnerable to weather and predators. Among human threats, off-leash dogs are of particular interest. Compared to leashed dogs, off-leash dogs may be seen by shorebirds as a bigger threat as their travel direction is unpredictable and some of them engage in hunting-like (or actual hunting) behaviour. For Hooded Plovers in particular, direct predation by off-leash dogs has been documented in recent years. Focusing on walkers, walkers with on-leash dogs and walkers with off-leash dogs, we were interested to: (a) determine whether the probability of a bird fleeing the nest was different depending on the type of human threat they were responding to; and (b) estimate the distance from the nest the human threat was when the bird fled.

In total, we conducted 65 two-hour nest observations, recorded 382 human disturbance events (i.e. encounter of a human stimulus within 100 m or less of the nest) and over 125 hours of video of incubating Hooded Plover behaviour (we described the fieldwork methods in more detail in the [Winter 2020 Newsletter](#) if you're interested!). It's important to note that all off-leash dogs we observed were accompanied by at least one walker and none of them roamed the beach without the walker/s nearby. It was no surprise that Port Fairy beaches and easily accessible beaches within the Reserve had the highest rates of human disturbance.

When it comes to leaving the nest in response to an approaching human threat, we found that nests on the beach were three times more likely to be flushed than nests on dunes/foredune. There were no significant differences in the probability of fleeing between types of human threats. However, given our model outputs, our data don't provide enough evidence to confidently say that differences between threat type don't exist, and model estimates indicate that on-leash dogs and off-leash dogs have the potential to be up to 4.6 and 4.7 times, respectively, more likely to flush an incubating bird than walkers alone. Recent research from Spain



Dog off leash. Photo Grainne Maguire



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has shown that off-leash roaming dogs are significantly more likely to flush incubating Kentish Plovers than walkers alone.

Regarding the distance between the human threat and the nest, most fleeing responses (70-80%) occurred when the threat was between 100 and 20 metres of the nest. Sixty percent of off leash dogs (6 out of 10) were between 50 and 100 metres of the nest when the bird fled, whereas 28.5 % of the walkers with on leash dogs (2 out of 7) and 41.5 % of the walkers/joggers (17 out of 41) were in this outer buffer area when the bird fled. Hence, off-leash dogs were further from the nest when the bird fled compared to walkers/joggers on-leash dogs. This is in accordance with some other research that found shorebirds had longer flight-initiation distances (i.e. distance at which a bird flees from perceived danger) in response to walkers with on-leash dogs than walkers alone.

Overall, this study shows that the current buffer width of 20 metres considered in the Belfast Management Plan is insufficient to mitigate disturbance impacts of human recreational activity.

The buffer width should be increased to 100 m to mitigate the variation in disturbance responses to different human threats. This should be accompanied by higher efforts and resources to enforce compliance around breeding territories, particularly in Port Fairy beaches and beaches within the Reserve with easy access. Finally, although our data was inconclusive to determine if off-leash dogs within 100 m of the nest have a higher probability to flush a bird than walkers and on-leash dogs, we found that off-leash dogs flushed birds off the nest earlier. This, together with evidence from other research, indicates that the management of off-leash dogs should consider the risks of dogs freely roaming the beach and even destroying nests or hunting chicks.

WHEN IS A JUVENILE NOT A JUVENILE?

Richard Stone, Volunteer Friends of the Hooded Plover Otways

Towards the end of the 2020/21 season, late February, I was pleased to see a juvenile hooded plover at the Barham River mouth in Apollo Bay. There are three active nesting sites in this area but there have been no fledglings here for many years so to have a new bird coming into the area was exciting, especially as it was flagged.

I took a few photos so that I could record the flag details and headed home to complete a portal sighting.

However, when I looked at the images on my computer, I was surprised to see that this was not a new bird but 'HH' the resident hoodie for the Barham River East nest. Normally 'HH' has the deep black head and well-developed black back and shoulder of an adult, as can be seen in photo 1 below taken in December 2012.

I had seen 'HH' early in the 2020/21 season and referred to photo 2 taken in September 2020 for its colouring then – obviously still a deep black head. But now in February 2021 it had the pale grey head/back and shoulder of a juvenile as can be seen in photo 3.



'HH' in December 2014. Photo: Richard Stone



Thoughts were put out by the Hoodie team that 'HH' may have been moulting or the loss of colouration was related to ageing, but I should record what happens to it over time.

Seven months later in September 2021 at the beginning of the current 2021/22 season, I was therefore on the lookout for 'HH'. It appeared as usual at its resident nesting spot with a mate and still with the pale grey mottled head, back and shoulders of a juvenile as can be seen in the photo below.

If this hoodie had not had a flag to identify it, I would have photographed it then recorded it as a juvenile in the portal. I wonder if there are other adults without flags that are unknowingly being recorded as juveniles?



Left: 'HH' and mate in September 2020. Right: 'HH' late February 2021. Photos Richard Stone



'HH' in September 2021. Photo: Richard Stone



REGIONAL ROUND UP

Click on the links below to read more from each of the regions about their beach-nesting bird project activities and updates from the 2020-2021 breeding season just gone.

[Victorian](#) Beach-nesting Bird updates

[South Australian](#) Beach-nesting Bird updates

[Queensland and Tasmania](#) Beach-nesting Bird updates



Photo: Mark Lethlean

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