



EDITION 26 – SPRING 2021

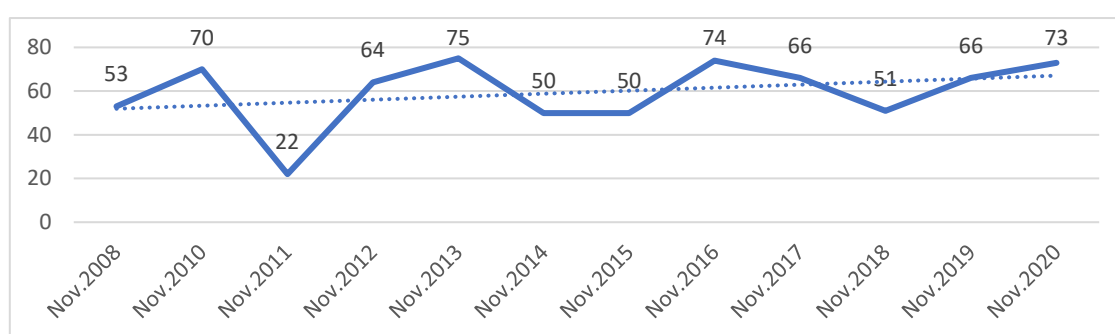
A PROMISING TREND IN HOODED PLOVER NUMBERS

Jeff Campbell, Friends of Shorebirds SE

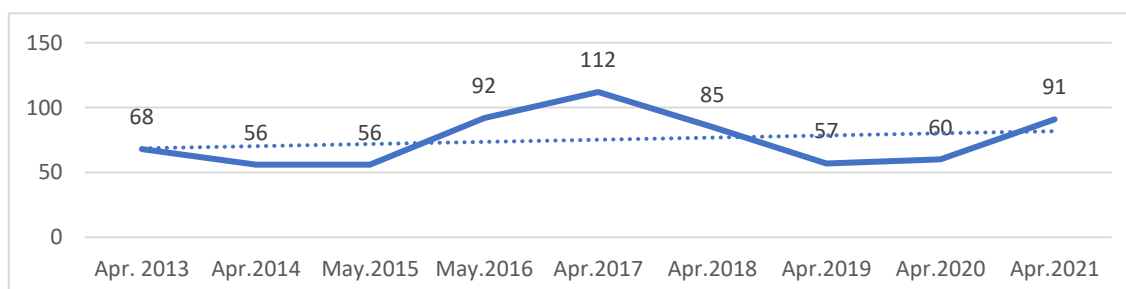
Recent Hooded Plover counts in the South East of South Australia have shown an encouraging trend in numbers observed. Counts are carried out twice per year by volunteers from Friends of Shorebirds SE under a contract with the Limestone Coast Landscape Board as part of the *Enhancing the Coorong and Managing Ramsar values along the Limestone Coast*. The counts cover the area of The Granites, north of Kingston SE, to the Victorian border, a distance of around 220 km. Annual counts have been undertaken in April/May since 2010, and November since 2009. Biennial November surveys were conducted prior to 2009.

The November 2020 survey resulted in a count total of 70 adult and three juveniles, the third highest number of Hooded Plovers counted. The April 2021 count of 67 adults and 24 chicks/juveniles (a total of 91 birds) was also the third highest total number observed and the number of chicks/juveniles the highest. It is of course possible that at least some of the juvenile birds included in this count originated from outside the count area given that the fledglings can often move a considerable distance.

With the help of a group of wonderful and dedicated volunteers these counts will continue into the future and hopefully the slight upward trend in numbers may be maintained.



November counts. Adults & juveniles.



April counts. Adults & chicks/juveniles.



SOUTH COAST FLEURIEU

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

Our hoodies on the South Coast of the Fleurieu didn't gather into flocks very much last winter, the resident pairs were usually to be found on their own territories, with occasionally visiting sub adults and juveniles testing the territories for access. By 2/9/21 we had fenced/signed 5 nests along our urban beaches. The remote beaches, though, having their respective resident pairs on site, didn't start laying until 7/9/21 with a nest at Tunkalilla East, which has subsequently failed, fox being the culprit. On subsequent surveys of the remote beaches 3 nests have been found. The high spring tide and swells have played havoc with nests across the south coast, washing away 4 of the 11 failed nests so far, despite hoodies putting their nests well up the beach.

We are up to nest number 16 for the south coast, with Watson's Gap pair BX and partner on their third nest. Basham's Beach is presenting us with chicks today 25/9/21, 3 chicks have hatched and MS and partner have done their usual practise of taking their 36-hour old chicks the 800 metres west onto their preferred chick raising beach.

As we volunteers do all our own fencing, anything to make this job easier and quicker is taken on board with alacrity, and the use of the 'Pigtails' (photo) instead of using cable ties is a case in point, making the job much quicker, in fact 25 minutes sees us on our way home with the resident hoodies back inspecting their new refuge and settled into incubation.



Pigtail instead of cable tie. Photo: David Thorn

The Causeway to Granite Island is being replaced at the moment and this piece of beach is in PX and partners territory, so after losing their first nest at the Hindmarsh Estuary, they decided to try their second nest on the beach right in front of the works area against the causeway. The Ecologist working for the company was very interested and managed to get that piece of beach closed to beach users, but this nest failed, seagulls taking 2 of the eggs. PX and partner decided it wasn't worth their while sitting on just one egg, leaving the last egg to a raven and going back to the Hindmarsh Estuary area. They are now on their third nest!



*Granite Island Causeway Construction Site.
Photo: Roslyn Shirlaw*

The Middleton East site with YV and partner incubating 3 eggs was visited by a Long Nose Fur Seal, which was chased by an off-leash dog back into the sea. The seal was determined to rest on the beach, so interested walkers, getting too close, pushed the seal right up to the fenced area, luckily no damage was done and the seal went back to sea. This nest was abandoned, and the 3 eggs remained on site for a fortnight before disappearing, they are now back in the fenced area with a new 1 egg nest, having had their second nest thoroughly washed out by a 5-metre swell.



MYPONGA TO LANDS' END, FLEURIEU PENINSULA

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

A slow start to the season with just 2 nests in late August, unfortunately one failed 3 days before hatching. The nest at Myponga is still being incubated even though the Myponga Reservoir gates have been opened recently sending down an enormous amount of water to the sea. This knocked the fence around but luckily did not take the nest with it!!

A training day was held at Normanville on 25th September and we were able to take the interested attendees down to Carrickalinga North where we had just fenced the first nest for the season at this site. It is very interesting to see the nest quite high on the beach amongst the grass, very well hidden and very hard to spot! Also, the nest is above a rocky stretch of the beach, so it will be very interesting when the chicks hatch to see how they navigate their way down to the sea.

Hooded Plover displays have been erected in Victor Harbor Library and in the front office of the Alexandrina Council.



Left: Hoodie display. Photo: Wendy White. Right: Hoodie on nest. Photo: Laura Tildesley

SHORT SUMMARY OF THE START OF THE 2021/22 BREEDING SEASON – ONKAPARINGA REGION

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

As usual the season got underway with the pair at Ochre Cove starting their first nest on 17th of August. Although this was only the second recorded nest for SA it was 10 days later than their nests in the past 2 seasons. Part of this delay was probably due to the cooler weather this winter but also because several winter storms had caused severe erosion at Ochre Cove, limiting their choice of nesting sites. These storms have affected the nesting at most of our beaches, but at the time of writing all but one pair had started nesting and the pair at Moana are on the second nest having had



their first nest washed away by a high tide (erosion had left the beach with very little slope, resulting in tides reaching higher up the beach than normal). Unfortunately, a fox took the eggs at Ochre Cove 3 weeks later.

It was interesting to watch our juveniles in the months after they fledged. Three of our five juveniles were banded so we were able to track their movements. KV White one from a pair from Maslin Beach has remained in the area since fledging, but RJ White left soon after fledging and has spent the winter on the southern beaches of the Fleurieu Peninsula. HN White from Ochre Cove stayed with its parents for nearly 2 months before heading to the Adelaide Metro region where it joined in flocking with a mixture of adults and juveniles.



Left: KV in sub-adult plumage. Right: Juvenile HN before it left Ochre Cove. Photos Sue and Ash Read.

ADELAIDE METROPOLITAN BEACHES

Ligita Bligzna and John Cobb, volunteer regional coordinators

An increasing number of Fleurieu and Metro birds joined flocks both north and south of their normal territories over winter. At times there were nineteen adults and juveniles at West Beach or West Lakes with some birds having flocked there from as far away as Myponga Beach (approximately 60 km south as the crow flies). Interestingly, one pair remained close to their breeding site at Marino Rocks. Hallett Cove seems to have been abandoned as a breeding site again this season but we remain hopeful that some of the younger birds from our expanding population will use the site in future. A new coastal walkway is under construction which, when completed, will redirect walkers away from the beach at the former breeding site at Field River.

Winter storms and high tides have resulted in a flattening of the beaches and extensive sand erosion, reducing suitable nesting sites because of under-cut dunes. The Seacliff pair nested slightly earlier and further north than last year only



30 metres from a sand pumping outlet which began pumping a huge volume of slurry (mix of sea water and sand) for a week at the same time we found the “suspected nest”. The slurry forms a wide impassable delta across the beach resulting in beach users being forced to walk behind the pipe immediately beneath the nest site. In spite of all the activity 3 eggs were laid with an estimated hatch date of 15 September.

A couple of days later the West Beach pair had 2 eggs, followed by a third, with a hatch date of around 21 September. This nest was found predated by dogs (more than one judging by the number of prints) as well as an inquisitive fox on 10 September. Subsequently MR and partner, plus another un-banded bird have been regularly observed and the pair are showing signs of breeding again.

The third Metro nest with 1egg was located at Henley on 1 September, followed by 2 further eggs, with an estimated hatch date of 1 October. This was the second year that YL (a fledgling from Seacliff 2018/19 breeding season) and un-banded female had attempted breeding at Henley. This nest was destroyed by dogs on 14 September.



Left: West Beach nest destroyed by dogs. Photo: John Cobb. Centre: Egg remains at Henley, surrounded by dog prints. Photo: Jim Moore. Right: Slurry line 30m from the Seacliff nest. Photo John Cobb

The City of Holdfast Bay (Seacliff) introduced a new by-law in January 2019 which requires dogs to be leashed at all times within 100 metres of a breeding area and the City of Charles Sturt (West Beach and Henley) have replicated the same requirements, effective January (or possibly earlier), in their council area. The Seacliff site is also routinely patrolled by contract compliance officers, which combined with volunteer activity, is helping to reduce the risk of disturbance. Both councils are extremely supportive and advocacy, with regard to compliance issues at West Beach and Henley, is on-going. Whilst unleashed and out-of-control dogs are a major focus in the Metro area, there is increased evidence of foxes on our beaches as well as regular predation by native bird species including Nankeen Night Herons.



One of the City of Holdfast Bay banners at Seacliff. Photo: John Cobb



The Metro volunteers celebrated Plover Appreciation Day with an informal gathering at a local cafe and we had hoped to also celebrate our first hatchings of the season. The good news is that 3 chicks hatched on 19 September at Seacliff. Very special thanks to our volunteers, especially given the early season disappointment of losing two nests within a week. Thanks also for the on-going support from the two local councils and Green Adelaide.

ENGAGING FRIENDS OF DHILBA GUURANDA-INNES NATIONAL PARK IN HOODIE MONITORING

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

I was fortunate enough to meet a group of really committed volunteers who belong to the Friends of Dhillba Guuranda-Innes National Park in late September. They help the Dhillba Guuranda-Innes National Park retain its original vegetation through propagation of native plants and revegetation and maintain sites of heritage value such as Shepherd's Hut through maintenance and restorative works, under the guidance of Park Ranger Aaron Smith.

I was provided with the opportunity to deliver a talk about Hooded Plovers and the various threats they face during the breeding season to this group of lovely people as they were interested in getting involved in monitoring Hoodies in the National Park. Brimming with enthusiasm, some of the Friends accompanied me on a beach walk with the hope of spotting a breeding Hoodie or two. It was not a particularly warm day so whatever we did, we knew we could not disturb birds for too long. So, we tried to spot them using the scope and binoculars. We chose Big Emu Beach for our walk which was quite close to the Friend's group's headquarters. Andy (the president of the group) spotted the head of one Hoodie on the top of the ridge on the beach and it appeared to be trying to lead us away. The edge of the sandy ridge looked too soft for walking, so we retreated and headed back not wanting to disturb the birds any longer.

Well, this did not dampen the enthusiasm of the Friends and they asked if we could do some more beach walks perhaps at their next meeting. It is looking likely as I have decided to become a member of the Friends group myself! They accomplish a lot in preserving the natural environment and the heritage of the National Park and I think I have a lot to learn from them. Their expertise in weed identification is incredible and I would love to learn more especially after failing a quick test miserably which made me realise that my knowledge is quite limited.

The Hoodie breeding season on Yorkes started quite early this year with the first nest being found at Hardwicke Bay on the 15th of August. Usually, the first few nests are found in the north of the peninsula around Moonta Bay but this year it was different. The other thing I have noticed is that a lot of Hoodie nests are located fairly high up on the dune, either on top of a ridge formed by erosion due to tides or on top of rocky mounds. Could the birds be responding to rising sea levels or is it just that there is not enough beach for them to nest on especially early on in the season? I would be keen to know if this is the case in other regions as well.



Dhillba Guuranda-Innes Friends Group volunteers with Ranger Aaron Smith (right). Photo Nanou Cabourdin.



A Far West Coast Island Provides a Safe Breeding Ground

Andrew Sleep, Landscapes Officer, Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board

Hooded Plovers on the Far West Coast of SA, like many places on the mainland, are faced with many barriers to success in raising chicks to the fledgling stage. On St Peters Island they seem (at least anecdotally) to be quite successful. St Peters Island is the largest island in Nuyts Archipelago Conservation Park, offshore from Ceduna in South Australia. In 1988 the island was bought by the National Parks and Wildlife Service of SA and declared a park shortly afterwards. Prior to being bought by National Parks the island was used for over a century to run sheep. In addition to Hooded Plovers, St Peters Island is home to many local shorebirds, seabirds and raptors, including Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Red-capped plovers, Gulls, Pelicans, Herons, Black Swans, Terns, Cormorants, Cape Barren Geese and more.

Much of the island is surrounded by shallow water and there are large areas of sand and mudflats. During the warmer months, these good feeding areas attract numerous species of migratory wader-birds from the Northern Hemisphere. As with many islands there is also a large population of Short-tailed Shearwaters nesting during the summer.

Whilst hoodie monitoring isn't conducted on St Peters Island for logistical reasons, every season while conducting the annual wader-bird surveys in February we do see a number of juvenile hoodies. Last summer a flock of 15, including 6 juveniles and 9 adults, was spotted feeding on one of the intertidal reefs.

Hoodies on St Peters face the usual threats of extreme weather, storm surges, large swells, big tides, native predators, including snakes, sand monitors, raptors and other predatory birds (Ravens, Pacific Gulls, etc). However...the island is free of foxes, cats and dogs. There's one rarely used vehicle, and very little human activity. As hoodies on the island aren't as impacted by introduced pests and vehicles, it provides a comparison and contrast to what we are seeing only a few kilometres away on the mainland.

On the Far West Coast, a lot of the longer, wider beaches with large areas of potential nesting habitat, get a fair bit of vehicle traffic. There are often people fishing as well, but not as many



Above: 5 Adults and 2 Juvenile Hooded Plovers on an intertidal reef on St Peters Island. Below: Sooty oystercatcher chick on St Peters Island. Photos Andrew Sleep.



walkers and dogs as beaches in the more populated areas. However, all the beaches are regularly visited by foxes.

The beaches chosen by hoodies for nesting are often the ones that are inaccessible to vehicles, or at least rarely accessed by vehicles. The trouble with these high energy types of beaches, is that they're often at the bottom of steep sandhills or small cliffs. When there are big swells and storm surges, the beaches are awash and don't have much, if any, dry beach left. This leaves a lack of real estate for nesting, and leaves eggs vulnerable to being washed away. It also means that foxes don't have such a large area to search, and are more likely to come across nests.

The relative success of the St Peters Island hoodies compared to the mainland is likely due to a combination of all these factors, but it appears that foxes and vehicles are the major threats to breeding success out this way. In the past 18 Months, Covid19 restrictions on international travel has led to increased visitation, traffic and camping along the coast. No doubt only making the hoodies' already difficult task of raising chicks, that much harder. Thankfully the island continues to provide refuge for the Far Western hoodies, to breed in conditions mostly free from many of the threats faced on mainland beaches.



Left: A Hoodie chick with its parents on the Far West Coast. Centre: Hoodies nest on top of low cliff above the beach. Unfortunately, this nest wasn't successful as almost every time we checked it there were people camping nearby. Right: Pied Oystercatchers and chicks on Far West Coast. Photos Andrew Sleep.

THE HOBBLING HOODIE OF BAUDIN BEACH

Les Montanjes, Volunteer from Kangaroo Island, South Australia

At Baudin Beach, near Penneshaw on Kangaroo Island we have a Hoodie with a curious locomotion condition. I first observed this bird on 3rd September. As I walked passed a group of four hoodies (three adults, one juvenile), one adult got up and started to waddle away but there was something wrong with its legs. It was skittering like one of those plastic wind-up toys, one foot crossing over in front of the other rather than working in parallel and looking somewhat bandy-legged. As I was watching them through binoculars, two people emerged from round the corner and startled them and they flew off. On my way back I saw all four of them and two adults started to chase the lame one away, but it kept coming back. After a while the adults gave up trying to shoo it away and they all just settled down to



rest. Then, as I was walking back to the car, I saw all four of them again. They must have flown around over the sea and landed on the beach before I came round the corner. They flew up and over my head and landed on the beach behind me. They started scampering off, with the lame one unable to keep up. In the end it flew to catch them up, causing them all to take off back to the main beach.

Ten days later, I was able to see two adult Hoodies mate, after which both birds settled in some wrack and began preening. What is interesting, is that it was the lame one mating with one of the other adults which had been chasing it on the previous visit. Neither the third adult nor the juvenile from the last visit were present. As I continued to observe, the lame one stuck its rump in the air and the other flew up to it but they didn't mate again and eventually flew off about 30 metres and began foraging, washing in a pool of seawater and preening. I had my Nikon P1000 with me, a camera with a humungous telephoto reach up to 3000 mm, and managed to take a short hand-held video of the bird clattering about like a drunken sailor and sent it off to Renee from the Beach-nesting Birds Team for comment. Being the thorough investigator that she is, she sent the video off to two vets, one in Victoria, the other at Zoos SA.



Photo: Les Montanjees

The Vets reported that this was an oddity, with a posterior bilateral pressure sores/ulcerative lesions on the plantar surface the tibiotarsal joint. With the Hoodie still able to mate, forage and preen. The best thing we can do at this stage, is monitor it and keep an eye on the progression of the joints.

We don't know if there was swelling that became ulcerated due to pressure when the bird squats, or if the swelling is associated with the joint itself, or if the lameness is due to the joint movement or discomfort. There's lots of possibilities and the vets are still on the case to help try and work out what might be happening.

Whilst looking at the photos, they have revealed another curiosity. When both birds are seen side by side the non-hobbling Hoodie's head is much browner and the red around the eye less vibrant. Difficult to see in this low-resolution reproduction, but quite clear in the original shot. BirdLife have suggested that while we don't know much about the brown flecks you can see in some Hoodies, but it's often the older birds that have this browny colouration.



Photo: Les Montanjees

While the world falls apart, the mystery of one little bird has involved two vets, BirdLife staff and one old volunteer. And Hobbling Hannah is blissfully unaware of it all!