



EDITION 27 – WINTER 2022

UPDATE FROM THE BEACH-NESTING BIRDS TEAM

Dr Grainne Maguire, Program Leader (Coastal and Wetland Birds)

The first half of 2022 has been an incredibly busy one for the Beach-nesting Birds team. After years of delaying the National Beach-nesting Birds Conference, we made the decision to proceed with an in-person event in May 2022 and were delighted by the turnout! It is always a great opportunity to share the work of groups around Australia who are active in trying to protect beach-nesting shorebirds and seabirds, and their coastal habitats. Our program seeks to guide and unite the work that individuals and groups do on their bit of coast to achieve the enormous task we have of securing habitat and populations, and mitigating threats so that the birds can successfully breed and survive. Video recordings of the conference presentations plus some additional talks will be available online on Plover Appreciation Day this September 16th, for those who missed out on attending or missed a particular talk.

Hooded Plover breeding success data from South Australia and Victoria has now been vetted and collated by the team to assess the outcomes of the 2021/2022 breeding season. The South Australian population continues to achieve above target fledgling production rates (95 fledglings from 104 pairs, 0.91 fledglings/pair), stemming from a combination of high investment by stakeholders at high threat sites, and a high number of sites subject to lower pressures due to distance from major cities and towns. In comparison, the Victorian population (52 fledglings from 142 pairs, 0.37 fledglings/pair) is now showing a concerning trajectory of not meeting targets in 3 of the past 4 seasons. The growing human population and unsustainable pressures impacting around 45% of the population, coupled with low investment in compliance patrols, increasing predator populations and recent findings around presumed remote 'strongholds' representing breeding sinks for the species, means urgent action is needed to overcome the next hurdle in recovery, albeit before the population trajectory begins to decline again.

The final genetic sampling expeditions to Tasmania have been carried out, achieving the full sample of 100 Hooded Plovers to contribute to a study of Eastern population genetic diversity and exchange. We are currently exploring funding opportunities to see this important analysis carried out by the end of this year.



Left: Searching for Hooded Plovers on the expansive beaches of Northern Tasmania. Above: 'W2 Red' flagged hoodie in Tasmania. Photos: Glenn Ehmke



A pilot study for testing scent repellents around artificial nests was run for 28 days during summer in a wetland near Melbourne, spraying 20 plots with dog urine and 20 paired control sites with water, and monitoring take of quail eggs using remote cameras. Data is currently being analysed and results will be shared in our next newsletter. This pilot was funded by Victoria's Coast Action/Coastcare in collaboration with the Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula, and will enable us to refine methods prior to a more intensive research project exploring efficacy of scent and audio repellents. Honours student, Finn Saurine, has now started his research into audio repellents and after a series of trials on real and artificial nests this spring and summer, we will understand the value this method holds for trying to protect nests at sites where traditional fox control methods are not an option.

A new project into the size and health of the Beach Stone-curlew population in Southern QLD was launched via 3 workshops (Yeppoon, Bribie Island, Manly) and a coordinated count in late March/early April along the coast between the Gold Coast and Yeppoon. This has been funded by the Queensland Government's Queensland Citizen Science Grant, with additional funding from a donation from the BirdLife Photography Photo Awards. A count at this time of year can provide insights into juvenile recruitment across the region. A follow up count during the most sedentary period of the breeding season will be carried out in Spring 2022 enabling greater knowledge of the distribution and location of breeding pairs. In Northern QLD, we now have baseline knowledge of the Beach Stone-curlew population size and distribution but wish to better understand population viability targets. Community workshops across Queensland identified loss of habitat, off leash dog walking, jetskis and off road vehicles as major threats to breeding success. Workshops have generated local action, with a new partnership with the Bribie Island Environment Protection Association focused on devising a two-year conservation strategy to improve breeding outcomes at Buckley's Hole.

A new project to initiate Indigenous and community monitoring of Little Terns across 3 key sites in QLD is now underway through funding from the Great Barrier Reef Foundation in collaboration with the QLD government. This comes at a time when the species is just being listed under the EPBC Act. Monitoring is a key conservation activity to generate community connectedness to coastal wildlife, pivotal to triggering behaviour change and to building community ownership to ensure sustainable protection in the long term. Melbourne Water has now invested in a one-year research project into habitat selection and restoration guidelines for improving Fairy Tern habitat in Victoria.





Volunteer spotlight

Geoff Hall, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Mornington Peninsula, Victoria.

My interest in birds began with the Gould League when I was in primary school back in the 1950s. I carefully coloured a drawing of a Golden Whistler, entered it in the competition and sat back waiting for first prize. It never came. Undaunted, I roamed the public gardens and woodlands around Castlemaine looking for birds – to spot a Red Wattlebird was a particular highlight. I still have my copy of Cayley’s What Bird Is That? that I received as a going-away gift when we left Castlemaine in the early 60s,

During this time (and ever since) my family had a holiday house at Somers at the mouth of Merricks Creek. Coolart, now run by Parks Victoria, was still owned by the Luxtons in those days but by walking along the beach and crossing the bridge we could access the lower wetlands unnoticed. Red-capped plovers (dotterels in those days) were often to be seen along the beach but apart from noticing them, I thought no more about it. However, our family kept a list of birds (and fish) that we observed around Somers over many years.

Fast forward about 40 years and the holiday house was gone and a permanent retirement home was built. As a retirement hobby, I decided to try to photograph all the birds on our list – about 110 species at that time. It was whilst photographing the beach birds that I met a Friends of the Hooded Plover member who was also photographing birds and he encouraged me to register with Birdlife Australia. There began my volunteering.

FoHP had just begun to record RCPs and the Balnarring-Somers beach was one of the sites they wanted to monitor. It was a beach I walked regularly so it wasn’t a burden to record my observations in the portal. The beach is also used to train racehorses so setting up and maintaining signs and rope barriers to nesting areas was important as the horses were an existential threat to the colony. The observational data were important in having changes made to the training conditions which have somewhat ameliorated the immediate threat.

Hooded Plovers have been irregular visitors to the beach but in the 20/21 breeding season a pair from Phillip Island decided to nest – the first time this had been recorded. Their first 2 nests were taken by ravens. Their third nest looked to have been destroyed by the tide – the stakes and ropes I’d installed were in a mess. I went up to repair the damage. The nest was intact – the tide had missed it by half a metre – and the first egg had just hatched. The 3 chicks survived, fledged and after being flagged were spotted down on the Bass Coast. A cause for celebration!

There are not always going to be good news stories about our native wildlife. This season the ravens ensured that only one RCP egg hatched along this beach and no Hoodies. But to know why is important and that can only come from observations. Every bit of volunteering helps!



Geoff releasing ‘SL White’ with Kasun. Photo: S. Kepert



Newly hatched chick. Photo: G. Hall



Volunteer spotlight

Annie Hopkins, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Yorke Peninsula, South Australia.

I started visiting Rifle Butts beach in Port Victoria on South Australia's Guranda/Yorke Peninsula with my family when I was three years old. My dad often commented on the tiny shorebirds we saw there – he collectively called them all “sandpipers” without differentiating the different species.

When I started visiting Rifle Butts with my own young daughter, I started to experience the beach through her eyes. Small details that had been there all along began to stand out as I followed her fascinated exploration of the shore. It was then I began to take more notice of the birds – including an endearing pair of hoodies that lived there. Soon we had named them “Bob” and “Marge” and started to eagerly look for them at each visit.



Three years ago I was walking with my family on Parson's beach on the Fleurieu Peninsula, when my daughter found a dead hoodie. The bird had a flag on its leg, so we collected it, marked the location, and made contact with Birdlife Australia's Emma Stephens who was able to identify the bird. This marked the start of my hoodie volunteering adventure! Emma invited me to a volunteer training day, and by the end of the session I had learned so much about these fascinating birds that I was hooked.

I've been fortunate to learn many monitoring skills from other experienced Birdlife volunteers. I don't think you ever forget the first nest you find – it's like discovering hidden treasure in the sand! In my first season of monitoring I saw several nests and hoodie chicks, and Bob and Marge managed to get a chick through to fledging which was very exciting.

In October last year, my daughter and I found one of the Rifle Butts hoodies with a leg entangled in fishing twine. We were lucky enough to be involved in the rescue mission that was launched through our Birdlife Australia contacts. It was amazing to see the vet carefully remove the twine and treat the hoodie on the beach, and to be so close to one of the birds we had been watching for so long. The hoodie made an excellent recovery, and Bob and Marge went on to fledge two chicks in May this year.

Being in nature and watching birds is one of the ways I look after my wellbeing and balance out the stresses of my paid job. With so much negative climate news about, I love having something active to do that is connected to the natural environment. Protecting the hoodies and advocating for them is one small contribution I can make, and there's always new things to learn and other dedicated volunteers to meet. Citizen science is an amazing and deeply satisfying thing to be a part of – I would recommend it to anyone!



*Vet removing the entanglement.
Photo: A. Hopkins*



Land manager spotlight

Jane Shearer, Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management, Bellarine Peninsula, Victoria.

I work with the Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management (Bellarine Bayside). We manage 17 kilometres of coastal Crown land on the Bellarine Peninsula near Geelong from Portarlington to St. Leonards. Bellarine Bayside partner with Birdlife Australia staff and volunteers to apply for various funding opportunities to monitor our resident Red-capped Plovers (RCP) on Indented Head and Portarlington beaches. We work alongside Birdlife Australia staff and volunteers to convey information about the RCP to the wider community and do what we can, as a land manager, to assist the monitoring program and the health of the local RCP population.



The local Birdlife Australia volunteers do most of the hard work with monitoring and logging their observations within the portal, but various Bellarine Bayside team members help out where needed. The team members who assist the most are Hayley, Caitlin and Tiah, our Conservation Crew and myself, our Coastal Projects Officer.

I have been in my role with Bellarine Bayside since 2016 and we started partnering with Birdlife Australia in 2017. I act as a liaison between Birdlife Australia's staff and volunteers and the local community, with the help of our Community Engagement and Communications Coordinator. We share the great work that is being carried out with the wider community through organising beach walks, kids beach-nesting bird activities, developing interpretive signage, and providing media updates. Volunteers also let me know if there is anything we need to know/do about the beach or foreshore areas regarding impacts to the RCP. Our conservation team help by controlling weeds and planting native vegetation along the coast to allow for natural and healthy habitat for the RCP and other coastal wildlife.

Some of the greatest challenges facing the birds in our region are coastal erosion, weeds, dogs and other predators. The beaches we manage are relatively narrow, being Port Phillip Bay beaches. Coastal erosion (both seasonal and storm damage) can further reduce the space the RCP has to live and breed. Although the RCP are capable of nesting off the beach, the rest of our foreshore is also quite narrow, closely bordered by a road and intersected by the popular Bellarine Coastal Trail. This makes for less-than-ideal nesting locations (although they have been known to do it!). Additionally, some weed species such as Sea Wheatgrass and Marram Grass can create a 'ledge' on the beach which can prevent chicks from being able to run away and find refuge in vegetation from predators or high tide. Ongoing issues with dog walkers and other beach users not reading or following signage is still occurring as well.

Our organisation is proud to be contributing RCP data to the Beach-nesting Birds program. It is nice to know that our data will help determine the current conservation status of the RCP. Our main RCP breeding site in Indented Head is now a 'dogs on-leash all year round' area which is a step in the right direction in educating dog owners to consider wildlife when walking their dogs. We have also installed some permanent interpretation signage to help educate the community on the local RCP colony. It's something I have wanted to do since we started in 2017 so it's great to have them on display.



The Birdlife Australia staff are all wonderful and I learn a lot from them. I really like that they are understanding of what we can and can't do as a public land manager and that they are able to find solutions to problems that will work for everyone. Their expertise on banding and appropriate monitoring is invaluable, we wouldn't be able to do what we are doing without them! The volunteers are our eyes and ears on the ground and are an integral part of the program, it is so nice when we can get together and share information on the local RCP population.

A personal highlight has been learning about the RCP and other species from the Birdlife Australia team, their passion and knowledge really is incredible. Getting to know these wonderful little birds is a lot of fun. I also really loved being able to go along to a banding session. It was a treat to see the RCP up so close and to see the Birdlife Australia team in action. Additionally, the 'Birdlife Beach Walk' we deliver in January each year is another highlight. It's a great way to introduce the local RCP colony, and other shorebirds, to the community and increase awareness.

Thank you to the Birdlife Australia team and all the volunteers across the country for all the work you do!



New permanent interpretive signage. Photo: R. Mead



2022 BEACH-NESTING BIRDS CONFERENCE

Rachael Beecham, Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, Victoria

Scott and I had the pleasure of travelling over to the Yorke Peninsula, South Australia, for the 2022 Beach-nesting Birds Conference. We work for the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority in Victoria on the Great Ocean Road, so it was quite a long drive to attend but, well worth it! It was a valuable opportunity to listen and learn from other land managers around the country, to share techniques and strategies that were both successful and some that had failed. It was a hive of new, established and evolving ideas and methods of managing not just Hooded Plovers but, all beach nesting birds. It gave us a broader understanding of the challenges faced by our beach nesting bird species and the dedicated volunteers, land managers, scientists and Birdlife employees who work so hard to protect them.

Scott and I thoroughly enjoyed meeting so many new and like-minded people and sharing our experiences with managing Hooded Plovers. Each talk, workshop and field trip was carefully planned by the BirdLife team and was relevant and interesting. Scott and I ventured out to visit the Wardang Island Indigenous Protected Area at Point Pearce where we learnt from Lyle and Ian, the Indigenous Rangers, about how they manage the beach nesting birds that inhabit the area and some of the history. We had a lovely time bird watching and seeing numerous species including terns, herons, parrots and plovers. The Beach Nesting Birds Conference was such a wonderful experience, and we are looking forward to the next one.



*Attendees at the Wardang Island Indigenous Protected Area.
Photo: R. Beecham*

THOUGHTS ON THE 8TH NATIONAL BEACH-NESTING BIRD CONFERENCE

Wendy White, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia

Moonta, a small coastal town 160 kilometres north of Adelaide on South Australia's Copper Coast at the top of Yorke Peninsula and situated on the Spencer Gulf, hosted the 8th National Beach-Nesting Bird Conference from 13th – 15th May 2022.

Twenty speakers entertained, educated and enthused the 126 attendees on different approaches to beach nesting bird conservation in their local environments. Although the group was particularly Hooded Plover orientated it was fantastic to learn about the plight of the Fairy Terns, Beach Stone Curlews and the Canadian Piping Plovers which showed us the importance and similarity of conservation nationally and internationally. Just to highlight a few of the presentations, Max Barr from Northern and Yorke Landscape Board talked about the Marna Banggara project which aims to restore Southern Yorke Peninsula's spectacular landscape by returning locally extinct species and reinvigorating the ecological processes that ensure the bushland's health. This project uses rewilding principles in a working landscape, where conservation agriculture and community exist side-by-side. Tony Flaherty from Green Adelaide presented on the Our Plover Coast project which aims to propagate and plant 20 thousand spinifex plants on the Fleurieu Coast to replace the invasive sea wheat, marram and euphorbia which encroach on the natural Hooded Plover habitat. The spinifex has been propagated by local Fleurieu Environment volunteers who will work in



Behaviour change and awareness raising



Conference venue and attendees. Photo: R. Mead

cooperation with Hooded Plover and Coast Care volunteers to plant these out in the next two years. A wonderful example of organisations working together for the betterment of our vulnerable Hoodies. Basil Schur from Green Skills in Western Australia delivered a session on working with local farmers to fence inland lakes on farmland to protect the inland nesting birds from stock. Another example of the positive outcomes that occur when organisations, community and volunteers work collaboratively.

Day one provided glorious weather which finished with a walk through a local conservation park. The local fauna came out to provide us with a wonderful display of the natural beauty that abounds in this environment when it is cared for. After more excellent speakers on Saturday morning, a number of very diverse workshops were on offer. Unfortunately, time only permitted attendance at two of these. The choice was a difficult one on which to attend. It didn't matter which workshops were attended, the feedback indicated that each and every one of them was relevant, informative and thought provoking. The unique and practical workshop 'Building connection with nature through Art' presented by Karen Carr, of Squashed Cocky was fun and interactive. Each participant created four clay tiles with different patterns, textures and images, using items found from the beach. These tiles will be installed on the Yorke Peninsula later this year and will be a very colourful lasting remainder for those 'artists' and for all beach users about our threatened beach-nesting birds.

Sunday, we all went off to different regions of the Peninsula for a field trip which included, Dhillba Guuranda (Innes National Park), Point Pearce and Port Clinton to explore some amazing bird habitats. Port Clinton was extremely windy, not great bird watching weather, but we all had an interesting day thanks to Kasun and his wealth of bird knowledge.

One lasting thought/impression from the whole conference is that with the right amount of camaraderie and cooperation we can succeed in protecting our wonderful beach-nesting birds!

A huge thankyou to the BirdLife Australia Beach-Nesting Birds Team who once again provided a most enjoyable and informative conference.



Participants and Squashed Cocky presenter Karen Carr at the art workshop. Photo: R. Mead



Behaviour change and awareness raising

HOODIE MURAL

Charlotte Devine, Immanuel College, South Australia

My name is Charlotte Devine, I am a year 10 at Immanuel college and passionate about both art and protecting our amazing wildlife. Last year I created the informative Hooded Plover display at my Primary school's Marine Discovery Centre, which I wrote an article about in the Spring 2021 newsletter. While creating this, I was also in the process of organising a public mural at Ozone reserve next to the West Beach Torrens Outlet.

At the outlet, small flocks of Hooded Plovers often visit in winter and a couple has been trying to breed there for a few years now, unfortunately without success. I know that one of the reasons why Hooded Plovers struggle so much to raise their chicks is because of the lack of knowledge and respect obtained by the frequent beach-users. Many people I talked to about the issue had never heard of a Hooded Plover, and at first did not understand what made them need to be treated differently than a common seagull. By creating the mural, I hoped to give these birds a voice that the public could hear and understand.

First, working with BirdLife Australia and Green Adelaide, I had to gain approval from the City of Charles Sturt Council as well as support through their Young Change Maker's Grant. Through this, I was put in contact with Naomi Campbell, a professional artist who was willing to help me through the design and painting processes of the mural. When creating the final design, I had a bright sunset in the background to help draw people's attention to the artwork. I incorporated an adult Hooded Plover as well as two chicks and a few eggs in the forefront, so people clearly really see what they looked like, as Hooded Plovers, especially the chicks, are quite hard to spot on the beach. I also added some shells (to put the Hooded Plovers into scale) and a typical beach sign and fence in the background, so then people could associate these protective measures with the birds. I also created two information boards which are to go on either side of the toilet block, however these have not been installed yet.

Naomi and I painted the toilet block over three days in the October school holidays, and now it can be clearly seen from the esplanade, Seaview Road, and the carpark in the reserve. It was amazing to have been able to design and paint my own mural, especially one with such an important message behind it. I am extremely grateful to Naomi, BirdLife Australia, Green Adelaide and the City of Charles Sturt council for helping me have this experience. I am sure it was worth it is a conservation perspective also, as I have received so many positive comments since from people who had never thought much about the Hooded Plovers, and the mural will continue to advocate for them for many years to come.

A timelapse video of us painting the Hooded Plover Mural can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx977gYsTBE>



The completed mural. Photo: C. Devine



MEET THE GREAT OCEAN ROAD HOODIES

Renée Mead, Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

In January, Meg and I ran a series of Beach walks called “Meet the Great Ocean Road Hoodies”. There were six different events, inviting members of the public to come along for a beach walk with a coastal bird expert, to learn more about the local beach-nesting birds. The Great Ocean Road is Victoria’s most famous coastline and a popular destination for tourists. So, during the January School holidays, we aimed to educate holiday makers and locals of how special this coastline is to the local birdlife.



Shipwreck Coast's Crofts Bay. Photo: R. Mead

Meg undertook her events at Kennett River, where the group got to see the recent fledgling (which was the first time a pair had nested at this location), Skenes Creek and Barham River in Apollo Bay. I was further along the Great Ocean Road, with beach walks at the Bay of Martyrs in Peterborough, which is where the participants got to see a lovers quarrel with the resident male TY, his new unbanded partner, and his ex-partner BV! The other walks were at Sherbrooke River, where a new nest was located, and main Peterborough beach, where they got to see the birds incubating in the fenced area – and we also did an impromptu weeding session to remove a small patch of Beach Sea Daisy.

These were a great initiative, and well attended by tourists passing by, as well as locals. This project was supported by the Victorian Government through a Community Volunteer Action Grant.

EAST GIPPSLAND BIRDLIFE SHOWCASE

Renée Mead, Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

In February, the Beach-nesting Birds Project teamed up with other BirdLife Australia Programs to undertake a “showcase workshop” of all the different bird projects happening in East Gippsland. We held two of these, one in Mallacoota and one in Gippsland Lakes. It was a great opportunity to share with the community updates on the efforts going into the recovery of different local threatened species and to promote ways to get involved in each project.

The showcase included:

- Jack Winterbottom, Convenor of BirdLife East Gippsland, spoke about the group, their involvement and contributions to conservation programs, as well as their regular bird monitoring group outings.
- Laura Tan, Glossy Black Cockatoo Project Coordinator at BirdLife Australia, explained how to identify Glossy Blacks, and how to get involved in the Great Glossy Count (which was happening in March 2020).
- Sam Monks, East Gippsland Nest Box Project Coordinator at BirdLife Australia, showed us all the different nest boxes that had been made from schools, men’s sheds and members of the public. These nest boxes were all different shapes and sizes for different bird species, and even different mammal species that lost their nest hollows in the fires.



- Deb Sullivan, East Gippsland Conservation Coordinator at BirdLife Australia, spoke about several programs that she works on. This included the Great Pelican Count, where she informed everyone on how to get involved and told us about pelican banding and monitoring. She also spoke to us about the recovery of the Glossy Black-cockatoo after the fires and how the habitat needs to be protected.
- Renee Mead, Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator at BirdLife Australia, spoke about the Hooded Plover program, how people can get involved and the different volunteer roles that participants can undertake, as well as the latest research into the species and its threats.



Laura Tan presenting on Glossy Black Cockatoos.
Photo: R. Mead

It was a great initiative to have many different BirdLife Projects “showcase” their efforts in a local area, where everyone gets to hear about all the local efforts in one event. It’s something that could be replicated in other areas as well, as it was well received by the community.

TURNING PEOPLE’S ATTENTION TO OUR SEABIRDS

Amy Adams, Coastal Birds Program Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

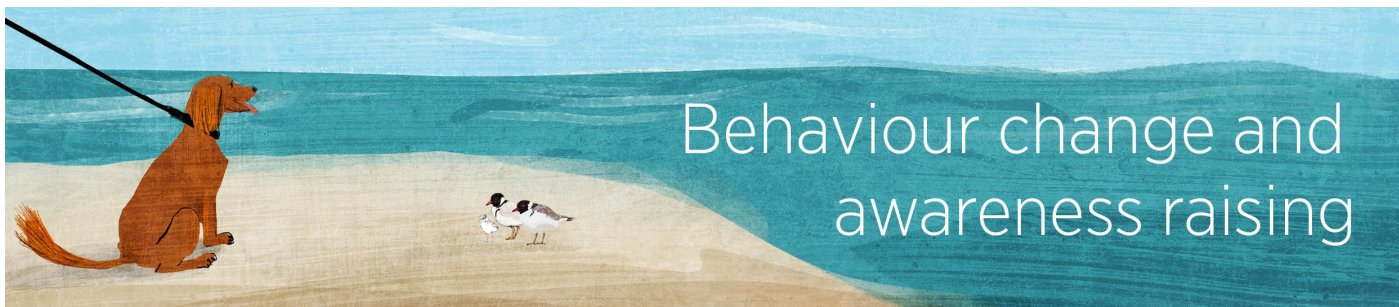
This summer we launched our *Boating, fishing and birding* flip guide as well as added some exciting new resources to our educational toolkit for Fairy Terns in Victoria.

Once the Covid-19 restrictions eased, members from the BNB Team attended several marine and fishing-based events across Port Phillip Bay, Western Port and Corner Inlet to launch and distribute the *Boating, fishing and birding* flip guide which is targeted at recreational boat users and fishers. This was a great opportunity to begin engaging with community members that are regularly out on the water to promote awareness of the species, provide advice on how they can implement safe boating practices around nesting seabirds and encourage reporting of sightings to better inform our monitoring program. Flip guides were also stocked at a couple of local bait shops around Western Port.



Fairy Tern model decoys. Photo: S. Lee

Another resource we have added to our educational toolkit is a couple of ‘Spot the Difference’ tern fabric banners (measuring 0.9 m x 1.2 m). Based on the traditional ‘spot 10 differences’ between two pictures game, these banners depict two beach scenes with 10 differences between the two pictures. A fun way to engage (and educate) both kids and adults alike at events with many a competition being had between family members and friends.



Behaviour change and awareness raising



Amy Adams at the Sea Days Festival in Port Welshpool.
Photo: R. Mead

We also commissioned Shaun Lee from New Zealand to 3D-print and hand paint life-sized adult and juvenile Fairy Terns. These are a fabulous addition in our educational toolkit to accompany our workshops and public events to help with Fairy Tern identification and to demonstrate how small these precious birds actually are. The majority of community members that we speak to do not realise how small Fairy Terns actually are. Having these life-sized models will be an invaluable teaching resource and will hopefully spark the interest, and love, of many!

RAISING AWARENESS OF HOODED PLOVERS AND OTHER WILDLIFE AT THE CAPE SUSTAINABLE HOUSING ESTATE

David Hartney, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Bass Coast, Victoria

The Cape is a 40-hectare sustainable housing estate on Victoria's Bass/Bunurong Coast, situated west of the seaside village of Cape Paterson and bordered on the south by the Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park. Using water and biodiversity sensitive urban design principles, when complete, 230 homes and community facilities will co-exist and stand among extensive areas of restored and remnant habitat which has been designed to reintroduce indigenous flora and safe habitat for a range of native fauna.



THE HOODED PLOVER



The Cape Paterson area and the beach adjoining The Cape is home to a small, threatened shorebird, the Hooded Plover. It is estimated that only 600 birds remain in Victoria. You will normally see these birds feeding and resting along the beach and on the rocks. They can be observed between Second Surf and Wilsons Road near The Cape. They are listed as a vulnerable species and their breeding is enormously impacted by human behaviour. Unleashed dogs are one of the major threats to their survival.

Their nesting/breeding period is from mid spring to early autumn which coincides with the busiest holiday and recreation period along our coast. They nest on the upper beach just above the high tide mark and in the dunes. It is normally a simple depression in the sand. If disturbed,

the likelihood of successful hatchlings is extremely low - adult birds will abandon the nest, exposing eggs and young birds to predators and the elements.

Some easy tips to help the Hooded Plovers survive and breed successfully:

- Observe all wildlife from a safe distance and take notice of advisory signage.
- Observe signage at beach access points which are placed there during the crucial breeding period - these beaches are patrolled

- Observe roped off areas and signage where nests are likely - do not disturb the nest or the birds - **disturbed nests lead to no chicks**
- Access the beach via defined paths
- Stay out of the dunes and walk along the water's edge
- Please note that dogs are **NOT** allowed on the beach at certain periods
- During the times when dogs are allowed, keep them on a leash
- Do not leave dogs unattended while you swim or surf
- If you see the birds on the beach, walk past them about 100m before settling on the sand

For more information go to capechatter.com





Interpretive signage at The Cape raising awareness of Hooded Plovers for residents and visitors.



Behaviour change and awareness raising

Since August 2019, along with eight identified amphibian species, reptiles, small native rodents/marsupials, and iconic land mammals such as Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Swamp Wallaby, Common Wombat, Koala, and Short-beaked Echidna, some 120 bird species have been identified within the estate and adjoining coastal park, of which 15 species (13%) are threatened or vulnerable to extinction. These include Lewin's Rail, the migratory Latham's Snipe, and Blue-winged Parrot. The local high energy 2nd Surf/F Break beaches in the adjoining coastal park are home to beach nesting Sooty Oystercatcher and Red-capped Plover and there are several crucial Hooded Plover nesting and flocking sites.

Conscious of the impact the development could have on native wildlife, a significant financial investment and construction effort has been made by the developer to build, restore and rewild habitat, including reworking landscape designs to protect threatened species habitat.

Raising community awareness and citizen science projects are also key to helping manage and protect our animals. Community planting projects along constructed creek lines, around wetlands, in addition to koala habitat revegetation works, will provide important additional habitat into the future. Wildlife interpretive signage has been installed advising residents and visitors how they should behave toward animals along with useful information on threatened species. Residents are involved in building fauna habitat/nesting boxes and Hooded Plover chick shelters and participate in Latham's Snipe and Blue-winged Parrot surveys as well as working with the local Parks Victoria team with sensor camera monitoring for new species and feral animal activity between The Cape and coastal park. The estate's "no cats and dogs on leash" policy aims to reduce the impact these animals may have on wildlife.

As part of raising community awareness, A Hooded Plover familiarisation workshop for The Cape was facilitated by Birdlife Australia in early 2021. Residents have now become integral volunteers of the Bass Coast Hooded Plover monitoring effort. Important breeding and nesting news is communicated via local social media platforms and a



popular community led nature observations website and blog, Cape Chatter (see <https://capechatter.com/>) keeps residents and visitors regularly informed of local Hoodie happenings during the breeding season.

The Cape's initiatives to integrate the natural world, enhance habitat and raise community awareness as crucial components of the estate's sustainable goals, will hopefully lead to a win-win for the wildlife and residents' connections with nature.

Hooded Plover '13' is a frequent visitor to 2nd Surf Beach at The Cape. Photo: D. Hartney



Science and research

BEACH STONE-CURLEW I3 'OFF ITS LAST LEGS'; RESCUE, RECOVERY, RELEASE

Reid Waters and Tania Romero Brito, Byron Bay, New South Wales

Byron Bird Buddies volunteer in close collaboration with NPWS and other agencies to monitor, protect and promote shorebird conservation in the Cape Byron Marine Park.

Estimated NSW beach stone-curlew nesting numbers 'bounce around a bit' from season to season but indicate about a dozen or so breeding pairs along the NPWS coast. These birds need all the help they can get.



Chick and one of its parents. Photo: R. Waters

Rescue. Tania Romero Brito found a distressed forty-four day old unfledged beach stone-curlew chick at her local beach. The chick was literally 'off its last legs'.

Tania's Story....

The estuary is so alive yet is a peaceful place. Its beauty is dynamic, with waters that change from red colours given by the tannins of tea tree bushes upstream the river, to crystal clear waters incoming from the ocean. It's the scene of a constant drama unfolding from the many shorebirds species and others that call this place home. Staying in one habitat and observing its changes was one of the gifts that COVID brought to me, a much-needed practice I couldn't have imagined was so needed in my life. If it was not because of the context that forced me to stay in one place for two years and truly connect with it, I would not have noticed the beach stone-curlew family living there, proudly raising their little chick, doing their part to keep their species out of extinction. Day by day, I saw them change their behaviour from singles to parenthood, first not caring about my presence to then trying desperately to get my attention so I don't notice their precious egg. I pretended I didn't know what was happening. It became a routine to see them protect their chick, I saw the baby the first day he hatched, and from then, it was a daily thing in my life to see the busy parents working diligently keep the chick out of sight and sign him to camouflage. As long as parents kept doing that, I knew the chick was okay.



44 days old chick at rescue. Photo: T. R. Brito

One day the young bird was not camouflaged, he was actually exposed to the eyes of the world. Strange. He was calling to his parents, flapping his wings, then trying to walk but tripping and falling on the ground. Is that what chicks do? Sure they must be clumsy, but I wasn't sure. But thanks to my daily visits I knew that something was different. I took a video and shared with my former PhD supervisor, a bird fanatic, who warned me that this was not okay. He



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encouraged me to check on him. I did, and indeed it didn't run away, he was too weak. A huge tick on his neck; this must be the problem, tick paralysis maybe? I took him in my arms and he didn't resist but his parents showed me a ferocious behaviour that was rather cute, I tried to reassure them. Sunday afternoon... who to call? After talking to Jan Olley from Byron Bird Buddies, our best bet was the Australian Seabird Rescue, who directed me to an emergency vet who could look after him. My partner met me halfway with a box and a towel and we took him there. As much as I would've loved to stay and see more of him, this hand over is when my intervention ended. At least he was in good hands now. Good luck little chick...

Tick Paralysis-Signs: Weakness, gagging, wobbly legs, paralysis, laboured breathing, respiratory failure.

Treatment: Tick Anti-Serum slowly via iv catheter. Specialised nursing care.

Recovery: Chick was treated over night at North Coast Emergency Vets Bangalow then transferred to Byron Bay Wildlife Hospital for observation and nursing. Thank you all.



*Dramatic recovery of the chick after treatment.
Photo: R. Waters*

Reid's story...

Tania's distressing curlew photo says it all..... on its back.... eyes half shut.... mouth agape.... rictus.... legs frozen.... a sense, death was close. During the chick's hospital stay I thought about the parents.... What must they may have been experiencing as they gazed down at their hapless one..... What could they do?

Right from hatching the parents' routine changed. Around the clock baby-sitting..... security.... bush turkeys.... goannas.... pythons.... a fox.... a nearby osprey nest..... fellow humans and their good canine buddies. Secreting the chick undercover between foraging low tidal flats, returning, regurgitating soldier crabs into the demanding mouth, and progressively over the coming weeks coaxing the chick further out on to the mud flats towards independent feeding. During the chick's hospital stay both parents retreated to a previous year's natal area on a small island up stream. Through a scope they looked resigned and philosophical.



Chick nestled in ranger Emma's arms, so excited to see mum and dad. Photo: R. Waters

Release.

The highlight for us of course was the chicks release two days later to the family bosom. Very charged atmosphere, you could see and even feel the emotion. The chick nestled in NPWS ranger Emma's arms, little head poking out, straining as it caught sight of mum and dad waiting. Nineteen days later the unfledged chick was banded/flagged i3 by Greg Clancy. Thanks Greg and trainee bander Phoebe Colbrelli-Cox. Recently i3 and parents have been joined by a sub-adult curlew and all are 'doing well'. We love these birds.



BEACH STONE-CURLEWS - HANGING ON BUT HASSLED ON THE WET TROPICS COAST

Amanda Freeman, Ecologist and Writer, Nature North, Queensland

BirdLife's Cairns based far northern shorebird project is finishing up. The project has been a collaboration between BirdLife, volunteers, and the Yirrganydji, Mandingalbay Yidinji, Gunggandji, and Gunggandji Mandingalbay Yidinji Indigenous ranger teams, funded by a Queensland Government Community Sustainability Action grant. Over the course of the project, more than 250 Beach Stone-curlew records have been collated, mostly contributed by the project's 25+ volunteers. Some records have also come from eBird and even Facebook posts.

There's good news. Beach Stone-curlews are still widely distributed along the mainland Wet Tropics coast and still occur in most of the locations where they were recorded 20 years ago. There are some changes though. Beach Stone-curlews seem to be gone from some of Cairns' busier northern beaches. Breeding attempts, as indicated by a nest or a sighting of an immature bird, were recorded in 11 locations along the Wet Tropics coast during the project. Of 18 known nesting attempts over three breeding seasons, we know that five successfully raised a chick and seven failed for various reasons including predation and being washed out by a high tide. We know that Beach Stone-curlews are sneaky though. Nests are easily overlooked, and immature birds can be hard to separate from adults. We've more work to do with the data, using group size as a proxy for past breeding success, that may give us a clearer picture of breeding up and down the coast.

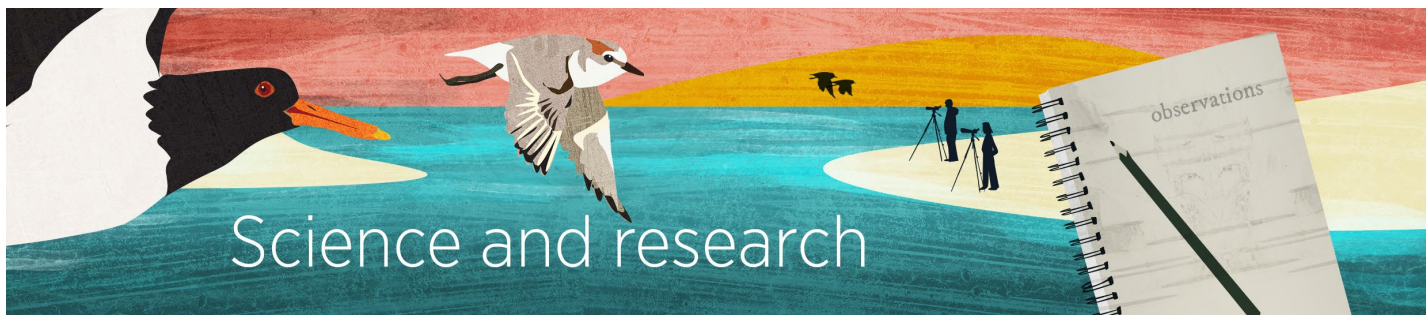


a designated dog exercise area is situated in recognised shorebird habitat and the dog and bird signage stands side by side. Photo: A. Freeman

What can we say about the threats to Beach Stone-curlews on the Wet Tropics coast, and have they changed over the last 20 years? First, they do seem to tolerate some sorts of regular disturbance. For example, there's a pair that nest adjacent to the Cairns airport, in sight of the runways, and there's another pair that nest on dredge spoil next to the harbour. Both have successfully raised a chick during the project. And the mudflats at the Cairns Esplanade are still frequented by Beach Stone-curlews despite the numbers of people. These activities don't seem to directly disturb them. Disturbance by dogs and quad bikes is quite different. Interestingly, dogs scarcely rated a mention in Birdlife North Queensland's Beach Stone-curlew database which collected records up until 2006. Quads didn't feature at all. Now, comments about both are frustratingly commonplace. We weren't so aware of the threats posed by climate change 20 years ago either. Now, coastal erosion and inundation may threaten nest

sites adding another challenge. This has probably always happened to these beach nesters but could become more common. In areas of coastal development, Beach Stone-curlews may not always be able to simply shift their nest inland as the foreshore gets narrower.

In conclusion, the good news is that Beach Stone-curlews are still widely distributed along the Wet Tropics coast, and the Cairns region is quite a hotspot due to the largely inaccessible areas to its north and south. There's no room for complacency though, some former sites are no longer occupied, and breeding records are sparse. Beach Stone-curlews face threats from climate change, dogs, and quad bikes which now make even remote beaches much more accessible.



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BEACH STONE-CURLEW MONITORING ON THE CAPRICORN COAST

Allan Briggs, BirdLife Capricornia, Queensland

Following a Beach Nesting Birds workshop in Yeppoon in February, members of BirdLife Capricornia have undertaken monitoring of Beach Stone-curlews along the Capricorn Coast from Corio Bay in the north to Tannum Sands in the south as well as on the offshore islands in Keppel Bay and Gladstone harbour. During the period from early March to the end of May, a total of eight sightings were recorded. This brings our total records to 47 with historical records going back to 2013.



Beach Stone-curlew family on North Keppel Island. Photo: A. Briggs

An analysis of these records showed that 28 (60%) were from the offshore islands of North Keppel, Great Keppel, Mackenzie and Curtis. In addition, the only breeding records were from North Keppel and Great Keppel islands. The implication was that human disturbance was causing the birds to prefer the isolation of offshore islands. One of the major disturbances is from dogs off leash on mainland beaches. An additional factor is that predators such as foxes are not known on the islands. Feral and domestic cats are absent from North Keppel and Mackenzie Islands and only a small population of domestic cats are present on Great Keppel and Curtis Islands. Feral pigs are not found on North Keppel, Great Keppel or Mackenzie Islands and a cull by QPWS on Curtis Island has reduced the population there to a minimal level. Finally, 4WD beach driving is not permitted on North Keppel, Great Keppel and Mackenzie islands and is limited on Curtis Island.

Conservation work has seen the erection of signs on high usage beaches at Yeppoon, a cull of foxes and feral pigs, and a change in by-laws requiring dogs to be on a leash. The Beach Stone-curlew is listed as Vulnerable in Queensland and Critically Endangered in NSW where the population is estimated at only nine breeding pairs. Rising populations in coastal areas is putting increasing pressure on the Beach Stone-curlew and to ensure its survival into the future we need to educate the general public, control feral animals and reduce 4WD driving on beaches.

ROAD TRIPPING HOODIE STYLE – THE FLIGHT OF WHITE TR

Jonathon Stevenson, Friends of the Hooded Plover, South Gippsland, Victoria

When we're young we all like to step out and spread our wings and visit far flung places. Well, seems it's no different for some Hoodies, except they literally spread their wings. This is the tale of White TR, a Hoodie who wanted to see it all! TR's story started on Norman Bay, at the Prom. Hatching in February 2021 with two siblings, they were the first chicks hatched on Norman Bay in about 10 years. So already making news in the Hoodie world. They continued to make news when they lost their mum and one sibling, making dad a single parent. He did a great job, raising two chicks and even getting back



Credit: Jonathon Stevenson

White TR taking a rest before they're next flight. Photo: J. Stevenson



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on the dating scene as the chicks matured. The two chicks then went through the traditional Hoodie adult rite of passage – alien abduction with associated banding, flagging and probing. They survived this experience and flew off into the world, carrying their new bling. White TR and White PV were now on their first-year journey of discovery.

Forward to early November 2021 and the new breeding season is underway. While checking the vast sand-lands of Sandy Point spit, Kasun spotted a familiar flag; TR had got through the winter and was now sporting the beautiful adult plumage we know and love. Any re-sighting is exciting but when it is one of the birds you have banded (yes, Kasun and I were the aliens) it's doubly exciting to see how they are getting on. Sandy Point looked good but the wind does blow hard and long, so maybe good to try elsewhere.

In late November, a great sighting by Mark on Dream Island in Nooramunga Marine & Coastal Park spotted TR hanging out with four unflagged birds. This wild island is also great Hoodie habitat, but were the locals welcoming? Possibly not or maybe they laughed at TR's alien abduction story; none of them had ever been abducted. So, time to move again. From east to west, across the region TR flew, landing in December to check out the Point Smythe lifestyle. Great location but the neighbours didn't stop squabbling, with multiple pairs all vying for real estate. Time to move again for somewhere quieter.

Waratah Bay, where the forest meets the sea, is quiet and secluded. The resident pairs seem to enjoy a swinging lifestyle, swapping partners each season or so. Maybe this could be the place for an adventurous young bird. It was about now I wondered if TR was female as I found 'her' hanging out with local male Orange ET in January 2022, with his normal partner sulking a hundred metres away. But it wasn't time to settle down yet, the wanderlust was still stronger than the attraction of an older chap with a nice patch of beach.

I saw TR once more, back at Sandy Point sand spit in February. Now just over a year old, this young bird had travelled a minimum of 236 km (as the crow flies) in their first year. In reality, as the Hoodie flies, they would probably have followed the coast, and we don't know how far TR ranged between March and November 2021. But if their travels between November 2021 and February 2022 are anything to go by, they may well have covered over 1000 kms. Not bad for a little bird who had just learnt to fly.





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THE ONGOING SAGA OF BV AND YT: A REMINDER ABOUT THE VALUE OF BANDING

Kerry Vickers, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Shipwreck Coast, Victoria

We must go back to the previous season to begin this story, though these two birds may have been a pair long before that. On banding trips in December 2020 and January 2021 Grainne, Renee and Meg successfully banded the resident pair at the Bay of Martyrs on the Shipwreck Coast. Subsequent sightings proved that White BV is a female and White YT a male. They were the first Hooded Plovers banded along the Shipwreck Coast for many seasons. The day BV was banded we discovered that this pair had a nest located about 3 metres above the sand on top of a long, flat, rocky shelf. It proved to be an inspired choice for a nesting site, as all three eggs hatched, and two of the chicks went on to fledge. BV and YT had already raised two other chicks which fledged earlier in the season. We regarded them as the stars of the Shipwreck Coast, and had high hopes for them at the beginning of the 2021/22 season.



White BV and White YT. Photo: K. Vickers

They had other ideas though! YT was sighted at the Bay of Martyrs with a new unbanded partner 10-Sep-2021. In the months that followed they were observed mating and they experienced two nest fails. Meanwhile by December BV had not been seen for 8 months, so Renee produced a Wanted Poster which was published on social media and put up in town at Peterborough. On 20-Dec-2021 I sighted BV foraging along the east side of the Curdies Estuary, north of Ward's Road, with an unbanded partner. They disappeared from sight again for a month, during which time YT and its unbanded partner nested on top of the rocky shelf at the Bay of Martyrs.



BV, YT and their three chicks. Photo: K. Vickers

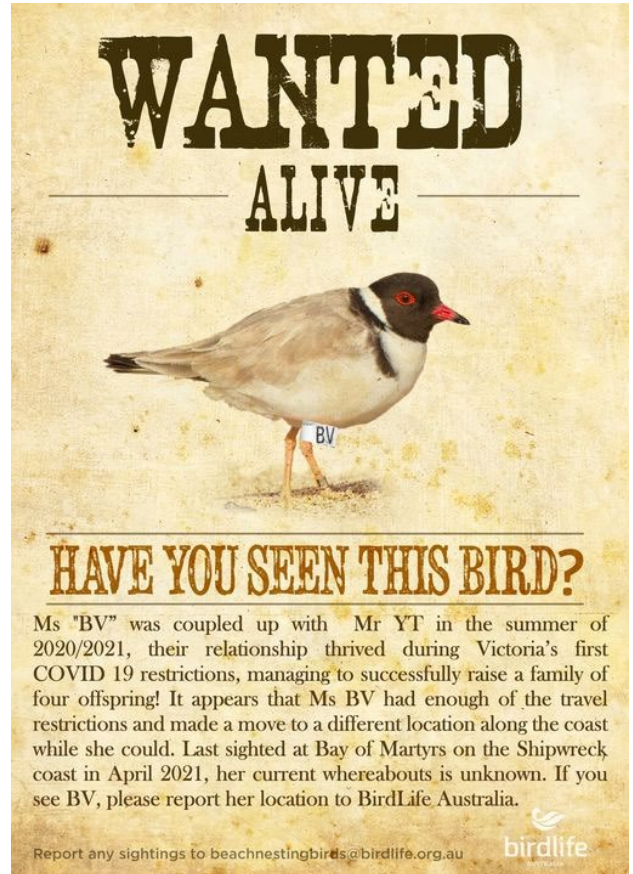
On 19-Jan-2022 Renee ran a beach tour there, and had just finished telling the attendees what nice, quiet, gentle birds Hooded Plovers were when all hell broke loose on top of the rocky shelf! Everyone watched in amazement while YT and unbanded chased a third adult down onto the sand, you guessed it, it was BV. While YT returned to the nest, his unbanded partner defended their territory relentlessly for the next fifteen minutes or so, keeping BV away from the rocky shelf and chasing her all around the third section of beach, including right past the feet of Renee and her tour group a couple of times. The unbanded female maintained the upper hand, but BV seemed undeterred and they were still at it when we headed back to the carpark at the completion of the tour. The attendees certainly got more than they bargained for!



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During the latter part of the season YT and his unbanded partner successfully hatched those two eggs and eventually the two chicks fledged at the Bay of Martyrs. In mid-February BV and her unbanded partner were sighted with a nest at a new site at Massacre Bay (mentioned in the Shipwreck Coast report), which is next door to the Bay of Martyrs, just to the west. Unfortunately, they were unsuccessful, but remained on territory. I last saw them there on 9-May-2022, and remember thinking that they looked well settled. Again, BV had other ideas! I next saw her on 2-Jun-2022 further west at Crofts Bay where she and her unbanded partner seemed right at home. Crofts Bay had been occupied by a pair of unbanded Hoodies throughout the season. They successfully battled a series of high tides to hatch one surviving egg and were very attentive to their only chick which fledged successfully. There was no sign of them when I visited Crofts Bay in early June. However, as I left the beach I couldn't help but wonder whether BV's current unbanded partner was her partner from Massacre Bay, or could she have perhaps changed partners again and teamed up with the resident male from Crofts Bay!

The saga of BV and YT highlights the importance of banding. Those two small white flags allowed us to observe and make sense of several changes and some quite unusual behaviour over a short period of time. Without the flags, we'd have been unable to identify those two individuals. We'd have been puzzled by and left guessing at some of the behaviour observed. In short, we'd have been totally in the dark if those two birds at the Bay of Martyrs in December 2020 had remained unbanded. The Shipwreck Coast team are looking forward with interest to future developments, and have learned to expect the unexpected!



HOODED PLOVER BANDING ON TASMANIA'S RUGGED WEST COAST

Dan Lees, Coastal Birds Project Officer, Birdlife Australia

As part of an ongoing study into Hooded Plover population genetics, BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds team in collaboration with Deakin University and Museums Victoria, sent a team of four banders to Tasmania's remote west coast to capture, band, flag and take small blood samples from a sub-set of the west coast's population. This highly experienced team of four (Mike Weston; Deakin University, Jon Fallaw; Phillip Island, myself and Glenn Ehmke; BirdLife Australia) travelled to Tasmania for six days with the aim of collecting Hooded Plover genetic samples (a drop of blood) from Tasmania's west coast population.



West Tasmanian banding team. Photo: D. Lees



Previous trips sampled Tasmania's east coast, northern coast, King and Flinders Islands, leaving the west coast a gap in the population sampling and hence last trip. The team met in Devonport on the 1st of April (having made their way to Tasmania separately by ferry or plans) and after some reconnaissance of a few nearby beaches and the successful catch of the trips first hoodie set up camp at Arthur River.

After a very cold first night in our Arthur River campsite, we met up with local Parks and Wildlife ranger Dale Crosswell, AKA Crossey. With Crossey's substantial local hoodie knowledge in tow, we travelled a couple of hours south; primarily along 4wd only tracks to Ordinance Point. Here we had fantastic success and managed to catch five adults from a large flock of 20 hoodies. We then travelled back up north, about 2/3 of the way back to Arthur River, to Nelson Bay where we caught a single adult from a flock of six before calling it a day.



W2 Left (Red). Photo: D. Lees

The next morning, after meeting up with Crossey again we drove north from Arthur River to West Point, the northern-most point of the trip, where we caught two adults before winding our way south, via Arthur River Beach and Bullock Hill where we caught single birds to Nelson Bay to attempt to catch the birds we missed the previous afternoon (with some success).

The next day Jon and I flew out of Devonport, while Mike and Glenn headed south to Strahan (the southern-most point of the trip) where they successfully caught another four birds at Granville Harbour.

We would like to thank the Tasmania National Parks and Wildlife Service and specifically Dale Crosswell for his time and expertise as well as the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment for supporting this research.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Beach-nesting Birds program is funded by a diverse range of funding sources and each year we apply for new grants and opportunities to develop new resources, carry out targeted research or to provide support to volunteers and key regions. Donors, grants and philanthropists make the program possible, and we often leverage small funding to go for bigger grants to achieve special projects. This newsletter is jointly funded through BirdLife Australia and the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.