



EDITION 28 – SUMMER 2023

UPDATE FROM THE BEACH-NESTING BIRDS TEAM

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

BirdLife Australia has a new Bird Conservation Strategy 2023-2032, designed to take us into a future where we can reverse the extinction curve for our most threatened birds by 2032, improve the status of 30% of threatened birds by 2032, and be on our way to halting overall bird declines by 2050. This is based on four pillars: **Sites** where we protect critical habitats and Key Biodiversity Areas; **Society** where we empower our communities to be part of change; **Species** where we ensure we tackle threats and return resilience to bird populations so that they can overcome extinction, and; **Systems** where we can change the factors and processes in our society that lead to extinctions, such as strengthening legislation and altering industry practices. The Hooded Plover (and from here we can generate the overall Beach-nesting Birds) Conservation Plan is nearing completion, and this lays out the steps toward making these big changes in our systems, society and sites, so that we can ensure our beach-nesting species and habitats are appropriately protected and managed for a secure future.

We are nearing the end of the National Landcare Program 2 Regional Partnerships round, which for those of you who are not familiar, has been the main source of funding for the Hooded Plover work occurring across Victoria, South Australia and parts of Tassie for the past 5 years. For the first time in the history of the Beach-nesting Birds Program, this is the longest period of secure funding to carry out critical conservation work for this species and coastal habitats as a whole. This has meant continuity and the capacity to embed the program in communities and support fantastic initiatives. The team has been busy liaising with Natural Resource Management boards (Catchment Management Authorities or Landscape Boards) to ensure priority projects for our birds are built into the next National Landcare program 3.

In the meantime, we are about to recruit for a new team member in Western Australia (June 2023-Aug 2025), to finally address the huge knowledge gaps we have around our Western Hooded Plovers, their habitat use, breeding success and population trajectory. This is perfect timing too, as Kirrily Hastings begins her PhD studies into the Western Hooded Plover! We may also have good news to announce soon around further projects focusing on Fairy Tern conservation across South Australia and Victoria, stay tuned! And to add to our recent success, we've finally secured capacity via the Threatened Species Initiative to mapping the Hooded Plover genome and analysing our genetic samples we've been collecting over the past 3 years, so that we can work toward having the best understanding of how we should manage and conserve these distinct populations!



Western Hooded Plover. Photo: G. Maguire



Behind the scenes, the team has been busy collating the biennial count results, supporting student research including the active trial of an audio repellent device around nests this season to see if we can effectively protect these from fox predation, and providing input into critical government documents, such as the Vic Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act Action Statement, and a threatened species scorecard compiled by Department of Environment and Water SA. We're working on a campaign with Birds SA currently to protect South Australia's beaches from uncontrolled driving, and using the data you collect to inform criteria for site protection. Visit <https://www.actforbirds.org/safebeachesforall> to learn more about this campaign and for South Australians, please help us convey the message to our decision makers. Lastly, we work on many campaigns and submissions, and manage to overcome some serious threats to our beach-nesting birds through our input. The most recent win is that the Skenes Creek to Apollo Bay trail will not be going ahead. This would have been disastrous, building a trail through a narrow coastal strip that is hard up against the Great Ocean Road. Currently, there's very little space for the birds and for the habitat to retreat, and this would have placed people, dogs, bicycles, in the heart of the birds remaining breeding territories along this stretch.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter, with stories from the amazing people who are so active at conserving birds and beaches around Australia, you're all amazing!

INTRODUCING MEL SHEEDY!

Mel Sheedy, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

Hey there! I'm Mel and if you haven't already met me out in the field, then I'd like to introduce myself as the newest member of the Beach-nesting Birds Team. I've been working as a BnB Project Officer for a good, few months now and you'll be seeing me around until June. Lovely to meet you all!

Prior to BirdLife, I've been an active volunteer in my community, predominately working with my local wetlands centre and presenting to school kids on their behalf. My main interests are engaging young people with the outdoors and growing their appreciation of their local environment. Young people are integral to environmental conservation succeeding into the future, and I think it's important that we are constantly connecting with them within our program.



I have already learnt so much from both the BirdLife team and flock of volunteers. So far, I've had the pleasure of hosting a few pop-up information stalls out along the Bass Coast where I've met a handful of extremely experienced and knowledgeable volunteers. I quite enjoyed hearing about their personal tales of the pairs they monitor, stories of success over the years, and to see their perseverance even after witnessing first-hand fruitless breeding seasons. I'm looking forward to meeting more of you out in the field or online!



Volunteer spotlight

Jan Lierich, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast, Victoria

Moving from Tatura in the Goulburn Valley at the end of 2013, I wanted to learn about the Surf Coast environment and meet some new people. After attending a BNB workshop in Barwon Heads, I was mentored by Bronwyn Sparks (Friends of Point Addis), Jennie and Julie (Breamlea) and of course Glenda Shomaly. Hoodie triplets fledged in my first season at Breamlea and I thought that was the norm! For the 2015/16 Hoodie season I was asked to monitor the Nudist Beach sites in Torquay so I became more involved with FoHP Surf Coast. It has been wonderful forming new friendships from the Surf Coast and Bellarine areas.



Jan Lierich at Red Rocks. Photo: B. Ives

Monitoring the beach for hoodies is what I enjoy the most. I love walking along the beach all year round observing the birds, animals, native vegetation, rock pools and treasures washed up by the tide. Sighting the hoodies is a bonus.

Point Impossible (Possos), Wadawurrung Country is very special – the drive down the dirt road, through the salt marshes of the Karaaf Wetlands, past the Eastern Grey Kangaroos and along Thompson/Bream Creek to the surf beach. There are middens and ochre sites, examples of the more than 1,000-year history and unique culture of this Country. Migratory wading birds on the rocky platform and surfers enjoying themselves on the inner and outer reefs all add to this sacred place.



Red Rocks. Photo: B. Ives

The Point Impossible to Whites Beach section includes 1 km of Nude Beach. The nudists are mostly very supportive of the hooded plovers. They have learnt how to help by keeping to the waters' edge and having dogs on lead etc. So, when a nest is sighted and signage and fencing around the nest are installed by GORCAPA, the beach goers understand the routine. We do have some problems with filling our rosters as some people are not comfortable being on the nudist beach. When wardening on the Nude Beach you need to be mindful of the use of your binoculars and camera!

So many interesting things have happened on the beach, like meeting international visitors and rescuing a penguin.

One day this season I was sitting on a section of permanent fence the day the chicks fledged. It was a beautiful day, the beach was deserted and the family did a 'fly by' as if to say thanks, we'll be right now.



Volunteer spotlight

I have been monitoring the Nudist Beach, Point Impossible/Whites section for about 8 years now. JM Left Orange (m) was banded as an adult in 2012 and has been sighted on this beach every year. He has had about 3 partners, PA Right White (Pamela Anderson), EJ Right Orange (Elizabeth Jagger) and this season a new unbanded partner. With EJ we were lucky to have a fledgling in 2015/16, another in 2016/17, and again in 2019/20. But this year with unbanded, and just outside the Nudist Beach, 2 chicks fledged. JM is a great dad, he seems to do most of the incubating and is often sighted near the chicks as they become more independent. Watching the antics of the twins this year has been fun.



HP with March fly. Photo: I. McConchie

It is a team effort looking after the hooded plovers. FoHPSC volunteer observations, drawing up rosters (thanks to Pam), monitoring, putting A-frame bird boards on access tracks, messaging, photos and video clips on social media and wardening. The Bellarine and Breamlea FoHP volunteers provide much appreciated support, and staff from GORCAPA and Parks Vic erect signage and patrol during the week where they are the land managers. All these efforts contribute to the care of our Hooded Plover family. As we say, "it takes a community to raise a chick".



HP family, Nude Beach. Photo: I. McConchie



Jane Renwick, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island, South Australia

I helped coordinate the 2012 Hooded Plover Census so when the BNB team came to Kangaroo Island (KI), I went along to their presentation. I was really impressed by their enthusiasm, their knowledge and how respectful they were to us volunteers. I was hooked!

Similar to all volunteers, I help with grant writing, lobbying the council, speaking to the public on the beach, erecting rope fences and permanent and temporary signage. I also use the hoodie portal and besides my data, I post for a friend. Since July 2022 I've posted 79 times for him. His beach visits and associated data leave me in awe. The main beach I monitor is Pennington Bay, which is my favourite beach on KI.



The team at Penneshaw: Grainne, Adam, Deb, April, Jane, Renee and Jean. Photo: G. Maguire

One of the highlights of being part of the program, was last October when the BNB team came to KI to do some banding and I was one of four volunteers who met them at Pennington Bay. There was great relief when the two resident hoodies were spotted. The team leapt into action. Tiny nooses were set up by Renee and sand and seaweed scattered around them. We volleys retreated to the sand dune, and Grainne and Deb quietly set about herding the birds towards the trap. We were really impressed when one of the birds walked virtually straight into a noose. (There was much laughter from the team as apparently this is not always the case.)

The captured hoodie was put carefully into a bag. Renee asked me if I would like to select the band. Is the pope a Catholic? I looked for one with PR, the initials of my brother who had terminal cancer but there wasn't one. However, there was an RR which was perfect because his mates called him Rennie Renwick.

After Grainne had carefully put the white flag on and measurements had been taken and recorded, I was given the great privilege of releasing RR. Later that day I rang my brother and told him what we had done. He was chuffed. It was the last conversation I had with him. (Update: Rennie and partner fledged 3 juveniles in November 2022 and currently have two chicks on the beach. 20th March 2023).



Grainne holding the banded Hooded Plover, RR. Photo: BNB Team



Nikola Manos, Volunteer, Parks and Natural Resources, City of Onkaparinga, South Australia

Onkaparinga features 31 kms of coastline, with sandy beaches found in most of its 11 coastal suburbs. Council has supported the Hooded Plover volunteer program since it began more than 13 years ago. We started with only two nests. That quickly expanded with more volunteers and monitoring coming onboard. The 2020–21 breeding season saw a record five fledged chicks on our beaches, and we can now have up to eight nests at once with each site presenting different challenges.

We work as a team to support the program. Staff include officers and field crew from the Parks and Natural Resources Team. We supply fencing materials and signage, and help with education and promotion. The latter with council's marketing and communications team, which publishes regular posts and stories throughout the breeding season, and pitches stories to local media. We also provide lots of hands-on help to deliver and install the nest enclosures, often involving lots of walking over difficult terrain. The Community Safety Team provides regular beach patrols to monitor and enforce bylaws.



Sue and Ash Read, Volunteer Regional Coordinators (left, photo: City of Onkaparinga), and their photo of a 37-day old juvenile (right).

With a growing population of humans and Hoodies, this has increased demand for resources. Last year council added a new foreshore ranger position to dedicate more time to patrolling beaches. One foreshore ranger, Thia Tran, reports that the Community Safety Team runs foreshore patrols daily during summer to highlight their presence while continuing to educate and ensure compliance. “I work actively alongside vested stakeholders to keep abreast of reports and updates in relation to the hooded plovers, particularly during their nesting season. It’s a real privilege to work alongside my peers at council, supporting all those working tirelessly at BirdLife Australia to minimise the challenges the Hooded Plovers face,” she said.

Sometimes I’m asked, ‘what’s the biggest threat to the Hooded Plovers so we can address that and then they’ll be protected?’ But the solution’s never that simple. While it seems enticing, we can’t afford to focus on one threat and



ignore the rest. Each nesting site has different issues, and even at one site, they can change year to year. Here are some examples of recent actions we hope will improve the breeding success of Hoodies in Onkaparinga.



Spinifex planting Aldinga, June 2022. Photo: N. Manos

Dune management – We’re working with Green Adelaide to improve the resilience of dunes to storm surges, by replacing invasive, introduced dune grasses with native spinifex. Our in-house nursery has grown thousands of *Spinifex hirsutus*, which produces more gentle sloping dunes than weedy grasses. This should also improve available nesting habitat for Hooded Plovers.

By-law review – The volunteer program provides extremely valuable data, which can be used for Council reports. For example, off-leash dogs continue to be recorded as a high threat to our breeding Hooded Plovers. In response, Council recently amended the dog by-law. From 28 November, dog owners are required to leash dogs

within 100 metres of a Hooded Plover nest, and these are identified by signs.

Fox control – Foxes are another big threat, but options to control them on council land have been limited to finding and fumigating dens. We’ve been eager to trial new methods in partnership with Green Adelaide and BirdLife Australia such as the ultrasonic Foxwatch device, and a trained sniffer dog to find dens in difficult terrain. Both are showing positive results.

Signage

We’ve been trying out some different signage styles to help people understand why we ask them to ‘keep out’ of dunes and estuaries. Below are some examples:



I continue to be amazed by the persistence of the Hooded Plover to keep trying and that helps to inspire me to continue to try and support them as best as I can.



PROTECTING HOODED PLOVERS – RAISING AWARENESS AMONGST BEACH GOERS AT CAPE PATERSON AND BEYOND ON VICTORIA'S BASS COAST

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

Cape Paterson has not had a fledged Hooded Plover since 2019. With growing coastal housing developments and all that comes with an increasing human presence on the beaches, more needed to be done. In 2020, an awareness workshop for Cape locals by Birdlife Australia attracted more volunteers to the cause and was followed by a generous financial donation in 2022 by The Cape sustainable housing development.

Using a model of 'adoption' of five known nesting sites around Cape Paterson, several initiatives from The Cape's donation flowed. First, the creation of a Hooded Plover Breeding Update on a local nature website <https://capechatter.com/> which is regularly updated from Birdlife Australia BNB data portal along with photographs. This source information is then shared through a regular Cape Chatter Blog, social media groups such as resident Facebook Groups, the Cape Paterson neighbourhood app 'Nextdoor' and local community newsletters.

The funding also provided for a range of new Hoodie nesting and chick signs for use with roped enclosures and at access points to the tracks entering beaches. The signs have a QR Code which when scanned with a mobile device takes you to the *Cape Chatter Hoodie* site: <https://capechatter.com/the-hooded-plovers-of-cape-paterson-2/>. More permanent, all-weather breeding update signs, also with the QR Code, to be updated regularly by volunteers, are to be installed by **Parks Victoria** at access points to the Yallock-Bulluk Marine and Coastal Park.



New sign with QR code (left). Permanent metal sign with QR code for updating at access point (right). Photos: D. Hartney

The Cape's funding sponsored a public awareness information day which was held by Birdlife Australia in early 2023 at the 'family' Bay Beach in Cape Paterson, near to one of the breeding sites. This event triggered an emerging relationship with the Wonthaggi Life Saving including the placement of banners and a 'Hoodie News' sandwich board which is updated daily.

An increased presence by local volunteers during busy holiday periods has helped raise awareness at chick feeding zones. Volunteers have been armed with promotional/educational material along with bird scopes to allow the public to get a closer glimpse of the cute little chicks.

On the broader Bass Coast, a public Facebook Group, *Friends of the Hooded Plovers – Bass Coast* has been created sharing news

of local Hoodie happenings along the coast from San Remo to Inverloch. This is helping bring together volunteers and other Hoodie groups and shares lovely stories of the resilience and determination of these birds. To join the group, click [here](#). The local print media has also been utilised to raise awareness at crucial times of the season on the breeding status of the birds and what the public can do to reduce nest and chick disturbance.


capechatter.com

THE HOODED PLOVERS OF CAPE PATERSON

Where Are They ... and What Are They Up To?

The Cape Paterson coastline is home to a small and very vulnerable beach nesting bird, the Hooded Plover. There are numerous breeding areas in the Cape Paterson area, primarily around Pea Creek estuary/Undertow Bay, along 2nd Surf Beach east of Wilson Rd and the several small bays west of Wilson Rd.

Check out the latest 'Hoodie' news for each of these breeding areas in the bold green text below.



Pea Creek Estuary/Undertow Bay Area

Updated 3 March 2023

After six nesting attempts and 12 eggs, Hoodie pair (Orange YW and partner) finally had two chicks hatch on 4 Feb 23. If you are walking near the Pea Creek area, please keep an eye out for the adults as the chicks will not be far away. They have been feeding on the sandy point and rocky platform between Bay Beach and Undertow Bay and east along Undertow. If you see them, please give them a wide berth and

Cape Chatter Hoodie screenshot



Sandwich board sign and banner – Bay beach. Photo: D. Hartney

Are all these initiatives helping and is the public becoming more engaged and aware of the plight of the Hoodies? It is hard to gauge at this stage ... but, it has been over 3 years since a bird fledged at any Cape Paterson sites. As of 4 March, this season, we have had 8 chicks hatch: one has fledged and one is close to fledging; two have reached the 28-day mark and one is 24 days. The 'chatter' from the public, the positive interest on the beach and the feedback on social media suggests the initiatives may be partially contributing to the success through increased community awareness. Time will tell!

Thanks to the local volunteers from the *Friends of the Hooded Plovers – Bass Coast* for their tireless efforts, the

BNB team at Birdlife Australia, local land managers at Parks Victoria, and especially **The Cape** for their generous support which has provided real impetus to the cause.

CAPE PATERSON (BASS COAST, VICTORIA) POP UP INFORMATION STALL

Mel Sheedy, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, Birdlife Australia

BirdLife Australia headed out east in January to speak to the beachgoers of Cape Paterson, with the aim to show locals ways in which they can best help our Hoodies. The Wonthaggi Life Saving Club was kind enough to let us set up camp in the picnic area outside of their tower, where we had a lot of conversations about the latest successes and failures of the local Hoodies. We also shared with people how best to protect these threatened birds when taking a stroll down the coast. We had a Dream Team manning the stall, which included Dan and Matt from Parks Victoria, as well as Mandy from West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA), and volunteers Stephen, Jeannie, David, Joe and Kerry. While we tried to entice dog walkers to come along with free dog leads and giveaways, we're ecstatic to say that the residents were following the Council and Parks Victoria regulations which state no dogs on the beach after a certain time – Hooray! Still, not many people could decline a free dog lead.



Children's information stall. Photo: M. Sheedy

At the time, Cape Paterson was host to one ~6-day old chick at the bay west of Wilson Rd, three ~5-day old chicks at Second Surf Beach, and one suspected nest at Pea Creek. Jeannie and I headed down to Second Surf Beach with a scope to check on the newly hatched chicks. From a safe distance, we were able to show many curious passers-by what Hooded Plover chicks looked like. How shocked were they when they realised they weren't looking at Masked Lapwings through the scope! As well as diffusing misconceptions surrounding what kind of plovers we were protecting (nothing against the bold and fearless Lapwing), we were able to physically show the community the precious birds in which we were speaking of, and helped direct them on where to safely walk when you see signs and fencing. Many earnest promises were made to walk along the water's edge and follow local rules displayed on chick signs.



Volunteer David states, 'Cape Paterson has not had a fledged Hooded Plover since 2019'. Let's hope to prove that wrong – four chicks remain, one at the bay west of Wilsons Rd, two at Pea Creek, and the other at Second Surf, and are about to fledge any day now if they haven't already!

The Hoodie site of Cape Paterson is manned by a team of volunteers who remain extra vigilant in maintaining the signage and fencing and sustaining good relationships with existing land managers and residents of the area. Thank you to the Friends of the Hooded Plover Bass Coast, WGCMA, Parks Vic, Bass Coast Shire and The Cape for all that you do for our birds.

You can keep up to date with pairs along this coast by joining Facebook Group, Friends of the Hooded Plover Bass Coast, or by reading regular updates on the Cape Chatter website! This is a great initiative which encourages connectiveness between locals and our Hoodies as you would have read in David's article above. This project was funded by The Cape Sustainable Housing Development.



Mel, Joe, Kerry and Jeannie at the stall. Photo: M. Sheedy

VOLUNTEERS TEACH U3A SOUTH COAST MEMBERS ABOUT BEACH-NESTING BIRDS (FLEURIEU PENINSULA)

Roslyn Shirlaw, Volunteer, Friends of The Hooded Plover Fleurieu South Coast, South Australia



In early 2023, Fleurieu South Coast Hoodie volunteers banded together for 5 weeks to teach a group of thirteen U3A (University of the Third Age) members about Beach-nesting Birds (BNB). The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and five, or 38%, of attendees expressed interest in becoming a Hoodie volunteer. Most importantly, the word about BNB has been spread and more people are now aware of the birds, their place in the ecosystem, their risk of extinction and the conservation efforts of Birdlife Australia.



The first group workshop was on 2 February 2023 at Old School Building, Victor Harbor. That day a local Hoodie family had three, 4-day old chicks. The opportunity could not be missed. We left the classroom for the beach and everyone was thrilled to see the Hoodie family in their home environment. In the classroom, we explored the lives of beach-nesting birds through the lens of coastal ecosystems and their respective threat of extinction. We looked at environmental change, habitat, threats, identification, behaviours and lifecycles. A variety of learning tools were used including ppt slides, videos, activities, brochures, photos, posters, booklets and beach visits.

Keith Jones presenting on Oystercatchers; (top). Roslyn Shirlaw presenting on threats to beach-nesting birds (bottom).

The course covered Hoodies, Oystercatchers, Red-capped Plovers, Beach Stone Curlew, Fairy Terns, Little Terns, Crested and Caspian Terns. On the last day we visited the beach at Encounter Bay. Course



participants were excited to put their new knowledge to the test and identify different birds at the beach, especially Hooded Plovers and Sooty Oystercatchers. Their learning was complete. Many thanks go to Wendy White, David and Sue Thorn, for supporting the participants on each beach visit with scopes, binoculars and expertise to answer their questions.

The idea to create a Beach-nesting Bird course for U3A was conceived by Roslyn Shirlaw, after reviewing Birdlife Australia's education kit for children. U3A is an international volunteer organisation that offers locally coordinated educational and activity-based groups for retired persons, over the age of 50. After preliminary discussions with Emma Stephens and Wendy, Birdlife Australia approved the concept. The course for 2023 was then developed by Roslyn. Finalising the content was a team effort including support from Grainne Maguire providing photos, Deborah Furbank vetting presentation slides, as well as Wendy and Kerri Bartley organising support materials. Delivery was also a team effort. Roslyn coordinated and led the group, David and Sue presented on Hooded Plovers, Keith Jones presented on Oystercatchers and Wendy discussed the Beach-nesting Bird Program, as well as providing volunteer training. David, Sue, Wendy and Keith also assisted with room set up and pack down.



U3A Birdwatching Group with David and Sue Thorn at Encounter Bay.

It has been a win-win solution for U3A members and Birdlife Australia. With the first 5-week course now ended, the materials are being modified to capture the need for flexibility in delivery. The course will be repeated in October/November 2023 where 17 different U3A members have already enrolled. It is hoped that other Birdlife Australia volunteers may like to conduct such a program for their local U3A Group. If you are interested, please contact Birdlife Australia for details.

RED-CAPPED PLOVER BEACH WALK (BELLARINE BAYSIDE, VICTORIA)

Mel Sheedy, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, Birdlife Australia



Mel talking to members of the public who attended the beach walk at Indented Heads. Photo: J. Shearer

Over the summer holidays, Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management ran a series of education sessions for holiday makers, one of which included a beach walk for members of the public to come and learn about the local Red-capped Plovers. BirdLife Australia was invited along to help host this walk and share stories about these brave little birds, along with local volunteer group, Friends of the Red-capped Plover Bellarine Bayside.

The walk involved meeting up at Indented Heads, a beach that is well known for its



extremely narrow beaches. Such narrow shorelines are often deemed dangerous for beach-nesting birds, as they are at high risk of disturbance from local foot traffic and tidal inundations. High tides in these areas leave little room for beachgoers to walk along, which increases risk of egg and chick trampling, and flushes parents off the nest.

These risks are reflected in the overall success of the pairs of the Bellarine Bayside. The breeding season for our Red-caps at the time of the walk in early January was looking bleak – very high tides and strong northerly shore winds had washed out a few of the nests, and a high abundance of seagrass in some areas meant that little exposed sand was left for the birds to nest on. Local volunteer, John Pearce, describes the total number of birds this season as being lower than usual, when compared to other years, and states that while the birds usually continue to breed after failed attempts, there has been no such recovery. He says, “Since the last nest washover in November, only five birds in total have been observed on beach. No new nests have been established after that event and the tagged birds which have regularly called our beach ‘home’ have been sighted elsewhere in the area. Interestingly some of the other birds which have previously been observed on the beach including Black-winged Stilts and Pied Oystercatchers, have not been seen this year. The regular influx of Ruddy Turnstones has however occurred.”

This meant that unfortunately for our walk, not many nests or chicks were to be sighted. Thanks to local volunteer Leanne, who knew of a pair closer to Portarlinton, we had something to share with participants (the Willy Langdon and Calhoun Rd sites of Portarlinton were the two more successful sites in the Bellarine Peninsula for Red-capped Plovers). We were able to spot one resilient female on her single remaining egg, and she sure knew how to pick her nesting sites! One family was playing in the shallow water directly in front of her fenced off area, and two families were picnicking off to either side – all extremely close to the incubating mother, who seemed to persist in protecting her egg. This is a very common sight along these shores; the beach-nesting birds of Bellarine Peninsula are all too familiar with living in close quarters to humans.



Mel and members of the public in Indented Heads beach. Photo: J. Shearer

Luckily for these birds, they stand a better chance thanks to the exceptional work of the volunteer group, Friends of the Red-capped Plover Bellarine Bayside. It was apparent to participants how driven our volunteers are in alleviating threats to these birds. Thank you, Friends of the Red-capped Plover Bellarine Bayside, and a special thanks to the Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management for assisting our Friends of Groups, and for hosting educational walks like these, where residents and tourists can grow their appreciation of the local wildlife.



HOODIE WHO? KINDER RESOURCE

Lisa Williams, Parks Victoria Range, Mornington Peninsula National Park, Victoria

'Hoodie Who?' is a resource kit for kindergarten to Grade 2 aged children, designed to build a child's familiarity with hooded plovers and the hooded plover signs and ropes we use on ocean beaches to protect nests and chicks. The long-term goal is to achieve desired behaviours from children (and their parents) when they visit Mornington Peninsula beaches with protected (fenced) hoodie territories.

Each kit contains a *Teacher Resource booklet* detailing the hoodie lifecycle, threats, and how conservation organisations, land managers and volunteers collaborate to help protect them. It also gives session details for running the activities. Also included are a number of resources, such as Three polymer clay eggs, for use as teaching aids and a USB stick with PDFs of the activity books, Teacher Resource booklet, and extension activities (like colouring sheets, and 'find the egg' images).

The activity is designed to run across two days, but teachers may adapt it as they see fit!



Activity 1: Let's Learn builds the children's familiarity with what hooded plovers look like, where they nest, and how well camouflaged their eggs are

Activity 2: Let's Help reminds children of how well camouflaged hooded plover eggs are, introduces them to threats, and how volunteers and land managers ('Friends') help keep eggs and chicks safe.

Extension activities are as endless as a child's imagination, though we've made a few suggestions.

Our game plan in the coming months is to soft-release the kits in kindergartens and primary schools on the Mornington Peninsula. In August/September we'll make the kits available again, so the activities coincide with the hooded plover breeding season and children are able to connect the dots between classroom teachings and beach signage and management.

A little background, and some thank-yous...

The idea for a kindergarten resource was conceived by my colleague Sue Finley with a desire was to bridge a gap in Parks Victoria's educational outreach on hooded plovers. We currently target primary school aged children with an extensive Junior Ranger program, and Nippers and primary school talks, but at the time of conception, didn't offer a targeted kindergarten program. The activities were trialed at Red Hill Primary, with excellent feedback.

In 2021, I started my contract as the hoodie ranger on the Mornington Peninsula, and Sue presented this resource. With help from a Coastcare Victoria grant funding was available for Chicks on the Beach signage and the multiple components that would roll together to form 20 'Hoodie Who?' kits. I set to work writing and mocking-up the Teacher Resource and activity books working in conjunction with an enthusiastic and talented team. A big thank-you and congratulations to all involved!



'Hoodie Who?' really is a product of mass collaboration across organisations, agencies and community groups. Thank you (Friends) for embracing, seeking funding for, and collaborating on the project, Birdlife Australia for the science and guidance, Parks Victoria for backing our pursuit of the idea, and Coastcare Australia and the Victorian Government for the funding. It is very satisfying to see the resource materialise, and we're itching to get it into kindergartens and schools across the Peninsula.

Reach out if you have Peninsula-based Kindergarten-Grade 2 teachers in your midst who might be interested in running the activity with their classes. I'd love to drop them a 'Hoodie Who?' kit, And if you'd like to be part of the roll-out and retrieval of kits, please let me know!! More hands make light work 😊

YORKE PENINSULA 'HOODIE PLAY POD' LAUNCH

Nanou Cabourdin, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Yorke Peninsula, Narrunga Land, Point Turton, South Australia

On the 13th of January, we officially launched the 'Hoodie Play Pod' outdoor board game at the Point Turton community playground, on the Yorke Peninsula!

The BirdLife Australia program partnered up with artist Karen Carr, of Squashed Cocky to deliver several art workshops on the Yorke Peninsula. Karen Carr is a respected Eyre Peninsula artist and her work has adorned many public places; The Giant Cuttlefish sculpture seat in Whyalla, the Osprey Flight path in the Port Lincoln Airport and This wondrous Shore (a sculptural bench seat all about shorebirds) in Port Neill are some of her favourites. You can view her work at her Facebook page [facebook.com/squashedcocky](https://www.facebook.com/squashedcocky).

In the process of creating her artwork, Karen invites the community to be involved, fostering community connection and ownership, and ensuring that the final piece reflects the local spirit. Karen hosted two community workshops, with some of our Beach-nesting Bird Conference attendees coming along at Moonta. Karen also worked with two local schools, Stansbury Primary School and Warooka Schools. Each participant learned about the local Beach-nesting birds and how they can help protect them, and then had the opportunity to make a lasting piece of artwork to help further raise awareness of Hooded Plovers on the Yorke Peninsula.



*Stansbury primary school students discovering the mosaic game pod in Point Turton.
Photos: N. Cabourdin*



Each individual worked with clay to create four tiles with different patterns, textures and images, using items found from the beach. These tiles adorn the side of the game pod and will be a lasting legacy for those who came to the art workshops and give beach users the opportunity to learn more about our threatened beach-nesting birds.

Karen made the game tiles for the top and created the pod adding the community tiles around the sides to bring the whole story together. The pod was then installed at the Point Turton Nature Scape Playground by Karen with help from Jeff Carr. It was immediately popular. A group of local students, who'd been involved in the tile making, discovered it with delight even as the grout was still drying!

"I'm always delighted to see the reactions from the community as

Glazed tiles. Photo: K. Carr

they engage with the piece for the first time, it's such a special moment" says Karen.

We had a good turnout despite the hot weather, with The Point Turton Progress Association providing a BBQ and drinks, and free face painting from the talented Vanessa Correll. We had talks from Deborah Furbank of BirdLife Australia and Karen Carr, who surprised me with the gift of a wonderful Hoodie chicks mosaic drinks tray she created. I was delighted to be the recipient of such a beautiful present.

We were able to thank in person the representatives of some of our sponsors.... Max Barr from Northern & Yorke Landscape board, and Jennie Hiscock and Phil Cole from the SA Shorebirds Foundation. We would also like to thank Charlie, the owner of the Point Turton Tavern for his generous forklift work installing this outdoor Hoodie game.

The Hoodie Play Pod, along with the Community Workshops and School Sessions, have been made possible because of support from the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board via the National Landcare Program, ABEF, South Australian Shorebirds Foundation, Friends of the Hooded Plover Yorke Peninsula, Yorke Peninsula Council, Squashed Cocky and BirdLife Australia.



FAR WESTERN VICTORIA HOODIE CAPERS

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

During the January school holidays, Dan and Renee headed to Western Victoria to undertake lots of activities to help raise awareness of Hooded Plovers in the Port Fairy/Killarney area.

Thanks to a successful Coastcare Victoria Community Grant for the Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West Victoria, we were able to raise awareness to beach users with Pop Up Education Sessions - using our Hoodie costume! A great way to start a conversation, the costume was a hit, and had everyone in the main street of Port Fairy asking lots of questions!



Dan Lees looking for Hoodies dressed as a Hoodie. Photo: R. Mead

We also were able to complete a weeding bee - where lots of dedicated volunteers came to help remove Cape Beach Daisy – an invasive species which reduces the available habitat for Hoodies to nest on. And many of the participants came to our Hooded Plover training workshop the next day, to learn more about how else they can help the birds!

We also installed fencing and signage at sites where new nests were found.

BirdLife Australia acknowledges the support of Coastcare Victoria and the Victorian Government.



Weeding success. Photo: D. Lees



Training Workshop. Photo: R. Mead



Threats and management

CAPE BRIDGEWATER KIOSK – HOPING TO MAKE A TRIUMPH OUT OF A TRAGEDY

Dr Dan Lees, Coastal Birds Projects Officer, BirdLife Australia

The breeding pair of hoodies at the Cape Bridgewater Kiosk have had a rollercoaster of a breeding season, but, thanks to the amazing effort of local vols Judy and Stan they manage some success despite the incidents I outline below.



Car tracks on Cape Bridgewater. Photo: J. and S. Galewski

The first incident occurred on the 25th of November when their ~28-day old chick; the only remaining chick from an initial (suspected) brood of three, was taken off the beach by a member of the public who apparently thought it was injured. That evening I was contacted by volunteer Robyn Bush who was herself contacted by a wildlife carer, that a Hooded Plover chick had been handed into the Portland Veterinary Clinic. We were soon able to get in contact with the on-call vet who confirmed that the chick had been taken off the Cape Bridgewater beach, was in their care and was uninjured. By this time, the daylight had faded and we would have to wait until the following morning to attempt to reunite the chick with its parents. The following morning, I picked up the chick from on-call vet Fiona, met local volunteers Judy and Stan on the beach, who had already found the parents, and after banding the chick 'BU Right (White)' released it back to its parents. 'BU' ran directly to its parents while calling loudly! Success in reuniting the family. Better yet, it was confirmed to have fledged by Judy and Stan on the 9th of December.

Unfortunately, the next incident did not have a positive outcome. I'll start with some background information. Cape Bridgewater's foreshore has recently been refurbished including the renovation of two boat launching ramps. The Beach-nesting Birds team was engaged (albeit at the last minute) by the shire and construction project managers prior to the works, where we voiced our concerns about the lack of barriers preventing people from using the ramps to access the beach by vehicle. Despite their professionalism in having a thorough environmental assessment, our concerns about vehicle beach access were unfortunately ignored. Just a few weeks after the chick above was confirmed to have fledged, Judy and Stan found the pair had laid another nest! This nest hatched on the 13th of January, but by the date of the incident, only a single chick was left. On Sunday the 22nd of January, Stan and Judy went down to the Cape Bridgewater beach to find the protective fence and signage vandalised, the remains of a fire in front of the nesting area, car tracks all over the beach/nesting area, and the body of deceased chick in one of the car tracks.



Deceased Hooded Plover chick. Photo: J. and S. Galewski

Judy and Stan immediately contacted Crimestoppers and myself to report the incident. Apparently, there was a wedding on Saturday and the afterparty was held, without permit, on the beach in the cove the pair had nested in and was raising their chick.



The following day we posted a description of the incident with the accompanying photos taken by Judy and Stan on our social media, tagging the Glenelg Shire and asking them to prevent vehicles from using the boat ramps to access the beach. We also e-mailed the shire directly, informing them of the incident and requesting a meeting to discuss options to stop further such incidents from happening.

We've since had two meetings with the shire, one online and another at Cape Bridgewater, and it's looking promising that some mitigation measures will be put in place to dissuade the public from using the ramps to illegally drive on the beach. It will admittedly be a challenging task as Cape Bridgewater's beach width at low tide limits the effectiveness of potential barriers or bollards. Having said that, even those options should make vehicle users think twice about driving on the beach and risking not making it back before the tide turns.

RESPONSE TO HERALD SUN AND 3AW MELBOURNE INTERVIEWS TO MP JAMES NEWBURY

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

Last January, Herald Sun and 3AW Melbourne (Mornings with Neil Mitchell show) interviewed James, Newbury, opposition environment spokesperson and Brighton MP, on sharing the beach with Hooded Plovers on the Mornington Peninsula. According to the MP, it's "madness" that Parks Victoria rangers were making kids cry for playing in the dunes. The articles and interviews lacked background research and objectivity, misinforming the public about the work being done to protect Hooded Plovers and its importance for the beach ecosystems. Here is Grainne's response, which we shared on our [Facebook page](#):

"For all our wonderful volunteers, land managers, educators, coastal communities and beach users who all play a different but incredibly valued role in helping our precious Hooded Plovers escape extinction, I apologise that you had to read or listen to the poor excuse for journalism in the [Herald Sun](#) and on [3AW Melbourne](#) on Tuesday. It was clear that absolutely no background research had been done and this was just a story to appeal to anyone who connects with the idea that people should have the right to do whatever they like, wherever they like.

Most present generations have grown up with some form of education about protecting the dunes. Scientists together with coastal community groups have shown us just how valuable they are: habitat for unique flora and fauna, the location of sacred cultural sites and also an important protective barrier between land and sea. Hoodies nest in dunes (plus the beach) and their tiny vulnerable chicks hide in the dunes from predators and people, in the safety of the vegetation. Is it our right to trample, crush and destroy these habitats and all that depend on them? I guess if your world view is only a view of self and desires. But we teach our kids as parents to share, to appreciate and to not make the same mistakes of past generations. We have coastal community leaders, Traditional Owners and land managers who work to preserve Australia's coastal biodiversity, and they help make sure they will be here for all future generations to enjoy. They aren't kill joys or extremists, they're educated, hard working and working for others.

Ask the kids what they think! Every school kid we've taught has embraced the birds and have actually asked why we can't pull out all the stops to protect them."

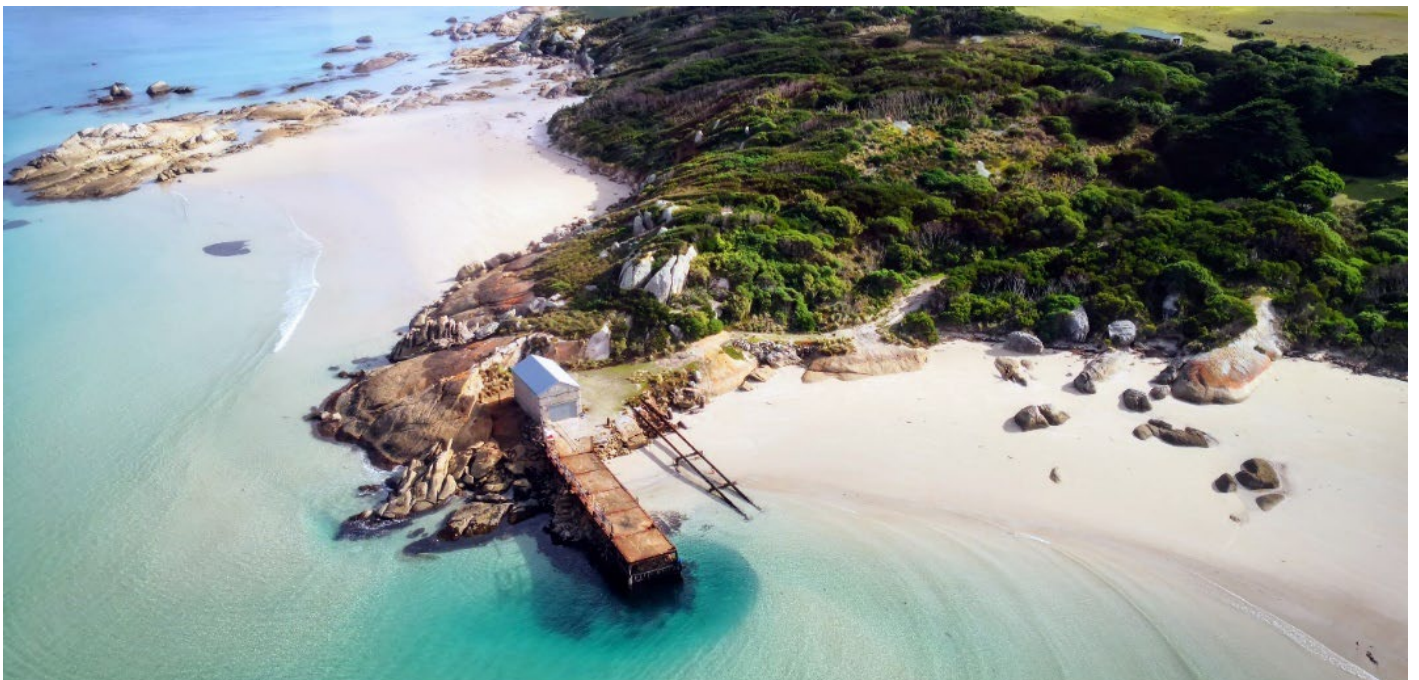
You can listen to the MP interview on 3AW Melbourne [here](#). The Herald Sun article is [here](#), but only accessible for members.



FERAL CAT CONTROL IN TASMANIA TO PROTECT HOODED PLOVERS

Iona Flett, Natural Resource Management Planning and MERI* Manager, Cradle Coast Authority, Tasmania

Three Hummock Island, off the north-west coast of Tasmania has been the location for an exciting feral cat control trial program to create a stronghold for Hooded Plovers and other coastal wildlife. Hooded Plovers are vulnerable to human impacts on Australia's southern beaches, but Three Hummock Island receives few visitors as there is only one place to stay. It is also a State Reserve managed by Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, so dogs are not allowed.



The jetty at Three Hummock Island from the air. Photo: I. Flett

Cradle Coast Authority (CCA), in partnership with Biosecurity Tasmania and with funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, has been running a project for the last four years that aims to remove another threat to the island's wildlife: feral cats. Feral cats on Three Hummock Island are thought to be in low numbers and spread across the densely vegetated island. The island is difficult to access and very difficult to traverse, meaning that conventional feral cat control techniques are less effective and much more expensive than in other places.

A new piece of technology, called the "Felixer" cat grooming trap, has been trialled on the island and is showing promise.

Beach-nesting birds like Hooded Plovers are vulnerable to feral cat predation, as are Short-tailed Shearwaters and Little Penguins that breed all around Three Hummock Island's coastline. BirdLife Australia ecologists, Dr Sonia Sanchez and Dr Dan Lees, visited the island in December 2022 to assess the Hooded Plover population.

They were impressed with the view of the island flying in in a small plane. "Three Hummock has some beautiful beaches! Volunteers have been removing Sea Spurge to keep space clear for the birds, but actually several beaches were washed out by winter storms so it's really a difficult place for the birds to survive," said Sonia.



Science and research

Despite these difficulties, the Hoodies are faring well. “Numbers of Hoodies on Three Hummock were similar to 2019, with breeding activity detected on many of the suitable beaches. We also found Sooty Oystercatcher nests, and there are lots of Pied Oyks too!” said Dan.

Iona Flett from Cradle Coast Authority is looking forward to the day when Felixers can be used everywhere. “Every feral cat kills an estimated 740 animals per year, so reducing feral cat numbers, and eradicating cats from high conservation-value places is really important. It’s great that we could contribute to their development and trial them on Three Hummock Island while removing some cats from this beautiful ecosystem,” said Iona.



A Felixer in operation on a track. Photo: Cradle Coast NRM



Sooty Oystercatcher on one of Three Hummock Island’s attractive boulders. Photo: D. Lees.



A feral cat in a shearwater colony. Photo: Cradle Coast NRM



Feral cat automatically targeted by a Felixer’s detection beams. Photo: Cradle Coast NRM



Science and research

MOVEMENT OF MALLACOOTA HOODIES!

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

Back in February 2022, the Beach-nesting Birds team flagged a Hooded Plover family, two adults with their juvenile at Seal Creek (East Gippsland). The two adults were flagged with “YE Orange” and “SL White” while the juvenile was flagged “EB White.”



YE Orange being released. Photo: G. Maguire



YE Orange. Photo: J. Hutchinson

EB White, the juvenile, has since been sighted by BirdLife Australia’s Monitoring Program Coordinator, Joris Driessen, at Nadgee Beach, NSW in October 2022, now as an adult with an unbanded partner.



EB flagged as a juvenile. Photo: G. Maguire

What has been quite unexpected, is the sighting of adult YE Orange in January 2023, over on Rigby Island in Gippsland Lakes! This was a great sighting, especially for the observers, including John Hutchison of BirdLife East Gippsland. There have been no Hooded Plovers flagged within the Gippsland Lakes system, so observing a flagged Hooded Plover came as quite a surprise! What makes this an unexpected sighting, is that YE Orange was sighted during the breeding season, so it makes us wonder if there has been a divorce between its original partner, SL White! Their last sighting together was October 2021. It’s possible that SL White is still at Seal Creek, as a white flagged bird was recorded there during the November 2022 Hooded Plover Biennial Count, but the flag couldn’t be read. It will be interesting to see what happens at the start of the next breeding season at Seal Creek! Luckily, we don’t have long to wait, with the next breeding season 3-4 months away!


Thanks to John Hutchison for the flag information and photos. The banding trip was supported by Glenelg Catchment Management Authority via funding through the National Landcare Program.



BEACH-NESTING BIRDS COUNT IN SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Mel Sheedy, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, Birdlife Australia


Check out the fantastic infographic below on the results of our central to southern Queensland Beach Stone-curlew (and other beach-nesting birds)! This count was funded by a Queensland Government's Queensland Citizen Science grant.



Learn how to help our most vulnerable beach-nesting birds at <https://birdlife.org.au/beach>

SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND BEACH STONE-CURLEW COUNT 2022


Surveyed between October **31ST** and November **6TH** of 2022. Together, we recorded:

27 Beach stone-curlews		112 Pied Oystercatchers	
6 Sooty Oystercatchers		238 Red-capped Plovers	



80 kilometres of beach covered

Thank you to those who contributed to our 2022 Beach Stone-curlew counts for **Southern Queensland!**





37 volunteers surveyed

50 locations

YOUR WORK IS PART OF A BIGGER EFFORT!

38% of dogs observed were off-lead





THREATS TO THE BEACH STONE-CURLEW

Our beach-nesting birds face a huge number of threats. Threat data is highly important and we ask that you collect this information with every survey! The major threats assessed in these counts were:

Dogs off-lead

Vehicles on beaches

Jetskis

Foxes


Weeds

WHILE OUR CURLEWS ARE WIDESPREAD, THEY ARE NOT NUMEROUS. YOUR COUNTS MATTER!

This project is funded by Queensland Government's Queensland Citizen Science grants and delivered by BirdLife Australia.

If you'd like to get involved with Beach-nesting Bird surveys, please contact beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au

Top right Beach Stone-curlew by Deborah Merry, left Beach Stone-curlew by Dean Ingwersen, Pied Oystercatcher by Dan Lees, Sooty Oystercatcher by Dan Lees, Red-capped Plover by Dan Lees, dog walkers on beach by BnB team and tire marks on beach by BnB team.



Science and research

HATCHING OF BEACH STONE-CURLEW *ESACUS MAGNIROSTRIS* AT KAKADU SHOREBIRD ROOST, BRIBIE ISLAND, SOUTHEAST QUEENSLAND, IN DECEMBER 2022

Terry Burgess, Volunteer, Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association, Queensland

“Since mid-November 2022 something rare in the Australian birding world has been happening on Bribie Island – the hatching of one of Queensland’s vulnerable shore birds, the Beach Stone-Curlew writes Terry Burgess”. You can read Terry’s full article [here](#).



Beach Stone-Curlew chick at 18 days old with its parents on Bribie Island (7th January 2023). Photo: P. Cuddihy

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.