
**EDITION 28 – SUMMER 2023**

## LOWER SOUTH EAST SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### Jeff Campbell, Friends of Shorebirds SE Inc. (FoSSE)

The 2022/2023 season has seen mixed breeding success for Hooded Plovers in the Lower South East of South Australia. Breeding success rates appear to be low this season, although having some areas which are rather remote and difficult to access (e.g. Canunda National Park) means that we undoubtedly are not aware of all nesting events. I use two examples to illustrate that while the area around Robe had an excellent success rate for producing fledged young, in the very lower section of the area towards the Victorian/South Australian border, near Port MacDonnell, things were very different with no fledged young produced at all.

The contrast between the results at the two areas could not be greater. The Hooded Plover around Robe managed to produce four fledged young from two known nesting attempts, three from one clutch on Long Beach in Robe and one from a nest on Matches Beach in Little Dip Conservation Park, south east of Robe (for more details see Facebook page 'robeneighbourhoodie'). It is perhaps surprising that the birds on Long Beach in Robe are successful as over the summer holiday period it is an extremely busy site with many holiday makers in the area and on a fine day hundreds of cars on the beach. This success may be due to a number of factors.

*Hoodie family at Robe. Photo: J. Campbell*


*Dog sign of the District Council of Robe. Photo: J. Campbell*

The District Council of Robe have closed the short section of the beach where the birds breed, in part to protect people using the beach and have erected signs advising that dogs must be on a lead on a section of the beach during the breeding season. There is also a dedicated group of volunteers in the area who spend quite a bit of time on the beach talking to beach users about the hoodies and erect temporary fences and signs at the nesting area.

At the other area to be mentioned, on a beach known as Woolwash Beach on the outskirts of Port MacDonnell, breeding success was abysmal. In previous seasons, two pairs of Hooded Plover nested on this beach but this season only one pair was present. This pair was known to have nested on five occasions in the 2022/2023 season, however unfortunately failed to produce a single fledged young. The pair laid a total of 12 eggs and one clutch produced three chicks which disappeared after around a week. It is believed that two clutches of eggs were lost due to high overnight tides combined with storm events, one predated, probably by a


Silver Gull or gulls, and one from an unknown cause. Similarly to the Robe Long Beach, Woolwash Beach is on the edge of a town and has a great deal of human disturbance. It is particularly popular with walkers and dog walkers. The vast majority of dogs on the beach are unleashed and there are no Council regulations requiring leashing of dogs. It is also regularly used by four-wheel drive vehicles.

Although the numbers of adult Hooded Plovers located during yearly November counts carried out by Friends of Shorebird SE volunteers over the past ten years are showing a steady trendline with numbers remaining about the same, it is concerning that a continuing trend in low breeding success may at some time lead to a significant drop in the overall population of the area.

*Hooded Plover nest on Woolwash beach. Photo: J. Campbell*

*Hooded Plover nest on Woolwash beach. Photo: J. Campbell*

## FLEURIEU NORTH, ADELAIDE METRO REPORT

### Jim Moore (Volunteer, TRM Beach Leader), John Cobb (Volunteer Regional Coordinator), Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula, Adelaide Metro

There was no breeding activity this season at Henley and Hallett Cove, offset by lots of activity at Seacliff/Brighton and West Beach, now appearing as Torrens River Mouth (TRM) on the portal.

At Seacliff/Brighton an unbanded pair (possibly new or the previous resident bird with a new partner) produced fifteen eggs in five nests with three chicks from the last clutch, one of which has successfully fledged at 33 days. We observed interesting behaviour possibly related to avoidance of predators including: two nesting sites in dunes, followed by one on the beach; a move to a dune site in a different location followed by a move of 1km to another unmonitored beach site where the chicks survived. After hatching the family moved 1km to a stormwater drain and then constantly moved between there and another drain or open beach, distances over 450m. Most observations noted that the birds were unusually restless and vocal.


*At Seacliff / Brighton. Photo: J. Cobb*

One nest was lost through tidal inundation and two others with evidence of fox predation. "FoxWatch" was deployed on two occasions and the conservation dog has been used to locate dens within the dunes, but the significant increase in the fox population and their use of the dune habitat is a great concern.

This beach is extremely busy most days with community events and literally hundreds of people and dogs, the majority of whom respect the presence of the birds. The City of Holdfast Bay previously implemented protective by-laws and this year funding for compliance contractors was included within their budget, resulting in more consistency. Council circulated information with dog registration notices about the birds which was repeated in a community group's newsletter.

Some excellent new volunteers have joined our dedicated group, but we continue to have a low number of very active volunteers. We have been trying to generate more participation through a pre-season get-together, scheduled group site visits, and a "pop-up" presentation on the beach.

This season at Torrens River Mouth (TRM) has been interesting despite, once again, no Hoodie fledglings. From four clutches, nine eggs and two short-lived chicks. In August the breeding pair (since 2018), "MR" and unbanded, nested for the first time ever known, on the north side of the river. This doubled the length for potential nesting sites at TRM and the required volunteer monitoring effort. About three weeks after the first nest failed (fox), "MR" and partner left the area. Five weeks later a new pair made the first of three ultimately unsuccessful nesting attempts, all north of the river. During their second attempt one adult was captured and flagged "RT". Their second nest site was also lost to foxes, days before hatching, despite a "FoxWatch" being present. In December several dozen fox dens were found along the nearby stretch of the river. The third nest attempt resulted in two chicks, but these were lost only a few days later, most likely to gulls. Off-leash dogs remain an ever-present threat. A large part of this was due to the Hoodies nesting north of the river where dog-owner compliance with the new by-law requiring dogs on-leash within 100 metres of a plover nesting site had never been necessary. Support given by the City of Charles Sturt has been strong this season, except for the apparent "education-only" policy of the dog-on-leash by-law, that has resulted in very little voluntary compliance from dog-owners.

We greatly appreciate the dedication provided by many volunteers, including Stevie Austin who covers for the VRC, along with support from Birdlife Australia and Green Adelaide along with the invaluable assistance provided by the Cities of Holdfast Bay and Charles Sturt with regard to site management and compliance.

## SOUTH COAST FLEURIEU FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER 2022-23 SEASON

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

The start of the season commenced on the 2nd of August with seven nests over the month, three of these hatching seven chicks and we managed three fledglings from this bunch. Though some of these nests were washed over, the


hoodies found some of their eggs and continued incubation, eggs are so resilient. After losing the next six nests to increased fox numbers and hungry young magpies, ravens and raptors, we had success with our 14th nest at Middleton East fledging two more chicks just before Christmas, making five up to this time.

We are on our 50th nest and 25 of those have happened on the remote beaches, where success for fledglings has eluded us so far, foxes playing havoc with nests along with tidal surges. Two chicks which hatched on the 23rd of January on Tunkalilla Beach fledged at the beginning of March and brought our South Coast Fleurieu fledgling count for the 2022-23 season to 7.

Birdlife Australia and Deakin University have had a program running that involves using Sonic Fox Watch Deterrents with Motion Cameras around the incubating nests and this was still in place on 2 of our last nests of the season.

*Goolwa beach nest fenced area with European Carp fingerlings as far as the eye can see. Photo: D. Thorn*

We have had repercussions from the flooded River Murray, with large numbers of dead European Carp fingerlings washing up on high tides along the beaches, these have caused aroma problems for the local human population, but the hoodies don't seem worried. PIRSA and local Councils decided to bury the fish in trenches high on the beach, so spotters were needed to watch for hoodies and new nests, one of which was indeed found.

In the midst of this, "Our Plover Coast Dune Restoration Project", has been in full swing, spraying out the Sea Wheat-grass and planting Hairy Spinifex and Pigface in its place.

On the 2nd of February, we experienced a storm with a 7- metre swell, this was devastating and washed out six incubating nests. As we knew this was coming, we were able to pull up the front of the nest fences and remove signage to the high back of the beach. We reinstalled all these fences several days later, hoping the resident hoodies would try again for a last nest, 3 sites on our urban beaches successfully started again, two of those were still in incubation phase at the time of writing this article. Three sites had chicks present through this storm, and they all survived, but sadly only one site still has two chicks on Tunkalilla Beach (Remote Beach) and they are heading for fledging. On the right is an image of Shell Beach (Bashams Beach site), the favoured nesting site of MS and partner, who have had many nests over past seasons at the edge of the foam area, high on this beach. This abundant foam and green slim, again, is a result of the Murry River flood. Photo taken by David Thorn.

We were grateful for a grant of $100 from the Victor Harbor Coast Care group. This was used to help buy rope for temporary fencing to protect native dune vegetation behind a nest fenced area at a Victor Central site. It has been left in place all season to deter short cutting through the fenced area on to the beach.

To further public awareness of beach nesting birds, FM radio interviews have been part of our South Coast program through the season, and alongside this, one of our South Coast volunteers, Roslyn Shirlaw, has spent many hours


developing a University of the Third Age (U3A) course, for the Victor Harbor U3A group called "Bird Watching," it gave a broad awareness about Beach nesting birds and shorebirds.

*What you have to do for Education! Deborah Furbank (BirdLife) holding a dog while a visitor spots the 3 chicks on the beach from the walking pavement behind the fenced area at Yilki. Photo: K. Bartley*

*Abundant foam and green slim on Shell Beach (Bashamms Beach site) is a result of the Murry River flood. MS and partner have had many nests over past seasons at the edge of the foam area, high on this beach. Photo: D. Thorn*

## KANGAROO ISLAND

### Jean Turner, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island

The 2022-23 beach-nesting birds breeding season on Kangaroo Island (KI) has been long and challenging for the birds and volunteers alike. Along the way we've had many 'highs' and a few 'lows'.

Monitoring kicked off in July as breeding pairs of Hooded Plovers, Pied Oystercatchers and Red-capped Plovers settled into territories. This early start helps detect onset of mating, first scrapes and nests. Failed attempts and repeat breeding have been common this season in all three species. In mid-March breeding has almost finished, except for a few Hooded Plover and Red-capped Plover pairs still with chicks and a new Hooded Plover nest with eggs. That's nine months of regular, repeat monitoring. Thanks to all the volunteers for this huge effort!

**First and last**

Our first Hooded Plover nests were found in early September, and the latest one in mid-March. Pied Oystercatchers started scrape-making in July, and the first nest with eggs recorded in late August. The latest Pied Oystercatcher nest


was found in early January. The first Red-cap nest with eggs was found in late August and a few pairs were still incubating in February; the latest chicks are now close to fledging.

*Just hatched Red-capped Plover chicks at Island Beach. Photo: D. Potter*

**Highs and Lows**

This breeding season was plagued by extreme high tides and storm surges, from late winter through to mid-summer. Many scrapes and nests of all three species were washed away early on, resulting in multiple repeat breeding attempts. Storms also completely eroded the nesting substrate of some Hooded Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers, forcing them to try less favourable areas, or even giving up on breeding altogether. Two Hoodie pairs with nests lost them to yet another extreme storm in early February.

Even so, by early summer conditions had settled eased, enabling many Hooded Plover and Red-capped Plover pairs to hatch and fledge chicks. Despite increased human disturbances over the summer holidays, Hooded Plovers at seven popular beaches have fledged 14 chicks so far, including 3 sets of triplets. At less frequently monitored sites Hooded Plover pairs have been seen with advanced chicks or pale fledglings, suggesting this has been a quite successful season for Hoodies in the end.

*White XU and fledgling on a short flight to Browns Beach Photo: J. Turner*

*Pied Oystercatcher nest with 4 eggs at Cygnet River estuary. Photo: D. Potter*

In contrast, Pied Oystercatchers had a very poor breeding season. They generally finish breeding on KI in December, as their chicks need 3 months of parental care and training to reach independence. If chicks aren't hatched by end of December the pair usually gives up. This season at least 97 eggs were laid by the 69 Pied Oystercatcher pairs monitored. Only 11 chicks were recorded and 9 chicks fledged. Loss of nesting habitat, scrapes and eggs to extreme tides and storm surges has had the greatest impact on this species. More details are available in the SA Team Oystercatcher March 23 Newsletter*.

**Strike up the Band!**

It was exciting to have BirdLife Australia staff - Renee, Grainne and Deb - here in October running workshops and banding Hooded Plovers. Three workshops at Brown's Beach, Vivonne Bay and American River catered to different interest groups, all well-attended. For many it was their first contact with the beach-nesting birds program and some have already signed up to help monitor!



*White CR in hand. Photo: R. Mead*

Ten Hoodies were banded at nine locations, 9 adults and an advanced chick. The adult birds were also fitted with engraved leg flags to help identify them on the beach. The leg flags are white with black engraving: SN, RR, SD, JP, HD, XU and AT have flags on their right legs; EM and CR on their left legs.

With identifiable flagged birds we can now confirm that breeding birds generally stay in their breeding territories over consecutive attempts until they succeed and fledged chicks finally leave. Some adults are 'empty nesters' remaining in territories even after fledglings have gone.

Movements of flagged birds have also been recorded. Some on long beaches have simply moved further than we thought, foraging and seeking better nesting habitat; others have relocated chicks around rocky headlands at low tide or taken fledglings chicks on short flights to adjoining beaches. Significant movements over greater distances have also been noted, one bird from Snellings Beach to Point Marsden and Boxing Bay; another from Hog Bay to Antechamber Bay after their chick fledged. Now to discover where these flagged individuals flock in autumn and winter. Likewise, will they return to the same breeding territories next year? Please keep an eye out and let us know!

The Biennial Count in November involved a huge team of volunteers, coordinated by Park Rangers Matt and Sam, and volunteers Jane and Jean. Nearly all 76 count transects on KI were counted, with a few lagoons missed due to high water levels. It will be exciting to compare results with the 2020 count to see how our beach-nesting bird populations are tracking.

**Old Dogs and New Threats**

Following public consultation, KI Council implemented a new dog management regulation at Penneshaw this summer. From November to the end of daylight saving dogs on Hog Bay beach must be on leash between 10:00am and 6:00pm. At all other times they must either be on leash or under 'effective control'. Most people have complied happily with this change and some walk their dogs on leash at all times. A vocal minority is unhappy and may try to change the regulation. Monitoring volunteers sincerely hope this regulation will be retained and even extended to other sites.

Beach Daisy (*Arctotheca populifolia*) is a new threat discovered recently at Pennington Bay on the south coast. Not recorded previously on KI, it was probably washed in via storms from further west along the SA coast. This 'highly invasive red alert' weed can spread rapidly over prime sandy beach habitat, preventing nesting. It tolerates salt spray and even brief tidal inundation. The single plant has been removed, but the challenge now it to find and control other infestations before it establishes around our coast.

*Beach Daisy plant at Pennington Bay. Photo: J. Turner*


Another emerging threat is helicopters being landed on beaches where Hooded Plovers and other beach-nesting birds breed. Recently a volunteer monitoring at Snellings Beach saw a helicopter land on the beach, drop off passengers and pick up more for joy flights. There are no Federal or local regulations which specifically prevent this. Of course the Hooded Plovers and Sooty Oystercatchers promptly disappeared! Just like vehicles on beaches, helicopters are an inappropriate beach use with potential to impact on people, coastal habitats and wildlife, including beach-nesting shorebirds. We need to remain vigilant, keep monitoring and report threats!

That's it 'til next breeding season.

* SA Team Oystercatcher Newsletter are available from the SA Shorebirds Foundation website:
https://www.sashorebirds.org/newsletter

## YORKE PENINSULA WELCOMES NEW VOLUNTEERS

### Sue Abbott, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Yorke Peninsula

*Sue Abbott. Photo: S. Abbott*

My partner Jay and I found our forever home and moved to Rossiters Point in Moonta Bay just over two years ago. It was the beginning of our transition into finding a healthier work life balance and we feel incredibly fortunate to have a rocky outcrop in what we call our front yard.

In the first 12 months we noticed these "tiny birds" running back and forth from the sand at the top of the beach down to the water's edge but did not dig any deeper until I almost crushed three eggs in a nest at the foot of our stairs to the beach. As it turned out, the bird - now identified as a Red-capped Plover appeared to have a broken wing and we were not sure what we should do to help. Seasoned volunteers would understand this to be a distraction display intended to lead us away from the nest.

This nest turned out to be within centimetres of where we had been tracking back and forth for a lot of the day. We were shocked and went to find some traffic cones in the shed in order to protect the nest. Once again, I now know this is not best practice as it would have resulted in obscuring some of their line of sight. At the same time, I jumped onto Google to find out more about these little birds. I found the Hooded Plover Volunteers website and signed up immediately.

It is early days but already I have been fortunate to meet Nanou, our Yorke Peninsula co-ordinator, Kasun, Janet and long term Moonta volunteers Steve and Rose. Everyone has warmly welcomed us to the Hoodie community.


Nanou kindly visited us in December and joined us on a beach walk to Port Hughes. Together we spotted JP nesting. Many of you may you know this pair have had a difficult time in recent years. The nest hatched but sadly we lost them one by one over the following weeks. The last was lost in mid February, just days short of being ready to fly. It's tough to watch and I can only imagine the frustration of those of you have been doing their best to protect these little ones for many years.

As my work life begins to ease in the coming years, Jay and I very much look forward to becoming more involved members of the community and doing what we can to help protect both the Hoodies and the Red-capped Plovers.

## EYRE PENINSULA

### Rachael Kannussaar, Landscape Officer, Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board

**Reaping the rewards of targeted intervention – Redcliffs Camp Beach.** Increased monitoring of 25 priority Hooded Plover nesting territories on Eyre Peninsula between Ceduna on the west coast and Cowell on the east coast, has continued during the 2022-23 Hooded Plover nesting season as part of the Australian Government's National Landcare Program through a BirdLife project, and our Saltmarsh Threat Abatement and Recovery project.

Consecutive years of regular monitoring by BirdLife volunteers and Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board staff combined with the use of remote sensing cameras has certainly helped us to unravel the likely causes of nest and chick failure across different nesting locations in our region.

Redcliffs Camp Beach, located south of Tumby Bay, has been monitored by BirdLife volunteers for a number of years. Regular monitoring has shown that while fledglings had been confirmed at this nesting territory in the past, no success had been recorded since 2017 - which was of concern.


*Fox finds and removes buried 1080 bait. Photo: R. Kannussaar*

Prior to the 2021-22 nesting season, the EP Landscape Board made the decision to commence some targeted intervention work at this nesting territory, with the goal to improve the number of nests reaching the hatching stage and chicks successfully fledging.

***Targeted predator control – a focus on foxes and cats.*** Foxes are a particular threat to the success of Hooded Plovers that we are concerned about in our region, including at Redcliffs Beach. Fox tracks were regularly recorded during monitoring visits and also close to failed nests. As foxes are a threat that we can target (unlike the high tides!), Landscape Officers implemented targeted fox control programs in Autumn 2021, Spring 2021 and Autumn 2022, in conjunction with landholders adjacent to the coast. While we couldn't lay baits as close to Redcliffs Beach as we would have ideally have liked (because of 1080 guidelines regarding the


minimum distance requirements from dwellings) we did achieve successful bait uptake along the coast, with a total of 29 baits taken across the three programs.

Landscape Officers have also trialed using canid pest ejectors (CPEs) adjacent to Redcliff's Beach. CPEs can be safely installed closer to dwellings, providing an option for closer control to be undertaken. Two stations were established during the 2022-23 nesting season and remote sensing cameras have confirmed that so far each station has been triggered by a fox once

In addition to foxes, feral cats were also a concern in the area. Landscape staff and BirdLife volunteers received intel from landholders that cats had been sighted in the vicinity of Redcliffs Beach. Interestingly, cat prints were not picked up along the coast during monitoring. This may suggest the presence/absence of prints may not be a great indicator for the presence/absence of cats in the sandy coastal environment.


*Fox triggers canine pest injector at Redcliifs Beach. Photo: R. Kannussaar*

A decision was made to act on landholder intel and engage a contractor to implement a trapping program. The first program was undertaken in Spring 2021 during the 2021-22 nesting season and the second in June 2022 prior to the 2022-23 nesting season.

*Contractor setting cat trap. Photo: R. Kannussaar*

As cats are known to travel large distances, traps were placed along a 13 km section of coastline, which would also benefit other Hooded Plover nesting territories adjoining Redcliffs Beach. A series of traps were set simultaneously amongst coastal vegetation for a minimum period of 4 days/3 nights targeting cold spells. Six cats were successfully caught across both programs, with four cats caught adjacent to Redcliffs Beach!

***Improving communication and on beach protection.*** Implementing active management in the form of on beach fencing and signage to protect nests and chicks is not always possible or required in our remote region, however, there are certain locations such as Redcliffs Beach where this type of intervention could increase the level of protection for nests and chicks.

Redcliffs Camp is located at the southern end of Redcliffs Beach and is a formal campsite used by school groups and campers. An informal bush camping site is located at the northern end of the beach, also used by day visitors. There are no dog restrictions at this location and the beach is accessible to off road vehicles.



*Dog lead and chick feeding zone sign. Photo: R. Kannussaar*

With the District Council of Tumby Bay's approval, flanking signage was installed during the 2021-22 nesting season to help beach users identify which section of the beach to avoid during the nesting phase. *Chick feeding zone ahead* signs were also installed at beach access points as soon as chicks were confirmed. To try something different, dog leads were provided for dog owners to borrow. Despite one lead being borrowed 'permanently', this strategy seemed to work well and helped encourage beach users to leash their dog when accessing the beach.

Similar strategies were implemented during the 2022-23 nesting season, however after three failed nesting attempts, nest site fencing was added to the mix with the hope this would increase the level of protection for nests located in a vulnerable position close to the Redcliffs campsite.

***Intervention strategies lead to success.*** Following four years of repeated failed nesting attempts, the Redcliffs Beach Hooded Plover pair successfully fledged five chicks from two separate nesting attempts during the 2021-22 nesting season. The combination of on beach management and targeted predator control adjacent to Redcliffs Beach has more than likely contributed to this high number of fledglings. It is worth noting that the fox and cat control in spring 2021 was timed perfectly to coincide with the Hooded Plover pair's first nesting attempt, increasing the likelihood of the intervention work providing increased protection particularly during the flightless chick phase. One more chick has successfully fledged during the current 2022-23 season - from five nesting attempts. Again, the timing of deploying the canid pest ejectors was ideal, with both successful triggers coinciding with the chick phase of this pair's fifth and final nesting attempt for the season.

Targeted intervention work has been implemented at many priority nesting territories across Eyre Peninsula with the aim of improving Hooded Plover fledgling success. The good news - we were thrilled to record 23 successful fledglings on Eyre Peninsula during the 2021-22 nesting season, which was more than triple the number compared to the previous season. While the numbers are yet to be confirmed for the current 2022-23 nesting season, we are aware of at least 16 fledglings so far and have a number of chicks close to fledging! Here's hoping for another successful season.


*Intervention in place. Photo: R. Kannussaar*