



EDITION 29 – SPRING 2023

INTRODUCTION

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

It's late November and it feels like it's already been a busy season! Our team is embarking on some exciting new projects around conservation of Fairy Terns in their south-eastern range. While the species is considered nationally Vulnerable, its distribution and persistence on the eastern mainland, particularly within Victoria, has been steadily eroding. Our focus will include a population census to better identify critical habitat sites and repeated monitoring of breeding colonies to identify key threats that need mitigating to improve breeding success and future use of these sites. As the colonies shrink in size, they become more vulnerable to predation as their capacity for group defence diminishes. It's time to ramp up conservation activity in parts of the range where this is occurring.

Several members of the team are also working to wrap up some important project work in southern Queensland that piloted a census for the Beach Stone-curlew and initiated some great partnerships with local groups and the very committed QLD Parks and Wildlife service (QPWS). QPWS have embedded some amazing regulations into their marine park plans that benefit migratory and nesting shorebirds, and they undertake coastal bird monitoring as part of their commitment to coastal management.



Beach Stone-curlew. Photo: Dean Ingwersen

In September, we ran a dedicated 2-day workshop for our volunteer coordinators in Victoria to provide some inspiration and motivation to face the challenges ahead. New coordinators were learning the ropes alongside long-term coordinators, who offered deep insights into what has worked best and what they've tried over the years. You can read more about this further below.



Volunteer Regional Coordinator Workshop (Victoria). Photo: Meghan Cullen.

The Beach-nesting Birds team also has some new members! Together we tackle similar issues regardless of where we are based and we work towards those big picture goals for conserving coastal habitats and birds, and creating informed communities and sustainable management. Below you will be introduced to new members of the team.



Spring is well and truly underway, with large flocks of migratory shorebirds appearing on the sandflats, breeding colonies of seabirds starting to form and of course, resident shorebird breeding season in full swing. Early fledglings are the hope in many areas, as long as erratic weather conditions and tidal surges can be withstood, as the warmer months will only bring more human-based threats. Our volunteer and land manager spotlight sections always provide inspiration in terms of what can be achieved within coastal communities, and recognising that the program has many, many contributors, working towards a sustainable future for coastal habitats and the birds dependent on these.



Caspian Tern breeding colony. Photo: Mark Lethlean

TEAM MOVEMENTS

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

The Beach-nesting Birds team has recently reshuffled roles as many of the roles within our team are shaped by the current grants being coordinated and delivered.

Sonia Sanchez previously helped us deliver a range of Hoodie projects including targeted bush walker engagement for reporting sightings of hoodies (and other threatened coastal birds like the Ground Parrot) in remote areas, coordinating Plover Appreciation Day for many years, Flight Initiation Distance research, and reporting for a number of our monitoring projects. Sonia is now moving on to a new role as Fairy Tern Coordinator, leading the coordination of targeted repeated surveys for Fairy Terns across SA, Vic and NSW at sites of historical and current occupation for breeding to 'census' the population (3 days per week), and coordinating more regular monitoring of colonies in Victoria once breeding initiates (2 days per week).

Deborah Furbank has been working as Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife Coordinator with BirdLife Australia and Green Adelaide for the past year (as a maternity fill for Emma Stephens), but now moves on to the role of Fairy Tern Coordinator, where she will coordinate regular monitoring of key breeding sites on Yorke Peninsula and western Eyre Peninsula (3 days per week).



Kerri Bartley will continue to work 4 days per week in her Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife Coordinator role, but will now also work 1 day per week coordinating regular monitoring of key Fairy Tern breeding sites around the Murray Mouth and in SE SA.

Dan Lees continues to work across both Beach-nesting Birds and Migratory Shorebirds projects, coordinating support for the Hooded Plover regions - Bellarine, Surf Coast, Otways and Western Victoria, and coordinating monitoring for the National Migratory Shorebirds program.

Meg, Kasun, Renee, Simon Kennedy (QLD Little Terns) and Melissa Sheedy remain in their usual roles as part of the Beach-nesting Birds team.

INTRODUCING LISA

Lisa Nicholson, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

My name is Lisa Nicholson and I am excited to be the BNB Project Officer (part-time) for the Project in south-west WA over the next two years. I am based in Denmark, WA, and my background is as a population biologist working on seabirds and shorebirds, with an emphasis on population dynamics and mitigation measures. I am also a secondary and tertiary educator in the fields of science and biology and am passionate about conservation, education and advocacy for our birdlife.



Lisa Nicholson. Photo: Patricia Gill

There are so many wonderful people involved in the conservation of our beach-nesting species and I am looking forward to my first breeding season in this role getting to work with them, and any newcomers who would like to join us.

INTRODUCING JULIA

Julia Roetman, Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia



Julia Roetman is a project coordinator with Birdlife Australia's *Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife* team, as a maternity fill for Emma Stephens who will take another year of leave. Julia has a wealth of experience in conservation and environmental sustainability developed through years of working in science education at UniSA. Julia also has extensive experience in environmental monitoring and research, having worked as a wetland manager in South Australia's southeast, a fisheries biologist in the US, and a research assistant supporting citizen science projects. Career highlights have included radio tracking salmon from aboard a jetboat, and spending weeks immersed in the wetlands and birdlife of the southeast. We look forward to working with Julia!

Julia Roetman. Photo: Julia Roetman



Volunteer spotlight

VALE JOHN HARGREAVES

Beach-nesting Birds Team

One of our beloved volunteers, John Hargreaves, passed away in March. John was an exceptional volunteer, starting with the Beach-nesting Birds Program in 2010 in western Victoria. An extremely knowledgeable man, but always wanting to learn more, John loved monitoring, protecting and advocating for Hooded Plovers in his patch, from Killarney to Yambuk. John extended his volunteer work to assist with Orange-bellied Parrots and Bitterns in the area as well. He loved his pet chickens, often letting them in his room and finding them roosting in various places, or they would roost outside his window.



John and one of his beloved chickens. Photo: Kasun Ekanayake



Yambuk estuary. Photo: Toni Ryan

An avid snorkeler, if the ocean called him, John would often just wander off and head in for a swim. He would also monitor the Hoodies while he was in the water and enjoy watching Hoodies behaving naturally, undisturbed by his presence in the water. John would even swim fencing material across to a small island off the main Griffith Island in Port Fairy!

John's contribution to the conservation of Hooded Plovers was exceptional and the data he collected has been imperative to our knowledge of the western Victoria Hooded Plovers, and the threats on the beaches. John amassed a mammoth 3,564 data portal entries since 2010, with 1,628 of those being in 2019-2020 alone. He knew every flagged bird in the region, with a soft spot for AB Orange (Alan Border!), and VU Orange. He also dedicated so much time to looking through remote camera images and processing these for us. What a legend.

Always up for a chat, and present on every trip the BNB team made to western Vic in the years he lived there. A visit to the beach was enriched by John's presence, his wonderful stories and historical knowledge, his cheeky sense of humour, and his willingness to learn and to share knowledge. John patiently showed us the best knots to use for fencing (over and over again!). He has been a mentor and friend to the Beach-nesting Birds staff and we will all greatly miss him.

Graham and Jan Thomas, Volunteers, Fleurieu Peninsula, SA

We have a keen interest in environmental matters, and have been members of The Friends of Onkaparinga Park for over 21 years. At an event around 12-14 years ago, we met Ash and Sue Read, Volunteer Regional Coordinators with the Beach-nesting Birds Program. Their invitation to get involved led us to volunteering in the Hooded Plover monitoring, work we continue to this day. We monitor at primarily on Maslins Beach and adjacent Ochre Cove on the Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia

To fit in with the Friends group work, we monitor these sites at least 3 times a week. Given that Graham is an early riser, his preference is to be on the beach[es] shortly after dawn. This enables a complete picture of what has occurred particularly when the wind/rain hasn't removed the many tracks which are able to be read as an art critic reads a painting. Monitoring is done throughout the year, as we believe it is critical data is obtained outside of the breeding season to better understand what these courageous birds do to exist. One of the highlights of our volunteer work with



BirdLife Australia, was being given the opportunity to release a new flagged fledgling by Emma Stevens in Ochre Cove. A real thrill, feeling the rapid heartbeat of this young bird, keen to start its journey to hopefully breed more Hoodies one day.

John Pearce, Beach Leader, Friends of the Red-capped Plover Bellarine, Victoria

Back in 2015 I was walking along the beach near our house in Indented Head when, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed this small bird flapping its wings in a strange fashion. It didn't appear to be trying to fly, but it was certainly wanting to attract my attention. Looking around for why it was doing this, I somehow caught site of two brown speckled eggs nestled in a small hollow in the sand. This was my introduction to the Red-capped Plover.

It just so happened that the conservation officer from the local foreshore authority, Bellarine Bayside was just a little further up the beach doing some planting. I approached him and queried whether he knew anything more about these little birds. He said he would do some investigation. Our conversation, combined with queries from other beach users about the Red-caps, began a wider conversation within Bellarine Bayside. As a result, Bellarine Bayside sought the assistance of Birdlife Australia as to what they might do to monitor and help the birds.



Red-capped Plover Banding.

Photo: John Pearce

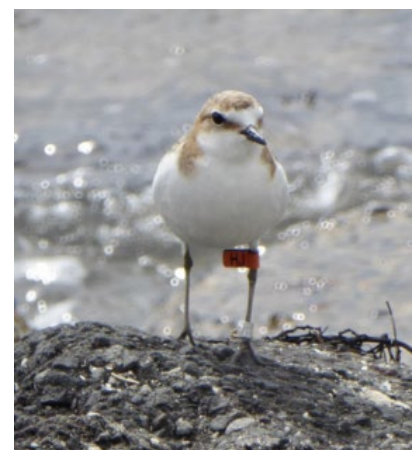
From this approach, a strategy was developed which included a couple of local volunteers, including my wife and I being trained to monitor and record data about the Indented Head Red-cap population. We were also trained in how to set up nesting fences and provided with handouts and booklets designed to educate the general public about the birds.

Over the years, since that first encounter with the protective mother we have continued to monitor the colony. The area has since been expanded to encompass another two nearby beaches and other volunteers have been trained. Bellarine Bayside, in conjunction with Birdlife Australia, have also conducted regular community information days which have been very much appreciated. Bellarine Bayside has also supported the on-going project with interpretive signs and advocacy for the establishment of dog on-lead areas.

Thanks to a series of Coastcare Grants, Bellarine Bayside has over the past number of years, budgeted for Birdlife Australia to conduct a number of bird banding missions.

This has meant that we can now be more definitive in the gathering of our data, enabling us to become familiar with different bird's characteristics. This includes the extent to which birds move around along the beach as well as the flight initiation distance of banded birds.

I've been fortunate to have participated in all of the banding sessions conducted in our area, which has been a real highlight. This is even more so when one of the first birds we banded, HJ, has proven to be one of the most persistent nesters over the time we have been monitoring her. She is also the most phlegmatic of the birds in the colony.



Red-capped Plover flagged HJ Orange. Photo: John Pearce



Land manager spotlight

David Martin, Natural Resources Officer, Bass Shire Council

I work for Bass Coast Shire Council as the Natural Resources Officer. We assist Birdlife Australia and volunteers from the Friends of the Hooded Plover (Bass Coast) and Hooded Plover Watch on Phillip Island who are overseen by Phillip Island Nature Parks. We assist through staff time in monitoring, managing, purchasing materials, on-site education of beach goers, creating media for local release, and Ranger enforcement.

I have been at Council for 14 years and that is how I have learnt how to manage breeding Hooded Plovers. However, as a fresh recruit with Parks Victoria in 1999, I did tag along in the footsteps of Bernice Dowling. That was my introduction to Hoodies along the coast of the Mornington Peninsula National Park. That was early on when the Mornington Peninsula National Park allowed dogs on leads, now of course this has been rescinded due to the data collected by volunteers in that region and analysed and communicated by BirdLife Australia.

Being a major tourist destination, one of the biggest challenges is managing people, especially during public holidays and the peak summer period. It is highly unlikely to have successful breeding during the crazy period but that doesn't stop the awesome volunteers, other agency staff and myself from trying.

The benefits of working together with BirdLife Australia and the volunteers, is that I get to learn a lot about beach-nesting birds and other birds that frequent these sites such as migratory birds. The passion everyone brings to the program is fantastic and is one of the joys of my job. My background is in vegetation management, so I have had to learn a lot. One of the achievements of our organisation, is that I was lucky to have a manager who had the foresight to include a budget for wildlife management (specifically for Hoodies). It was barely on our radar and he just did it without prompting.

One of my personal highlights working with beach-nesting birds, is the successes of some of the seasons, or even individual pairs that beat the odds and come out on top. It is also the rarities like a pair managing to get away two separate hatchings to the fledging stage last year. Also, I can't forget the fun times had whilst having a chat to the volunteers, which, if they were not involved the program would be impossible to run.



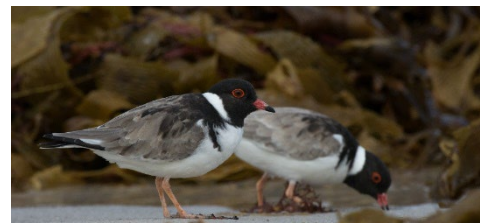
Hooded Plover chicks and egg. Photo: John Hargreaves



BEACH-NESTING BIRDS PROJECT IN SOUTH-WEST WA

Lisa Nicholson, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

The Beach-nesting Birds team were successful in their application to the WA State NRM Community Stewardship grant. This has enabled us to work closely with current stakeholders and build on the years of amazing effort to monitor the population and start to bolster their breeding outcomes, and to welcome new stakeholders for Hooded Plover conservation in the South West of WA.



Lights Beach, WA. Photo: John Anderson

At this stage the Project will operate in coastal regions from Yalgorup National Park (south of Perth) on the west coast, around to Denmark on the south coast. Our focus is upon conservation for our beach nesters, the Western Hooded Plover and the Red-capped Plover which are under threat due to habitat destruction, disturbance, predation and direct, unintentional crushing of nests by 4WDs, people and dogs. The BNB Project aims to support current efforts by stakeholders, provide education events and resources, assist with signage and fencing for nesting where required and increase awareness in high recreational use areas.

The Project got off to a great start with meetings held with stakeholders in four regions during August to highlight priorities for the upcoming nesting season. Western Hooded Plovers began nesting on beaches in the Cape to Cape and Denmark regions in September, keeping volunteer monitors and myself busy with ongoing monitoring and site protection. We've had a great time with well attended community workshops in Denmark, Walpole, Bunbury and Margaret River.



Denmark Workshop, 7th October 2023. Photo: Rosalie Melrose



OUR HUB HAS A NEW FONT PAGE!

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

Eagle-eyed (or Plover-eyed) volunteers may have noticed that the front page of our Beach-nesting Bird Hub (www.beachvol.birdlife.org.au) has been updated! On this website, we have all the downloadable resources that used to be on the BirdLife Australia website – our Education Kit, kids activities, resources for land managers, our newsletters and our new feature – our upcoming events! These resources (and more) are all still available when you login to the Hub, these are the basic resources that are available to the public.

Don't forget to keep your details up to date in the Hub!



SAVE THE DATE..S?!

We're still trying to secure funding and a venue for our 2024 National Beach-nesting Bird Conference! We know it will be on the Surf Coast in Victoria, and it will be either 17-19th, 24th – 26th May or 31st May – 2nd June!

Once we have confirmed a venue – we will announce the official dates on social media! But keep these in mind! We should have confirmed within the next few weeks!



2022 Yorke Peninsula Conference. Photo: Renee Mead

COASTAL CHAMPION WORKSHOPS

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

On Friday the 6th of October, we held our first of three 'Coastal Champion Workshops', made possible through Park Victoria's Volunteering Innovation Fund. With these workshops, we aim to target new and existing volunteers, looking to increase the reach of our Beach-nesting, Migratory and Wetland Birds Programs through cross-training volunteers from different programs and expanding our monitoring across different coastal habitats.



Behaviour change and awareness raising

This funding has allowed us, in collaboration with talented illustrator Chrissie Cloete, to develop a 'Coastal Champion Factsheet'. It includes illustrations of coastal birds from neighbouring habitat types. This factsheet makes up the free kit we were able to hand out to workshop participants, which also comprised Beach-nesting Bird, Migratory Shorebird and Wetland Bird ID Booklets, plus more.

Our first workshop, held in Inverloch, focused on beach-nesting and migratory shorebirds and was a great success. We have since hosted one of these workshops in Torquay, and the final one in Port Fairy.



Inverloch Coastal Champion Workshop. Photos: Melissa Sheedy

MEET YOUR COASTAL BIRDS

PIED OYSTERCATCHERS call out and even circle above you to warn you to leave, to protect their chicks. They use their long bill to pry open shellfish and probe for worms.

EASTERN GROUND PARROTS are perfectly camouflaged with bright grass-green colours, making them very hard to find within their environment.

AUSTRALIAN PELICANS' most distinguishable feature is their large throat pouch, used to capture food they can swallow whole.

HOODED PLOVERS are masters of camouflage and secrecy. They will quietly sneak off the nest, or if they have chicks, call an alarm for the chicks to run and hide.

RED-CAPPED PLOVERS are Australia's smallest beach-nesting bird. When eggs and chicks are threatened, they will try and distract you with a 'broken wing' display.

FAIRY TERNS nest in colonies along the beach close to their favourite fishing spot, where they dive for small fish.

BAR-TAILED GODWITS migrate to Australia every year from their breeding grounds in the Northern Hemisphere. They use wetlands and beach habitats during summer to fatten up, ready for the flight home.

SOUTHERN EMU-WRENS have a tail almost twice as long as their bodies. These secretive birds hide in shrubs and grasses, searching for insects to eat.

AUSTRALASIAN BITTERNS are elusive birds that hide among reeds and rushes. They have a distinctive booming call.

OCEAN
Seabirds, streamlined with short legs and webbed feet, have adapted for life in a marine environment. These species nest in colonies on sandy habitat and fish for food in the ocean.

BEACHES & DUNES
Beaches are sometimes both recreational areas and the only place beach-nesting birds can breed and feed. Camouflage is their best defence against predators, with chicks and eggs blending well into the sandy environment

COASTAL HEATHLANDS
Coastal heathland occur in areas by the sea where saline soil and wind conditions prevent the growth of tall trees. Here, shrubs dominate the land, the perfect place for elusive and shy birds to seek refuge.

WETLANDS
Wetlands are areas of land covered in water, either seasonally or permanently. While wetlands service as flood control and act as carbon sinks, they also provide habitats for birds to feed, breed, rest and shelter at.

The 'Community Coastal Champions' Project is supported by the Victorian Government through the Volunteering Innovation Fund



VOLUNTEER REGIONAL COORDINATOR TRAINING

Janine Thomas, David Hartney, and Warwick Mears, Beach Leaders, Bass Coast, Victoria

In August this year, 20 of us from Victoria attended a 2-day workshop at Capel Sound on the Mornington Peninsula. Areas represented were the Surf Coast, Bellarine, Otways, Mornington Peninsula, Mallacoota, French Island, South Gippsland and the Bass Coast. It was run by the BNB team with the aim of upskilling existing and new Volunteer Regional Coordinators (VRC's) and Beach Leaders. It was jam-packed with new information for all levels of experience as well as plenty of inspiring ideas and advice from existing VRC's. The connections we made will enable the ongoing sharing of information to help each other out in the future.

Meg did a great job hosting the workshop and took us through the Conservation Action Plan which began in 2019. This key framework builds strategies (e.g. to mitigate threats) to provide effective outcomes that underly what we do helping Hoodies.

Renee gave us a good summary on how to get the most out of the Hub including use of the document library and online training courses. These are continually being updated and are a valuable resource to keep us always learning. The ever-important raising awareness public events can be created on the hub in simple easy to follow steps.

Grainne gave us her key tips for inspiring new volunteers into becoming active ones. These include 1. Don't bombard with too much information at once. 2. Only give to the program as much time as you have. 3. Only have interactions with the public if you are comfortable doing so and make them positive ones. This is a new approach of easing new volunteers into the wealth of information and the strict protocols that need to be followed.

Grainne then took us through the methods and necessity of VRC's communicating with the BNB team. They are interested in our welfare, our ideas and of course, incidents involving the public or volunteers. Bird injury and entanglements need to be brought to the attention of the BNB team urgently. The importance of communicating with traditional owner groups in your area. A new publication called the "Aboriginal Heritage Identification Guide" would be a helpful resource. Day 1 concluded with us all unwinding and sharing a lovely dinner at The Milbri.



Photo: Renee Mead



Day 2 kicked off with a power presentation from Hazel Maynard, a trainer with Volunteering Victoria. She covered everything from volunteering insurance, law, recruitment strategies and retention to the nitty gritty of training, management and maintaining boundaries. Her personal and humorous approach sparked much discussion from existing VRC's which was valuable learning for everyone.

After lunch we split up into our regions for a planning activity where we brainstormed ideas for the upcoming season using up what was left of our grey matter. On the Bass Coast, we have the amazing past VRC, Stephen Johnson and Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator Kasun to guide us on what promises to be an incredibly rewarding journey.

Special thanks to the BNB team for looking after us so well with delicious catering and facilities and organizing and running such a valuable event.

PLOVER APPRECIATION DAY – PLOVER POWER!

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

This year's Plover Appreciation Day (September 16th) was all about Plover Power! Plovers camouflage their eggs and chicks, their chicks grow at super speed to reach adult size, they have unique ways to protect their eggs and chicks, fly across huge distances for migrations, avoid predators and threats...the list goes on. Because of these amazing adaptations and behaviours, we think they have super powers.

We asked Plover Appreciators all over the world to get involved and create their very own "Plover Power Card." The Plover Power Card was a type of swap card idea! So, people create their Plover Power Card and then post to social media, where people can 'collect' them all!

It was a great success – with the hashtag #PloverAppreciationDay receiving over 20,000 likes and the total reach was 1.8 million! An amazing result. Below are some of the Plover Power Cards created across the globe!

Check out the #PloverAppreciationDay on social media to see more Plover Power Cards and all the activities people got involved with on the day!

PLOVER POWER CARD

EASTERN HOODED PLOVER
Thinornis cucullatus cucullatus



VULNERABLE

© Photo Mark Lethlean



DESCRIPTION

With a black hood, white collar and red eye ring, hoodies blend surprisingly well in their ocean beach habitats. They have the cutest (sorry for the controversy!) chicks of all Aussie shorebirds, and are super parents, braving coastal gales, hot spells, tides, dogs, crowds of people, killer birds and foxes, all to raise a family!

PLOVER POWER SCORE

- Super Resilience: hoodies never give up! ✂ ✂ ✂
- Invisibility: camouflaged eggs and chicks 🥚 🥚 🥚 🥚 🥚
- Death defying: will feign broken wing to save chicks ⚠ ⚠ ⚠

WEAKNESS





BirdLife Australia's Eastern Hooded Plover Power Card




Behaviour change and awareness raising

Plover Power Card

WHITE-FRONTED PLOVER

Charadrius marginatus



DECLINING

DESCRIPTION



The White-fronted Plover is a small and inconspicuous shorebird that inhabits sandy beaches, dunes, mudflats and the shores of rivers and lakes in sub-Saharan Africa and Madagascar. Chicks are precocial and feed themselves within 2 hours of hatching from their eggs.

PLOVER POWER SCORE

- Deception: feigning a broken wing as distraction
- Heat resistance: adults shade their eggs as protection from the sun
- Invisibility: eggs, chicks and adults highly camouflaged

WEAKNESSES

- Dogs
- People
- Beach equipment

White Fronted Plover, Nature's Valley Trust

PLOVER POWER CARD

Great Lakes Piping Plover

Charadrius melodus circumcinctus



ENDANGERED

DESCRIPTION

The Piping Plover is a small, sandy-colored shorebird that nests on beaches around the Great Lakes. These birds are highly selective in their habitat requirements, needing conditions that are 'just right.' They serve as a symbol of a healthy beach environment and play a vital role in preserving the ecosystem. Piping Plovers help protect other beach biodiversity and maintain the cleanliness of the shoreline by consuming invertebrates.

PLOVER POWER SCORE

- Charisma:** Tugs on the heartstrings of supporters and beach goers all over!
- Camouflage:** Adults and chicks can blend seamlessly into their surroundings.
- Confidence:** Ability to defend chicks against gulls more than 3x the adults size!

WEAKNESS

- People
- Dogs
- Beach equipment





Ontario Piping Plover Conservation Programs Great Lakes Piping Plover

PLOVER POWER CARD

LESSER SAND-PLOVER

SPECIES SCIENTIFIC NAME



ENDANGERED

DESCRIPTION


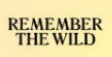
Small wader with a short, thick bill and big, black button eye. Grey on top with white underparts and a white stripe through the eye. Breeds in north-eastern Siberia. Found around the Australian coast but more common in Queensland and New South Wales.

PLOVER POWER SCORE

- BIG EYES:** All the better to see prey with.
- Coastal specialist: Feeds almost exclusively on beaches and mudflats in Australia
- Crab destroyer: Smashes and dismembers crabs for dinner


WEAKNESS

- Beach equipment

Remember The Wild's Lesser Sand Plover

Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*



Habitat: Beach

Population: <8,400 **Length:** <7 in. **WT:** <2.5 oz.

Umbrella Species



Actions to protect Piping Plovers protect entire ecosystems.

Cute-o-flage

Piping Plovers have advantage on stealth & cuteness when hiding & attacking.

weaknesses: dogs on the beach, dense vegetation

avg. clutch size: 4 eggs

American Bird Conservancy's Piping Plover



Science and research

FLAGGED NSW BIRD HEADS NORTH!

Jacob Crisp, Alison Kuitert, Kaitlyn O'Brien, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Shorebird Ranger Kaitlyn O'Brien said she was over the moon when the call came in from the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) reporting that 'Hoodie T7' had been spotted near Evans Head.



Hooded Plover T7 was found at Salty Lagoon Entrance, Broadwater National Park. Photo: Jacob Crisp

"Until now the maximum distance a banded Hooded Plover has been recorded moving is 376 km, and that was after 5 years, so this little one has certainly started at a cracking pace," Ms O'Brien said.

"We are not sure why Hoodie T7 is so adventurous as these beach-nesting birds are typically only seen on the south coast, so we are very keen to hear where it stops next.

"Our dedicated group of south coast shorebird volunteers monitored Hoodie T7 as a chick, watched it grow, shadow its parents and eventually fledge in January." Like its parents, Hoodie T7 was banded and given an engraved leg flag for identification. "Banding provides valuable data that gives us a wonderful insight into the secret life of Hooded Plovers and helps us protect these very special birds.

"Thank you to the ABBBS volunteer who spotted T7 and reported it. It's incredible to learn that Hoodie T7 has ventured so far and we are really pleased to see it looking happy and healthy.



NPWS Ranger Kaitlyn O'Brien at Tilba Tilba Lake, releasing Hoodie T7 after banding for identification. Photo: NPWS

"It's extremely rewarding to know that our work protecting these birds during the nesting season pays off, and that we are contributing to the survival of this species," Ms O'Brien said.



Science and research

Hooded Plovers are listed as Critically Endangered in New South Wales. The BirdLife Australia Hooded Plover Biennial Count puts the current NSW population at only 65 birds. Despite their distinct black, white and red colouring, Hoodies are difficult to spot during nesting season and are very vulnerable to disturbance.

Further to the above, after being spotted in Broadwater National Park, 850km north of where it hatched in Eurobodalla National Park, the young bird has travelled all the way back down to Wallaga Lake, 5km south of its original location. So, in just a month it has travelled all that distance back to more or less where it started! Many thanks to the citizen scientist who submitted the sighting at Broadwater National Park to the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, and the #NSWParks volunteer who sighted the Hoodie again at Wallaga Lake. This data provides valuable insight into the secret life of this critically endangered species.



Hooded Plover T7 was found at Salty Lagoon Entrance, Broadwater National Park 2. Photo: Jacob Crisp

For more information on New South Wales's beach-nesting birds, visit [Share the Shore](#).

PUTTING ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE CLAY POT: BIZARRE OR NOT!

Kasun Ekanayake, Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

In June and July this year, we went back home to Sri Lanka for a long overdue holiday. With ample time on our hands and children being old enough to travel freely, we spent a lot of time birdwatching and visiting places that we were not able to visit during our previous trip. Although it was outside the migratory bird season, it still was great to go out birdwatching because it was the breeding season for many resident species. So, with binoculars, field guides and notebooks in hand, we headed out to the dry zone on a three-day trip to the Wilpattu National Park in the northeast of the island.

A couple of days in the National Park provided us with amazing opportunities to see mammals such as Asian Elephants, Leopards, Sloth Bears, Jackals, Sambar, Spotted Deer, etc. We also saw lots of different species of birds including Hornbills, Woodpeckers, Bee-eaters, Hawk-eagles, Owls, and of course ground-nesting birds such as Ringed Plovers, Stilts, and Lapwings. On our drive back, we decided to have a break for lunch near a large reservoir called Nachchaduwa Tank near the town of Anuradhapura. This is where we came across the most bizarre choice of nest site that I have encountered in my life!

While walking along the tank's shoreline, we disturbed a Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* that suddenly started circling overhead and dive bombing us with its characteristic "did-he-do-it" call. We knew instantly that we were near its nest and so we switched into nest search mode because we did not want to accidentally step on its eggs. This shoreline was predominantly covered in grass but there were lots of washed-up logs, sticks, and dead vegetation that could have provided excellent camouflage for the eggs. But we could not believe what we saw next as it had chosen



the most unnatural spot to lay its eggs. Yes, as you probably guessed from the title, it had chosen a clay pot that was abandoned on the shoreline, to lay its eggs!



Red-wattled Lapwing eggs in clay pot, Nachchaduwa Tank, Sri Lanka. Photo: Kasun Ekanayake

There are various factors such as camouflage and cover that underpin birds' choice of nest sites. In Red-capped Plovers, we know that some nest under cover for thermally favourable environments, trading off the ability to detect approaching predators early. Others nest in the open for early detection of predators, trading off more thermally favourable environments. In the case of this Red-wattled Lapwing, the clay pot provided better camouflage for the eggs and a reduced risk of inundation compared with nesting directly on the grass. Clay pots are known to heat up quicker in the sun so it would not have provided the eggs with a more thermally favourable substrate. The clay pot may also help to conceal the eggs from predators such as snakes which may have influenced this choice of nest site. Considering the above, it might be the best spot to lay eggs in that environment, even though we may think of it as a bizarre choice of nest site.



Red-wattled Lapwing, Nachchaduwa Tank, Sri Lanka. Photo: Kasun Ekanayake



HOODED PLOVER AND RED-CAPPED PLOVER BANDING AND FLAGGING PROGRAMS

Kasun Ekanayake, Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

We recently went to Kangaroo Island (SA) from 23-28th of October to band and flag Hooded Plovers, thanks to a small grant we received from the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation. We aimed to band at least one adult from a pair and target those pairs which are regularly monitored by nest monitors. We also ran a Hooded Plover monitoring training workshop at Penneshaw, with the aim of recruiting more volunteers. This was our second trip to Kangaroo Island in as many years and we are excited to be able to continue our banding and flagging work there! We caught and flagged 15 adults while we were there.

We also have funding from The Cape eco village at Cape Paterson on the Bass Coast (VIC) to organise one more Hooded Plover banding and flagging day which will occur before the end of the 2023/24 breeding season. We will target adults and fledglings of those pairs monitored under The Cape custodianship (pairs that breed between Harmers Haven and Undertow Bay).

We will use white flags with two-letter engraving on both Kangaroo Island and Bass Coast birds so make sure you keep an eye out for flagged birds and report on the MyBeachBirds data portal (those who are registered users) or email us at beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au.



A subadult Hooded Plover with white engraved flag. Photo: Mark Lethlean

In exciting news, we will be heading over to Western Australia (WA) in late November for our first ever banding and flagging trip beyond the Nullarbor! Thanks to a grant we received from the Western Australian government's State Natural Resource Management Program, we will band and flag our first lot of birds from the western Australian subspecies of Hooded Plover. The Beach-nesting Birds Program very recently spread its wings to WA and we now have a dedicated staff member (see introduction above) delivering monitoring training workshops and training volunteers to monitor beach-nesting birds. With more eyes on the ground, this banding and flagging of Hooded Plovers will provide us with valuable insight into their movements especially given the western Australian subspecies use beaches and inland salt lakes for breeding.

We will be using blue flags with two-letter engraving and we would love for you to keep an eye out and report sightings of flagged birds to us.



Blue leg flags. Photo: Grainne Maguire



Science and research

We also had a Red-capped Plover banding session in Bellarine Bayside (VIC), thanks to a Coastcare Victoria Community Grant and Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management. We were able to catch three adult Red-caps, one male and two female. We have a second banding session that will be undertaken during this season.



Adult male Red-capped Plover "OH". Photo: John Pearce

BEACH STONE-CURLEW AND LITTLE TERN MONITORING IN QUEENSLAND

Simon Kennedy, Wetland and Coastal Birds Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

The results are in from the Southern Queensland Beach Stone-curlew counts in March and October/November 2022. The survey network found 18 birds in March and 33 in October/November, with both surveys locating one bird for about every 3-4 km of coastline searched. The highest densities were in the Birdlife Capricorn branch area. Only three juveniles were found; we will have to investigate this further with a group of regularly monitored pairs to see if this apparent low rate of reproduction is real.

Workshops were held in Yeppoon, Elliott Heads (near Bundaberg), Hervey Bay, Bribie Island, Manly and online during 2022 and all resulted in new information on the species. The surveys ranged from long walks on ocean beaches such as Mazz on Moore Park Beach (with a Beach Stone-curlew right at the end!) and Trevor Graham's kayaking expedition up the Elliott River.



Mouth of the relatively undisturbed Jenny Lind Creek in Eurimbula National Park, home to a pair of Beach Stone-curlews. Photo: Simon Kennedy



Science and research

The project increased attention on the species resulting in records that we would not have received otherwise, as the network grows to include local people that were not regular birdwatchers. Beach Stone-curlews were not reported during surveys at Point Vernon near Hervey Bay in the Birdlife Bundaberg branch region but were subsequently found there and reported directly to Birdlife by survey participants. Other sightings were reported directly to us from nearby Urangan and River Heads, sites not covered in the surveys giving us new monitoring sites for the future. Follow up work by the Allan Briggs and Sari Beasley from the Capricornia branch has confirmed that the Keppel Islands are a valuable refuge for the birds. A well-known pair at Kakadu Beach on Bribie produced young as they frequently have in recent years, possibly benefiting from the protection of the site from disturbance.

Monitoring of Little Tern nesting colonies began in late 2022, with three colonies watched by LARC Tours at Seventeen Seventy and another five in North Queensland. Little Terns in this area are the "Tasman Little Tern" (subspecies *placens*) and it is under review for Vulnerable status nationally under the EPBC Act, with as few as 1200 adult birds estimated to exist. Little Terns are hard to track, as they can shift locations and vary greatly in numbers between years but these colonies were followed every few days by a tough band of volunteers through the latter part of last year. The colonies were small, with only 40 nests found in total and 9 young produced.

Quadbike tracks were observed at four of the five North Queensland colonies, despite their use above the high-tide mark being illegal under council regulations. The most successful colony was little-known Cassady Beach near Ingham with four young, and also notable was a single plucky pair at Wongaling Beach in the Mission Beach area, which was watched by a team of volunteers and raised a chick. The chick even had a small adventure, when it froze upon being discovered by well-meaning folk who took it to the local wildlife shelter, who promptly returned the unharmed bird to its parents! The monitoring will continue this year. At the time of writing this article, the first Little Terns have arrived at Seventeen Seventy.



Naomi Epong from the Mandubarra Rangers in North Queensland with a Birdlife sign at a Little Tern colony on North Kurrimine Beach near Innisfail. Photo: James Epong



*Some Qld beaches are under heavy pressure-Rainbow Beach.
Photo: Simon Kennedy*



*Baby Wongaling" readying to fly at Mission Beach. Photo:
Simon Kennedy*



Science and research

HOODED PLOVER ENTANGLEMENT AND RESCUE ALDINGA WASHPOOL

Kerri Bartley, Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

Aldinga Washpool resident Hoodie 'SR' was observed on Sunday 6th August with a string of twine wrapped tightly around his lower right leg and a twig of dried seaweed dragging from the twine. The entanglement was causing difficulty in movement and flight and from the photo sent in, we were able to determine that SR needed to be captured and the twine removed as soon as possible.

BirdLife Australia has a strict set of protocols for deciding the steps to take in the scenario of an injured, entangled, oiled or sick Hooded Plover adult or chick. These protocols have ethics approval and are an approved process for deciding on intervention. The protocols ensure all the key approvals are in place, that we have veterinarian care lined up for the bird if required and a well-devised plan for each step of any intervention.

As SR's lower leg warranted intervention due to the twine restricting blood flow to his foot, we set about a plan, assigned the capture team and arranged for a veterinarian to meet us on site the very next morning. Beach leader, Dudley, arranged for several volunteers and veterinarian Jenny McLelland to meet us. We allocated 'set positions' for each volunteer to keep watch at beach access points and further along the beach to ask beach users to keep clear while we attempted to rescue the entangled bird.



SR with twine and twig dragging from right lower leg, Aldinga Washpool 6th. August 2023. Photo: Dudley Corbett

What made the mission even more challenging was that another 4 Hooded Plovers decided to join the party! Making a total of 6 birds flocking up and moving together as a group on the wet sand around the trap.

After 3 attempts at capture, SR walked through the trap without being caught but the seaweed twig which had been caught up in the twine had dislodged in the trap. However, the twine was still tightly wrapped around the lower leg. After the fourth attempt at capture, the birds took flight and separated in the air. SR and partner flew south and the other four north.



After an hour break to allow the birds (and us) to rest and refuel, we found SR and partner foraging along the wet sand back at the Aldinga Washpool. We managed to finally guide SR slowly over and through to be caught in the trap – Hooray!



Dudley releasing SR post rescue and twine free back at the capture site. Photo: Sue Read

Once SR was carefully removed from the trap, he was taken on a short car ride to the Aldinga Vet Clinic where Dr Jenny McLelland had arranged for a veterinarian to be on standby to assist with the immediate twine removal. Luckily it was a simple procedure and the vet cleared SR to be released immediately back on the beach with his partner all within 40 minutes of capture.

Soon after release SR was observed foraging undeterred and limp free with partner on the wet sand not far from the release site.

COUNTING FAIRY TERNS

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

We're thrilled to introduce you a new project focused on Fairy Terns! The Beach-nesting Birds Team has received funding from the Australian Government to conduct the first ever Fairy Tern Census across the entire eastern range of the species, from South Australia to southern New South Wales.

The Australian Fairy Tern (*Sternula nereis nereis*) is one of Australia's most threatened seabirds and is nationally listed as Vulnerable under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. This small (20-24 cm), piscivorous seabird occurs along the southern coast of Australia, from south of the Dampier archipelago in Western Australia and east to Botany Bay in New South Wales, including Tasmania. Like all tern species, Fairy Terns depend on both marine (foraging) and coastal terrestrial (breeding and roosting) habitats. They breed in colonies during spring and summer (in eastern Australia and south-west WA), laying 1-2 eggs in a nest scrape. Colony locations can shift between years and site selection is poorly understood. Nonetheless, we know that colonies need to be close to food resources as adults have to balance fishing out for food with parenting duties on land (incubating and chick feeding), and colonies are usually established in open mostly unvegetated areas covered by shelgrit and/or sand.

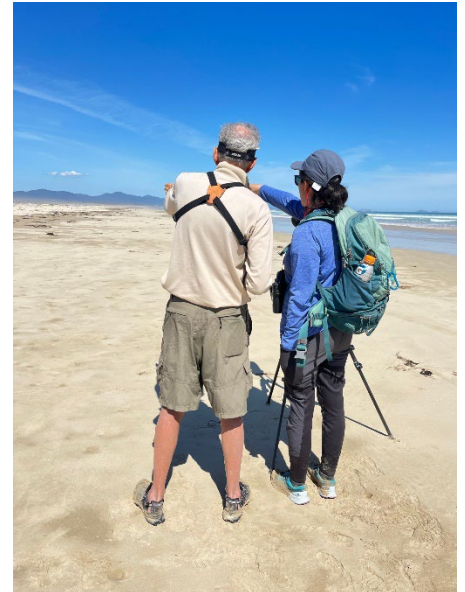


Adult Fairy Tern in breeding plumage. Photo: Mark Lethlean



Science and research

The total population of Australian Fairy Terns is currently estimated to be 6,800 – 8,100 mature individuals and has undergone steep decreases in the past few decades, particularly in eastern Australia, where state-based estimates include 900 – 1,150 mature individuals in South Australia, 250 – 300 in Victoria, 200 – 240 in Tasmania and 70 in New South Wales. Predation by introduced (e.g., foxes) and superabundant native (e.g., silver gulls) predators, human disturbance, increasing salinity in waters adjacent to colonies, irregular management of water levels and weed encroachment at breeding sites are thought to be the main threats contributing to very low breeding success that has led to the steep population declines observed. For instance, in South Australia, numbers in the Coorong have decreased from 1,330 birds in 1985 to 300 – 350 birds in 2018. Near Melbourne, within Port Phillip and Western Port Bays, colonies of over 50 breeding pairs were recorded before 1980s, but numbers began to decrease in the late 1980s and there are currently few records of breeding attempts within the bays, with only one instance of confirmed breeding success since 2016, when the Beach-nesting Birds team started to monitor colonies within the bays. To try and improve the outlook of the species, a [‘National Recovery Plan for the Australian Fairy Tern’](#) was implemented in May 2022 with the goal to increase the population size of the species and sustain a positive population trend by 2030.



Stephen Johnson and Sonia Sanchez counting Fairy Terns on the Sandy Point spit, VIC. Photo: Wendy Hayes

The aim of our Fairy Tern population census is to provide an accurate estimate of population size of mature individuals and distribution along the eastern range of the species. Following similar methodology to the [2011 South Australia Fairy Tern Census](#), our census will involve three repeated surveys during the breeding season to try capture different stages of the breeding cycle. Each survey will be conducted within as narrow a time window as possible across all sites. The dates of the three surveys (with one week buffer either side) are:

1. **24-25th October 2023** (17th Oct – 1st Nov inclusive)
2. **5-6th December 2023** (28th Nov – 13th Dec inclusive)
3. **1-2nd February 2024** (25th Jan – 9th Feb inclusive)

The first survey has recently finished, and covers 74 sites across South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. A huge collaborative effort with existent projects, volunteers and partners and new connections! Thank you everyone who has been involved in any capacity so far!

If you're interested in knowing more about the Fairy Tern Census, please contact Sonia (census coordinator) at sonia.sanchez@birdlife.org.au



Fairy Tern with fish. Photo: Shane Tuffery



Science and research

INFOGRAPHIC OF OUR HOODED PLOVER BIENNIAL COUNT 2022 RESULTS

Kasun Ekanayake, Beach-nesting Birds Project Coordinator and Melissa Sheedy, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

Check out this great infographic that summarises the results of the 2022 Hooded Plover Biennial Count! If you want more detail, you can find a copy of the full report here: [2022 Hooded Plover Biennial Count Report](https://birdlife.org.au/beach)



The Hooded Plover Biennial Count is supported by the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and delivered by BirdLife Australia, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program

Glenelg Hopkins CMA | Australian Government | National Landcare Programme | birdlife AUSTRALIA

Top left Hooded Plover by Hamish Burrell, left Hooded Plover by Geoff Gates, Red-capped Plover by Andrew Silcocks, Pied Oystercatcher by Andrew Silcocks, Sooty Oystercatcher by Dan Leek, remaining images by BnB team