



EDITION 30 – AUTUMN 2024

UPDATE FROM THE BEACH-NESTING BIRDS TEAM

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

Welcome to another edition of our Word about the Hood newsletter.

We enter an interesting time in the program, where it becomes important to balance perceptions. We need to celebrate wins and have a tendency to avoid dwelling on losses as we look towards adapting our solutions and remaining positive. However, does this lead to a perception that the battle is won for our threatened beach-nesters?

Adaptive management is in situ, we are very advanced in our overcoming knowledge gaps relative to many avian species, but we still have massive barriers to overcome, particularly in terms of effective predator management, and learnings around managing climate change impacts. The perception that there's enough people looking out for the Hooded Plover, or that it has received enough investment and the job is done, is a product of our successful communications, network of participants and some breakthroughs in threat mitigation which has yielded some great results early on in the game. Those initial wins are expected especially when working with a 'vulnerable' species and you're not in 'emergency response mode', so it can be rapid to see some early positive results from investment.

So yes, we've covered ground, had wins and we want to celebrate these but threats to coastal environments are escalating and diversifying and we have solutions to some threats but not others. Our work isn't single-species minded, we use a charismatic flagship to protect and heal our over-developed and over-used coast, for the benefit of all coastally-dependent species. Coastal habitats are some of the most undervalued and misunderstood because they look intact. There's sand and water, there's vegetation on the dune but look closer and you'll notice the vegetation is predominantly weeds, there are fox prints running the length of the beach (not in Tas or on a few islands thankfully but here you might see these replaced by cat prints), there are tyre tracks, plastic, dog prints, people, and the linear nature of the coast means you weave in and out of legislative boundaries and land management tenures, the majority with a list of current proposed changes that further degrade the quality of coastal habitat. Let's not count our beach-nesters (chickens) before they've hatched! Conservation is a long journey. If we start that journey and prematurely cease that journey, then we jeopardise the advance we've made in the battle against coastal threats.

BirdLife Australia will continue to advocate for appropriate coastal management and protection and we thank all our volunteers and supporters for their roles as citizen scientists, advocates and site protectors. Our upcoming Beach-nesting Birds conference will celebrate and explore the breakthroughs we've had in recent years for conserving this suite of shorebirds and seabirds and their critical habitats. We have some exciting speakers lined up and hope you can make it along.



WORK HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR US ALL

Meg Cullen, Beach-nesting Birds Project Manager, BirdLife Australia

There are always potential challenges with everything we do and that includes when we are out helping to conserve beach-nesting birds. Whether it be physical challenges, like aches and pains after an extra-long beach walk or emotional challenges, when encountering difficult beach-users. It is important for us all to understand and work to reduce the risk associated with these challenges.

The Risk Assessment for Beach-nesting Bird Volunteering is part of the induction every volunteer completes when they first join. It can be accessed at any time under the Document Library in the [Beach-nesting Birds Hub](#). We recommend revisiting this from time to time but here are a few key reminders:

- Only take on tasks that you are physically and emotionally comfortable in doing.
- Always carry a mobile phone with you when volunteering and make sure you have reception on the beach. If not, you must work in pairs.
- Organise a check-in person and make sure you let them know when you expect to return from volunteering and make sure they know who to contact if you haven't returned and cannot reach you.
- Whilst speaking with the public, approaching a nest or setting up protective signage/fencing, all volunteers must wear a volunteer badge/name tag or vest.
- Any injury or incident that occurs during volunteering must be reported to a BirdLife staff member.
- All volunteering must be documented in either the MyBeachBird Portal (monitoring), the BNB Hub (events) or an additional agreed method (guardian).

Of the current volunteer roles on the Beach-nesting Birds project, there is only one that involves interactions with the public, the Nest/Chick Site Guardian. However, there are times when volunteers speak with the public as part of their other roles and in order to ensure everyone has training in appropriate communications and safety, we will shortly be introducing a new course 'Interactions with the public (basic)' which will be required for all roles. This will be available on the BNB Hub later in the year.

Remember your safety is the most important thing and you should never put yourself in a potentially dangerous situation. This is of particular importance when you are engaging with the public, please remember that as a volunteer you:

- Can educate beach-users but should not attempt to enforce any regulations,
- Should not take photos of people, as this can escalate negative interactions,
- Should disengage and leave the beach as soon as there is any negative change in tone, body language or response from a beach-user,
- Should ALWAYS put your safety first, even at the detriment of the birds!

Stay tuned for future training in effective communications and stay safe out on the beach.



VALE JOHN FRANKLIN

Contributions from: Lois Greene, Mark Lethlean, Karen Wootton and Dr Grainne Maguire



John Franklin. Photo: Mark Lethlean.

Lois Greene – Volunteer of the Friends of the Hooded Plover, Mornington Peninsula Inc.

John sadly passed away on the 9th of October 2023. John and I were firm friends from the day I partnered him on Beach 16 on the Mornington Peninsula. We monitored two families of hooded plovers, Heyfields East and West. John was a true gentleman with a warm sense of humour. John was always interested in talk of family and friends and he himself was a devoted family man. John was a dedicated volunteer and was on the Committee before I joined the group. He also recorded the volunteer hours for many years. We kept in touch after we both moved away from the Peninsula, so it was a shock and surprise to hear of his passing. John will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Mark Lethlean - President of the Friends of the Hooded Plover, Mornington Peninsula Inc.

John was such a brilliant and gentle man, and his passing is a real tragedy for all who knew him. Personally, I used to love our weekly walks along the St Andrew's Ocean beach, talking about anything and everything, although I must admit that I did struggle to hear him on windy days as he was so softly spoken. His commitment to conservation and our environment, particularly the beach-nesting bird program, was so valuable. He was so involved in his community, no fuss and never any bother. He collated all our volunteer hours for many, many years which was an important and necessary contribution towards all our grant applications. I know John will be missed by so many in our small close-knit group and I particularly will miss a very supportive friend. He was always genuinely interested in my travels and photography. We send our sincere condolences to all his family and friends.



Karen Wootton - Secretary of the Friends of the Hooded Plover, Mornington Peninsula Inc.

We wish to acknowledge the wonderful John Franklin. John was a founding member of Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc. and a long- time stalwart of our team. Sadly, John passed away in late 2023 and our condolences go to John's wife Virginia and all those who knew and loved him. Though we hadn't had the pleasure of walking the beaches with John recently (after he and Virginia relocated to Melbourne to be closer to family), he remained a valued member of our team, collating monthly volunteer hours and celebrating any of our Hoodie success stories. It's a fitting tribute the first two Hoodie chicks to fledge on the Mornington peninsula this season are from beaches that John used to monitor. Thank you, John, your kind, gentle manner and dedication to conservation are recognised and appreciated. Your contribution made a difference, and we miss you.

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

John Franklin was a wonderful Hooded Plover volunteer, keeping watch over the intriguing pairs (and threesome even) at 16th Beach for so many years. He was gentle, kind and so giving. I always felt supported and encouraged by John, and I will miss him dearly.

Sylvia and Frank van der Peet, Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Apollo Bay - Otways, Victoria

Frank and I have always enjoyed spending time outdoors and both our fathers probably helped to get us interested in birds. Frank's father always had canaries while my father always had a budgerigar when I was growing up. We moved to the Otways from the Grampians around 14 years ago.

We didn't really know much about shorebirds, although in the Grampians we did have a Plover (Masked Lapwing) which sometimes nested on the side of our road. The more we learned about the local birds the more we realised what a tough time the Hooded Plovers had when breeding season came around. They may have evolved to nest on beaches but that was before we introduced foxes and people started to dump unwanted kittens in the bush. Not to mention the off leash dogs. While a lot of chicks are fed in the nest for some period of time, we were surprised to learn that the little Hooded Plover chicks have to forage for food from the day they hatch. The parents keep a lookout for danger and warn the chicks to hide, but they can sometimes be too late.

So around nine years ago we decided to volunteer for the Beach-nesting Birds Project in the hope that we could make a bit of a difference. Most people will happily put their dog on a leash or turn around and walk a different way if you explain about chicks on the beach and how they



Frank and Sylvia helping with last year's banding of one of the resident pair at Sugarloaf "White ZP" aka Zippy to it's friends! Photo: Inala Swart



have to feed themselves from the day they hatch. Although there's always the odd person who thinks their right to jog anywhere on the beach with an off leash dog is more important than anything else. This is quite frustrating if that particular chick was literally three or four days from being able to fly when that dog gobbled it up on the way past.

We volunteer near where we live in Skenes Creek and we keep an eye on sites from Thomases Corner and east to Sugarloaf, probably around eight kilometres of coastline, with generally three or four nesting pairs. During the breeding season we put up signage warning that it is Hooded Plover breeding season. We keep a look out for new nests and when we find a nest with eggs we put up signage and rope off the area, checking on progress generally twice a week. We talk to people passing by especially if they show an interest, and then if the Hoodies manage to hatch a chick we visit more frequently to try and reduce the risk of chicks being lost to off leash dogs.

I share the local Hooded Plover Volunteer Coordinator Otways role with Scott Hives from the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority. I write the occasional article for the local newsheet and post items to Facebook on Friends of the Hooded Plover, Otways Group. We are also very grateful for the help we get from GORCAPA especially Kristian and Inala. They always manage to find time to assist when asked. Whether it be delivering fencing, moving or installing fencing, weeding favoured nesting sites etc.

This year has been rather disappointing with some nests lost due to extreme weather and others lost to predation. One poor bird at Sugarloaf lost its mate, so the highlight this year was when a new mate took up residence and they started to nest. For me however, last year's highlight was when a very reluctant chick finally took to the sky and proved it really could fly. Frank's highlight is discovering that chicks we have watched fledging and being flagged, are being found in areas outside our monitoring area. "LA White" which fledged a year or two ago is now one of the pair at Kennet River.

[David and Sue Thorn, Volunteers, Friends of the Hooded Plover South Coast \(Fleurieu\), South Australia](#)

We both have backgrounds in Agriculture and have farmed all our married lives, first on the banks of the Murray River in South Australia and then for twenty years in central Victoria, so this has enabled us to appreciate our natural environment.

David's parents were bird lovers and during our married life the family farm bought farmland that had 405 hectares (1000 acres) of natural Mallee scrub with plenty of under storey, and we were able to put a permanent Heritage listing on it so that the bird life could be preserved.

On retiring to Victor Harbor 17 years ago, we heard of the plight of the Hoodies and decided to join the Beach-nesting Birds Program as we were both interested in this work and have become totally immersed in the welfare of this intriguing bird.

Living in Victor Harbor has put us centrally in the South Coast Fleurieu Peninsular Hooded Plover Region. This area encompasses from Goolwa going west to the Bluff at Victor Harbor and then going west again onto our remote beaches to Tunkalilla beach. Some beaches in this section have private key access.



We felt that the program on the South Coast was going strongly and was in a good position, and with a background of farming and an interest in conservation, we felt we could contribute to the program. We do our own fencing on the South Coast and have introduced a lightweight fencing system, with approval from BirdLife Australia, for our breeding sites that is quick to erect and easy on the volunteers. We have also introduced a daily Hoodie report which is texted out to the group of active volunteers, with latest breeding site information, many volunteers texting in an early morning report on the sites they regularly visit, so this information is incorporated into the daily text, so all volunteers have the latest information. This has also become an education tool for newer volunteers who have many questions about the Hoodies.

On ground Hoodie education has become an important part of our activities and taking new volunteers with us on our early morning rounds of sites has become a regular activity. As we have a suitable car, we are able to monitor some of the remote beaches that would otherwise require a lot of walking to reach the beach. Having used a Herd Program in our farming life to record Stud stock and complicated Dairy farm activities, we felt that as the Beach-nesting Birds Program was a scientific program, it was important to enter Hoodie information in the Portal and we have encouraged and helped other volunteers to do the same.

There have been many highlights over the fifteen or so years that we have been involved in this program. It is rare to get three chicks from the same clutch to the point of fledging and we had the delight of achieving this feat twice in one season in 2021-22.



Sue and David at the Tokuremoar West Breeding Site. Photo: Davey Widdrington



[Scott Hives, Conservation Supervisor, Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority](#)

The Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority was established on December 1, 2020, to deliver better protection and management of the iconic coast and parks of the Great Ocean Road.

Working hand in hand with Traditional Owners, the Authority's primary objective is to manage, protect, and foster the resilience of the area's natural, cultural, and heritage values.

Importantly, all revenue raised through our commercial endeavours is reinvested back into the coast to ensure the Great Ocean Road region can be enjoyed now and for generations to come.

Prior to the Authority's inception, a staggering 30 organisations shared responsibility for the region's governance, leading to fragmented efforts which created challenges in planning and delivering for the future in a coordinated manner.

Fast forward to the present, we currently manage a 65-kilometre stretch of coastal Crown land reserves – including coastal reserves, beaches, and town foreshores – from Point Impossible in Torquay, through to Elliott River in Marengo. Future proposed land management transfers include Crown land parcels in Peterborough, Princetown, and Port Campbell.

At the forefront of our conservation crusade is the Authority's Conservation team, comprising seven passionate environmentalists, who wake up each morning to eradicate pest plant and animals.

Over the summer months when the sun is shining, the team head out onto the beaches to protect our beloved Hooded Plovers, whose survival hinges on the team's tireless vigilance alongside dedicated local volunteers.

In collaboration with the incredible team at BirdLife Australia, the Authority has implemented the Beach-nesting Birds Program, guiding management strategies to support not only Hooded Plovers but also other beach-nesting shorebirds in the region.

Through innovative methods and steadfast determination, together we have identified and protected 15 pairs of Hooded Plovers along the coast.

Yet, the path to conservation is fraught with challenges. The surging human population brings crowds to the beaches, just as these vulnerable birds strive to breed. Remote stretches face new threats from foxes, cats, and predatory birds, adding complexity to the team's efforts.

However, amidst the trials, a shining beacon emerges – the dedication and passion of the volunteers. Spending countless hours monitoring the beaches, they provide invaluable insights and support to the conservation efforts. Their unwavering commitment is the backbone of the Authority's mission, ensuring the protection of the Hooded Plovers and the coastal ecosystem as a whole.

We have an inside joke within the team that one day we might go out to check the hoodies and find a volunteer incubating the nest, that's how dedicated they are. Jokes aside, volunteers are central to our protection of the Hooded Plovers, and we couldn't achieve what we do without them.



One of my personal highlights over the years was when the BirdLife Australia team came out to band two fledglings at Point Roadknight, Anglesea. BirdLife gave us a rundown on how to catch the Hoodies, setting the expectation that we would need to be very lucky to catch and band even one bird.

Within half an hour we had managed to catch the two new fledglings, a surprise to us all! My work partner at the time had a bird banded after him, EV White, and I was lucky enough to get one of the birds banded SH White, my very own bird! We then headed to Moggs Creek and on the first attempt caught an adult bird to band. At this point I left the BirdLife team who headed over to Breamlea to band another bird, a strike rate of four from four attempts. Amazing!

As the Hoodie season draws to a close, I am humbled by the journey we've embarked upon. Each day has brought us new challenges and triumphs in our mission to protect the Hooded Plovers and I can't wait to do it with you all over again. See you out there!



SH White with new flag. Photo: Scott Hives



Adult Hooded Plover being measured by Meg Cullen. Photo: Scott Hives



Science and research

NEW HOODED PLOVER FLAGS - GREEN

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

The Beach-nesting Birds program has been flagging and banding Hooded Plovers since 2010. It started with Orange leg flags, then we ran out of letter combinations and moved to White leg flags. We're now starting to run low on White flags, so we have Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS) approval to use a new colour – Green!

Green will be used in Victoria and South Australia only. If you see a flag, be sure to record the two letters, as well as the colour, as the letter combinations are the same! For example, we have ML Green recently re-flagged on the Mornington Peninsula, but we also have ML Orange who was banded in 2011 at Venus Bay, and ML White, who was banded in 2021 in Mallacoota! So be sure to record the colour of your flagged Hoodie!

If you noticed above, I mentioned that ML Green was re-flagged... what does this mean? Well, it means that ML Green has another identity! This 13 year old Hoodie used to have the identity of DS Orange – but the flag came off (which is rare, but happens, which is why all banded birds get a metal band as well).



ML Green. Photo: Mark Lethlean

Back in 2011, this Hoodie was flagged as a juvenile on the Bass Coast (Powlett River), DS Orange. In 2012/2013, DS Orange, decided that the back beaches of the Mornington Peninsula (Rye area) looked like the perfect habitat to settle down, after meeting a Phillip Island banded bird. This pair continued to breed in the same area for the next 10 seasons! Having 23 nests together, 63 eggs, 25 chicks, and four fledglings in that time together. One of those fledglings from 2017, MD White, is now breeding on the Bellarine (Point Lonsdale) and has had fledglings of its own, making DS Orange a grandparent!

Unfortunately, at possibly 17 years of age, the Phillip Island banded partner went missing in 2022. DS Orange remained on territory and found a new partner, where they have managed to fledge one chick last season, and two this season! But after DS Orange decided to move forward with its new partner, it shed the old identity (orange flag), and we've given it a new, fresh identity. So, meet the new ML Green! We look forward to continuing to follow the movements and breeding attempts from ML Green!



DS Orange before it changed to ML Green. Photo: Mark Lethlean.



KAIKOURA BANDED DOTTEREL TRACKING STUDY, NEW ZEALAND

Dr. Luke Eberhart-Hertel, Ailsa Howard, Ted Howard, Colin O’Donnell, Bart Kempenaers, and Emma Williams. The Kaikoura Banded Dotterel Project Team, NZ Department of Conservation

Banded dotterels (aka Double-banded Plovers, *Charadrius bicinctus*) are Nationally Vulnerable in New Zealand, where the majority of the species breeds on the South Island. Banded dotterels on the South Island primarily exhibit two migratory strategies: individuals breeding in Central Otago and the Mackenzie Basin chiefly migrate due west >2,000km to south-eastern Australia in the winter, while individuals breeding on the coast either stay resident year-round or migrate within New Zealand. Curiously, the Banded dotterel is one of only three native non-seabirds breeding in New Zealand that migrate abroad (other two being the shining cuckoo and the long-tailed cuckoo).



Tagged Banded Dotterel in Flight. Photo: Ailsa Howard.

Currently, banded dotterels are only managed on their breeding grounds due to lack of information about the threats the species’ faces at nonbreeding sites and flyways. Thus, an essential step in conservation is to identify how and where birds move throughout their annual cycle so critical threats can be managed. Recent advances in the miniaturisation of animal tracking tags mean that devices are now available for studying the continuous movements of small shorebirds, such as banded dotterels.

To develop safe and ethical best practices for deploying tags on banded dotterels we conducted an ethics trial in collaboration with New Zealand’s Department of Conservation between 2021 to 2023 in Kaikoura. In our trial, we deployed ten 1.3g archival

GPS tags and ten 1.8g Satellite tags with leg-loop harnesses on nesting dotterels. We then compared the outcomes of these 20 tagged birds to 20 control birds which did not receive a tag. In brief, tagged birds did not differ from control birds in:

- body mass dynamics,
- reproductive success,
- behaviour during the breeding season,
- annual return rate

Notably, five of the tagged individuals with tags migrated away from Kaikoura during the non-breeding seasons, providing novel information about the wintering sites and schedules of this previously assumed resident



Tagged Banded Dotterel, feeding. Photo: Ailsa Howard.

coastal breeding population. One male moved 700km north to Omaha Bay, one female moved 600km to Port Waikato, one female moved 900km north to the Houhora Harbour, one male moved 200km south to the lower Rakaia River and one male moved twice 10km north to the Hapuku River mouth where he remained for a week before returning to Kaikoura. Given the success of our tagging trial, we aim to ramp up our deployments at several South Island sites in the 2024 breeding season to study trans-Tasman movements.



Tagged Banded Dotterel. Photo: Ailsa Howard.



Science and research

NORTH QUEENSLAND LITTLE TERNS BRAVE THE CYCLONE

Simon Kennedy, Wetland and Coastal Birds Co-ordinator, BirdLife Australia



Little Tern Chick, Cassady Beach, Qld. Photo: Simon Kennedy.

So many North Queensland Little Tern colonies were submerged by storm tides whipped up by Cyclone Jasper in December. In the wake of the cyclone, BirdLife Australia headed to the last unknown colony, Cassady Beach near Ingham in North Queensland with some trepidation.

Did the young birds make it?

The answer was *yes*, the nesting area had just escaped the highest storm tide. But that wasn't all. Amazingly the terns were nesting a second time! We responded quickly and with some community

awareness and support. The colony produced another seven fledglings. By late January, the second batch could fly and had joined the juveniles born in the first November batch in the "creche" down by the water's edge where they were guarded by the adults. Thanks to Aramai Cassady and the Mungalla Rangers and the Forrest Beach community for monitoring, maintenance and keeping an eye out for them. The terns are back out to sea now but are likely to return in October.

Meanwhile, further up the coast near Innisfail, the Mandubarra Land and Sea Rangers watched over a colony at North Kurrimine Beach. This little group produced seven fledglings from just five nests, and rangers James Epong and Sean Kyle watched as the adults "herded" six fledglings under a single washed up stump! Again, the colony was visited with some trepidation after the cyclone but the fledgling group was found by the water's edge, guarded by the adults and taking short flights in between being fed.



Chick caught off guard when a passing adult (out of shot) bumped it! Cassady Beach. Photo: Simon Kennedy.



Fledglings in the sand, Kurrimine Beach, Qld. Photo: Simon Kennedy.

Both groups will share their experiences with the North Queensland Little Terns at the upcoming Beach-nesting Birds Conference in Anglesea in late May.



SOOTY OYSTERCATCHER 'OLD LEGS' AT RYE, VICTORIA

Teresa Madgwick, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula, Victoria

Sooty Oystercatchers, affectionately known as ‘Sooties’ intrigue me, perhaps because it is one of the few birds that the Hooded Plovers happily feed alongside all times of the year, or perhaps it is because they are a bit mysterious, timid and often flying away squawking well before a beach walker has a chance to get too close. I was happily surprised when I stumbled upon a family of Sooties when checking on Hooded Plover fledglings at Rye recently. They were more interested in feeding than worrying about me which allowed me to sit and observe and take a few photos! I wondered where they had come from and where they have been especially as one of them looked to have really old legs. Fortunately, when I was looked at my photos later, I noticed “Old Legs” had a metal band so I could find out some information of where this old bird has been.



Sooty Oystercatcher, “Old Legs”. Photo: Teresa Madgwick.



Sooty Oystercatcher, “Old Legs” and friend. Photo: Teresa Madgwick.

You might not know, apart from BirdLife Australia’s Hooded Plover and Red-capped Plover banding projects, other shorebirds are banded (with other conservation organisations, with appropriate permits) in order to facilitate research about the bird species with the end target being enough information to help inform their conservation and the places where they live, feed and breed. In terms of the actual banding, the birds will at a minimum have a unique metal band but also a combination of coloured rings and more recently, larger coloured leg flags with identifying digits such as YL or A8. The purpose of the coloured leg flags is to allow easier identification from afar and therefore more frequent records of resighting. Sometimes the coloured bands and flags fall off leaving the metal band as the only available method of identification.

After logging my Sooty Oystercatcher sighting with the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme (ABBBS), a very excited response was sent by the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG), ‘Old Legs’ is at least 24 years old, originally banded at Corner Inlet with a yellow leg flag ‘B4’. It has been sighted at Barwon Heads (2010) and several times on the Mornington Peninsula, the last time being in 2015. I wonder if “Old Legs” is showing his latest offspring, the feeding spots along the coast between Corner Inlet and Portsea and beyond.



Science and research



Sooty Oystercatcher, "Old Legs" 10 years ago. Photo: Mark Lethlean.



Sooty Oystercatcher, "Old Legs" and Hooded Plover. Photo: Teresa Madgwick.

In a strange twist of coincidence, a new resident Hooded Plover on the same beach also has just a metal band. We have a partial reading indicating the bird is female and banded as a chick in January 2017 at a nearby Blairgowrie Beach. Perhaps this is the start of answering another nagging question, where do Hoodie offspring disperse to, and who travels further, the male or female?

If a Sooty Oystercatcher, or Pied Oystercatcher with a flag is sighted, you can now log the sighting on the new Birdmark portal ([BirdMark](#)) or ABBBS [How to report a bird or bat band recovery in Australia - DCCEEW, to obtain the history of that particular bird](#). Hooded Plover and Red-capped Plover flag sightings are still to be recorded in the [MyBeachBird Portal](#) or for their histories, contact beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au

SHIPWRECK COAST – FLAGGED BIRD MOVEMENTS!

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

The Shipwreck Coast has had some interesting flagged bird sightings and movements of recent years.

There was the 2020/2021 saga between BV White and YT White! Where they were a successful breeding pair, until BV White was given the boot in the 2021/22 season and replaced by an unbanded bird. It's unknown why this happened, given that YT White and BV White had successfully fledged chicks in recent seasons. Nonetheless, a quarrel of some sort meant BV White had to find herself another territory.



BV White. Photo: Kerry Vickers

She had been unsighted for several months, but was found in the Curdies Inlet estuary, foraging on the mudflats with an unbanded bird. She decided to breed at Massacre Bay during the 2021/2022 season, a location we've not recorded Hooded Plovers breeding. With no success at Massacre Bay, BV White moved to the Curdies Inlet Estuary during the



Science and research

2022/2023 season, where she managed to hatch chicks, the first time chicks had been recorded here for over 10 years! Unfortunately, they didn't fledge. With no success at either of these sites, BV White decided to take over the territory just a bit further down from the estuary, at Newfields Point with an unbanded bird, where they had a nest in November. Unfortunately, poor BV White was found deceased on the beach in on 21st January and the unbanded partner attempted to continue to incubate the eggs. But on the 25th Jan, a new bird came into the mix, ZZ White (Right), and the nest was abandoned.

ZZ White is from Apollo Bay, flagged as an adult in Feb 2023 at Barham River with an unbanded partner. It was quick to make the move – as it was sighted at Apollo Bay on the 22nd Jan! So within a space of four days, BV White's territory was taken over by ZZ White. ZZ White and the unbanded bird remained on the territory, but no nesting was recorded, so it will be interesting to see what happens next season!



ZZ White. Photo: Kerry Vickers

In the meantime, while all the BV White saga was happening, volunteers managed to spot another flagged bird at Peterborough, which took up nesting in the spot between the Curdies Estuary and BV's last attempt. This new bird was XY Orange (Left), first sighted on the 8th December and was flagged as a fledgling in 2015 in Port Fairy. She was re-sighted for the first time in 2016/2017 season, where she nested on the Bass Coast (a significant move). But she wasn't seen again until 2018/2019 where she was spotted once on the Mornington Peninsula (no breeding recorded). XY Orange had been missing ever since, the next resighting after four years, was this one! So, we have no idea where this nine year old bird has been for the last few years, but we're glad we found her, breeding on the Shipwreck Coast!



XY Orange. Photo Kerry Vickers

This shows the importance of always checking the letters on your flagged birds on each visit, and not assuming it's always the same pair because things can change so quickly!

ENTANGLED HOODIE RESCUED AT MOANA SOUTH (SA)

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

An injured Hoodie was first reported hopping on one foot at Port Willunga 25th Nov 2023 and the word was put out amongst the volunteers, but the injured bird was not seen again until 5 days later at Moana South.



Injured Hoodie. Photo: Ash Read.

BirdLife Australia's rescue protocols were enacted, and we met on the beach at Moana South with a view to catch and rescue. Several beaches were searched but there was no sighting of the poor injured Hoodie. Again, on the following day several search parties were deployed across the entire Onkaparinga coast but still no sighting! Dudley, Beach Leader from further south, called later in the day to say he had seen the injured bird near Snapper Point but it flew off



and wasn't seen again. The injured bird was very flighty and didn't like staying in one spot for very long so we were quite worried how we would eventually catch the bird even if we did manage to locate him.

Four days later, the injured bird turned up again at Moana South with partner JR White. The pair had a recent breeding attempt at this site and we knew JR White was a female so it would be safe to catch the injured male partner (no eggs on board). Early on the morning of the 7th December we arrived at the Moana South site and to our complete amazement the pair were both sitting inside the fenced area! After setting the trap near the fence, the injured Hoodie was finally rescued, Hooray! Vet staff from Zoos SA was in attendance and successfully removed the entanglement. The bird was given treatment, a health check and was released back with partner JR White who was waiting close by. The birds were then seen to fly off together and the entire event was all over within a matter 45 minutes!



Providing first aid to the injured Hoodie. Photos: Ash Read.

Over the next days and weeks following the rescue, the Hoodie was seen to slowly improve and eventually weight bare on his right foot again and later seen running limp free! A fantastic outcome for everyone.

It took a massive effort by so many volunteers to search the beaches and then finally locate the bird 13 days after it was first seen limping. Thank you to all the amazing volunteers for their time to help locate the bird and the vet team from ZoosSA.

WHAT HAVE WE GAINED FROM FLAGGING WESTERN HOODED PLOVERS?

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

The 2023/24 Beach-nesting bird season in south-west WA contained many highlights for those of us monitoring our beach-nesting bird species, not least of which included the visit to the Cape to Cape region of the National Beach-nesting Birds Team in November. Grainne Maguire, Meg Cullen and Kasun Ekanayake joined, Lisa Nicholson, Chris Taylor (DBCA), Christine Wilder (Cape to Cape Birg Group), Kirrily Hastings (PhD candidate) and the dedicated volunteer citizen scientists who regularly survey the Cape to Cape shorelines.



Science and research

There were five days of surveying, capturing and flagging Western Hooded Plovers with their very own white letters on blue flags. In total, fifteen adults and one juvenile were caught and flagged on five beaches between Margaret River and Augusta. In addition, one chick was caught and banded, however was too small for a flag. The recorded movements of flagged individuals will provide a greater understanding of this threatened coastal population. This information, combined with genetic analysis of blood samples and morphometric measurements will provide new insights to inform ongoing conservation and habitat protection. It may also help to have this species reviewed and listed as *Endangered* in WA under both national and state legislation, which will provide more resources and legal protection for our Western Hooded Plover.



Banding team at Skippy Rock Beach. Photo: Lisa Nicholson.



Banding Team at Contos Beach/Bob's Hollow. Photo: Lisa Nicholson.

In the months that followed this banding trip it was exciting to see where the flagged birds were being observed in the Portal by BirdLife/DBCA volunteers. One of the banded juvenile Hoodies, KW Blue, was banded at Hillview North but was later mostly observed at Cosy Corner Beach (10km away) with one sighting at Cape Freycinet, 25km distant. An amazing feat for one of the first fledglings in this region in the 2023/24 season! One adult, CT Blue, was frequently observed on the same beach at Redgate North.

Volunteers and land managers of the Cape to Cape region will continue to keep a lookout for Hoodies at their local beaches in ongoing seasons. As more sighting data is collected for flagged Hoodies, a greater understanding will be gained of the movements and population dynamics of our threatened coastal Western Hooded Plover population. The WA banding program is supported through funding from the State Natural Resource Management Program WA.



Banding of juvenile KW Blue at Hillview North Beach on 21/11/23. Photo: Grainne Maguire.



KW Blue at Cosy Corner on 24/02/24. Photo: Lisa Nicholson.



Science and research

DOES THIS REMIND YOU OF SOMEONE? THE NEW ZEALAND SHORE PLOVER

Mark Lethlean, President, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula

I was recently fortunate to be part of a trip that explored the New Zealand sub-antarctic islands.

While in a zodiac, cruising the rocky coastline of South-east Island, off the coast of the Chatham Island Group, we came across several of these amazing Hooded Plover look-alikes. The Shore Plover (*Thinoris novaeseelandiae*) was once common along the coastlines of both New Zealand's main islands, but is now considered one of the world's rarest shorebirds, with a current stable, although critically endangered, population of around 175 individuals (2016). And this tiny rock, in the south-west Pacific, is the only place they are now found.



Shore Plover. Photo: Mark Lethlean.



Chatham Island Group. Map provided by Mark Lethlean.

They are so closely related to the Hooded Plover that they are, in fact, it's only congener species in the world, *Thinoris*. The morphological similarity to our Hoodies is remarkable. Apart from being of a similar size, they are also a grey and white bird with a striking red eye-ring, a red bill with black tip and an incomplete black hood. They are however a sexually dimorphic species with the female having more of a brown mask.

They feed mainly on invertebrates along rocky platforms and shorelines. Like our Hoodies, they have strong pair fidelity and consistent territories that are divided into nesting, chick rearing and feeding areas. The first two are strongly defended. Unlike Hoodies, they generally nest under cover, utilizing rocky shelves, boulders or crevices. Some have been known to use the abandoned burrows of petrels or the open end of a hollow log. They use various nesting materials and generally produce 3 eggs. Although their breeding season roughly correlates with our Hoodies, they will generally only make one further attempt after a nest or brood failure.

Their extinction on mainland NZ has been largely due to feral predators and so their survivability on this tiny island is totally dependent on the exclusion of those predators. The risks of a catastrophe are so high that there have been numerous attempts by local conservationists to relocate an insurance-population to other predator-free islands in the Chatham Group. However, the birds have never established elsewhere, always flying home within a few days.



Shore Plover Feeding. Photo: Mark Lethlean.



FAIRY TERN MONITORING MURRAY MOUTH AND BIRD ISLAND

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

In South Australia, two sites intensively monitored to determine Fairy Tern Breeding success included colonies at the Murray Mouth in the Coorong and on Bird Island, Outer Harbor.

At the Murray Mouth site, there was a maximum number of 48 Fairy Terns observed on 23rd November 2023. After a rough start to the breeding season, where the first 3 breeding attempts failed due to storm and significant rainfall events, success finally came from the 4th attempt in early January with nests observed and then a 2 week old chick first sighted on 30th January. This site certainly had its share of threats including 4wd vehicles, fishermen, kayakers, foxes and cats!

From 18 surveys, there were a total 19 nests, up to 14 chicks (which also included 3 Little Tern chicks observed being fed by parents) and a total of 13 fledglings recorded! Three of the fledglings were Little Terns and 10 were Fairy Terns, a fantastic result for a site with so much disturbance and so many threats!

We can't thank the staff and crew from Maritime Constructions enough, their willingness to support the project by providing boat transport to and from the breeding site was incredible! Thank you also to the Limestone Coast Landscape Board and Coorong National Parks staff for their support with exclusion fence installation, maintenance and threat abatement.

For the first time we were fortunate to have Ramindjeri traditional custodians from the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation join our program, whose interest and engagement with the project was greatly valued as they generously shared their Cultural knowledge with us.

The South Australian Fairy Tern Breeding monitoring project at the Murray Mouth was made possible with funding from the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

Bird Island, Outer Harbor Fairy Tern Breeding Monitoring Project has been running since 2018 and for the 2nd season in a row showed increased numbers of Fairy Tern fledglings. A total of 121 breeding adults and at least 22 Fairy Tern fledglings were recorded this season, up by 7 from the previous season. Again, chick shelters were deployed at the site to offer chicks refuge from inclement weather and avian predators. Another wonderful collaboration with land managers from Flinders Ports, Green Adelaide staff and members from Friends of Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary.

Thank you to our wonderful BirdLife Australia volunteers who carefully monitored the birds and captured some brilliant photos at both sites which greatly assisted with species identification and threats to the breeding birds.



Little Tern with chick at Murray Mouth. Photo: Mark David.



BEACH-NESTING BIRDS CONFERENCE

Registrations for our National Beach-nesting Birds Conference are open!

BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds Conference is aimed at sharing the latest research findings and stakeholder knowledge around beach-nesting bird species, their habitats, threats and conservation management. We have a range of presentations, workshops and field trips on offer!

Where: Anglesea, Victoria When: May 31st - June 2nd

Conference Program: <https://bit.ly/BNBConferenceProgram>

There is a two step registration:

1. Fill out a short survey with your details, workshop and field trip preferences and dietary needs at: <https://bit.ly/BNBConferenceRegistration2024>
2. Purchase tickets and an optional Sunday packed lunch: <https://bit.ly/BNBConference2024Payment>

Conference Registrations close on the 13th May – so be sure to register soon!

SUCCESSFUL FLEDGING OF TWO CHICKS AT LORNE

Janice Carpenter, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of Hooded Plover Surf Coast, Victoria

The headline-grabbing news for the Surf Coast breeding season was the discovery of a hooded plover nest at Lorne in December 2023, the first in BirdLife's recorded history! This was first reported to BirdLife Australia via the Hooded Plover Facebook page! The flagged bird, RA White had relocated to Lorne from Moggs Creek and partnered up with an unbanded Hooded Plover. When two chicks hatched in January, the land managers, (Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority) installed a People and Dog Exclusion Zone, a first for the Surf Coast.

This Exclusion Zone's success relied on public cooperation. Very quickly 27 wonderful people from the Lorne community volunteered to become BirdLife guardians. The volunteers were registered with BirdLife and did the online training and started their wardening on the beach within a few days of the chicks hatching. Most of these volunteers had never observed hooded plover chicks on the beach before so it was a fast learning curve for them.



Lorne Hoodie family. Photo: Bron Ives.

Joined by GORCAPA staff and about 10 existing Surf Coast volunteers, they were rostered on the beach every day for five weeks from 7am-9pm. This was a massive effort with two people rostered for two-hour sessions all day (14 people



per day) as the beach was always very busy. The timing of the nest meant that the birds had to endure the New Year's Eve Fireworks, the Pier to Pub Race, Surf Carnivals and more.

This new zoning allowed the chicks to feed undisturbed and the parents could focus on deterring other threats. Beachgoers enjoyed observing the family through scopes at either end of the beach and learning about the birds from volunteers. The vast majority of people embraced this minor change and happily walked along Cypress Avenue instead of the 75m stretch of beach. We had many visits from the Surf Coast Shire Rangers, the Police, Parks Victoria and DEECA personnel. A person in uniform definitely helps the guardians with their work! There was much more media attention than is normally the case along the Surf Coast.

Best of all, we now have two more fledglings to add to the population of these threatened birds.



Angela Berry using Scope. Photo: Bron Ives.



Lorne chick under Shelter. Photo: Bron Ives.

BASS COAST COASTCARE EVENTS

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

With thanks to funding from Coastcare Victoria, staff and volunteers were able to host three 'Dogs and Bikkies' events in Inverloch and Cape Paterson. This funding was able to help purchase dog leads and Hooded Plover stickers, which we were able to hand out to families so that they could learn about the Hoodies and how we can safely share our beautiful beaches with them.

It's great to have our fantastic volunteers attending these events, as they have the intimate experience of monitoring the local Hoodie pairs week in and week out and can share and pass on their knowledge.



Fake Eggs. Photo: Mel Sheedy.



These events are a great way to remind dog walkers to use leashes on beaches, and to plan off-leash walks by checking signs and being aware of which local beaches have nesting birds! We're also working on an accessible and up-to-date dog map with information on beach access regulations for dog walks along the Bass Coast area. Look out for this in the coming weeks!

Friends of the Hooded Plover Bass Coast and BirdLife Australia acknowledge the support of Coastcare Victoria and the Victorian Government for this event.

SHARING OUR SHORES – NIPPERS AND HOODED PLOVERS

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

The beach-nesting birds along the Adelaide Metropolitan Coast and Fleurieu Peninsula share the shores with many community groups and this season the Somerton Surf Life Saving Club (SSLSC) was sharing the shore with a pair of nesting Hooded Plovers. With an active surf life saving club and Nippers program, SSLSC was keen to learn more about the beach-nesting birds. Wendy White (Volunteer Regional Coordinator) and I ran presentations for three different age groups. Wendy shared her incredible knowledge of the Hooded Plovers with over 70 enthusiastic Nippers, plus SSLSC members and parents.



SSLSC nippers session. Photo: Julia Roetman.

Many of the children were excited to share their observation and what they already knew about the Hooded Plovers. They were also surprised to learn of the challenges the plovers face. The Nippers had the opportunity to see replica eggs, to search through images to find well camouflaged nests and chicks, and to identify potential threats. Wendy left the Nippers with three things to remember – walk on the water's edge, put your dog on a lead and give the Hoodies space.



SSLSC nippers session. Photo: Julia Roetman.



Dogs breakfast event, Bass Coast. Photo: Mel Sheedy.

RED-CAPPED PLOVER NORTHERN BELLARINE EVENTS

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

This season, staff and volunteers delivered several Red-capped Plover monitoring workshops and beach walk and talk events along the Northern Bellarine area (Victoria). These events were an especially engaging way to safely show everyone, firsthand, the types of quirky behaviours of beach-nesting birds!



Red-capped Plover Workshop Group. Photo: Scott Crabtree.



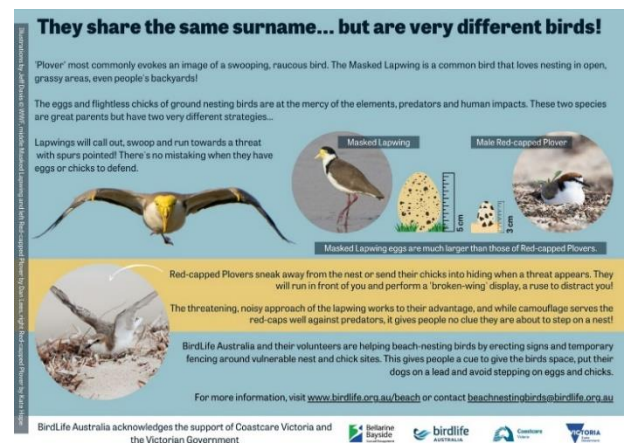
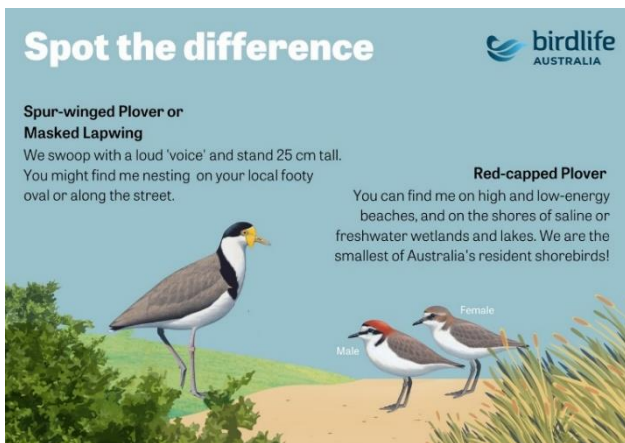
While this coastline is an important breeding habitat for these birds, it is also extremely narrow and regularly frequented by beachgoers and dog walkers. These walks and workshops are great in educating the community on the vulnerabilities of Red-capped Plovers who have a difficult time breeding and trying to passively defend their eggs from people enjoying the beach.

Red-capped Plovers are commonly confused for the louder and infamously known Masked Lapwing. We've been busy developing a postcard sized handout that outlines the difference between the two birds and helps raise awareness of the different types of plovers found within the local community. Check it out below!



Beach Walk, Indented Head. Photo: Shaya Kaartinen Price.

BirdLife Australia and Friends of the Red-capped Plover Northern Bellarine acknowledge the support of Coastcare Victoria and the Victorian Government for this event.



Red-capped Plover and Masked Lapwing Postcard, Front and Back.

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 2022-2023 breeding season:

[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.

Thank you to Felicity Hoff, our fabulous volunteer who assisted with the production of this newsletter.