Word about the Hood

Biannual newsletter of BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds Program

Edition 23 – Winter 2020

UPDATE FROM THE BEACH-NESTING BIRDS TEAM

Dr Grainne Maguire, Coastal Birds Program Leader, BirdLife Australia

YS White. Photo Grainne Maguire.

2020 has certainly thrown many obstacles in our way. With so many of our wonderful volunteers being fire impacted, and then Covid-19 isolating us from one another and from many of the activities we love, it has been a very tough year so far.

Our team has been working very hard to adapt to the times. We were able to run our end of season debriefs online (and for one region where connectivity isn't great, supply the presentation in pre-recorded segments). We were also able to get-together online with all of our regional coordinators from across the country in March, and this was a great opportunity for a long overdue catch up!

The 2019/2020 breeding season had its highs and lows, which you can read about in this newsletter. Across South Australia, fledgling rates were on target or higher than expected for the regions where we were monitoring sites intensively (through multiple National Landcare Program funded projects). However, Victoria had a very poor hoodie season in comparison. For many regions in Victoria, the Hooded Plovers had high failure rates at the nest stage, many due to natural conditions such as storm events, tidal surges and erratic weather. However, there were also those losses that could have been easily avoided if beach users were mindful of the signage and fencing around the vulnerable breeding sites. In a number of areas, this indicates that current restrictions just aren't providing the protection needed and we continue to explore how threatened species legislation can better assist the birds.

Our team has been working through the 12,046 Hooded Plover data records entered on the My Beach Bird portal for the season – what a phenomenal number of records! This is not even including the 701 red-capped plover breeding records, 988 pied and 215 sooty oystercatcher breeding records, nor Birdata surveys! Congratulations to everyone who has helped us build this wealth of knowledge about the birds. We've been able to increase our knowledge of sites used by breeding birds, movements of flagged birds, breeding success and for a subset of sites, know exactly how many breeding attempts the birds had, hatching and fledging success rates, and to develop threat profiles to guide targeted threat mitigation actions.

One area where we've gained greater understanding is within Corner Inlet. Here, 19 Hooded Plover and 59 Pied Oystercatcher territories as well as tern colonies, were monitored on three of the barrier islands over 8 consecutive trips in 2019/2020. In total, 132 Pied Oystercatcher nests, five Caspian Tern and four Fairy Tern colonies, and 42 Hooded Plover nests were found!

Despite all this nesting effort, only one Pied Oystercatcher chick fledged and one Caspian tern colony was successful. This is incredibly poor breeding success, but only the first season where we've had intensive monitoring of this nature. We certainly hope it is not the norm, as it would change our understanding that this system is a stronghold for breeding due to many of the islands being fox free and having very low human visitation.

We hope you enjoy reading this newsletter with reports from all around the country about the range of species being monitored, the efforts of communities to conserve these brilliant birds and of the unique issues some areas face. Keep safe everyone and enjoy a well-earned rest over winter!

Correction to Edition 22: In the June edition, page 4 under Volunteer Spotlight, a photo was incorrectly credited to Mary-Ann van Trigt instead of to Susanne Nikolajsen. Apologies Susanne.

Volunteer Spotlight

Les Montanjees, Volunteer from Kangaroo Island, South Australia

Photo: Les Montanjees; Hog Bay Beach, Penneshaw

Photo: Les Montanjees

What made you want to volunteer on the Beach-nesting Birds Project and when did you start?

I joined around August 2018 after attending a workshop with Renee, which was advertised in the local newspaper. I'd been a member of the RAOU back in the day and had taken part in several nesting projects for the Atlas, but they were all to do with bush birds. Then in the 1980s I did some field work for John Bransbury, author of *Where To Find Birds In Australia*, who was researching Hoodies and I wound up falling in love with them and the whole shorebird environment. Shortly after that a friend and I managed to get permission and a key to visit the ICI saltfields north of Adelaide and we spent a few years exploring the comings and goings of migratory shorebirds there.

After retiring, my wife and I moved to Kangaroo Island and I got involved in building our house and other things and did almost no birdwatching for several years. Then came Renee's workshop, my interest was rekindled, and it has gone on from there.

Where on the coast do you volunteer?

I live in Penneshaw, a small coastal village on the eastern end of KI. I monitor the main beach, Hog Bay. It's a frightening place for Hoodies to nest, being a tourist magnet and a favoured dog walking beach for locals, but there's been a pair that bravely pops out chicks year after year. I also monitor other beaches within a few kilometres of Hog Bay.

What sort of activities do you undertake as a volunteer?

To be honest, I'm not exactly sure what my status is with the BNB project. I'm certain I completed the monitor/citizen scientist training, but I can't remember (don't get old!) whether I've been anointed as a site protector and/or guardian. I do monitor and record in the portal the BNBs in my patch throughout the year and regularly talk to the public on the beaches, show them the birds, explain about dogs, help putting up banners, signs and a fence, liaise with DEW, Council etc. as well as my KI and BirdLife co-ordinators. I'm a skilled photographer and last year I acquired a camera with a humungous 3,000mm lens which allows me to get, for example, photos of leg flags from quite a distance. I'm just starting to explore its video capabilities and hope to be up to speed by the start of the coming season. The camera will, I think, be very useful for us as a BNB group on KI.

What has been one of your highlights whilst being a BirdLife Australia Friends of the Hooded Plover volunteer?

Well, there have been many. If I had to pick one I guess I'd choose helping Grainne and Renee band and flag a Hoodie on one of "my" beaches. I took a video of the procedure and when she was done Grainne allowed me to hold the bird and release it. That was a real thrill. Here's the bird, KM Right (White) a few days later. Sadly, it seems to have disappeared since about December last year, but at least we have a visual record of it:

Photo: Les Montanjees

Being a BNB Volunteer is one of the best things I've done in my 75 years. I hope there'll be a few more years to build up my knowledge and record it all. For the birds' sake.

Chris Willocks, Volunteer and Committee member, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc.

What made you want to volunteer on the Beach-nesting Birds Project and when did you start?

I retired from science teaching in 2010 and I was looking for an activity that included environmental work on the Mornington Peninsula beaches and National Park. By chance, I picked up a FOHP newsletter that was calling for beach walkers and it sounded interesting. After making contact, I was connected to two amazing volunteers - Val Ford and Diane Lewis who both mentored me on the beaches. Their amazing knowledge and friendship confirmed for me that BNB volunteering was a fantastic project to be involved with.

The added benefit of knowing I can contribute to a citizen science project that gives increased knowledge of the survival of Beach-nesting Birds was important. With increased understanding, we are in a better place to protect their habitat and keep BNB as a key part of the ecosystem.


Looking for Sooty Oystercatchers, other birds and whales from the clifftops at Bay of Islands, Sorrento. Photos: Alan Willocks.

Where on the coast do you volunteer?

I have a holiday house at Sorrento and have walked the beaches, cliff tops and coastal tracks in the area all my life. I walk early every morning for a couple of hours and see fantastic birds, wildlife, plants, historical sites, rocks and fossils. The walks are mostly on the lower end of the Mornington Peninsula from Blairgowrie to Point Nepean. Every day I see new things but I particularly love watching animal behaviour and stop frequently to watch any animal that will not be disturbed by my presence.

What sort of activities do you undertake as a volunteer?

My main role as a volunteer is monitoring Hooded Plover and Sooty Oystercatcher pairs over the breeding season. I watch the bird's behaviour and get to know individuals so I can sometimes predict the location of nests and chicks. Fencing, signage, data portal entry and talking to beach users while walking with friends and new volunteers always makes them pleasant tasks. Carrying heavy loads of fencing in soft sand and stairs ensures fitness is maintained but is not a favourite. Fortunately, I have a very willing partner that also loves walking and assists with the tough tasks.

Education about BNB and conservation is a very important part of our work. Consequently, I have visited many primary, secondary and TAFE college on the Mornington Peninsula to give talks in classrooms and meet classes for excursions on the beach for project work. I always take my basket of beach finds that never fails to create interest and enthusiasm from students.

What has been one of your highlights whilst being a Friends of the Hooded Plover volunteer?

Being a part of a fantastic volunteer group has connected me to like-minded people and I have made wonderful friendships and increased my environmental and conservation knowledge. It has also given me the privilege of monitoring the birds in the restricted area at Point Nepean where I get to see beaches and rock platforms in Point Nepean that have limited visitors. It makes me realise the huge impact of humans on the coastal environment and it gives a great comparison to the very busy beaches on the rest of the Mornington Peninsula.

The biennial BNB conferences are always a highlight in spectacular locations. I enjoy listening about the scientific work that has been carried out and making connections with volunteers in other regions.

Also, BirdLife has given me amazing training opportunities. In particular, going to Corner Inlet for BNB surveys has given me insight into the challenges facing wildlife in remote and beautiful locations but also to work beside the BNB team and to watch their dedication to scientific work is inspiring.

BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD 2020: JAN OLLEY, BIRDLIFE NORTHERN RIVERS

Jan's work to realise the BirdLife vision to ensure that native birds are protected and valued has been carried out since 1997.

Through her earlier work with Cooloola Coastcare and now with Byron Bird Buddies in association with BirdLife Northern Rivers, Jan has been instrumental in the local protection of shorebird nesting and habitat. She has instituted regular surveillance and monitoring of nest sites together with protective fencing and signage, with these measures being adopted by several local Councils on the North Coast.

In terms of community education, Jan has produced multiple bird watching brochures covering Tin Can Bay, Byron, Ballina, Richmond Valley Council areas with another in production for Kyogle. She has organised bird week celebrations and community education events, and undertakes regular surveys for Shorebird 2020, the Nightcap Key Biodiversity area and Latham Snipe project.

Photos: Anne Jones

BEYOND VOLUNTEERING: INSIDE THE BNB TEAM

Bronwen Baird, Beach-nesting Birds Team

Last year I was invited to join BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds (BNB) team to assist with some projects on a part time basis. I was delighted to accept for a whole lot of reasons, but I really didn't fully appreciate what a wonderful experience it would be.

Photos: Grainne Maguire; BNB team hard at work in the office!!

The BirdLife Australia office in Carlton (Vic) is in a building which I know well. 60L was designed and built to much acclaim at a time when I was employed as Information Manager with an architectural firm. Its Green credentials are long, and it has been the recipient of numerous awards of excellence for sustainability, so it was with much pleasure that I walked up the stairs heading to the BirdLife Australia offices on the second floor. The sun streams through the light well in the building's centre and the open design allows views into the offices on either side. Many of the other occupants of the building, including the Australian Conservation Foundation and Environment Victoria aspire to help the environment and the creatures that live in it. It exudes a sense of purpose.

More personally, joining the team was something of a dream job. I've been a bird watcher all my life from Junior Field Naturalists in SA to my most recent volunteering with the BNB team in the Bass Coast Region at Inverloch and surrounds. Joining the BNB team in their home environment enabled me to meet and get to know its members and to understand their roles and the complexity of the tasks they undertake but I was also stunned by the breadth of knowledge they possess and the range of conflicting pressures they face.

Field work, which is anticipated with much enthusiasm, takes up many hours, is completely weather dependent and takes staff away from home and family but, before they can even begin, there are a multitude of tasks to complete. Calendars, budgets and even tide charts need to be checked; bookings for travel and accommodation finalised for staff and sometimes volunteers; coordination with local Land Managers and volunteers needs attention; OH&S issues must be assessed and solved; equipment allocated, serviced, and packed and the all-important morning tea supplies arranged.

While this may sound mundane it's all happening while the team is getting on with its other duties: composing submissions for funding (sometimes at very short notice), research development, report writing, designing education programs for volunteers and members of the public, keeping the social media reports rolling, budget management, student supervision, data entry, the list goes on. All while juggling priorities and coordinating with other BirdLife Australia teams.

I learnt so much. Not only from these knowledgeable professionals but through the administrative tasks I helped perform: the time it takes to enter data, the essential need for accuracy in reporting sightings, the number of variations in GPS systems, the vast number of volunteers and Land Managers involved and their extraordinary commitment to the BNB programs, and the encouraging impact all that work is having on the birds we are all working to protect.

And I also learnt from observing and being a part of the ongoing interaction and cooperation with other BirdLife Australia teams: Birds in Backyards, Migratory Shorebirds, Regent Honeyeaters, production of the BirdLife magazine, memberships, reception, the online shop to name just a few. Staff on all these teams bring knowledge, experience and expertise to the vast scope of projects in which BirdLife Australia is involved. They are influencers, educators and scientists and their enthusiasm and commitment is extraordinary.

My work at BirdLife Australia came to an end but my learning curve did not.

While I was working alongside the team I became more aware of the resources that are available to me – to all of us. Websites, books, apps, podcasts, produced by BirdLife Australia and other organisations both in Australia and internationally. I've been inspired to learn more. The BirdLife Australia team and the part of it that is the BNB team were that inspiration.

BEACH-NESTING BIRDS HUB

What is the hub? Should I be aware of it?
The Beach-nesting Birds 'Hub' has been designed for everyone with a general interest or who wants to participate in Beach-nesting Bird conservation. It was designed to be a single location for all training and induction materials, and for many of the resources available within the program. Here you can track your progress through the BNB courses and access all the information you will need to become involved in helping beach-nesting birds, including:

- Signing up for our twice-yearly newsletter
- Registering to become a volunteer
- Accessing training materials and inductions
- Accessing research papers and reports
- Learning of upcoming events in your local area
- Identifying key points of contact

If you have received this newsletter it is likely you already have a 'Beach-nesting Birds Hub' account, it just needs activation! Please go to: https://beachvol.birdlife.org.au/ click 'Re-enable Account' and follow the links. Please be aware that sometimes the reactivation code is sent to your junk mail folder.

If you have any questions or run into trouble trying to activate your account, please contact beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au

PORTAL CORNER

Below the team offers some tips for entering data in the My Beach Bird Portal

THIS SEASONS STATS

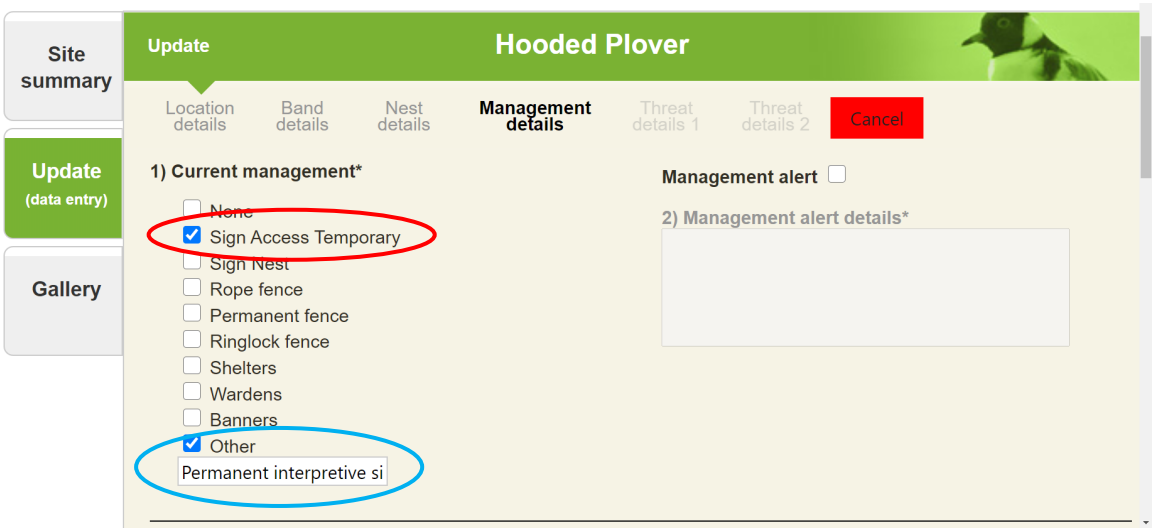
This season, there were 13,223 data portal entries for Hooded Plovers! Far West Victoria had the highest number of portal entries, with 2,863 for the season – a phenomenal effort, given that there were 13 people entering sightings! Fleurieu Peninsula, came in a very close second, with 2,843 entries! Thirty-four individuals achieved over 100 data portal entries! Three people completed over 300 entries, and one person did a superhuman job of entering 1,613 portal entries! Well done everyone! Each year the number of entries into the MyBeachBird Data Portal keeps growing!

SETTING UP NEW SITES IN THE PORTAL FOR NEWLY ARRIVED PAIRS

With new fledglings being recruited into the population every year, we are likely to see new pairs establishing new breeding territories sometimes in entirely new locations (e.g. Seacliff on the Fleurieu Peninsula) and sometimes very close to an already existing territory with a known breeding pair. As soon as nesting is discovered it is important that we set these new territories up as sites on the portal and start entering breeding and threat data for the new pair and site so that we can keep track of them throughout the season. On a few occasions where new pairs have established territories close to existing territories, we have seen breeding data relating to the new pair being entered under the existing territory. When this happens, it can be a bit confusing at the end of the season when we start compiling nesting summaries for the pairs. So, it is best to avoid this as we could easily help with setting up new sites on the portal. Please let us know when a new pair arrives and starts nesting and it is only when they start nesting that we set up a site for them on the portal.

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN 'SIGN ACCESS TEMPORARY' AND OTHER SIGNS AT ACCESS POINTS

We have come across a few entries where 'Sign Access Temporary' had been ticked under 'Current management' on the Hooded Plover data entry page (see red circle on screenshot below), at sites where these temporary signs at access points had not been installed. This should only be ticked if you see a sign that has been erected at the access point temporarily to indicate that there is a nest or chicks at that site. Typically, these are erected when a nest/brood is found and removed after failure/success. Sometimes they are erected when the first nest is found at a site for the season and remain in situ until breeding has finished. These temporary signs also include the update signs that have space for volunteers to write an update on the nesting status. In some regions, these update signs are permanently erected at access points whereas in some regions they can be erected temporarily as soon as nesting is detected. All the above-mentioned temporary signs should not be confused with permanent interpretive signs that typically have a lot of information and remain permanently in situ throughout the year. Those permanent signs should be entered in the 'Other' field at the bottom of the list (see blue circle on screenshot below). See photos below for different types of signs you can find at access points.



Temporary nest sign erected at access point

Temporary update sign at access point

Temporary update sign at access point

Permanent interpretive sign at access point

Permanent interpretive sign at access point

Permanent interpretive sign at access point

RECORDING THREATS

Please remember to fill in your threat data as often as you can. Having information on the threats you see, is just as important as what the birds are up to! With the threat information, we're able to analyse the data, learn what the major threats are, and then work to mitigate those major threats. Without the threat data, we're not able to understand what is happening at a site, and perhaps, why a breeding pair have not successfully produced chicks or fledglings. The more we know about the site, the more we can help the Hoodies and tailor management for that pair. This year we had 61% of My Beach Bird Data Portal entries have a full threat assessment (full threat assessments include what you see on the beach, and the prints). Let's aim for 70% for next season, so please complete your threat assessments!

Injured Birds

A ROUGH START TO LIFE FOR LITTLE XT (WHITE)

Daniel Lees, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

On the 3rd of April Beach-nesting Birds staff members received a report from Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast volunteers Marg MacDonald and Sue Guinness that a juvenile Hooded Plover at Fairhaven had a severe limp. The limping juvenile was one of two successful fledglings from Fairhaven beach whose flagged parents are HP (White) and SH (White).

The following morning, I (living only a 30-minute drive from Fairhaven) drove down to Fairhaven with my 500mm telescopic lens to photograph the limping juvenile and attempt to ascertain the cause of its limp. Earlier that morning Marg had located the family (the two juveniles were still accompanied by their parents) and past their location on to Sue who met me at the beach access. After taking numerous photos of the limping juvenile and examining them closely it became clear the bird had an entanglement around its left foot.

Two days later, on the 6th of April and having enacted our rescue protocol Grainne, Renee and I along with GORCC rangers Hamilton and Scott attempted to catch the juvenile, who by this stage was only hopping on its right leg. Fortunately, we were able to capture the bird on the first try after which Renee contacted Liz Brown a local vet who immediately rushed down to meet us on the beach. Liz carefully cut the entanglement (which superficially looked like long dog hair) and administered an antibiotic, after which we flagged the un-injured leg with leg flag XT (White). The bird was then released in close proximity to the rest of its family and we were thrilled to see it immediately using its injured leg confidently.

Over the next week unfortunately the bird (now XT White) that was being closely monitored by the local volunteers developed a limp on in un-injured leg. On a further two occasions over the next weeks I travelled to Fairhaven to photograph and video XT's progress all the while the local volunteers were keeping a close watch on it and often sending photos and video of XT to us. Over that time XT appeared to be deteriorating as its condition appeared to be affecting both left and right legs; often taking flight to keep up with its parents. Close inspection of the photos revealed unusual and troubling swelling and lesions on both legs and feet. We passed these photos to numerous avian vet specialists who provided us with two potential causes: 1) "after stressful events it may have developed a mild clinical pox infection, but they are certainly not classical pox lesions. It is possible that an injury has occurred following the overuse of the right leg" and 2) "due to reduced drainage from feet; or alternatively abrasions that have led to some infection of the feet". Fortunately, as the days progressed XT rebounded and seems, finally, to be on the road to recovery.

We would like to thank the dedicated FoHP Surf Coast volunteers who initially reported the limping bird and then tirelessly followed up on XT over the following weeks, specifically, Sue, Marg, Bron, Janice, Kaz, Jill, Will, Brian and anyone we may have missed. We would also like to thank GORCC rangers Scott and Hamilton who turned back beach users as we attempted to catch the bird. Thank you to Dr Liz Brown who dropped everything to rush down to the beach to treat the entangled bird and finally thanks to the avian specialists Dr Jenny Hibble, Dr Stacey Gellis and Dr Jenny McLelland for offering their thoughts on XT's condition.

Photo: Dan Lees; entanglement on left foot

Photos: Dan Lees; Top Left: Entanglement being cut off by Liz Brown. Top Right lump on left foot. Bottom: swelling from recovering entangled toe

BIRD INJURY RESCUE PROTOCOLS WORKING BEAUTIFULLY ON THE BASS COAST

Stephen Johnson, Coordinator Friends of the Hooded Plover Bass Coast

On 21st March 2020 whilst checking one of our local Hoodie Sites at Harmers Haven, I came across the disturbing sight feared by all Beach-nesting Bird Volunteers of a leg injured Hooded Plover. As we know the Hooded Plover relies on its leg speed across the sand to capture the tasty morsels on and beneath that make up its diet. Good healthy legs and feet are important for Hooded Plovers.

JS Orange is a 10+ year male which I banded at Wilsons Rd, Cape Paterson, on 1/4/11 (as an adult). It has been a long-term breeder at Harmers Haven utilising two sites which it alternates between during breeding seasons. As a licensed Bird Bander observing a Hooded Plover crippled by injury is a sad and traumatic experience. My immediate instincts wanted me to capture, treat and release this bird, sooner rather than later. I took a couple of scratchy photos of the bird that would not let me get too close, but close enough

binos to observe swelling of the right Tarsus joint and foot, dark red discoloured flesh and what look like some form of pinkish entanglement around the leg flag which was restricting free flag movement around the leg. The bird could not apply weight on its foot and was slowly and painfully hopping on one leg behind its companions as they tried to distance themselves from me. I had a Beach-nesting bird emergency on my plate.

I hastened home to examine the camera images to make a diagnosis of the injury cause. On the drive back I found myself attempting to calm down from the initial adrenalin surge of finding an injured bird and wanting to help it straight away. Do I have the required tools to catch it, I was confident in my catching skills but what if its injury is major, is a vet required, how will we treat it? A botched attempt at catch could be disastrous, so many questions running through my head. To be effective and efficient, I needed calm clear thinking right now. At this point what jumped into my thoughts was the key ingredient of this bird's emergency – Rescue Protocols. They were documented in the Beach-nesting Birds Program. Come on Steve, you have read them, what is your next move? Check the photo images then ring a Rescue Team member to report it and start the collaborative process of an appropriate plan of response. Kasun's phone did not pick up it was a weekend after all, but Renee Mead's did. Did you receive my scratchy images Renee? Yes, but cannot make out if there is an entanglement. Either way the bird is in trouble and I think we will need a catch attempt, was my response. After talking through all options with Renee who had the right calm thinking objective from a distance, we decided I would not attempt a catch that evening but return to the beach the next morning with a field telescope, long lens camera, a vet if I could find one at short notice and another local volunteer. The objective being, before dispatching a catch team with a plan, can we determine with clear evidence via the scope or camera, we have a leg entangled bird? Numerous phone calls were made, I managed to engage with a local registered vet willing to help. Some relief at last. I commenced an Incident Log to record the tasks that were building quickly now, time for a good night's sleep for clear thinking tomorrow.

Day two, overcast with light rain likely, I started early packing my vehicle with all required equipment which included a pair of carpet nooses for a catch attempt if needed. Camera and phone batteries charged up I headed to Harmers Haven to meet volunteer Rosemary Paterson and Inverloch-based vet Janine Thomas, on route. After briefing them, we headed on foot to the Waterfall Creek site where JS was sighted the day before. Through the misty light rain, we glimpsed small bird movement at the water's edge, set the scope up, bingo! JS and its two companions were busily feeding and to my absolute surprise and delight, JS was chasing prey across the sand and kelp, and applying weight on both feet. "I can see its leg flag much clearer and it is moving so much better. I cannot see any entanglement, there is still swelling to the leg and some limping but it is moving so much better – ladies, please look and tell me what you see". Both Janine and Rosemary confirmed the bird appeared to be favouring its right leg while actively feeding. We talked through our options and what emerged as a high possibility was the bird was making its own recovery, any entangling material has since disengaged the bird and we may not need to intervene. Some closer photos would help, so I approached the birds alone, with the 400mm lens extended at the ready. Crouching to one knee on the sand from the right distance about 25 metres, I was about to leash a rapid burst of shots when all three birds were startled by something other than my presence and they up and flew rapidly across the water and back onto the beach 100 metres further on. I pursued them and they flew again when I was about 50 metres short of them. I retreated to our group feeling much more comfortable that the bird was in a better state than it was the day before. We retreated to the comfort of Rosemary's cottage to discuss our options over some hot tea. Whilst collectively agreeing we could not observe through the scope the presence of entanglement material, it was felt more detailed photographs of the leg were required if possible, so close monitoring over coming days became the agreed plan. Both Janine's and Rosemary's presence and thoughts were important providing valuable corroboration of what the scope revealed. The BNB team were updated and Program Manager Grainne Maguire confirmed Hooded Plovers were known to sustain leg swelling from an unknown source occasionally and were often able to make a full recovery. She later confirmed the decision to defer a catch attempt was appropriate at that point in time.

Over the ensuing fortnight, three separate attempts to locate JS to photograph its injury progress were unsuccessful as the bird was not able to be located. This was frustrating but I was confident JS being a long-term resident breeder would emerge if not at Harmers Haven, somewhere not too far beyond its home patch. On the 8th April, local volunteer Amaryll Perlesz who is well known to JS and vice versa, spotted JS alone moving about the rock platform at its Waterfall Creek Site. Her words which she recorded on the Portal Site "good sighting of JS on rock shelf at Waterfall Creek. No sign of entanglement or damage to foot." Thank you Ammo, that is what we were all waiting for! Excellent record!

May 18th, I last sighted JS on its second site at A21 steps Harmers Haven. In the company of TP in late afternoon fading light, I spent 25 minutes with it observing it moving freely across sand, rock and through water, feeding across all three habitat surfaces. It has made a complete recovery including leg colouration returning to normal.

The story of this Beach-nesting Bird Emergency Incident with its desirable and fortunate outcome came about through recognition, engagement and application of the Emergency Rescue Protocols relating to injured Hooded Plover. It highlights if followed closely, this collaborative approach with calm and clear thought processes, while holding emotions of the bird's wellbeing in check, can bring about effective outcomes with minimal disturbance and stress to the bird and its helpers. I congratulate the BNB Team Members who compiled and incorporated the Rescue Protocols in the Program. Early response and intervention by a Rescue Team of experienced personnel increases the chances of successful outcomes. Reporting injured Beach-nesting Birds to your Regional Coordinator or Birdlife Australia on the day you sight them is important and encouraged.

Photos: Stephen Johnson; JS not bearing weight on it's right leg.

INJURED 'YELLOW 74'

Jon Fallaw, Ranger: Phillip Island Nature Parks

One of two chicks from the Crazy Birds nesting site was caught and flagged Yellow 74 (Y74) on the 8th of April, however on the 16th of April it was sighted with a severe leg injury. Quick work by rangers caught and rushed to nearby Newhaven Vet Clinic where the vet made room to immediately give critical medical attention. The chick was in good condition and the wound was fresh, however the lower right leg could not be saved and was removed. The chick was kept warm and was soon awake and in just an hour and a half Y74 was back on the beach at Crazy Birds where its thankful and very vocal parents welcomed their surprisingly mobile chick back home. To our surprise, the following morning the chick was seen actively feeding and using the injured leg, appearing to be relatively unaffected by the operation. The chick was seen a couple weeks after the surgery and Y74 was confirmed to have successfully fledged on the 22nd of April.

Morning after Y74 operation: Photo Shane Craswell 17/04/20

STUDENT CORNER

THE EFFECT OF HORSES ON SANDY SHORE INFAUNA

Madison Evans-Clay - Deakin University

Photo: Supplied by Madison Evans-Clay

Beaches worldwide are under increasing pressure from anthropogenic threats, which include high human foot traffic and 4WD use, but the impacts of horses on beaches, particularly to invertebrates and the flow-on effects, are unknown. Horses on beaches may alter the structure of sandy shore food webs by trampling invertebrates and altering the physical properties of beaches. My study examined the impacts of horse trampling by measuring and indexing the abundance, diversity and assemblage composition of beach invertebrates at paired sites with and without horses at nine beaches (locations) across Victoria, Australia. Beach rugosity, slope, compaction and the coverage of wrack were analysed because they may influence infauna, or be influenced by the presence of horses. Human and horse usage was indexed to determine the degree of usage at each site among locations. St Andrews beach is utilised by commercial riding groups and recreational riders daily. The control site (without horses) was placed at the St Andrews East Carpark entrance and the treatment site (with horses) was placed at the Boag Rocks entrance.

Horses were more common at the site where they were allowed and the sites (horse versus no horse) were well matched, having similar slope, seaweed coverage, human and canine activity. At sites with horse activity, there was less sand compaction in the upper beach (above the previous high tide) suggesting horses disrupt the sand matrix there. While invertebrates sampled by pitfall traps did not differ in richness or abundance between horse and no horse sites, the assemblage composition differed between sites, at seven of nine locations (St Andrews included). Horse sites were associated with fewer isopods, a known key prey item of Hooded Plover, and a group which is surface active on beaches and are highly susceptible to habitat disturbance. Amphipods were generally more common at horse sites, perhaps because the disrupted sand activated this group of burrowing invertebrates, which are also a major prey item of shorebirds. At the highest usage horse beach, Balnarring, amphipods were more active at the site without horses, suggesting that

different intensities of horse trampling may impact this group. This study shows that horses disrupt the sand matrix on beaches and can alter assemblage structures of invertebrates at many beaches, including on the Mornington Peninsula. This study was funded by BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds Program via Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and the Balnarring Beach Foreshore Parks and Reserve Committee of Management.

THE INFLUENCE OF HUMAN DISTURBANCE ON PARENTAL CARE IN HOODED PLOVERS

Lucy Doran, Honours student co-supervised by Mike Weston and Grainne Maguire, Deakin University Burwood

Mornington Peninsula beaches possess some of the highest densities of Hooded Plovers in Victoria. Coincidentally, these beaches also receive a high amount of foot traffic from tourists and locals, with large crowds covering the sand over the summer months. This high recreational use, as well as other threats and disturbances such as predation by invasive predators and unleashed dogs, influences the reproductive successes of these birds. We aim to quantify the behaviour of parent Hooded Plovers, to examine how these relate to reproductive success and management.

This project focuses on reproductive outcomes and success, and parental care and investment through observations of behaviour. This will be done using standardised methods of data collection from the global ELVONAL protocol (this is an international plover study project, run by Tamas Szekely from the University of Bath), aiming to study pairs at each stage of breeding using 1 hour observation blocks. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and uncertainty, this project is not yet fully planned and may be conducted during the breeding season of 2021. However, the main focal points will be human visitation and disturbance levels between sites, the use of managed areas, seasonality during the breeding season and the habitat characteristics. The results of this research will hopefully create a better understanding of the pressures, compounding threats, and behaviours that lead to reproductive success and failure on the Mornington Peninsula.

Photo Supplied by Lucy Doran

NON-BREEDING HABITAT OF HOODED PLOVERS – FILLING CRITICAL INFORMATION GAPS TO AID SPECIES RECOVERY

Madeline Barker, Honours Student, Deakin University Burwood

Hi, I'm Maddy Barker and this year I am completing my Honours project examining habitat selection of Hooded Plovers in the non-breeding season. The non-breeding season represents a critical life stage for Hooded Plover survival, and it is likely that adult and immature survival over the winter period is the critical next step for continued recovery of plover populations. In fact, we believe that the plovers face significant challenges to survival over this time including a potential food shortage since they have a moult pattern which avoids moulting in winter and initial results from a beach invertebrate seasonality study suggest that invertebrate prey numbers decrease over some parts of the winter period. Although the non-breeding season is important for these birds, we know very little about the habitat requirements of Hooded Plovers over this time.

This is where my project comes in! Since we believe that food is likely a key limiting factor for the birds over winter, we had originally planned to quantify prey resources in non-breeding habitat through pitfall trapping, as well as measuring beachscape characteristics like sand grain size, slope and amount of seaweed onshore. Unfortunately, covid19 had other plans and we had to postpone field work until social distancing restrictions are eased. So, we are now doing the next best thing, which is using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology (basically a mapping program) to measure potential habitat variables that may be important for Hooded Plovers over winter. These include the presence of offshore rocky reefs, amount of available beach at high tide, beach profile and anthropogenic factors like roads and beach access points.

In order to do this we have reached out to a number of BirdLife Australia volunteers to help us identify sites and let us know what the birds are up to during this time. Thank you so much to everyone so far who has helped, your contributions have been invaluable to my project! Thank you as well to my incredible supervisors Dr Mike Weston, Dr Grainne Maguire, Dr Desley Whisson and Dr Nick Porch who have all helped to redirect my project and have given me invaluable support and advice.

We hope that by mapping and understanding the nature of Hooded Plover non-breeding habitat, this project will play an integral role in habitat protection, species monitoring and conservation planning to ensure that Hooded Plover populations can continue to recover year-round.

Photos; Top: Mike Weston. Bottom: Photo supplied by Madeline Barker

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

'YOU'VE SEEN A WHAT? NEVER HEARD OF IT!'

John Hargreaves, Volunteer, Friends of Hooded Plover Far West Victoria

Photo: Kerry Vickers; Oriental Pratincole

An afternoon in the third week of autumn began as a routine visit to Yambuk to monitor Hoodie breeding pairs. The day was a belter, clear blue skies with gentle sea breeze from the south-east to keep it comfortable. Just as well, it is a challenging walk that can get you thoroughly hot and bothered. Five kilometres return plod on a wild, steep oceanic beach, with a flooding tide forcing you up into soft sand, feet sinking past ankles and often slipping sideways down slope from under you; walking is most arduous.

Little wonder that I felt like a bathe when I returned to the estuary, in a favourite rock pool on the limestone platform. Soothed and refreshed, I towelled off and began making my way back across the spit. Sand blocking the estuary mouth had formed a ridge dotted with fresh and drying clumps of algae, in the lee of which Double-banded Plovers, Red-necked Stints and Red-capped Plovers were preening or dozing in the sun. On previous visits, there had been a large flock of Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, a hundred and fifty or more, but they had been gone for a month, their departure coinciding with the arrival of the first Double-banded Plovers. As I disturbed the birds and they retreated to a safe distance, there was one bird that stood out; erect, slender and responding differently to my approach. Whereas the others scurried away in small groups, this one climbed atop an algae clump, peering intently my way and all about, then ran to the next clump to repeat the behaviour. Was it a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper that had stayed behind? No! For a start this one was bigger. I was looking at a species that was new to me. But what was it?

I dropped flat to the sand, shed my pack and tried to inspect this intriguing bird through binos from the prone position. Hmm. The bird had huddled in close to an algae clump and was difficult to spot, but I reacquired it and had a good view of head, chest and back. I noted the uniform olive/taupe colour of head and back, a lighter beige across the chest and a striking black line running vertically from the eye, down across the cheek and curving under the off-white throat. And the base of the bill was red. It looked vaguely familiar and help was close at hand. I reached into my pack to pull out BirdLife Australia's excellent *Australian Shorebirds Identification Booklet* and there it was on page 29; Oriental Pratincole, *Glareola maldivarum*. Wow!

I worked my way up sun and closer, flattened in the army crawl, getting sand up my nose and all over the binos. Sheesh! But I was in the zone, concentrating on this lovely bird. I kept a wary eye on two visitors that appeared in the lookout, lest they approach and disturb my exotic companion. They must have wondered what on Earth I was up to, but thankfully soon went away. After twenty-five minutes or so, I stood up to leave, scattering the shorebirds. Most flew low, south-east along the beach, but not the Pratincole. It climbed solo, high above the spit, flew several circuits fast and effortlessly, swallow-like wings that tapered to pointy tips, forked tail, superbly streamlined head and body, before heading inland north-east along the estuary. I was elated. Despite the tough and tiring beach walk, I floated light-footed back to the car and dawdled back home in a reverie. Later, reference to bird books and online resources suggested it was a rare sighting in Southwest Victoria. I wondered what had brought it so far south from its normal range in northern Australia and hoped it would survive its lonely journey, all the way back to its breeding grounds in India, Pakistan or Southeast Asia.

A word to the wise: It is important to log this kind of observation in databases, but unless you want your rare bird sighting to be plastered all over social media, be careful to whom you report it. Apart from your internal programme protocols, Victorian Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee or Birdata online portal are recommended.

A SIGHTSEEING HOODIE ON HOLIDAYS INLAND

Daniel Lees, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

As part of seasonal surveys of the Victorian western district lakes and just prior to the full corona virus lockdown, I conducted a shorebird survey of Lake Martin and Lake Cundare on the 6th of April 2020. The survey was fairly exciting with four Brolgas and good numbers of Red-necked Stints and even Red-capped Plovers with still dependent chicks (very late in the breeding season to have chicks).

However, the highlight of the survey was sighting 2 Hooded Plover in the middle of Lake Cundare. For context Lake Cundare is north of Colac and approximately 50km to the nearest coastline. Of further note was the fact that one of the Hooded Plovers was flagged. The flagged Hooded Plover at Lake Cundare was '44 Left (Yellow)', a male that fledged from Phillip Island's Smith's Beach on the 7/01/2018. Prior to the sighting at Lake Cundare '44 Left (Yellow)' was sighted on the 1/04/2020 by Mark Lethlean at St Andrews Beach on the Mornington Peninsula, and after being sighted at Lake Cundare '44 Left (Yellow)' was again sighted by Mark (on the 18/05/2020) at St Andrews Beach, a round trip minimum of 220km.

After conversations with Assoc. Prof. Mike Weston and Dr Grainne Maguire they both agreed that this sighting was the furthest inland the Eastern subspecies has been sighted. Why these two Hooded Plovers would choose to fly 110km to an inland lake from the last beach they were spotted at remains unclear, however it is possible they were mixed up with a flock of Red-necked Stints which were foraging nearby Lake Cundare at the southern end of Lake Martin.

Photos: Dan Lees; Hoodies looking a bit out of place!

Social Media

STAY CONNECTED WITH NATURE AND BIRDS FROM YOUR COUCH!

Sonia Sánchez, Beach-nesting Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

Extroverts, introverts, tech lovers, tech haters… We've all been relying on technology to stay connected with our loved ones during lockdown. Some of us might have even re-connected with old friends or that family member we hadn't heard from in a while! Although it should always be our top priority, these exceptional times remind us the huge importance of checking in, taking care of each other and ourselves.

From my experience, an important toll of lockdown has been not being able to get out to nature when I wanted and needed it. I live in the middle of Melbourne inner south-eastern suburbs and I would often feel trapped. But then I reminded to myself we're lucky to have tools to keep us connected with nature. Social media is great for that!

If you follow BirdLife Australia's and the Beach-nesting Birds Project's socials, you might have come across hashtags like #BirdingAtHome, #WhatBirdIsThat, #ThinkBeachBirds and #MindTheHoodies. But first things first. What's a hashtag and how and why you should use it? A hashtag is just a word or phrase preceded by the hash sign (#). Hashtags are used on social media to identify specific topics. For example, when you're on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, clicking on a hashtag will take you to all the posts that have that hashtag. It's so easy to get bogged down with information overload! Using hashtags makes it much easier to access content you're interested in!

We use #ThinkBeachBirds and #MindTheHoodies hashtags in our Beach-nesting Birds project posts. Being consistent with the use of these hashtags helps us reach our target audience, and likewise makes it easier for others to find our content. Overall, this is a great and relatively easy way to stay relevant and raise awareness. So, if you share any beach-nesting bird content on your socials, we'd love you to use #ThinkBeachBirds and/or #MindTheHoodies!

The #BirdingAtHome hashtag belongs to the campaign that BirdLife Australia's Urban Birds and Communications teams launched during lockdown to keep bird lovers and supporters engaged and connected. Within this campaign, there have been smaller initiatives such as #CuppaWithTheBirds, where people shared the birds they sighted while having a cuppa, and #WhatBirdIsThat to test and encourage people's ID skills. Another very popular initiative to reach those at home was the Birding At Home series, a group of Facebook live events where BirdLife Australia's staff members shared all the things about birds and their projects. If you missed this series, you can catch up with the episodes on the BirdLife Australia's Facebook page.

Remember you don't have to give up the great benefits that nature, and birding in particular, has on our physical and mental wellbeing during lockdown! I encourage you to use social media and follow the events and hashtags I told you about to stay connected with nature and birds from your couch! I'm sure you'll find and learn new things, new ways to connect with nature and you'll be even more appreciative of your environment once all restrictions are eased. In the meantime, keep #BirdingAtHome and don't forget to #ThinkBeachBirds and #MindTheHoodies!

MORNINGTON PENINSULA SAYS HELLO TO FACEBOOK

Rebecca Westlund, Volunteer Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc.

At the end of 2019, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula decided it was time to step up into the digital age and start our own Facebook page. These days spreading the word about threatened species is more important than ever, and it's also easier than ever with apps like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter available at our fingertips via smartphones, tablets, and laptop computers.

Facebook was the obvious choice for FotHP Mornington's new social media account because not only is it widely used all over the world, it gives us the ability to share more than a just a picture or a line of text. With a Facebook account wildlife groups can connect with people of all ages while sparking new and interesting conversations. It can be used can invite the community to participate in workshops and become involved in causes. While Instagram and Twitter can help maintain that connection to community, Facebook has a much more personal feel to it.

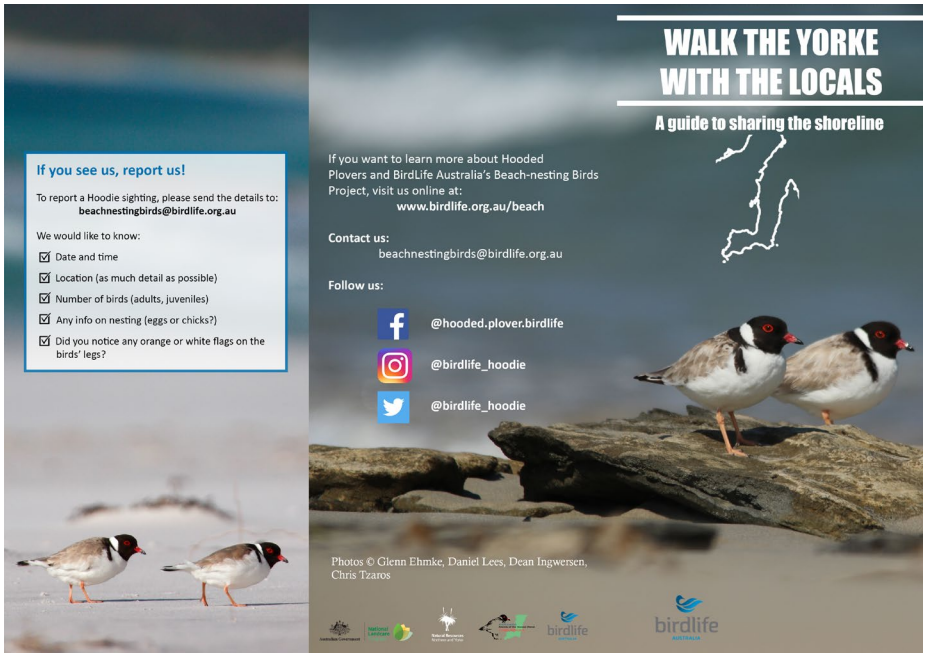
During the 2019-2020 breeding season our Facebook page was a hive of information about the various Hooded Plover nesting territories on the Mornington Peninsula, as well as about other beach-nesting birds like Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers. We shared stories both happy and sad, and endeavoured to show the community how important the tireless work of our volunteers is for the survival of these little birds.

Throughout the middle of the year when the birds are flocking, our Facebook page will not be forgotten and we will continue to engage the community about Hooded Plovers, Birdlife Australia projects, and other birdy happenings on the Peninsula's beaches. Since starting the Facebook page, we have gained over 200 followers, and we hope this will continue to grow. Maintaining this wider connection to community through Facebook will assist FotHP Mornington Peninsula in educating as many people as we can before the next breeding season, and hopefully bring the safety of our tiny beach-bird champions into the minds of all coastal beachgoers over the next summer.

New Materials

Below are some of the newer outreach materials recently produced:

Poster on the Do's and Do not's of dog walking



Walk the Yorke trail brochure cover funded by the National Landcare Program

Check out this video produced by Colleen Hughson and the Glenelg Hopkins Catchment Management Authority with support from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc7UCzkz7hk&fbclid=IwAR02FyE2XpzbnPL7nBXCE46ghVZwnGnkG_EHnGDLTAn5vcLJIo25JvyJ_Ms

Above is a fun banner using the Spot the Difference game from The Wing Thing: Beach-nesting Birds edition. Below is a new banner by Rob Mancini using his amazing illustrations from the Wing Thing! These have been funded by Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board and will be used by Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife and BNB staff at future events.

AWARENESS RAISING

ENGAGING YOUTH TO BECOME BIRD AMBASSADORS IN THE BASS COAST AREA

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

A two-day Youth Bird Ambassador workshop was coordinated and run by BirdLife Bass Coast and BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Bird, Migratory Shorebird and Birds on Farms project staff on the 22nd and 23rd of January. The workshop was held at the Bunurong Environment Centre in Inverloch, where 19 people, aged 12 to 17, came together to learn more about Australian Birds.

Day one included indoor sessions learning about beach-nesting birds, migratory birds and woodland birds, and in the middle of a rather warm day we all headed down to Point Norman and then to Screw Crew mangroves to check out some coastal birds and learn how to use binoculars and spotting scopes. Overnight the heavens opened and day two began with significant storms and buckets of rain, but the Bird Ambassadors weren't put off. With just a bit of tweaking, we still managed to head out to a local Birds on Farms property and were hosted by John and Karen, the amazing property owners.



Photos: Meg Cullen: Left; Ambassadors working on their Conservation Projects. Middle; Going for a walk to identify bush birds. Right; using binoculars to view shorebirds!

We finished with an afternoon of creativity, where students worked in small groups to develop engagement resources that would be used to create positive change in the community. We were all impressed by the work they produced, which included stop motion videos, information posters, stories and bookmarks.

This wonderfully successful event was funded by the Australian Bird Environment Foundation and we were grateful to them for making this possible. Following the workshop, the participants completed a feedback survey, which highlighted the enjoyment of participants and the overall success of the program.

Photo: Meg Cullen: Ambassador Conservation Project, threats on the beach and some awesome Hooded Plover LEGO!

'Thank you very much for this amazing experience. I am proud to be a bird ambassador.'

WORLD RANGER CONGRESS

Holly Barker, Parks Victoria Ranger, Southern Peninsula South East Melbourne District

In November 2019, myself and two other park rangers were sponsored by Parks Victoria to attend the International Ranger Federation's World Ranger Congress in the beautiful town of Chitwan, Nepal. This was the 9th world ranger congress and the first time it had been held in Asia. Nepal was chosen due to their outstanding efforts to reduce poaching on rhinos, tigers and elephants. Starting in 2011, Nepal achieved zero poaching on rhinos for four years in a row, which is an outstanding effort. This was also the biggest congress yet, with over 550 rangers from 70 different countries. The Congress was based around seven key themes: welfare, capacity, technology, communities, female rangers, indigenous ranger and ranger associations.

I was fortunate enough to be able to present at the Congress and what better topic to talk about than our hoodies! I focused on the theme of community and how we are conserving a threatened species as a big team made up of rangers, volunteers and of course our Birdlife Australia experts. The presentation went through an introduction and fact file of the Hooded Plover, its threats and challenges, our community of hoodie protectors and communication tactics. The room was packed out and I had lots of people coming up to me afterwards from across the globe talking about the birds they protect and similar projects they are working on. One ranger I met does almost the same role as me but with shorebirds in Germany!

The congress was an eye opener in many ways. I soon was accustomed to the wild rhino that walked down the main street every night on its evening stroll, but never fully got used to the steep and thin winding roads where buses frequently overtook cars right on the bends. There is no other word for the rangers I met but inspiring. I met rangers from Uganda that looked after and followed wild rhinos 24/7 with day and night shifts, rangers from Iceland that lived in mountain isolation and had a 2/3 female workforce, rangers from Nepal that would go out on 19-day patrols through the mountains counting animal sightings, and rangers from Kenya who had witnessed and battled poachers on the front line, lost colleagues and risked their lives and their families safety to protect endangered wildlife on a daily basis.

In summary, it was an absolute privilege to attend the congress and meet so many rangers from across the globe. It is so important to take a step back and realise how fortunate we are in the safety of the work we do, but also how much effort is being done globally to protect threatened species and we all should be very proud that we are very much a part of that.

Photos supplied by Holly Barker

VICTORIA UPDATES

BANDING ON THE BELLARINE AND SURF COAST

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

On the 26th and 27th of February this year we had a Beach-nesting banding team (Dan Lees, Laura Rhodes, Lucinda Plowman and myself) visit the Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast, where we were able to catch and band four Hooded Plovers. There were definitely some challenges over these two days, when quite a number of times the birds were herded over the traps but weren't caught – we didn't give up! At the end of the two days we had flagged the fledglings at both Point Lonsdale (flagged LN White) and the Nudist beach (flagged NB White) and an adult each at Collendina, Ocean Grove (flagged HE White), and Thompson Creek mouth, Point Impossible (flagged XJ White). Thanks to all the volunteers who were able to help us out on the day, especially Jan Lierich who came twice to the Nudist beach on the one day to give us a hand.

Photos: Meg Cullen; Left: Weighing and measuring the Hoodie. Middle; new swish leg flag! Right; Releasing the Hooded Plover

UPDATE FROM THE BELLARINE PENINSULA

Andrea Dennett, Friends of the Hooded Plover Bellarine Peninsula

The season for the Bellarine produced only two fledglings, one on Christmas Day to long term pair EL & PT at 4W Point Lonsdale and one on Valentine's Day a little further east, near the Point Lonsdale lighthouse to HY & MD in their second season together; their second fledgling, which went on to be flagged LN White. Whilst not a great season in terms of fledglings produced, it was an epic season in terms of new supports enlisted and partnerships forged.

Traditionally, John Murray has done the lion's share of Hooded Plover monitoring along the Point Lonsdale coast and has had a superhuman commitment to our hoodies. Along the way, the village idiot took a dislike to John's work and resorted to vandalising John's signs, stealing chick shelters, destroying fences and official COGG signage; more or less undoing or sabotaging John's efforts. This went on for almost 10 years. Mind you, the village idiot had visits from the police, rides in the back of a divvy van and an appearance in court to no avail! Until this season!

A working party, including representatives of the City of Greater Geelong and the Bellarine Friends of the Hooded Plover was formed to devise a plan of action to counter the vandal's activity and relieve John's workload a little. Brett Diehm (who works for Barwon Coast Committee of Management) lives in Point Lonsdale and put his hand up to look after the pairs East of 4W, to take the pressure off John and to hopefully in turn, take the vandal's focus away from John and the hoodies.

This time around, HY & MD chose to nest on the Borough of Queenscliff side of Point Lonsdale. Brett

contacted the Borough and was able to enlist the support of BOQ staff, Dinah O'Brien and Shane Poulter. Into the story comes Brett's partner, (former vet nurse) Natasha Verspeek, who has fallen in love with the hoodies possibly as much as with Brett? Tash is very keen and signs up to become a fully-fledged BirdLife Australia volunteer to assist Brett with monitoring the Point Lonsdale pairs.

On the eve of the chicks' hatch date 10/1/20, the vandal strikes for the last time, destroying signage that Brett and Tash had installed. No-one knows exactly why but all vandalism grinds to a halt.

The story of HY & MD's chicks make the local newspaper 'The Rip' and locals are following them closely. The HY & MD family also develop a following on social media. Local volunteer, Robin Spry kept a check on the family at least every other day and John couldn't help but check them every now and again as well. Sadly, two chicks fail, most likely the local kestrel is responsible. As is the experience of many of our hoodies, the remaining chick survived the summer holiday throng, the occasional off-lead dog, extreme heat, rain and strong winds, as well as way too much attention from the local kestrel.

Happily, our chick was flagged LN White on the 26/2/20; the first hoodie to be flagged at Point Lonsdale since HY and her two fledglings, LY & WY were flagged in 2014!

Fingers crossed that: the vandal has found a new hobby; John can continue to let Brett & Tash take up some of the slack; HY & MD continue their successful partnership and the Bellarine Friends of the Hooded Plover and the Borough of Queenscliff can maintain their newfound partnership.

Please let us know if you spot our LN White on your beach.

Photos Supplied by Andrea Dennett

DOING THE HOODIE BOOGIE- ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN CONSERVATION THROUGH DANCE AND MOVEMENT

Jennie Turner, Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Breamlea

The Surf Coast of Victoria has been grooving it up with the Hoodie Boogie. Jacqui Dreessens (Ethnochoreologist) from Wild Moves has been working to spread the word about Hooded Plovers through song and dance, following a successful grant from Birdlife Australia's Australian Bird Environment Foundation.

"We need to share the beach with our beach-nesting birds," Jacqui explained. "Hoodies are great to observe their fancy footwork, displays of cryptic behaviour as well as having very cool camouflage to distract predators away from their chicks. It takes about 35 days before the chicks can hatch and fly away from danger." Lyrics to

her song include, “If ya stomp too close to my nest, I freak out and I can’t rest. If ya stomp too close to my nest, mama freaks out she may lose her eggs. Hoodie Boogie, dogs on leads. Hoodie Boogie, follow my lead. Hoodie Boogie, take my lead.” The rhythm is a swing groove that can easily be played on ukulele and percussion.

This educational program was made possible through the backing of Birdlife Australia’s Friends of the Hooded Plover, Breamlea and support from the Beach-nesting Birds Project, Wild Moves taught it in local schools, markets, festivals, fundraisers and events to raise awareness of our relationship to the coastal environment through dance.

St Therese Primary School, Surf Coast Hoodie Boogie. Photo: Peter Marshall

Black Rock chick does the Hoodie Boogie. Photo: David Turner

BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA’S FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER BREAMLEA 2019 - 2020 SEASON SUMMARY

Julie Riley and Jennie Turner, Regional Coordinators, Friends of the Hooded Plover Breamlea

Breeding Pairs	# Nests	# Eggs	# Chicks	# Fledglings
Black Rock	1	1	0	0
Bancoora 44W E	0	0	0	0
Bancoora 46W	2*	3	2	1
50W – Pt Impossible	0	0	0	0

As the table above indicates, this was a difficult season, as it was for many regions. The following provides a snapshot of tragedy and triumph along Breamlea/Bancoora beaches.

Our highlights were:

- the fledging of one chick at almost 7 weeks of age at Bancoora 44W – 46W.
- the pairing of another unbanded bird (now XJ White) with our ‘Old Bloke’ at the 50W – Point Impossible site after losing his old unbanded mate and being left alone again, when EJ returned to JM at the Nudist beach.
- New vols, Shane Foyster and Claire Stephenson’s assistance with monitoring and Alex Page-Walker who helped us educate the Nippers at Bancoora SLSC.
- Our continued valuable relationship with the City of Greater Geelong’s, Nature Reserves Team on site management. Other activities together included ‘Scopes on the beach’ and Plover Appreciation Day walks.
- Receiving an ABEF grant for the ‘Hoodie Boogie’ with Jacqui Dreessens.

Our low moments were:

- Incursions by the 44W East pair into the Black Rock pair's territory, preventing them from having their usual success.
- Losing our special quirky and entertaining hoodie, AY from Bancoora 44W East to twine/fishing line in late December.
- Being unable to undertake our education session with students from Nagoya, Japan, which was organised by the COGG, due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Bancoora SLSC Nippers hoodie presentation, Photo: Barry Hunt

MY FIRST SEASON AS REGIONAL COORDINATOR

Janice Carpenter, Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast

As the new regional coordinator for the Surf Coast Region I was initially overwhelmed by the number of people involved with the Beach-nesting Birds (BNB) program. It has taken me the entire season to understand who is responsible for what, but that process has given me a real insight into how impressive the BirdLife staff who run the BNB program are. They have been able to engage the Surf Coast Shire, the beach managers GORRC and Parks Vic, and many local volunteers working for the betterment of beach nesting birds.

My role, as I saw it at the beginning of the season, was to re-engage the registered volunteers and to organise for the training of new volunteers. I started the process by having a stall at the ANGAIR Wildflower Show in Anglesea over a weekend in September. Later I organised a gathering at my house for new volunteers where the 'old hands' told positive stories about their experiences and potential 'new hands' asked questions.

Our Hooded Plover season on the Surf Coast started very late. Many nests did not reach the hatching stage due mostly, we believe, to local predators. Magpies were seen working in groups at one nest, scaring the incubating parent away and then feeding on the eggs. Ravens were at the beach in large numbers and fox prints were along the base of the dunes on many mornings. Even after a couple of chicks hatched at Fairhaven and then at Moggs Creek, the chicks at both places were snatched by Magpies within a few days.

A pair of hoodies surprised us at Nude Beach, Torquay by producing a chick without anyone being aware that a nest was in the area. Fortunately, with help from Jan Leirich and her team, NB White fledged and was last observed near Port Fairy.

A pair of Hoodies, HP and SH produced two chicks late in the season at their fourth nesting attempt. The timing was great as it was after the large Christmas crowds. GORRC quickly established a Dog Exclusion Zone in the area between the Inlet at Aireys Inlet and the Fairhaven Surf Club. This is an area of the beach which at this time in the season is usually an 'Off Leach' dog beach. In general, the public responded well, and our group of new and experienced Wardens patrolled the DEZ adding weight to the signage. Eventually our much-admired chicks fledged, and we thought our job was over.

We have established a strong team at Fairhaven/Aireys to cover all the aspects of the work of a Regional Coordinator. Margaret McDonald, Bron Ives and Brian Agland, Kaz Paton, Jill and Will Smith and the previous coordinator Sue Guinness have all assisted me in my new role. Our next drama needed them all.

Margaret and Jill were first to note that one of the newly fledged juveniles had an entanglement on its left foot. Meg Cullen and Grainne Maguire from BirdLife were informed, and Dan Lees from BirdLife made a trip to the beach to assess the problem. It was decided that an attempt needed to be made to remove the entanglement as the juvenile's left foot was swollen, its toe purple and it was unable to use that foot. A rescue operation took place including our local vet Liz Brown.

During the successful rescue the entanglement was removed, and the juvenile was banded and flagged XT. Our team monitored XT's recovery and just when he/she looked to be OK another problem emerged. XT was now having problems with his/her right leg. BirdLife once more sent Dan down to take photos. Specialist vets were consulted. Daily monitoring occurred sometimes twice a day. Our team was very anxious.

At this time, I am happy to report that XT seems to have recovered well without any further intervention.

It has been an eventful season as the new Regional Coordinator. Fortunately, I have a very active, knowledgeable and supportive team here and excellent support from BirdLife Australia.

SORRENTO BACK BEACH HOODED PLOVER ART PROJECT

Karen Wootton, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc

Adding to our slim number of fledglings for season 2019/20, another three Hoodies have joined the flock on the Mornington Peninsula. Our much awaited and anticipated mural, by respected aerosol artist Jimmy 'Dvate' Beattie, was completed at Sorrento Back Beach in February. We are now officially part of the Victorian silo/dunny block art trail! At a beach with stunning ocean vistas that attracts around half a million visitors annually, sits our gorgeous artwork depicting chick, fledgling and adult, complete with information on the artist/project and a Hooded Plover interpretive sign. We couldn't be more thrilled.

FoHP(MP) had received a substantial Trigger Bros. donation from the sale of their 'Save The Hooded Plover' merchandise and we wanted to use the money on a project that we hoped would connect with the community and raise awareness of Hooded Plovers.

A large artwork, by a recognised artist, could be an effective vehicle to capture people's attention and we wanted the artwork to be sited in the National Park where our Hoodies make their home but, gaining permission to undertake an art project in the National Park was unprecedented. Additionally, locating a

suitably sized wall in an appropriate location proved challenging. However, working through the issues together, the Sorrento Back Beach amenities block was eventually approved with Parks requiring us to meet stringent requirements for the colour palette and preservation of the fabric of the building.

Jimmy was enthusiastic from the outset, keen to help us achieve something special and the project was a wonderful demonstration of collaboration and teamwork between Parks Victoria, FoHP(MP) and Jimmy, with the project commencing on a squally, rain lashed Tuesday mid-February. Through driving rain, gale force winds and intermittent sunshine Jimmy worked, first sketching his outlines then applying his paint, and, in some sort of aerosol alchemy, the Hoodies appeared. A glint of lively eye, the hint of shine on a beak and fluff on an already fluffy chick (Holly from Parks Vic was supervisor of chick fuzzy cuteness), Jimmy brought the Hoodies to life.

After a week of making sure Jimmy had everything he required (hot chocolate, burgers, pies, cakes and other local treats) his ladders and crates of paint cans were packed away, the bollards and tapes were returned to Parks Vic and Lois' stall of Hoodie paraphernalia disappeared into the back of her car. Though we missed the daily ritual (and being Jimmy's fan girls) we had shared a remarkable journey of meetings, plotting and planning and the project couldn't have gone more smoothly.

For the week of the project Jimmy, his wife Carmen and their new baby stayed in a house overlooking the bay at the glorious Point Nepean National Park. They'd only been settled in for a few hours when Jimmy excitedly reported the first of several echidnas ambling past. I'm certain we won't have any difficulty encouraging them to return for another project!

A couple of weeks later, after front page coverage in the local paper (a first for FoHP(MP) and Chris' indoctrination (oops, Hoodie education) of the local primary school students, we held a well-attended launch and picnic. Our Head Ranger Kris spoke glowingly and there was amusement as the seaweed 'launch ribbon', held by a grinning Lois and Ellen, was cut by Jimmy with encouragement from our 'overseas' visitors Jennie and Andrea from Bellarine FoHP as well as Renee from Birdlife.

Throughout the project we had many compliments from both the local community and visitors and enjoyed multiple opportunities to chat with people about Hoodies and our mural. We believe the impact of the artwork will grow as Covid-19 restrictions ease and more people return to visit the area.

We hope to work toward another project (and we're pretty sure we'll have Parks on board :-) to build on the success of the silo/dunny block art trail, highlighting the issue of coastal conservation and reminding people that we are all connected through the art of nature, and the nature of art.

Photo: Andrea Dennett; Jimmy "DVATE" cutting the 'seaweed ribbon'

Photo: Karen Wootton; close up of the fluffy chick

Photo: Mark Lethlean

WHO KNEW?

Karen Wootton, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula Inc

Early this year, as we watched a Hoodie family flourish at Montforts Beach on the Mornington Peninsula, we had no idea a virus would sweep across the world causing chaos, anxiety and heartache. No idea that life as we knew it would change.

All we knew then was the delight of watching eggs hatch into chicks, the three fuzzy speedsters racing to hide beneath rock ledges and melt from view. This is the beach where CC and her unbanded partner, in successive seasons, had raised fledglings Little Dude and Monty. Nestled between Koonya to the west and Fowlers to the east, Montforts is a glorious stretch of perfect Hoodie territory. When CC disappeared a few years ago, a new pair, both initially thought to be unbanded, settled in at Montforts. On expansive, seaweed covered rock platforms skinny legs can keep secrets, and one bird, our mystery bird, was hiding a left metal band.

In their first season together we found a single giant Hoodie/dinosaur egg nestled on the beach, but it disappeared around day 25 and no further breeding attempts were observed.

Then last December, three Hoodie sized eggs were found on the sand, the pair diligently incubating despite the descending summer crowds.

In early January the fuzzy three were first sighted, darting across the beach with their ever-vigilant parents, a perfect posse. Sadly, as is often the case, two of the youngsters disappeared in the second week. We named the lone remaining chick ‘Phoenix’, a nod to the recent loss of the Fowlers fledgling.

Phoenix grew into a robust, active chick and Chris and I were fortunate to see sustained and competent flight around day 38. It was a bright moment in what had been a challenging season.

Phoenix and his mum however had one more delight in store for us.

Kasun, Mark and a small group of students, Parks Vic staff and Hoodie volunteers descended on Montforts to flag the fledgling and, after success (Phoenix is now PJ), Kasun, with stealth bomber precision, captured one of the adult birds. It was our mystery bird, now flagged EH White, and the secret she had been hiding on her metal band was revealed.

EH is the daughter of Mornington Peninsula legend JZ who, along with his partner XT, ruled the Koonya West territory for many years. JZ was flagged as a fledgling at Gunnamatta and was around 22 years old when he disappeared a year ago and broke our hearts.

EH and her sibling had received their metal bands as tiny chicks during the transmitter project in season 2016/17 (both birds went on to fledge). Two seasons later, in his final year, a weary JZ chased after another active youngster. That fledgling, flagged KW and known to us as Sweetpea, is now making her home on the Bellarine Peninsula.

EH didn't travel far from her Koonya home, 500 metres around Spray Point to Montforts where she has now begun her contribution to the Hoodie gene pool. One slim metal band, for a while hidden by seaweed, has revealed part of her story. She is no longer anonymous. We miss our boy JZ but he lives on in EH and her youngster PJ, in KW to the west and several unbanded birds he fathered in his 22 years. Who knows what a DNA analysis of the three generations may reveal……

The banding and flagging program run by Birdlife helps us fill knowledge gaps and understand something of the lives and stories of these charismatic birds. And of the secrets they keep. :-)

Photo: Glenn Ehmke; JZ at Koonya west in 2017, when he was protecting his two chicks (one of whom is now EH)

Photo: Glenn Ehmke; our metal banded fledgling had left home and mingled with the small flock at Sphinx Rocks platform.

Photo: Karen Wootton; I took this photo around day 36 (2 days before we saw Phoenix flying).

Photos: L: supplied by BirdLife Australia; JZ Orange being flagged. Middle: Mark Lethlean; EH Whte. R: Mark Lethlean; PJ White. Three generations of Hooded Plovers!

PHILLIP ISLAND SEASON SUMMARY:

Jon Fallaw, Ranger, Phillip Island Nature Parks

The 2019/2020 breeding season for Phillip Island's Hooded Plovers was a relatively productive season compared to previous years. No chicks were fledged before Christmas and it wasn't until the 17/02/20 that three chicks successfully fledged from the north-west coast of the Island, two from Red Rocks and one from Graydens Rd which is the only 24/7 dog off leash beach on the island. This seemed to be all the fledglings we were going to get as the next fifteen nests failed to hatch. It wasn't until late January that the Island saw a dramatic reduction in beach use by visitors and residents, giving the Hooded Plovers breathing room to successfully fledge a further 6 chicks along the south coast beaches in mid-April, bring the total number fledged on Phillip Island to nine. Many thanks to the wonderful volunteers, the Nature Parks hoodie team comprising Shani Blyth, Mitch Burrows, Rachael Ferguson and Tom Nixon, and to Dave Martin from the Bass Coast Shire.

Nineteen pairs of Hooded Plovers were recorded participating in the Phillip Island 2019/2020 breeding season. The 19 breeding pairs had 41 nests with 90 eggs. 24 chicks hatched from 11 nests and 9 survived to fledge successfully from 6 nests. The chicks fledged per pair was 0.47, continuing the solid breeding trend on the island.

Whilst Covid 19 gave the chicks a reprieve from summer beach crowds it stopped research activities for our interns, and all 'Hooded Plover Watch' volunteer activities were stopped including the quarterly island-wide 'Hooded Plover and Gull Count' on the 21/04/20 which was completed by Nature Parks staff.

Beach info session at Surf Beach: Pre Covid, Hooded Plover Watch and Surf Beach Coastcare group. Photo supplied by: Jon Fallaw

Pre Covid, Dogs breakfast at Smiths Beach. Photo Jon Fallaw

Brood amalgamation

Brood amalgamation is a rare event, and only ever recorded once before on Phillip Island. Late in the year 2001 on the north west coast of Phillip Island 01/11/2001 two chicks at Flynns Reef joined up with three chicks at neighbouring Farm Beach, where on 01/02/2002 four of the five fledged. Enquiries at the time discovered that brood amalgamation had not been recorded in Hooded Plover, and Mike Weston thought that it could be due to recreational pressure, which seemed reasonable, as Flynns is a very popular surf location.

Anyway, it happened again this season on the southern coast of Phillip Island where a partial brood amalgamation occurred on the aptly named "Crazy Birds" beach. Early March, Hooded Plover parents, 'Yellow 19' (Y19) and 'Yellow 25' (Y25) hatched three chicks at about the same time as the Forrest Caves pair, 'Orange BR' and unbanded, hatched two chicks. Unfortunately, one of the Crazy Birds chicks was taken by a Pacific Gull. Shortly after, the Forrest Caves hoodie pair walked their two chicks west to Crazy Birds beach where a Crazy Birds chick joined up with the two Forrest Caves chicks. The amalgamated brood of three then returned to Forrest Caves beach where they were flagged Y75, Y76, Y77. Only two of these chicks fledged, as Y76 went missing at the same time as a member of the public reported a hoodie taken by a 'brown hawk'.

Amalgamated 3 chick family with Orange BR at Forrest Caves.
Photo Gary Matthews 02/04/20

CORNER INLET ADVENTURE

Julie Riley, Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Breamlea

Last July Grainne Maguire called for volunteers among our Beach-nesting Birds groups to assist in surveying islands within Corner Inlet over the spring and summer. The objective was to intensively gather data on the breeding attempts of the range of BNB species within the system, comparing fox free island sites with island sites where foxes are present... Renee and Grainne had often spoken with enthusiasm about their surveys and bird counts down at Corner Inlet, so I eagerly put up my hand. As one of two volunteer coordinators of Friends of the Hooded Plover Breamlea, this would be a fantastic opportunity to increase my knowledge and see these amazing islands, with densities and diversity of birds like very few other places and very little human visitation.

What a difficult a task it turned out to be, with a season of exceptionally changeable weather and the catastrophic bushfires. Poor Renee coped with trips being postponed or cancelled mostly due to smoke or wind messing up the tight tidal schedule for the boat charter dropping off and picking up groups at each end of the day.

On Sunday, 2nd February by 7am, after several days of extraordinary hot and humid conditions across Victoria and bushfires still threatening areas not far north of Yarram where our group of 6 spent the night, we were off. The jet boat ride framed this day of adventure. Just picture the six of us sitting astride padded saddle seats holding on to the steel frame and bouncing at speed across the protected harbour making for various small islands which form what is known as the Barrier Islands. Renee and I were dropped off at the western tip of Dream Island to first locate the fox camera and swap the SD card and batteries. Then back into the boat to get dropped across the narrow channel on the sandy spit of Boxbank Island and walk the length of the island, criss-crossing from one side to the other where possible, monitoring for nesting activity, checking any nest cameras, identifying, counting the migratory waders and noting any tags. The other team of four, led by Grainne, were dropped at the tip of Clonmel Island for a similar task over about 20 km. We all carried a fair bit of equipment, including a field telescope and our food and water. It was extremely windy, chilly but splendidly sunny. Oh, and yes, beautiful! Looking back towards the mainland you have a vista of a hilly range running all the way to Wilson's Promontory. The islands are made of vast, white sand beaches with a spine of vegetated dunes and swales. The tide moves quickly, and our nervous boat captain wanted us to pitch

ourselves into the channel shallows quickly, and clamber back in just as efficiently. For me, short legs, weighed down and feeling my 69 years at the end of the long day, this was quite a challenge but with a hoist from Renee from below and a heave from above, I made it on the second go.

Renee and Grainne were disappointed at the comparatively low numbers of bird sightings, but I was gob-smacked by such big flocks of waders here in Victoria, predominantly Bar-tailed Godwits and Red-necked Stints. Although others have seen them here in the thousands, I had been saving up such amazement for a future trip up to Broome. As for our BNBs, we sighted a flock of about 100 Pied Oystercatchers, a couple of pairs still behaving as if they had a nest. I found the only Hooded Plover pair on Boxbank that day it seems. I felt I brought some of my useful hoodie monitoring experience and wildlife camera know-how to bear. The Clonmel group were treated to one of the last Caspian Tern chicks recently hatched in the rookery there.

Truly, a great adventure and I encourage other volunteers to grab any future opportunity to go. I certainly will. Mind you, I will have to do some practice of climbing up into a big rubber ducky first.

Ocean beach side of Boxbank Island. Windswept and beautiful. Photo Julie Riley.

6 adventurers heading off in our speedy craft. Photo Grainne Maguire. Photos from remote cameras.

CORNER INLET 2019/2020 SEASON FINDINGS

Dr Amy Adams, Coastal Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

The BNB team has been fortunate to have the opportunity to repeatedly survey three of Corner Inlet's barrier islands (Snake, Boxbank, Clonmel) during a full breeding season (2019/20), continuing on from our initial summer 2018 pilot study. This was funded by the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority as part of their evaluation monitoring for National Landcare Program investment in controlling foxes and other key threats to shorebirds within Corner Inlet.

Our key aims are to gain a better understanding of the breeding populations of Hooded Plovers, Red-capped Plovers, Pied Oystercatchers and various tern species across the islands; monitor and track the breeding

success of these species including attempting to determine nest fates; identify breeding territories; and to document the threats the birds face on these islands. Surveys were carried out between October and February and were complemented with the use of remote cameras on selected nests which enabled us to collect extra information about nest fates and predator indexing between visits. Additionally, egg floating was conducted to help us estimate lay and hatch dates and to help us time our surveys to confirm hatching success which is invaluable when trips to these remote islands are so logistically challenging!

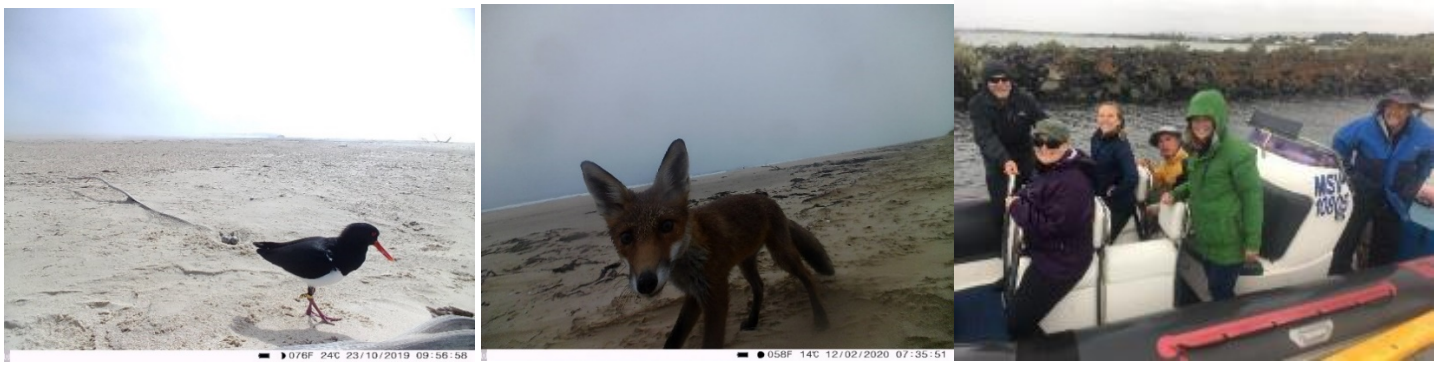
During the 2019/20 season, numerous trips needed to be cancelled due to a combination of boat availability, tide heights, storms and poor air quality due to the bushfires. In the end, Boxbank and Clonmel Islands were surveyed eight times and Snake was surveyed seven times (with 3 trips occurring to Dream Island just to ensure a tern nesting colony was not being overlooked) by teams of experienced observers.

The total number of Hooded Plovers (average 35 adults), Red-capped Plovers (average 40 adults) and Pied Oystercatchers (average 138 adults) across the three main islands all fluctuated between the seven survey periods where all three islands were surveyed. Sooty Oystercatcher (average 2 adults) numbers were typically stable across all survey periods. The total numbers of the tern species also fluctuated across the breeding season, being the highest during December and January, and numbers decreasing on subsequent visits for each species. These fluctuations suggest post-breeding movements are occurring in and out of the island system.

As you can imagine, working out the number of territories on islands where many species breed in close proximity to one another is certainly a challenge, especially as the majority are unbanded! There appear to be 9 Hooded Plover territories on Snake Island, 6 on Clonmel and 3 on Boxbank (with a fourth occurring late in the season). For Pied Oystercatchers, there appear to be 17 breeding territories on Snake, 23 on Clonmel and 19 on Boxbank. Breeding territories on the spits were particularly hard to define due to the number of adult birds seen in the general area – sometimes you could have up to four pairs of Pied Oystercatchers breeding within 100 metres!

Unfortunately, there was very little successful breeding observed on the four islands in 2019/20. Of the 10 active nests detected for Hooded Plovers, only one nest hatched (2 chicks) on Snake Island. Of the 63 active nests detected for Pied Oystercatchers, only four nests were suspected to have hatched and chicks were observed from another six nests on Clonmel Island. The only confirmed fledglings for the entire season were one Pied Oystercatcher chick on Snake Island, and five juveniles observed in March from a Caspian Tern colony on Clonmel Island (there are likely to have been more fledglings from this colony of up to 81 breeding Caspian Terns, but unfortunately there was a lag in getting boat access at the right time).

Twenty-one remote cameras were set on a variety of Hooded Plover, Pied Oystercatcher and Red-capped Plover nests as well as a Caspian Tern colony on Clonmel Island. Preliminary analysis of the photos shows a variety of predators causing nest failure including ravens, Silver Gulls and foxes.



Remote camera images of a Pied Oystercatcher with nest, and fox. A survey team, Photo Grainne Maguire.

To read the full report: http://www.birdlife.org.au/documents/bnb_Corner_Inlet_report_2020_FINAL.pdf

NORTHERN BELLARINE RED-CAPPED PLOVER COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

Jane Shearer, Coastal Projects Officer, Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management

Bellarine Bayside Foreshore Committee of Management (Bellarine Bayside) is a not-for-profit Committee of Management formed by the Victorian Government in 1994 to manage 17 kilometres of coastal Crown land reserves on the northern Bellarine.

In 2017, Bellarine Bayside and Birdlife Australia initiated a northern Bellarine Birdlife volunteer group to learn more about the local Red-capped Plover (RCP) population that had, up until then, been largely unrecognised. A community workshop was held in Indented Head to raise awareness on the RCP and to determine if there was enough interest to form a monitoring group. The workshop was enjoyed by all attendees and we found some very dedicated locals to form the northern Bellarine volunteer group and begin monitoring the local RCP colony.

Since then, Birdlife Australia and Bellarine Bayside have delivered annual community beach walks every January to engage holiday makers and residents. During these events we see many new faces but also some returning families who want to check up on the RCP family each year. They are always very enjoyable and well-attended events.

In 2018, the community volunteers and Bellarine Bayside staff were lucky enough to be invited to the Coastcare Victoria funded program "Fostering Community Participation and Protection for a flagship Coastal Species; the Red-capped Plover" on the Mornington Peninsula. We all learned a lot from The Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc. during that trip and therefore decided that we would also apply for a Coastcare Community Grant and continue the great work over on the Bellarine.

In 2019, we were successful in our application for a Coastcare Victoria Community Grant (funded by the Victorian Government's Sustainability Fund) and received two years of funding to extend the monitoring program. The "Northern Bellarine Red-capped Plover Community Education" program has included another workshop, banding activities, temporary signage and fencing equipment and permanent interpretation signage. The program aims to both further raise awareness within the community and monitor the RCP more effectively. To ensure a well-rounded and effective project, there are 3 distinct components: community engagement (workshops, signage); monitoring & data collection (banding, monitoring); and habitat improvement (planting, weeding).

We are now half way through our program and although coronavirus (COVID-19) has reduced the community involvement activities, the passionate local volunteers have continued to monitor during their daily walks and Bellarine Bayside's conservation team have been looking after the RCP habitat through weed control and planting. We look forward to the next breeding season to watch the exciting drama within the colony!

Thank you to Coastcare Victoria, BirdLife Australia and of course our wonderful community volunteers for assisting Bellarine Bayside in this important work.

Photo: Renee Mead; learning how to protect RCP breeding sites

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A TAG MAKES

John Pearce, Red-capped Plover volunteer, Bellarine Bayside

We first became aware of the Red-capped Plovers that inhabit the beach across the road from our place, when one of the birds was attempting to distract us with a broken wing display. Prior to that time we had simply known that there were some interesting shorebirds in the area and that some of them liked to run in a stop start manner along the water's edge.

Curiosity piqued by the broken wing display of one of the birds (and having located the nest of that bird), we engaged in conversation with the local coastal management authority, Bellarine Bayside (BB). As it turned out, BB had already been in contact with BirdLife Australia about establishing a monitoring group along this section of foreshore and beyond. Of course, we were more than happy to become part of this program. Soon we had purchased binoculars, been trained and were filling in observations of our red-capped plovers on the BirdLife My Beach Bird portal.

Of course, the more you know, the more you realise the things that you don't yet know. Identifying very mobile birds living in a colony of sorts, that have a greater awareness of your presence than you have of theirs, meant that it was very tricky to accurately record which specific birds were doing what. It was exciting when BB made a successful grant submission that enabled Dan Lees from BirdLife to head down our way to band some of the birds.

Our first banding mission was very successful and soon Dan had tagged four females that we could now identify quite accurately (well at least when the birds stood still, were facing the right way and were not holding their tagged leg up to their torso). The tags also meant we could begin to correlate behaviours with specific birds. As the banding was done close to the end of the 2018-19 breeding season, we couldn't wait until the next one began.

Come the next red-capped breeding season, the advantages of the tags quickly became apparent. We could now note with certainty when the bird tagged HV was spotted brooding a scrape in an unusual spot. Instead of choosing the beach where all of the other birds were nesting, HV and her partner instead selected a semi-grassed spot on the hinterland. Even better, we could use the telescope in our living room to monitor their progress.

Photo: John Pearce; RCP incubating

Delighted as we were by all of this, our excitement was dashed the day after the eggs hatched, when we noticed that HV was no longer on the nest. A closer inspection sadly revealed two recently deceased chicks. A couple of weeks later HV re-appeared, this time nesting on the more traditional sandy beach.

The presence of the band also enabled us to more clearly identify the seemingly imperturbable HR. Her flight initiation distance is considerably shorter than all the other birds in our local colony. She would regularly allow observers to approach within a very short distance of her scrape before she would leave her eggs.

We also noted that after one unsuccessful breeding attempt, the bird banded HX was not seen again for the rest of the breeding season.

Dan offered to come down to do a night-time banding session so we could tag some males. A select group jumped at the chance to take part in the operation. Whilst an interesting exercise, having to sit on the sand, in

virtual silence, in the dark with the temperature slowly dropping for 30 plus minutes was not as much fun as the daylight session. The mission however was ultimately successful, and we now have two male birds, HZ and HF, that we can also confidently identify. (In case you're wondering, none of the banded males are partners of any of the banded females).

Towards the end of this latest breeding season, Dan was available to come down our way for another banding mission. Locally, we had been monitoring two young chicks that were yet to take flight, so a date and time was set. As luck would have it, when Dan began to chase one of the chicks with his net, that chick took off on its first flight followed closely behind by the other target chick. Seeing as we had no other chick sightings to fall back on, we began to chat to Dan about the fourth of original banded birds, HJ.

Photo: John Pearce; newly flagged OE

HJ is notable because at the end of this season she had a scrape populated with three rather than the regular two egg clutches. More to the point this was the second such clutch that HJ had produced within a month, again an unusual occurrence. As we approached the scrape, HJ got up to distract us from her eggs. Just then Dan dropped all of his equipment, except for the long-handled net, and began running down the beach. With mouths agape we saw he was in pursuit of a chick that had run out from the nearby grass. Immediately HJ also went scurrying down the beach calling as she went. Despite the chick attempting to fly, Dan soon had it inside the net. HJ made it known that she was less than impressed with all of that. Despite these protestations, after the usual checks and measurements were completed we soon had another banded bird in the colony, this time OE. As it turns out HJ and her partner were incubating eggs at the same time as they were raising a new chick, another unusual occurrence.

On subsequent observations we watched as OE learnt to fly properly and finally left HJ to join up with another couple of juveniles making their way in the world. As to HJ's other eggs, alas they seemed to have been predated as a week or so later the scrape had been abandoned, well before the 28-day incubation period had passed.

A couple of weeks later we were lucky enough to catch up with HJ as she proudly displayed her tag.

Photo: John Pearce; flagged female, HJ

AFTER THE FIRE – A SYMBOL OF SURVIVAL AND OPTIMISM

Sue Hines, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Mallacoota

This article was originally published in the "BirdLife Action Network" newsletter.

A couple of days after the New Year's Eve fire in Mallacoota, birds of all kinds began to wash up on the beaches. I'm so glad I wasn't here to see that. On the morning of Saturday 1 February, I went for my first beach walk with my friend Jenny. We walked through the charred remains of bushland that surrounded Betka Beach… through evidence of heat so intense that it split and sliced rocks as neatly as any machine…

And down on the beach we discovered a tiny miracle. Two tiny miracles, in fact, running gaily about on the beach with their parents - two Hooded Plover chicks, perhaps a couple of weeks old! Why is this so miraculous? Because the Hooded Plover struggles each year to survive. Its declining numbers reflect its annual struggle to overcome overwhelming odds. It's Vulnerable. This beach-nesting bird's breeding season coincides with the height of our tourist season. Vulnerable chicks are routinely trampled – often by dogs – or taken by predators. They lose their eggs in king tides and storms. They lay clutch after clutch after clutch, often futilely. Their pluck and perseverance are magnificent.

This year the horrifying fires cut short the tourist season. The beaches are almost deserted. Perhaps many of the Hoodies' regular predators perished in the fires. But somehow during the fire – as the bush around them burned to ash, as the rocks split, as birds in their thousands perished from smoke or heat or exhaustion from their escape attempts – our little Hoodie parents sat steadfastly on the eggs that produced these chicks. Hunkered down in the sand, they must have been low enough to avoid the worst of the choking smoke, sheltered by the natural undulations of the sand. My point here is that the Hooded Plover is possibly one of Mallacoota's most vulnerable creatures – and yet it survived this. To me, it's a symbol of great optimism against almost insurmountable odds. That's something we all need at this awful time, as the hard slog of recovery begins.

Since the publication of this article (10th February), this nest that survived the fires (with the fencing and signage being burned), the two chicks that hatched, managed to fledge!

Photos: Leonie Dawes and Sue Hines; Left: a temporary sign stands out against the burned permanent sign; Right Adults and chicks

FAR WEST VICTORIA: HOODED PLOVER HIGHLIGHTS AND LOWLIGHTS FROM SOUTHWEST VICTORIA FOR SEASON 2019/20; THE WESTERN BEACHES

John Hargreaves, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West Victoria

Here I will cover Hooded Plover activity on the western beaches of Far West Victoria for the season 2019/20; Griffiths Island Port Fairy to Yambuk, and some sites in Belfast Coastal Reserve.

The season started promisingly enough with the pair on South Beach, Port Fairy leading the way. A scrape was first spotted on 16 August 2019, followed by a clutch of eggs being incubated by 30 August, the first recorded on the Victorian coast. These two Hoodies are little stars, having produced two fledglings the previous season from this doggiest of doggie beaches in the heart of town. All too soon, they recorded the first nest fail on the Victorian coast, a very dubious honour. Australian Little Ravens were the suspected culprits. Undeterred, these little champions were incubating a second clutch by 13 September and were to hatch 3 chicks from their third clutch by mid-November.

Mating was seen and scrapes found on other beaches in the first week of September, as migratory shorebirds began returning in numbers from the northern hemisphere. In mid-October the first chicks on the Victorian coast were recorded at Mills Reef at the western end of Belfast Coastal Reserve. These were tricky to spot as the nest was hidden on a secluded deposit of shell grit between large basalt boulders on a rocky platform. It was just possible to see into the site through a gap between boulders with a bird scope carefully placed under Coast Beard Heath shrubs on the primary dune 150m away, real Secret Squirrel stuff. But when I slipped into position one morning and disturbed a Brown Goshawk using the same vantage, it seemed a harbinger of doom. Sure enough, the chicks were gone 3 days later.

This set the pattern for the rest of the season. Until Christmas, there were more Ravens and Magpies on beaches and in dunes than I recall seeing in previous seasons, impacting many of the eighteen resident pairs from Port Fairy to Yambuk. The 7-8 pairs either side of the local abalone farm were subjected to large flocks of 60-75 Ravens and up to 250 Silver Gulls. Seven Magpies were recorded inside a nesting territory fence one day. This stretch is also popular with flocking Hoodies without territories and large numbers of migratory shorebirds, which creates constant disturbance and distraction. To add to the chaos, stock was getting onto the beaches regularly, there was a dramatic increase in the amount of vehicle tracks, and there was regular evidence of foxes and cats. Little wonder that a fledgling has not been recorded from this stretch for 3 seasons.

Storms, monster tides and huge swells pounded beaches without respite until December, washing into foredune faces and forming abrupt scarps that limited suitable nesting opportunities. Usually, south-easterly weather patterns return sand eroded away over winter, but this was not so apparent last spring. The hardy pair on South Beach lost their 3 chicks during a week of strong to gale force winds and stormy seas from the south-west. Quickly laying another clutch, they lost 2 eggs to an unusual storm-surge on low tide just before Christmas and moved the remaining egg 5 metres up the beach seeking safe refuge. It worked! They hatched a chick from the surviving egg just as holidaymakers piled onto the beach during the height of the season, but it succumbed after only 12 days. Then they had one last unsuccessful breeding attempt, their fifth. Better luck next season, little guys.

A new pair had established a seventh territory at the abalone farm, but then in the New Year, long-time resident VR disappeared. We lost several old banded birds; YL from Yambuk; VR from Taylors Bay; TR from Mills Reef; NY from Killarney Campground; CZ from Killarney Basin; AB from Towilla. VE, the female from one of our most successful pairs last season, was kicked off her territory at Time and Tide in August and spent the whole season shuttling between 4 stretches without partner or new territory. It is hard registering these changes and losses. After all, we get to know these banded individuals over many years. They are key to connecting us with the population and the landscape. They are missed when they are gone. But new pairings soon establish and occupy territories, continue the life cycle and the work goes on.

New regulations were implemented by the shire that required dog walkers to leash their dogs within 50m of a fenced territory on town beaches. This seemed to be working well over the holiday period, with more dogs sighted on leash near nesting territories. But some dog walkers moved to a nearby, unregulated beach and unfortunately this coincided with the first successful hatches and chicks on this stretch. There was an increase in dog prints recorded inside nest fences and all 4 chicks soon failed.

One site I enjoy checking is a basalt skerry 200m off Sisters Point, Killarney; a relaxing swim. It is notable that 3 species of birds breed here; Silver Gulls from August; Crested Terns from October; Hooded Plovers after Christmas. Only spotted one Hoodie nest out there this season, eggs but no chicks.

As the season drew to a close, there was good news from Mills Reef and Killarney Campground, where at long last 4 chicks fledged. Meanwhile at Yambuk, there was great excitement when NB, a juvenile banded near Torquay in January, was recorded flocking with the locals. I was reliably informed that NB is nicknamed *Nudie Boy* and that Surf Coast volunteers were excited by this sighting. Another individual originally from Surf Coast was recorded flocking on Saltwater Swamp this season and last, SZ, banded as a juvenile at Aireys Inlet in November 2018. It is notable that these two S. Coasters flew in excess of 250km of coastline to flock in South West Victoria.

We have experienced consistent high tides and big swells since mid-April, further eroding beaches, creating scarps, collapsing dune faces, making life difficult for our shorebirds. Saltwater Swamp, a popular flocking spot where 102 Hoodies were recorded last season, has had high water levels flooding mud flats and banks, making it unsuitable for foraging or gathering in numbers. It continues to be a tough season for the Hoodies, but nothing is surer than these tough little survivors will be back trying their hardest next breeding season.

Thanks to Kerry Vickers and Jane Lee for contributing to monitoring the western beaches.

MORE ON THE HOODIES FROM FAR WEST VICTORIA

Toni Ryan and Robyn Bush, Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West Vic

Our losses were high for Breeding Season 2019/20, the birds persevered often against horrible cold snaps and high tides taking essential breeding habitat with them. But like those that care and monitor this species they held their ground.

The local team recorded 8 fledglings this season with 7 fledging from the beaches of Belfast Coastal Reserve, which is nestled between Warrnambool and Port Fairy. Our other fledge survived along a stretch of coast called Logan's Beach which resides just east of Warrnambool and is famous for its visiting whales.

Our season was long with the first and last recorded chicks across the state, unfortunately neither clutches survived to fledging. The last chick was born late on April 2nd and battled hard for a month before succumbing to the pressures of storm surges, erosion and disturbance.

Photo: Robyn Bush

One of our resident Pied Oystercatchers was unfortunately found with a nasty entanglement to both of its legs. A team from Friends of the Hooded Plover Far West, Friends of Shorebirds South East South Australia and the Victorian Wader Study Group alongside Parks Victoria was able to successfully disentangle the bird and release it back to its concerned and steadfast partner.

We have been experiencing some horrible infestations of Beach Daisy along our coast, with Yambuk having a significant stretch of the surrounding coastline infested. Thankfully we were able to gather together a working crew including staff from the Working for Victoria initiative and remove large swathes of mature and near to flowering beach daisy. We hope this work can continue.

INVESTIGATING SITE-SPECIFIC DISTURBANCE RESPONSES – INSIGHT INTO THE BELFAST COASTAL RESERVE HOODIES

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

Most of you will know that Hooded Plovers are passive nest defenders, which means they flee when a threat approaches rather than staying to defend the nest. This escaping behaviour is an adaptation that helps conceal the cryptic eggs, so they are less likely to be detected by predators. It is pretty smart! Yet, this adaptation also has its costs. Leaving the nest means leaving the eggs unattended and vulnerable to other threats, such as extreme weather and increasing the probability of failure if nest is left for too long. This is why human disturbance from beach users is the biggest threat to Hooded Plovers. We can measure this behaviour to better understand the impact of disturbance, and human disturbance in particular, on Hooded Plovers to improve management approaches. And that's what Dan and I (Sonia) have been doing within the Belfast Coastal Reserve (Victoria) during the last breeding season, with funding and support from Parks Victoria and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

The Belfast Coastal Reserve encompasses 20 km of coast between Warrnambool and Port Fairy in south-western Victoria. This area has the highest density of Hooded Plovers in Australia and it's also significant habitat for many migratory shorebird species and the Critically Endangered Orange-bellied Parrot. The new regulations from the Belfast Coastal Reserve Management Plan, released by Parks Victoria, are coming into effect soon. The Plan seeks to balance recreation and commercial activities, such as horse riding, and the protection of the Reserve's ecological and cultural values. The aim of our research is to quantify the impact of key disturbances (e.g. walker, dog walker, horse rider, bird of prey) on breeding Hooded Plovers to inform the Plan management decisions relevant to the local hoodies and assess the effectiveness of management prescriptions. The narrowness of the beaches within this reserve and the presence of many rocky outcrops could impact disturbance tolerances. We want to investigate the distance at which the disturbance is when the bird leaves the nest and for how long the bird is off the nest. We want to explore potential differences in the bird's response to different approaching disturbances, e.g. a dog on-leash or off-leash. These are some of the questions we aim to answer to determine which disturbances are perceived as the greatest threats by the birds and to inform evidence-based management decision making.

Yes, that all sounds great, but how are we doing all this? We're collecting disturbance and bird response data following two main approaches: intensive nest observations and flight-initiation distances (FIDs). The intensive nest observations involve a two-hour observation of birds incubating their nests (complete clutches). During the two hours, a video camera is placed next to the nest (following strict protocols with ethics and permit approval) to film the behaviour of the bird, while the researcher records and timestamps the disturbances that occur within 100 m in each direction of the nest. Then, by matching the timestamp of the recorded disturbances and bird behaviour, we're able to determine whether the bird responds to each disturbance or not and the type of response. Ultimately, we want to quantify the disturbance impact by assessing the duration of time spent off the nest across different types of disturbance and the distance at which the birds respond. Distances at which the birds respond will be key to test a range of buffer distances, including the proposed 20 m in the Management Plan, the 50 m that many Australian councils apply and the 100 m that is suggested as another buffer distance for shorebirds. As you can imagine, measuring these distances accurately with the intensive nest observations is pretty challenging as there might be very few disturbances or different disturbances at once that the bird could be responding to. That's where the FID approach comes in. The FID is the distance at which a bird flees from perceived disturbance. This distance is measured by the

researcher approaching a bird at a steady pace and recording the distance at which the bird responds to the researcher approach. There are of course still many factors that can influence the bird's response, but at least the researcher can control for some influencing variables, such as the absence of other disturbances, when selecting a candidate bird.

Fieldwork comes with unforeseen challenges – surprise, surprise! Some challenges we found were that some nests had disappeared before we got to the site, mainly due to high tides, or the lack of human disturbance during the two-hour observation phase – of course disturbances would occur outside the two-hour observation! Despite these challenges, Dan and I have managed to collect 42 intensive nest observations and 17 FIDs. In total, we've recorded 186 human disturbance events and 285 natural disturbance events. Among the human disturbances, the majority were walkers and we also recorded 28 off-leash dogs and 20 on-leash dogs. Surprisingly, we only recorded 1 horse rider within our intensive nest observations.

So, what's next? With the help of some amazing volunteers, we're currently watching hours of videos from the nest observations to code the birds' behaviour and synchronise them with the disturbance observations. Once that's done, we'll move onto analysing the data to quantifying the impact of those disturbances on incubating behaviour and testing the buffer areas.

Our adaptive management work over the past years across Australia has shown that fencing an area around hoodie nests helps to reduce threats and improve the overall breeding success. Nonetheless, the size of these buffer areas can be varied according to the physical nature of the beach site, room for people to pass by and the distance between the next breeding site. Ultimately their effectiveness relies on the compliance of beach users. Our research will help us to understand the impact of threats to determine the appropriate minimum size these buffer areas should be and offers the opportunity to inform evidence-based decision making within the Belfast Coastal Reserve Management Plan.

Watch this space for more updates!

HOODED PLOVERS ENDANGERED BY SAND EXTRACTION

Timothy Godfrey, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plovers Otways

Last year, concerns were raised by BirdLife Australia to DELWP about the impact sand extraction from Wild Dog Creek beach was having on the Hooded Plover habitat. According to the Otway Coast Committee (OCC) there have been at least eight sand extractions over the last five years from the beach, to replenish eroded beaches in Apollo Bay.

The BirdLife Australia's Friends of Hooded Plover Otways are concerned about the effect this is having, including changes to the dune profile, a lowering in height of the sand dune spit, and the removal of invertebrate food resources. Wild Dog beach was productive at producing fledglings until about 2016, but since then none have been produced. This has been due to foxes, and more recently wave-topping of the dunes. Last season was particularly disappointing with high tides regularly washing away the nests.
In the Apollo Bay News Sheet (21/5/20) it was announced another round of sand renourishment from Wild Dog beach would be carried out in coming weeks. This is particularly disappointing, when concerns have been raised for the plovers and other sources of sand are available. It is also noted that "remedial works at Apollo Bay could affect sections of coast further to the north: in particular the availability of sediment to still travel north towards the beach at Skenes Creek" (Rosengren & Minor, 2019).

Alternative sources

Apollo Bay's 'Mothers Beach' has seen an extra 72,000 m3, or 7200 truckloads of sand, dredged out of the harbour and pumped on to the shore (Colac Herald 19/6/20). The former shoreline could be seen early Friday morning, where a pool of water remained at low tide. A strong northerly wind was transporting surface sand from the beach to the dunes which will, over time, be extended in height and/or width. "After the construction of Apollo Bay Harbour in the early 1950's, maintenance dredging delivered sand to the northern side of the harbour and the foreshore prograded 150 metres seaward and about 8 hectares of land was created" (Apollo Bay Sand Study, 2005). The abundance of sand at Mothers Beach and Point Bunbury, provides an alternative source of sand to Wild Dog beach. A rock wall revetment and groyne solution at Apollo Bay and Marengo, would remove the need to use sand for short term 'fixes'. It would also increase the odds of survival for our Hooded Plovers, an endangered species and a much-loved feathered friend.

Photo: Rob Candy; Wild Dog Creek Beach

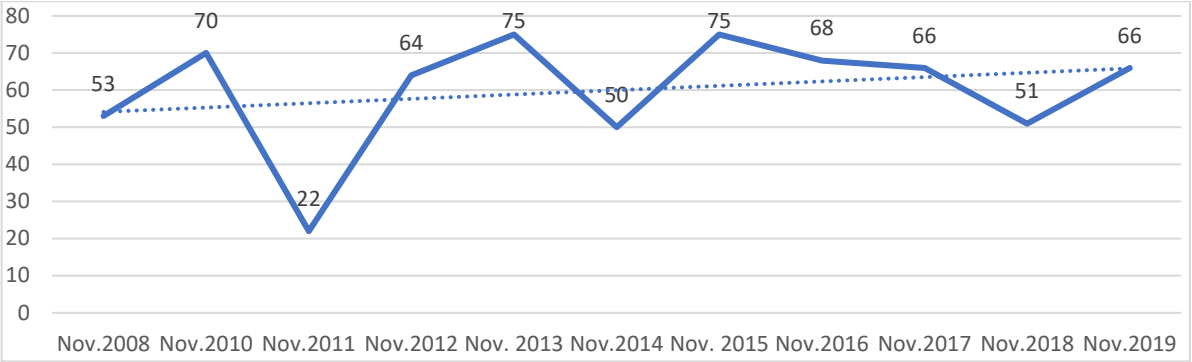
South Australia Updates

SOUTH EAST SOUTH AUSTRALIA 2019/20

Jeff Campbell, Friends of Shorebirds SE

The 2019/2020 breeding season in the South East of South Australia was unfortunately once again a poor one, with very few young birds known to have fledged. Although we knew of quite a few nesting attempts throughout the area very few of these were known to have been successful in producing fledged young. Our first Hooded Plover nesting events began in early September 2019 and continued on until April 2020. During this time we also had many nesting attempts by Red-capped Plovers and Australian Pied Oystercatchers, however once again known fledged young numbers from these species appeared to be low. This unfortunately is a rather common occurrence in the south east of South Australia. One example of this is illustrated by the birds which use Long Beach in Robe and have fledged just six birds from 34 eggs laid since December 2014. These birds have their own Facebook page @robeneighbourhoodie set up and maintained by volunteer Cath Bell.

Our November Hooded Plover counts, carried out every year, show a generally stable number of birds, see table, without the increase one may hope for given successful breeding events leading to an increase in the population. Given the quite long life-span of the Hooded Plover, there is a danger that if many of the adult birds reached the end of their life at the same time numbers could suddenly 'drop off the cliff' without adequate recruitment of young birds into the population.



One pair of hoodies which has had some success, consists of one unflagged bird and one bird with orange flag AH. This bird, which from observation during the breeding season we know is a male, was originally caught as a chick by Grainne in April 2015 at the abalone farm near Port Fairy in Victoria. This bird was first seen at Danger Point near Port MacDonnell in February 2016 and has raised at least one fledgling every year at that location since then.

Photo: Sarah Campbell; Immature Hooded Plover at Danger Point 2020

In an item of good news, in mid-January the Friends of Shorebirds SE received a call from Parks Vic Warrnambool asking us for help in assisting with the disentanglement of fishing line from both legs on a Pied Oystercatcher. The bird was on a beach at Killarney, west of Warrnambool, and was severely hampered by the line. Members travelled over to Killarney two days later and found that although the entangled bird was able to feed to some extent it was difficult for it to walk or stand steadily. Netting gear was set in the area where the bird had been feeding and although it returned soon after it was unable to be caught due to an equipment failure. Members returned three days later, and this time were successful in catching it. It was found that

indeed both legs were entangled by one long length of line which was tightly wound around the legs and had slightly cut into one. The bird had previously been caught and flagged in Corner Inlet, near Wilson's Promontory in Victoria in 2011. Since then it had been sighted in Westernport Bay, Victoria and Mimosa Rocks National Park, NSW then back to Westernport Bay before moving to Killarney, then Westernport Bay again and lastly back to Killarney! Fortunately, the band and leg-flag, both on the upper legs, were not involved in the entanglement which was confined to the lower legs only. When released the bird it flew strongly to its mate, which had always remained nearby, fed on a large worm before walking off accompanied by its mate.

Entangled Oystercatcher. Photo: Sarah Campbell

OUT OF THE ASHES; KANGAROO ISLAND

Alex Croft, Communications/Development Officer, BirdLife Australia and Caroline Paterson, Volunteer, Friends of Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island

Article originally published in 'Australian BirdLife'

In late December, dry lightning strikes ignited a hellfire on Kangaroo Island. The Ravine fire, unprecedented in its heat and scale, tore through Flinders Chase National Park. The fires burnt for weeks, engulfing half the island and claiming the lives of two people. Of 4,500 residents, 89 homes were lost. Former Ranger-in-Charge and BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Birds volunteer Caroline Paterson's family home was one of them.

For Caroline, the sadness of this material loss is equalled by her devastation at the destruction of the wilderness and wildlife she's devoted her life to protecting. Recently, she returned to the park for the first time. What she saw was nothing short of post-apocalyptic. "There are dunes of ash for miles and miles," she describes. "The silence was deafening. It was more like a moonscape."

Still, there have been some promising sightings since the fires—including Bush-stone Curlews, Southern Emu-wrens and Yellow-tailed Black-cockatoos. The calls of Western Whipbirds were recorded in remnant vegetation, and echidnas and goannas were still shuffling around, searching for food. She is heartened by some small hopeful pockets of green. But overall, the situation is dire. And it's not a matter of whether species have been lost—but of how many.

Like many residents, Caroline and her family are trying to navigate a world that's been turned upside down. She's been busy helping with threatened species recovery efforts—installing small mammal shelters, controlling feral cats and conducting surveys. "It feels good to be out there doing something, to be making a difference," she says. "But it's such a shame it took this for people to notice the reality of a changing climate. This needs to be a wake-up call. Every state has burnt this year, and we need a real commitment to renewable energy, ethical research and threatened species conservation." Even after everything, Caroline isn't easily deterred. They plan to rebuild. "We love Kangaroo Island and its wild places," she says, "and we aren't going anywhere."

SHOULD WE STAY, OR SHOULD WE GO?

Jean Turner, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island

Like Hooded Plovers elsewhere along the south eastern Australian coast, many Kangaroo Island (KI) Hoodie pairs disappear from their breeding territories after completion of breeding. Where do they go, and why?

In my limited experience of watching Hooded Plovers at a few sites on the Dudley Peninsula of Kangaroo Island over the past three years, I have noticed variations in the amount of time breeding pairs are absent from territories in the non-breeding season.

As these are un-banded birds, I can't be certain that pairs stay together and stick with their breeding territory from one season to the next. However, the consistent location of nest sites and behaviour after breeding suggest at least one partner of each pair stays the same.

At Crabby Jacks the pair disappears for only a few weeks, then returns to sit out the winter together on their small beach. Pairs at American Beach and Brown Beach come and go intermittently throughout autumn and winter, often using different sections of beach beyond of their usual breeding territory. The Hog Bay pair, monitored regularly by Les Montanjees, seems to take their juveniles away a few weeks after fledging and then head off pretty much 'for the duration', reappearing at the breeding territory in early spring.

At Island Beach Hoodies are present intermittently and irregularly throughout the year, with small flocking groups of 4 to 8 birds in winter; and a breeding pair sometimes in spring. Nearby the sheltered, shelly beach of Pelican Lagoon has two Hoodie adults this autumn-winter, but we have never seen them breeding there.

I can't help wondering what drives these different movements of pairs from their breeding territories in the non-breeding season.

Do successful pairs with fledged chicks take their young on an extended tour of habitats around the island and beyond? Do unsuccessful pairs need a break off their territories – and maybe even from each other - to recover from the hard graft of breeding effort?

Are some driven away in late summer by temporary depletion of prey, or natural seasonal changes in prey availability? Do pairs from very exposed beaches move to escape winter storms? Or are absent birds enticed to inland lakes to feast on salt lake snails *Coxiella striata*?

While searching for background on local Hooded Plovers, I came across some research on the behaviour and ecology of Hooded Plovers on KI. In a 2013 paper, Terry Dennis and David Ball reported on movements, longevity and site fidelity of KI birds over six consecutive years from 1986 to 1991. Unique combinations of coloured leg bands enabled individual Hooded Plovers to be recognized and aspects of their life histories followed.

It is an amazing study based on huge effort and is fascinating reading, providing insights into the lives of KI Hooded Plovers, including their winter movements.

Dennis and Ball found that some colour-banded birds changed locations several times in the study period, often moving distances in the range of 10-98km.

One young bird less than 3 months old flew a phenomenal 80km to another location on KI. And at least three colour-banded birds moved to the South Australian mainland. One adventurous sub-adult banded as a juvenile at Bales Bay, was re-sighted 145km away, north of the Murray Mouth on the Sir Richard Peninsula.

Based on re-sightings of colour-banded birds, Dennis and Ball (2013) found that sub-adults and un-paired adult birds were more mobile in the non-breeding season. Breeding pairs were apparently more sedentary, although some individuals from pairs travelled to winter flocking sites for day visits or longer stays.

Sixteen colour-banded breeding pairs from various locations around the KI coast generally showed strong fidelity to their breeding territories. These known pairs were re-sighted several- to many times throughout the study, but rarely if ever seen off their territories.

In winter periods large flocking groups of up to 55 Hooded Plovers (range 5-55) were recorded at some inland saline lakes; just over one quarter of which were colour-banded birds, including sub-adults, unpaired adults and individuals from known breeding pairs (Dennis and Ball 2013).

Interestingly, my reluctant travellers from Crabby Jacks beach seem to be following a pattern set years ago. Dennis and Ball's colour-banded Crabby Jacks pair remained together over the 6 years of the study and neither bird was re-sighted off-territory. Of course that pair is long gone, but I wonder if the territory has been handed down through the generations as a fiercely guarded family estate!

Exciting news is that Madeline Barker is currently doing Honours research at Deakin University looking at factors which influence why birds remain on breeding territories through winter or move elsewhere in the non-breeding season. Can't wait to read her findings!

Meanwhile, now is a perfect time to brave the weather and see what your Hoodie pairs are up to over winter - did they stay, or did they go?

And if it's just too cold, wet and windy to be out monitoring, I heartily recommend a close read of Dennis and Ball's paper (details below). It's given me extra incentive to check my usual monitoring sites as well as potential flocking locations around KI.

Dennis, T. E. and Ball, D. M. 2013. Some aspects of Hooded Plover behavior and ecology based on a colour-banding study on Kangaroo Island. *South Australian Ornithologist* 39: (1) 1-17.

Photos: Jean Turner; Left: small flocking groups at Island Beach last year. Right: Crabby Jacks Pair

HOODIE SEASON A SUCCESS FOR THE FLEURIEU PENINSULA AND ADELAIDE METRO BEACHES

Emma Stephens, Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

The 2019/20 season was a big success on the Fleurieu Peninsula! The fledgling success was the third highest since monitoring began in 2008/09, with 17 chicks fledging from 28 breeding pairs (19 fledglings in the 2015/16 season). The recently completed breeding success report (Mead and Maguire, 2020: 3) notes that "the Hooded Plover fledgling per pair result was 0.61, which is a great improvement compared to last season's below-target result of 0.30 fledglings/pair". Everyone contributed enormously, "with 59 people entering data into the MyBeachBird data portal, with 2,843 data entries. Fifty-six sites were visited, with 28 breeding pairs confirmed on the Fleurieu this season. There were 82 breeding attempts (218 eggs), with 69 chicks, and 17 fledglings. This is the second highest number of breeding attempts and eggs recorded in a season across ten consecutive seasons, with the 2018/19 season having the highest number. A high percentage of the nests failed at egg stage (61.0%) and many failures were suspected to have been taken by predators. Chick survival has improved since last season from 21.7% in 2018/19 to 24.6% in 2019/20. This season had a record number of chicks, with 69 chicks sighted and an extra 11 chicks suspected to have hatched" (the second highest was in 2015/16 where 63 chicks were observed).

It was also noted that "management (protection of the breeding site via signage and temporary fencing) was undertaken for 74% of breeding attempts: nine managed nests produced fledglings and four nests from remote sites that did not require management also fledged chicks. In addition to on-ground management, many events were undertaken on the Fleurieu Peninsula to raise awareness of the plight of the Hooded Plover, and to recruit new volunteers. Sightings of flagged birds revealed some pairs using multiple sites within the season", including the unprecedented move of MR (White) and unbanded from Hallett Cove to the very metropolitan West Beach, just 3km west of Adelaide Airport!

The Hoodie program on the Fleurieu and metro area is coordinated by BirdLife Australia and the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board. A big thank you to each and everyone involved in the 2019/20 Hoodie season on the Fleurieu and metro coast in the including Volunteer Coordinator Wendy White, Volunteer Regional Coordinators, volunteers, the Normanville Natural Resource Centre, South Coast Environment Centre and land managers (Department for Environment and Water National Parks, City of Charles Sturt, City of Holdfast Bay, City of Marion, City of Onkaparinga, DC Yankalilla, City of Victor Harbor and Alexandrina Council).

The report "***Monitoring Hooded Plover on the Fleurieu Peninsula: a summary of breeding success for the 2019/2020 season***" was written by Renee Mead and Dr Grainne Maguire 2020, supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the NRM Levy. To read the report head to: http://birdlife.org.au/documents/bnb_2019_2020_Fleurieu_Peninsula_season_report_BirdLife_final.pdf

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN REMOTE AND URBAN BEACH MONITORING

Rob Brinsley, Sue and David Thorn, Friends of Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula South Coast

On the South Coast we have several remote beaches. By remote we mean difficult to get to e.g. going through private properties or along the Heysen Trail for several kilometres before reaching the beach. These beaches are beautiful and are a joy to survey, the Southern Ocean waves crash onto the beaches, and the hills and cliffs above are very picturesque. Our volunteers travel from home many kilometres before starting down to the beach to find the Hoodies, and a whole day is sometimes needed to survey some of these beaches.

4-wheel drive vehicles are a must to get to some beaches, and in the height of summer, fire bans must be observed, winter trips can be curtailed due to wet, slippery and steep conditions. When surveying, especially after hatchlings appear, patience and time are the main requirements for volunteers visiting these sites. Waiting for anything up to an hour or two, at a good distance, with binoculars, is not unheard of, before adult hoodies feel safe enough to bring out their chicks, and you are rewarded with a sighting. Remote beach Hoodies don't see many people or dogs so will hide their chicks for long periods, whereas Urban Hoodies are well acquainted with people and dogs and use other strategies to try to keep their chicks safe.

Back to remote beaches. The resident pair of Hoodies, in some instances, have commanded two small beaches 1.6 kilometres apart, as their territory e.g. Sheepies and Coolawang beaches, and Callawonga and Ballaparudda beaches are cases in point, and will not let other Hoodie pairs onto these beaches to start a new breeding site. Callawonga and Ballaparudda are accessed by a 4 x 4 high clearance vehicle, with permission from the manager of Balquidda Station and may involve the opening and closing of up to 23 gates. The male hoodie JZ (white) has displaced the previous male on these two small beaches, after successfully fledging a chick at the Yankalilla river estuary site in the 2018/2019 season, having been fledged and flagged on Lands End Beach in the 2015/2016 season.

Coolawang beach, is a 9-kilometre return trip from the Parsons Beach carpark along the Heysen Trail via Parsons beach, the cliff tops to Sheepies beach, then the cliffs tops again to Coolawang. This past season these hoodie pairs have fledged a chick each and we found the families on the second beach of their territories, having flown their chicks roughly 1.6 kilometres between beaches, quite a flight for a newly fledged chick, with cliffs all the way.

Tunkalilla Beach has an excellent past record as a breeding site, but due to a loss of volunteer vehicle access for the past 5 years, site monitoring has become extremely difficult and time consuming, the Portal satellite map shows the relationship of the carpark to the beach. The carpark is 600 metres from the beach at an elevation of 110 metres. At the beach it is then 1.5 kilometres to the western end. From where the carpark track meets the beach it is 4 kilometres to the far eastern end, even the wet sand on this beach is usually extremely soft. Successful Hoodie observations of the five sites caps off the effort needed to climb back to the carpark.

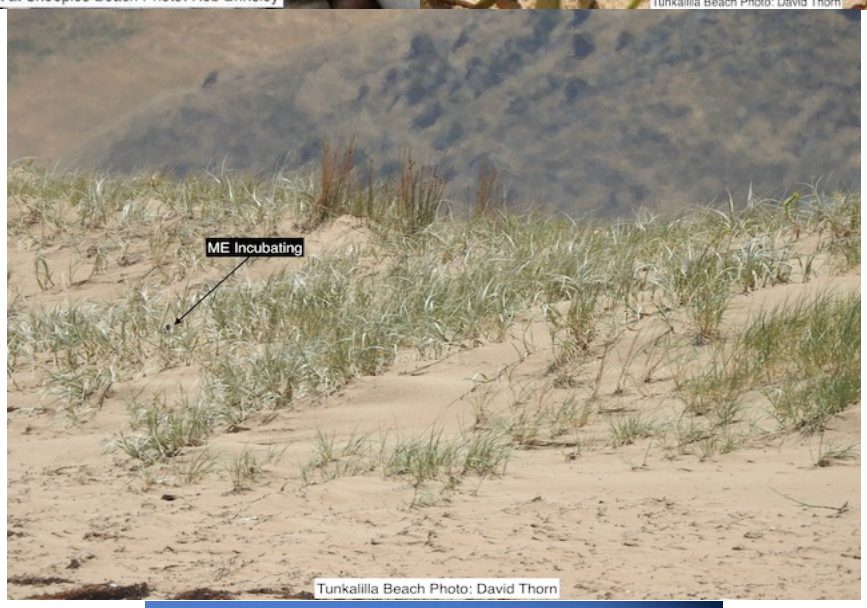
Although foxes present a problem on most beaches, urban or remote, we have seen a big decline in fledglings on remote beaches, we see fresh fox tracks on most surveys of these sites. We have been communicating with some of the private landowners, whose land flanks these remote beaches, and some are interested enough in the Hoodies to do some fox eradication on their properties, and we feel this has helped to get some chicks through to fledging this season.

Some of our remote beaches have rocky foredune areas and estuaries, and these areas are favoured by hoodies at times, finding their nests can be time consuming. Very few fences and temporary signs are used on these beaches as casual beach goers are few.

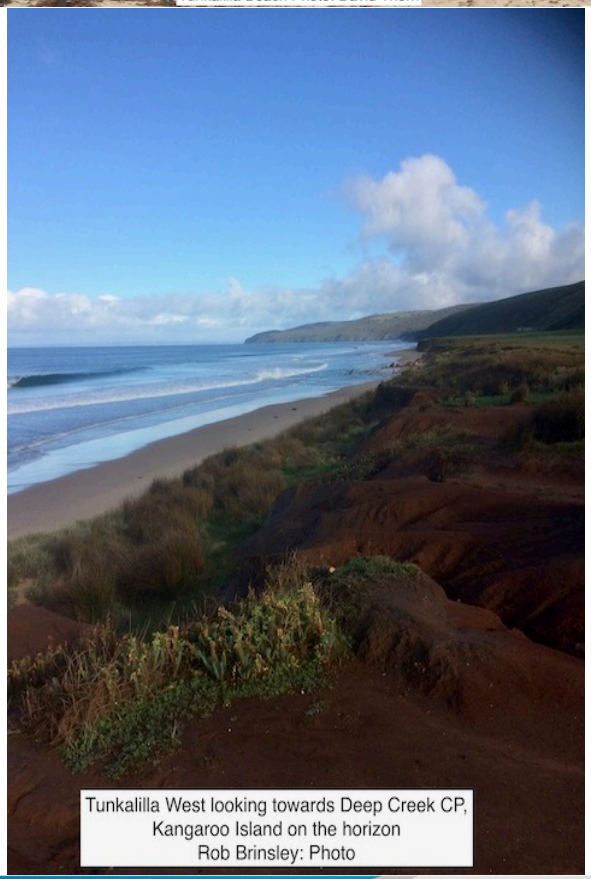
Statistics comparison between Urban and Remote beaches for the 2019-2020 season as per our records.
Remote: 7 Hoodie pairs, 22 nests, 5 fledglings.
Urban: 7 Hoodie pairs, 27 nests, 6 fledglings.

Rock Nest at Sheepies Beach Photo: Rob Brinsley

Tunkalilla Beach Photo: David Thorn



Tunkalilla Beach Photo: David Thorn



Tunkalilla West looking towards Deep Creek CP, Kangaroo Island on the horizon
Rob Brinsley: Photo

Photo: David and Sue Thorn, Tunkalilla Beach in the distance, looking from Tapanappa Lookout on the Heysen Trail

ONKAPARINGA REGION, NORTHERN FLEURIEU PENINSULA

Sue and Ash Read, Volunteer Regional Coordinators, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula Onkaparinga Beaches

Following on from the successful fledging of 2 chicks from the nest at Ochre Cove in mid-November, we had mixed success over the rest of the season. A single chick fledged from the nest at Port Willunga South. This was a pleasing result given the busy nature of this site, but it was also disappointing as all 3 chicks were still present after 24 days. It will be interesting to see if the adults' nest here again or if they return to their previous site at Snapper Point.

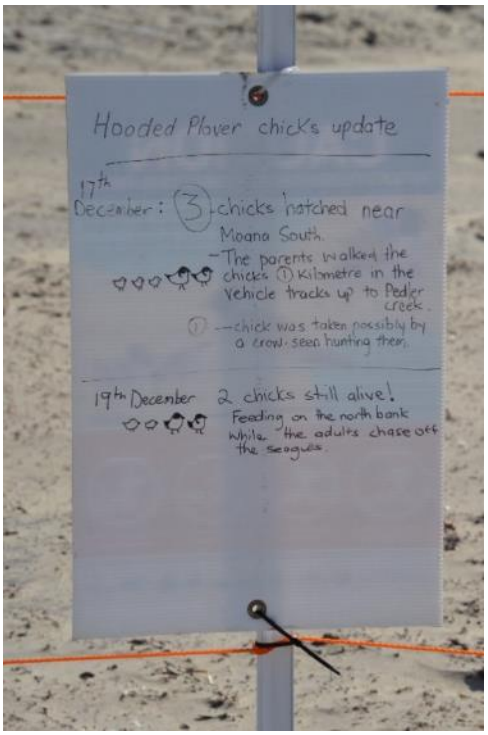
The third nest at the new site of Moana hatched in mid-November and again the adults took the chicks to the Pedlar Creek outlet. After a few days only one chick remained. Unfortunately, the last chick was lost at 34 days old as a result of 2 unleashed dogs entering the fenced area. The adults have remained on site and hopefully they will nest here again next season.

Both of our last 2 nests failed to hatch, with the adults incubating way past the usual 28-day period. Both nests (at Maslin Beach and Sellicks Beach) were in areas of high disturbance. It appears that too much disturbance caused the adults to be off the nest for too long during a series of very hot days.

In summary, having 3 chicks fledge is a good result for our region, although we had 28 chicks hatch, so a chick had only about a 10% chance of fledging.

This season highlighted the importance of creeks for our hoodies. Three of our beaches have creeks flowing to the beach and the hoodies take advantage of these for nesting and/or raising their chicks. The creeks provide the chicks with a place to feed away from the disturbance of people and dogs and this was vital at both Port Willunga South and Moana. The creeks also have the advantage of being able to be fenced off for a long period without inconveniencing beachgoers.

The adults at Port Willunga South (JT and partner) started taking their juvenile to the adjacent beach at Snapper Point (an extensive rock platform/reef) to forage not long after it fledged. With the failure of 2 nests in late January, the nesting season came to an early finish. It appears that our hoodies are starting to nest earlier and finishing earlier than when we started monitoring them 11 seasons ago. The early finish meant that several pairs left their home sites and started flocking at Snapper Point in early February. JT and family were joined by several other local hoodie pairs and often up to 8 adults and 3 juveniles were regularly seen on the reef. The juveniles consisted of one of the Ochre Cove birds (its sibling KZ continued to move further south to the Yankalilla River mouth), the juvenile from Port Willunga South and also JR (one of this season's juveniles from Seacliff). Interestingly the juveniles from Seacliff have ended up at Snapper Point over the past 2 seasons, and one of last year's fledglings (YL) remained in the area this season. In late May an adult (PR) from Parsons Beach appeared at Snapper Point and is still present at the time of writing. The reef is important not just for the hoodies as it also supports a large shorebird population with between 100-200 Red-necked Stints over the summer, with more than 20 Red-capped Plovers often present along with up to 8 Sooty Oystercatchers and numerous Silver Gulls, Crested Terns and White-faced Herons as well as occasional individuals from species such as Double-banded Plovers. The Red-caps do not nest at Snapper Point, but adults often have juveniles with them.



Photos: Sue and Ash Read: Top Left: JR juvenile from Seacliff. Top Right: Chick update sign is the work of Kim O'Connor. Bottom: Subadult having a stretch

MYPONGA TO LAND'S END

Wendy White, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula (Myponga – Lands End)

It was a fairly quiet end to a very uneventful season with only 1 successful fledgling on our lovely stretch of coast. There were 13 nests fenced with 13 chicks hatched but all except one did not survive more than a couple of weeks.

Two days before Christmas a nest was fenced at Shelley Beach, just south of Normanville and luckily one of the 3 shacks on the beach was occupied by some very interested and enthusiastic young people who provided a lot of help and took it upon themselves to watch over the nest for the next month. Shelley Beach is now a dog free beach all year round, but nearly every time our Hooded Plover monitors visited the beach, there were dogs running around. Luckily, we have a very dedicated compliance officer from the Yankalilla Council, who we contacted on a few occasions and although he was not always available to come out straight away, he did patrol the beach regularly and put up new signage. On 17th January 2 chicks hatched but within a week there was only 1. This chick finally fledged on 17th February, our first and only one for the season. It was great for our volunteers to be able to work with some local residents to help these chicks, they certainly made our job a bit easier. Unfortunately, we organised to band this chick a week later only to find 2 dogs racing up and down the beach and no sign of any Hoodies!!

I would like to thank one of the Normanville Resource Centre's volunteers, George Reeves who made a very big and sturdy Hooded Plover Resource box. After having some equipment stolen from the back of the centre, this box is perfect. It has a long side compartment for the poles, then the rest of the box is divided into 3 for signs, rope and fencing equipment. All the local Hooded Plover volunteers have access to this equipment, so it makes it easier for everyone!!

Photo: Wendy White; neat new equipment box!

SUCCESSFUL FLEDGLING AT THE HINDMARSH RIVER ESTUARY

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

PX and partner have commanded the breeding area - from the Victor Harbor Causeway going East to include the Bowling Club, Crochet Club, Hindmarsh Estuary, and Oliver's Reef beach fronts - for many years. This area is the beaches in the heart of Victor Harbor and has seen a huge increase in beach use over the years. Oliver's

reef was their last successful fledging in the 2017/2018 season, they have removed any intruding hoodies wishing to set up camp in their areas over the seasons. This season they tried 3 times to breed over various of their sites, and finally settling close to the Hindmarsh River Estuary with a 3-egg nest, which we fenced and signed on the 29/12/2019. After hatching 3 chicks on the 27/01/2020, we decided that we would have to do some very extensive wardening if we were going to succeed at this site. To that end, 7 volunteers spent the next 5 weeks, from dawn to dusk, being present at this site and knowing where the family was at any time.

We calculated an amount of 322 hours was spent at the beach. Education was paramount, and our strategy worked well up to day 26, when we found one chick limping, this chick died 3 days later and was found by a volunteer. Emma Stephens took the chick to the Adelaide Zoo Vets, where it was found to have a broken tibia, probably caused by a silver gull attack. We continued to warden the remaining 2 chicks, but found only 1 chick left on day 30, the second chick was possibly taken by a very early, (before 6 am) by a dog, whose tracks were clearly seen in the tide swept sand at 6.30 am by a volunteer, very disappointing. We continued on, hoping for the best, and on day 35 (2/3/2020) we fledged the third chick, and Emma Stephens and Aleisa Lamanna managed to catch and flag it, HC , it has been seen regularly over the past months, by our volunteers, on different beaches on the South Coast.

The point of this exercise was to try to increase the awareness of the Hooded Plover program in this area and the wider community, many walkers became very interested, although some felt their dogs were more important. The constant wardening was time consuming and became very trying, but determination won the day with HC surviving. A very big thankyou to all our fellow south coast Fleurieu volunteers. We had 11 fledglings across our south coast sites, 6 from Urban beaches, and 5 from the Remote beach sites. Four of these fledgings were before the Christmas holidays, and 7 came after the holidays ended at the end of January 2020. The last chick fledged on the 5/3/2020. Twelve unsuccessful nests were monitored over the Christmas holiday period 17/12/2019 to 31/01/2020, possibly extra pressure from holiday makers and extra dogs over this period didn't help the Hooded Plovers.

Photo: Gary Jackson; HC White's Fledging day! Look at those wings go!

A HOODIE LEARNING EXPERIENCE FOR 4-YEAR OLDS

Neville Hudson, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula, Onkaparinga Beaches

The Aldinga Beach Children's Centre provides preschool learning experiences for 4-year olds. As part of their curriculum they conduct an excellent "connecting with nature" program. This all takes place within a scrub, creek and beach environment at Port Willunga. The staff and children refer to the area as the Sheoak Forest. In spring each year, the children spend Friday mornings exploring, playing, making new discoveries and observations within the Sheoak Forest. This outdoor education program coincides with the beginning of the Hooded Plover breeding season. When I was asked to contribute to the Sheoak Forest program I took the opportunity to share information about the Hooded Plover.

Photo supplied by: Neville Hudson

On the sandy beach near the creek outflow the children were each given a photograph-(sticker) of an adult Hooded Plover. They were then invited to make a simple nest using seaweed. Two or three small egg-shaped stones became the plover's eggs in each nest. The adult (photographs) watched over the eggs as the children counted to 28. This represented the days taken to incubate the eggs. As part of the activity the students, staff and volunteers helped make a rope fence around the nests. On the rope were pegged illustrated signs warning people of the nests and the hazards eggs and chicks faced.

Photo supplied by: Neville Hudson

A new photo/sticker depicting a Hooded Plover chick was distributed and placed adjacent to the nest. The children counted to 35, the number of days the chicks need to develop and become free flying fledglings. When they returned to their Sheoak Forest Retreat the children placed their Hooded Plover sticker photographs in a journal of Sheoak Forest experiences. Their simple notes and illustrations indicated how much they had learned from the activity. Later that staff from the children's centre reported that the children shared much of their newly acquired knowledge with their parents. The parents made very favourable comments about the activity.

The Sheoak Forest program culminated with a magnificent media and art exhibition which occupied several rooms within the children's centre. Families and friends were invited to view the exhibition during an afternoon and evening. The Hooded Plover activity was a major feature of the exhibition.

A pair recently nested at Port Willunga in the very area where the children learnt about the Hooded Plover. Three chicks hatched and one chick fledged successfully. About 100 children, in several small groups, participated and later relayed the message to their parents and friends. This community involvement has given us the opportunity to make more people aware of these interesting birds that share the beach with us. We thank the Director of the Aldinga Children's Centre, Ms Jane Moore for encouraging this innovative program. Also, we thank the Sheoak Forest staff team leader, Ms Fiona Brown, for the opportunity to work with the children.

EGG-SQUISITE ART ON SALE FOR A GOOD CAUSE

Doug Collins, Fleurieu Woodturners

We all love our Hoodies and often find inspiration in their determination and plucky spirit. We all want to find ways to help them and indeed, there are many ways we can aid the engaging little birds. For the last 4 years the Southern Fleurieu Woodworkers Club and the Strand Art Gallery in Port Elliot SA, have been helping to raise money to assist in the costs of protecting our local Hooded Plovers. The idea came as the result of a conversation between Sonya Hender, curator and owner of the Strand Art Gallery, and Elizabeth Steele-Collins, then Hooded Plover Regional Coordinator South Coast Fleurieu Peninsula. Sonya and Elizabeth, who is also a wildlife photographer and conservationist, were talking and in the course of that conversation, Sonya asked if somehow the Strand Art Gallery could be involved in helping the plight of the Hoodies. Elizabeth's husband Doug, a local artist, woodcarver and member of the Southern Fleurieu Woodworkers Club became involved in the discussion. He offered to ask the Club Committee if they would be willing to turn some wooden eggs for an Easter exhibition at the Gallery, all proceeds to go to Birdlife Australia to be allocated to the protection of the Hooded Plovers in SA.

Doug broached the subject to the Club leadership and they jumped at it with enthusiasm. The rest as they say, is history. So far, the arrangement has netted over $1600.00 for the cause. At the start of each year the club members turn their collective hands to making wooden eggs. There is no particular size or wood species specified in their manufacture. Whatever takes the fancy of the individual turner. "The quality and finish of the eggs has improved immensely over the years" Doug says. "The Club is designed to help aspiring wood artists develop their craft. The membership collectively holds decades of expertise and experience. It's a wonderful environment for new and experienced wood artists to share techniques and ideas. This benefits all the members of the Club and it shows in the way their collective skills have improved so much in the last few years." Anyone wanting to have a look at the finished eggs can find them on any weekend at The Strand Art Gallery in Port Elliot, but don't leave it too long. They are very popular and won't last.




Photos: Top Left: Sonya Hender; gorgeous eggs on display in The Strand Gallery. Top Right and Bottom Left: Doug Collins; Fleurieu Woodturners hard at work creating eggs! Bottom Right supplied by: Doug Collins; great storage for the eggs!

YORKE PENINSULA

THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF FLEDGLINGS OF THE SEASON AWARD GOES TO... YORKE PENINSULA!

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

Winning the 'first fledgling of the season' award thanks to a successful Hoodie clutch from Moonta Bay early in the breeding season was a good omen of things to come for Yorkes! This was based purely on superstition (not scientific at all!) as the last time we had a fledgling from Moonta Bay back in the 2017/18 breeding season, we ended up with 12 fledglings from 8 pairs across the Peninsula that we were able to monitor throughout the season. This season Yorkes ended up with a whopping 20 fledglings from 26 pairs monitored which easily won it the 'highest number of fledglings of the season' award.

By Christmas, there had been only 6 fledglings raised and there was not much hope because Yorkes gets quite busy with holidaymakers during January and early February. To our surprise, a lot of nests and chicks survived through that period giving us 14 more fledglings in the latter part of the season. There also were at least another 6 fledglings reported from pairs that we were not able to monitor with enough regularity which boosts the number even further! 11 out of the 20 fledglings were raised at sites that are located within the predator exclusion zone of the Great Southern Ark project of Natural Resources Northern and Yorke (NR N&Y) where they undertake intensive fox control works which I am sure had a positive impact on the Hoodies. 7 fledglings came from sites located within the Innes National Park where dogs are prohibited and the pair of

Hoodies at the eastern end of Chinamans Hat Island Beach managed to raise two clutches of two chicks each, successfully through to fledging which was incredible!

We managed to flag four adults and one juvenile Hoodie belonging to pairs that are regularly monitored by our volunteers. Hopefully, it will make it easier for them to keep track of these birds especially when some of these pairs nest close to each other. This season we have also managed to recruit a couple of new volunteers to the FoHP Yorkes group as a result of a couple of workshops we delivered thanks to the National Landcare Program funding we got through NR N&Y. All our lovely volunteers put in a lot of effort this season which enabled us to monitor these Hoodie pairs frequently to detect nesting, hatching, and fledging of chicks. A huge thanks also goes to Rob Brinsley one of our Hoodie volunteers from the Fleurieu Peninsula's FoHP group, who snuck in some valuable Hoodie site visits as part of his fishing holiday to the Yorke Peninsula! Thanks to increased coverage this season, we managed to find 5 pairs of Hoodies nesting quite close to the township of Port Victoria. Sadly, we do not have any volunteers from there or nearby to keep an eye on these pairs. If you know of anyone who would like to help us, please let us know. Spread the word widely as we would like more volunteers to help us monitor these lovely birds. Fingers crossed for another successful season in 2020/21!

Photos: Nanou Cabourdin

New South Wales Updates

BEACH-NESTING BIRDS IN BYRON SHIRE NSW– 2019/20 BREEDING SEASON

Jan Olley, Coordinator - Byron Bird Buddies (BBB)

Each beach-nesting breeding season commences with a joint meeting with government agencies and stakeholders involved with managing our three beach-nesting bird sites in the Byron Shire area. This ensures we are all on the same page and management objectives are being met within the resources that are available to us.

The sites include the estuaries of Brunswick River, Belongil Creek and Tallow Creek. Nesting has been occurring successfully in both the Brunswick River and Belongil Creek estuaries for many years. Because of the presence of Pied Oystercatchers and Beach Stone-curlews the group has only recently been monitoring Tallow Creek, a very popular recreational beach within the Arakwal NP. To date nesting has not occurred at the site but we live in hope.

Following the meeting, we check and renew signs at the three sites and hold a working bee at the Belongil Estuary to renew and realign the bird-nesting protection fence if necessary and remove rubbish from the area. NPWS organize a media release to cover the Tweed, Byron, Ballina and Richmond Valley Council coastal areas, and BBB announces the commencement of the breeding season on social media. The nest sites in the Brunswick Estuary are not fenced but are rather isolated and naturally protected by the river, so the birds are relatively safe except from occasional boating activity.

Photo: Reid Waters; signage ready to be placed!

The Results

One pair of Pied Oystercatchers (POC), which we call the Belongil Beach pair, have successfully nested at the mouth of the Belongil Creek with varying degrees of success since 2004. One of the pair lost its leg to fishing line in 2017 and was quickly displaced by another more 'abled' bird. Each season, they have been the first of the five pairs of POC's that we monitor to make a nest, sometimes as early as June. This year, they were very late, laying their eggs on the 10th October. Two chicks hatched a month later but only one fledged. The fate of the other chick is unknown however dogs are a constant issue in this no-dog area of the Cape Byron Marine Park.

The second pair of POC's usually nests on a small island further in from the mouth of the creek, which is often inundated at high tide. This year they decided to try the busy beachside of the sandy spit and laid their two eggs at the beginning of September. Fortunately, with the help of BBB members, the Marine Park staff quickly erected a temporary fence and increased beach patrols. This resulted in a number of fines being issued to recalcitrant dog-owners. Eventually two chicks hatched but the parents moved them across the creek to their island and unfortunately one chick was lost on the way. This could have been due to disturbances by beach-goers, unleashed dogs, para-gliders, Brahminy Kites, Silver Gulls, or it may have drowned during the creek crossing.

Photo: Reid Waters

In 2018, a pair of Beach Stone-curlews set up a nest site at the creek mouth and successfully raised a chick which was tagged E9. E9 was still with its parents when they again nested in October 2019. Several attempts by the parents to be rid of the 'kid' was observed before October, but it was not going anywhere. Eventually it did fly off when the new egg was laid by the parents.

Red-capped Plovers also nest in the sandy spit and beach at the Belongil Estuary. While monitoring, we rarely see more than 4 adult birds, but this season we believe 5 nests were created. Only two chicks were observed and only for a day. As we are unable to maintain a daily presence it is difficult to determine what exactly happens to the eggs or chicks.

In the Brunswick River Estuary, about 10km north of the Belongil Creek Estuary, the breeding season can sometimes be hazardous for the three breeding pairs of Pied Oystercatchers and a pair of Beach Stone-curlews. Basically, this year, it was a fairly uneventful season. Each pair of POC's nested laying two eggs by the first week in September. This resulted in four chicks being hatched and fledged. Unhappily, the third pair's eggs disappeared two weeks after laying. They did not attempt to re-nest.

The pair of Beach Stone-curlews that have nested for the past ten years successfully fledged another chick again this year. Its nesting site, on NPWS land, has mostly restricted access, being protected by a substantial fence, good signage and sea buoys.

The life of a beach-nesting bird's chick is very precarious and we believe that successfully fledging six Pied Oystercatcher chicks and two Beach Stone-curlew chicks, all in this small part of the NSW coast, is a pretty good result and worth celebrating.

Photo: Reid Waters; Beach Stone-curlews foraging

CANINE CAPERS

Reid Waters, Volunteer, Byron Bird Buddies

Observing bird behaviour down at our very popular Belongil estuary for the last fifteen years or so with the Byron Bird Buddies you come to realise that you are not only observing avian activities. Coincidently you are also seeing what your fellow humans and their canine companions are up to as they transit around/through the shorebird roosting areas. Currently the four shorebird species that breed at the estuary mouth are Red-capped Plovers (1-2 pair), Pied Oystercatchers (2 pairs), Beach Stone-curlews (1 pair) and Masked Lapwings (1 pair).

Constantly exposed over the years to the passing parade of humanity the Oystercatchers and Beach Stone-curlews now display (particularly during the non-breeding season) a certain degree of habituation and insouciance to nearby beachgoers. If you stand/sit quietly both species may in 'stops and starts' approach you for a closer inquisitorial look before carrying on.

Have noticed over the seasons how the two adult Beach Stone-curlews appear to loath unnecessary flying. They much prefer to 'sort things out' on the ground chasing away an occasional nonresident Beach Stone-curlew and even repeatedly running their own fledged sub adult offspring up and down (talking about 150-200 m) the beach and away from their natal area. By way of contrast Pied Oystercatchers conduct more of their skirmishes in the air.

This unaccompanied dog responding to his primal inner beast pursued this adult bird (significantly one of the only breeding pair in the area) for 150m or so up down and around the estuary.

Photo: Reid Waters

Toward the end of the chase the beachie came to an abrupt stop and squared off throwing the dog into complete confusion. You could almost imagine the dog was looking around for its absent owner and thinking "Holy hell boss, what do I do next?''.

Photo: Reid Waters

Decision made, the beachie took off and re-joined its partner back at the creek. The dog was last seen padding back uptown. And yes! there is a cute element to this doggy story 'no harm done' train of thought BUT it could have been an appalling tragedy.

Photo: Reid Waters

Local residents waited many years for a breeding pair to establish at the Belongil and raise a chick (which they have done for the last two seasons). Really hard to pin down a definitive number on this but it is often said that there are fewer than 20 breeding pairs of Beach Stone-curlews in NSW.

TWEED COAST BEACH-NESTING BIRDS - GOOD AND BAD NEWS

Linda Brannian, Convenor, BirdLife Northern Rivers

The summer of 2019/20 has not been kind to Beach-nesting birds along the Tweed Coast. Though we cannot directly attribute the poor nesting success, it was another year of dry and hot conditions. We did not document any successful breading of our Australian Pied Oystercatchers and the numbers of Bush Stone-curlew young were also down. Furthermore, the condition of the surviving Bush Stone-curlew young was poor anecdotally attributed to the sparse insect population.

Our good news story is that of our pair of Beach Stone-curlews at Hastings Point along the Tweed Coast. We were at first excited when an egg was laid 3 October, quite early and thereby avoiding some of the high holiday use days before fledging. Tweed Shire Council response was again excellent with a wire fence enclosure and educational signage. Yet as time went on it was obvious the egg was not viable and sad to see them sit for those days beyond normal incubation. It took over 90 days for the egg to disappear. Meanwhile us humans were reacting to Covid-19, with beach parking lots closed and non-local visitation disallowed. How exciting to hear on Australia Day that the pair was discovered sitting on a new egg. We have had dedicated locals using their "allowed exercise time" to check on the pair morning and evening. The egg hatched on time a month later (25/2/20) and the family is now seen outside the enclosure in places where they could only have flown. We speculate they really enjoyed their beach with far fewer visitors.

Photo: Bruce McGregor; Top Left: Very big chick in hiding! Top Right: Adults on watch Bottom: Adult Beach Stone-curlew looking at the camera!

BUSHFIRES AND BEACH-NESTING BIRDS

Leo Berzins, NSW South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program and BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Birds project

On the far south coast of NSW, our nesting season and monitoring activities were disrupted by intense, widespread bushfires. Smoke and ash were almost a constant presence for most of January.

Most of my Hooded Plover and Pied Oystercatcher monitoring is done in National Parks and they were closed for eight weeks. One pair of hoodies took advantage of the closure, as I discovered when access was finally allowed again in late February. When I'd last seen them in late December, they had made a couple of scrapes at Bithry Inlet, but by late February they had three chicks that looked to be about two weeks old. Normally this location would be very busy with day visitors throughout January so the closure may have contributed to the nesting success. Unfortunately, none of the chicks made it through to fledging.

There was one hoodie pair at Bunga Beach at the northern end of Mimosa Rocks National Park that I was able to continue monitoring regularly. They had already fledged three chicks earlier in the season and re-nested in early December and all was going well after three weeks. Some of the worst bushfire days were 4th and 5th of January and the whole region was blanketed in dense smoke. When I was next able to visit Bunga on 7th January, I hoped to see new hoodie chicks. Instead, I found the nest abandoned and the male hoodie on his own. I've no idea what happened to the female or if the smoke had been a factor. The good news was that the male found a new partner two weeks later.

The dense smoke seemed to have an effect on our Little Tern colony at Mogareeka. Hatching rate had been good and chicks were growing quickly but there were still six active nests at the start of January, presumably belonging to parents who had lost their chicks and had re-nested. All six of these nests were abandoned after the horror weekend of 4th and 5th of January. It appeared that only birds with chicks remained. Numbers steadily dwindled as chicks fledged and departed with their parents. Usually there are Little Terns at the site until early February but this year, all had gone by 15th January. Overall results were still good with about 35 fledglings from a colony of about 100 birds.

Photo: Leo Berzins; Little Tern fledgling resting among burnt leaves at Mogareeka

At the same Mogareeka site as the Little Terns, the resident pair of Pied Oystercatchers lost their first chick and re-nested in December. Their eggs hatched on the weekend of 4th and 5th of January, so the chicks' first view of the outside world was one of dense smoke. Greatly reduced visitation at the site in January was no doubt welcomed by the oystercatcher family and both chicks went on to fledge in February. At nearby Nelsons Beach, another pair of Pied Oystercatchers had also re-nested in December. This site is inside a National Park, so access was not allowed until late February. Much to our delight, they had also fledged two chicks.

These are just a few personal anecdotes from a disrupted beach-nesting summer. Let's hope next summer is less dramatic.

Photo: Leo Berzins; Pied Oystercatcher fledgling at Mogareeka

SHARING THE SHORELINE

Sophie Hall-Aspland, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

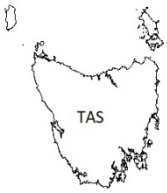
The 2019/2020 shorebird breeding season on the Far South Coast is now over. The season saw a lot of action in terms of wildlife, weather events and the Covid 19 shutdown. We had a period when the parks were closed on and off following the New Year's Eve bushfires. This meant some sites had little visitor pressure, but also that volunteers were unable to survey the sites. Other hazards included bushfire smoke, soot and ash clouds.

Hooded Plovers did reasonably well, fledging 7 chicks from 10 breeding pairs, with 3 of these coming from the pair at Bithry Inlet. The Pied Oystercatchers fledged 21 chicks from 16 breeding pairs. Little and Fairy Terns again chose Tuross Lake and Mogareeka Estuary to nest. Forty-five Little Terns fledged from the region. We had quite a number of sites home to Sooty Oystercatchers and nests were confirmed at Montague Island.
No school educational events were held over summer, but a few early season community events were attended with the shorebird education trailer. Shorebird volunteers were also taken on a field trip to Montague Island.

Combined Pied Oystercatcher and Hooded Plover nest. Photo Leo Berzins.

The full newsletter will soon be online at: http://www.southcoastshorebirds.com.au/about/#News

TASMANIA UPDATES



FLIGHTS OF FANCY FROM 'DEFENDING THE HOOD' TEAM.

Monique Case, NRM North Biodiversity Coordinator

Across six beaches on Tasmania's east coast tourism hotspot, four dedicated 'Defenders of the Hood' monitored six pairs of Hooded Plovers from September through to March, as part of a nest warden program. Of the six sites monitored, four pairs had two nest attempts recorded and one pair had three confirmed attempts. In total, three nesting pairs successfully fledged nine juveniles from four clutches. These results are based on preliminary assessment of the data which has not yet been peer reviewed.

One poor, lonely 'hoodie' did not successfully pair at all - but not for want of trying - being observed with other hoodies and making plenty a fine scrape. North of Scamander at a popular surf beach, another pair had a tumultuous and apparently unsuccessful season from two nest attempts. Forest Ravens were the suspected cause of the first failure, while inundation, dogs and/or human disturbance are suspected causes in the loss of the other chicks. A second pair near a popular facilitated camping ground made two known nest attempts, however both failed, with the most likely suspects being human disturbance and tidal inundation.

Photo: Monique Case

At Binalong Bay, one of the most popular beaches on the east coast of Tasmania, nests have been vigilantly monitored for many years. A new warden commenced monitoring an active pair with two chicks in November. Sadly, the chicks disappeared soon after, with no clue as to the suspect. However, one clutch beat the odds, successfully fledging three chicks on their second known nest attempt. The pair managed to select a site with a natural 'moat', keeping their nest out of reach of most disturbances.

At St Helens Point, the monitored beach was a little confusing, with multiple pairs making use of the site before one dominant pair became apparent. From two known nest attempts, we believe there was one fledgling from the first nest and three successful fledglings from the second nest.

Photo: Dr Liz Znidersic; Volunteers out searching for Hoodies!

At the mouth of Scamander River, the monitored hoodies shared their habitat with many other shorebirds including gulls and terns. From three nest attempts, the Scamander hoodies had three successful fledglings from two nests; ravens were the likely suspect for the failure of at least one chick.

With the benefit of a longer monitoring period, we have a bigger dataset of nest attempts and their fate. Our wardens continue to increase in confidence and are determined and dedicated 'Defenders of the Hood', that keep the project in flight.

Population surveys are planned for the east coast and Flinders Island in November 2020, in alignment with the Birdlife Australia biennial counts.

We are keen to hear from people who would like to share their Hooded Plover observations in north-eastern Tasmania including the Furneaux Islands or want to know more about the project and how to participate. You can reach the team through NRM North on 03 6333 7777.

Defending the Hood: reducing threats to Hooded Plover breeding success in northern Tasmania is a project supported by NRM North in partnership with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

Photo: Dr Liz Znidersic, Hooded Plover nest

FIRST HOODIES BANDED IN TASMANIA AS PART OF THE BNB PROJECT

Daniel Lees, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

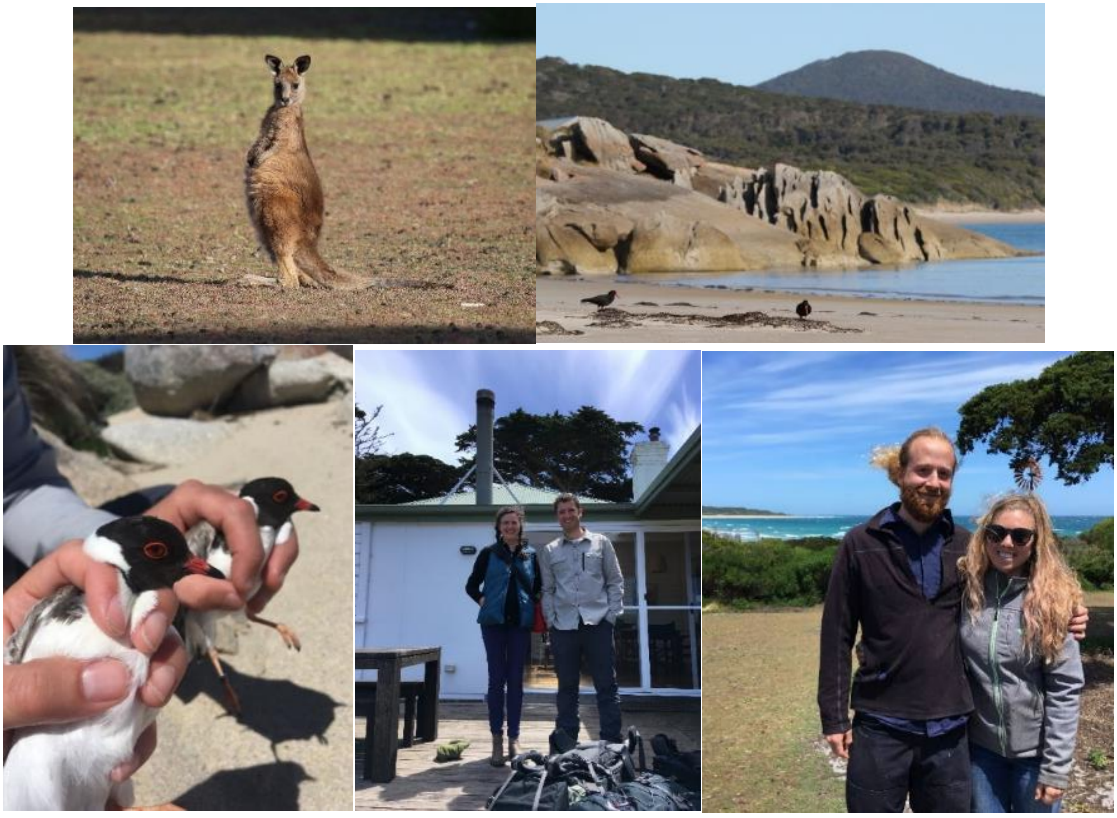
Grainne and I had the pleasure of surveying the beaches of Three Hummock Island, off Tasmania's north-western coast from 7th to the 10th of December 2019. Although survey conditions were ideal, with sunny days and low winds for the duration of our stay, the days of travel were another matter, with moderate and gusty winds making for a 'character building' decent/landing and take-off from Three Hummock Island, in by far the smallest plane either Grainne or I have been in!

On several surveys we were accompanied by Jessie and Taylor, the Island Managers, who were eager to learn more about the island's shorebirds and graciously transported us to beach access points. The northern and south-eastern beaches of the island are difficult to access thanks to dense melaleuca forest and granite cliffs (to aid your imagination, the environment of Three Hummock Island looks a lot like Wilson's Prom in Victoria) so Taylor and Jessie, along with boat operators Keith and Alex, took us by speedboat to survey the otherwise inaccessible beaches.

Along with the surveying, which revealed an island population of between 21-24 adult Hooded Plovers, we also aimed to capture, band and collect genetic samples from a sub-sample of Hooded Plovers from the island to compare to samples from mainland Australia (contributing to a broader genetic study with Museums Victoria and Deakin University). Thankfully, we managed to catch, band and collect genetic samples from seven adult Hoodies, giving us an adequate sample from the north-western coast of Tasmania.

Other highlights of the trip included discovering a newly hatched Sooty Oystercatcher chick, seeing the island's uniquely coloured Eastern Grey Kangaroos (they appeared to have a golden tinge) and witnessing a dispute between a White-bellied Sea Eagle and a Wedge-tailed Eagle.

We would like to thank Three Hummock Island Managers Taylor and Jessie, the boat operators Keith and Alex, and finally the Cradle Coast Authority (CCA), including Iona Flett and Anna Wind, for funding and supporting the survey work.



Photos: Grainne Maguire; Top R: curious Kangaroo. Top L: Sooties with a gorgeous view. Bottom L: Captured Hoodies. Bottom Middle: Grainne and Dan ready for field work! Bottom R: Taylor and Jessie

Western Australia Updates

CAPE TO CAPE REGION

Marcus Singor, Coordinator, Friends of Hooded Plover Western Australia

This year our annual Hooded Plover survey was conducted over the weekend of 8th and 9th February 2020. The beaches from Dunsborough, Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin, across to Black Point, were covered by our dedicated volunteers. The whole coastline was covered and produced some interesting results. A total of 10 species of shorebirds were sighted and six of these were migratory shorebirds. We had good numbers of Sanderling at Grunters which seems one of their preferred locations. The survey, probably for the first time, provided an insight into the number of Sooty Oystercatchers (73) and Pacific Gulls present on our local Cape to Cape beaches. Only one juvenile Pacific Gull was reported. Pacific Gulls are known to breed on St Alouarn Island to the south of Augusta. A total of 46 adult Pacific Gulls (and one juvenile) were counted. One has to ask the question: do these Pacific Gulls remain here all year round or visit over summer or do they come here to mature before returning to their breeding grounds?

The Australian Pied Oystercatcher is known to breed at Redgate Beach (South). Bill James observed an Australian Pied Oystercatcher sitting on a nest at Redgate Beach on 1st November 2019. Some weeks later he sighted one juvenile near the rocks.

We had a close look at the Hooded Plover population and this year we achieved some exceptional results. The final Hooded Plover count was the highest on record for this region and we have data going back some 20 years. We had a total of 64 Hooded Plovers on the beaches from Dunsborough to Augusta, these included 17 juveniles. On the beaches between East Augusta and Black Point we had a further 13 Hooded Plovers, of these three were juveniles. It is possible that due to the inland drought conditions some Hooded Plover had moved temporarily to the Cape to Cape region. The number of juveniles observed indicate that the Cape to Cape region had a very successful breeding season, no doubt due to the efforts of our Beach-nesting Bird volunteers and the excellent work in protecting nesting sites by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. The number of juveniles sighted were slightly higher than expected indicating that we probably did not locate all the Hooded Plover nesting sites.

Rock Parrots were monitored as they seem to be one of those species that suddenly disappear and are gone before you even notice. They are sensitive to disturbance and worth keeping records where and when you see them as they have disappeared from a number of sites further along the West Australian coast.

Denmark

The lockdown in response to the Corona virus resulted in local beaches being deserted and holiday towns along the coast remaining empty. It did not take long before reports were coming in about Hooded Plovers showing up at beaches where they had not been seen for years. At Ocean Beach, near the town of Denmark, a report came in about a pair of breeding Hooded Plover. A Hooded Plover nest was reported with two eggs, high up on the beach, on 30th March 2020 by John Anderson. This was a late in the season breeding event and the Hooded Plovers seemed to be taking advantage of the quiet beaches. The eggs hatched round the 20th April 2020 and the chicks survived for about a week. A pair of Pacific Gulls that were hanging around at the time were the suspected culprits of their demise. We did not have any previous records of Hooded Plover breeding at this beach.

Esperance

The Esperance region is the most important Hooded Plover area in Western Australia and is presently experiencing the ravages of drought. In times like this the local Hooded Plover population tends to form flocks and congregate at suitable lakes. A few reports came through of such gatherings. On 9th February 2020, Kim

Norris reported 70 Hooded Plovers at White Lake and Chris Tate observed 50 at the Lake Warden wetland system on the same day. On the 3rd May 2020, 155 Hooded Plovers were sighted by Kim Norris at the Mullett Lake Nature Reserve.

Israelite Bay

Israelite Bay is not a location many people will have heard about. It can be found at the start of the Great Australian Bight and at the eastern limit of the Hooded Plover distribution in Western Australia. At Israelite Bay a long stretch of beach extends out into the Great Australian Bight and just inland from the beach are a chain of salt lakes that run parallel with the beach for around 80 km. All indications are that this location has suitable Hooded Plover habitat. Access to this area is by four-wheel drive vehicles.

Information for this location is scarce indeed and remains unexplored. We know very little about this area in regard to the Hooded Plover population and breeding outcomes. The few records that exist for this region seem to indicate this is an important region for the Hooded Plover. There is a record of between 50-70 Hooded Plovers from the salt lakes between Point Malcolm and Point Dempster in 2019 and some additional Hooded Plovers were seen on the nearby beach. There is a historical record of 113 Hooded Plovers sighted between Israelite Bay and Wattle Camp.



Photos: John Anderson

CAPE TO CAPE HOODED PLOVER VOLUNTEERS IN THE SOUTH WEST REGION

Rebecca Bloomfield, Conservation Officer, Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)

South-west beaches are very busy over the summer season, not only for people but for many local beach nesting birds. Hooded Plovers (hoodies) nest and raise their young on our beaches between Dunsborough and Augusts from October through to February each year. Given their nests are no more than a shallow scrape in the sand above the high tide mark, eggs are at risk from being accidentally trampled by people and their four-wheel drives. Once the chicks hatch and begin to forage on the beach with their parents, they are often exposed to predation by dogs and other feral animals such as cats and foxes.

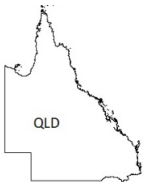
The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), in collaboration with Birdlife Australia, has consolidated volunteer efforts and provided training to a dedicated group of volunteers who regularly monitor hoodies at their local beaches in the Margaret River Region each season. With over 25 volunteers, information on sightings, indicative breeding behaviours and nesting locations are communicated regularly from a network of local volunteers and Birdlife members to DBCA staff. Based on this information, management responses can be coordinated to target sites that need additional protective measures. These additional measures include signage, temporary fencing around nests, shelters for chicks and, when combined with public education, are utilised to improve chances of nesting success. Volunteers continue to provide much needed on-ground monitoring support to report on outcomes and fledging success. The past two years has seen an increase in volunteers monitoring beaches which has been fantastic. Over the 2019/20 summer,

hoodies were found nesting at eleven breeding sites with growing chicks and fledglings confirmed from at least seven of these.

DBCA provides training for volunteers through workshops held prior to the commencement of the breeding season. Happily, there is usually a large group of new volunteers keen to get involved. A buddy-up system, introducing new enthusiastic volunteers to other experienced volunteers in their local area, has also worked well to deliver on-ground learning. This ensures consistent survey methods and welfare considerations for the hoodies is passed on in public education. Volunteers are supported with guidance documentation and a community of knowledgeable contacts to assist with recording data into Birdlife's 'MyBeachBird' application, interpreting observations and providing the link to land managers who can then utilise the information for conservation actions such as temporary closures, installing fencing or shelters.

Photo: Jenny Kikeros: Adult hoodie and chick spotted at Hill View Beach this season

QUEENSLAND UPDATES



BACK TO THE BEACH

Amanda Freeman, Ecologist, Nature North

Birdlife Australia's Indigenous Collaborative Management project for threatened coastal birds in North Queensland got off to a great start early in the year. Several surveys were conducted with Gunggandji, Mandingalbay Yidinji and Yirrganydji Indigenous Ranger teams, documenting shorebirds at key sites and establishing regular monitoring routines. The presence of Beach Stone-curlews was confirmed at a few locations along the Yarrabah coastline, an area that could not be accessed during previous surveys. It was also very heartening to confirm that Beach Stone-curlews are still breeding successfully at the Cairns Airport and on the difficult to access coast, Yirrganydji country, behind it.

Covid-19 did, of course, interrupt our surveys and events. Lockdowns and travel restrictions severely curtailed what we could do on the ground. We had workshops and information sessions, timed to coincide with "waving the waders goodbye" planned for March and a coast-wide Beach Stone-curlew survey slated for May but these BirdLife events had to be cancelled. Never the less, with social distancing and keeping within Queensland's travel regulations, the project team were able to continue survey work in a small way, and bird watchers who were able to take their exercise at their local beach kept records trickling in. Call outs on social media and in newsletters yielded valuable records of Beach Stone-curlews at several sites including a juvenile seen regularly on the Cairns Esplanade.

Photo: Amanda Freeman; Volunteer surveying for Beach Stone-curlews at the Hull River

Now, with the relaxation of travel restrictions, BirdLife members and others have been getting back to the beaches further afield, checking out key sites. More records of Beach Stone-curlews are being submitted to Birdata or shared with our project team. Records just in from marine debris removal and prevention organisation, Tangaroa Blue, from islands in the northern Great Barrier Reef, are of two Beach Stone-curlew nests with eggs in June, earlier than previously recorded. While this is outside our area of interest for the Indigenous Collaborative Management project, it is particularly useful information about Beach Stone-curlew breeding.

It is not possible yet to conduct joint surveys with our Indigenous Ranger partners based in Yarrabah but they are gearing up to include shorebird surveys in their next year's work programs. It will not be long now, once we have worked through Covid-safe protocols for our project, that we are all back to the beach.

TERNS

CRESTED TERNS COLONY MADE THEIR MARK ON WRIGHT ISLAND!

Emma Stephens and Aleisa Lamanna, Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife, BirdLife Australia, supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board

It was soon evident to the residents of Victor Harbor, South Australia last summer that something was happening on beautiful Wright Island in Encounter Bay. The ruckus could be heard from the café on the esplanade and the island turned white! Nearly 2500 Crested Terns were breeding on Wright Island. The colony usually breeds on nearby West Island, but for some reason this year they chose a different location.

The Sharing our Shores team Aleisa and Emma headed over to the island with Marine Parks, National Parks (Department for Environment and Water, DEW) and NRM staff to count the birds (from the boat). We estimated 2000+ adults with about half of those being on nests or brooding young chicks. We very quickly realised it needed

Photo: Natural Resources Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges. Just a few Crested Terns breeding on Wright Island in January 2020!

protection as Australia Day was fast approaching and it is a recreational location for many with boats and kayaks. DEW staff promptly installed fencing and signage on the island, buoys near the island stating no access, and signage at local boat ramps. City of Victor Harbor and NRM organised community awareness through the media.

Photo: Emma Stephens; "No access" buoys.

As the juveniles started to stretch their wings they left the safe shores of the island to crèche on the busy mainland shores of Encounter Bay. A fox was identified as the culprit of nightly attacks on the defenceless juveniles and City of Victor Harbor was quick to organise control. In the end this was not required as the remaining juveniles grew quickly and could escape or stayed on the rocky coast out of harm's way. We cannot be completely sure of the fledgling success, however on a subsequent survey in March we counted 306 juveniles. It will be very interesting to see which island they choose to call home next season. A community workshop was planned but due to the current Covid situation it was cancelled, however we hope to run it again later in the year, especially if they nest on Wright Island again!



Photos: Emma Stephens; Crested Tern Juveniles enjoying the shores of Wright Island

FAIRY TERNS BREED SUCCESSFULLY ON PHILLIP ISLAND, VICTORIA, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN DECADES

Peter Dann, Phillip Island Nature Parks

Fairy Terns (*Sternula nereis*) were found nesting at Rhyll Inlet on Phillip Island in late 2019 – the first time that this species has bred on the Island in decades. This species is listed as Vulnerable in Victoria and has had mixed fortunes in Port Phillip Bay and Western Port in recent times.

Fairy Tern eggs and young are vulnerable to trampling and predation so Phillip Island Nature Parks staff set up a refuge with roped-off areas, installed cameras and put out signage to increase public awareness and promote appropriate behaviour at the site and the nearest access point. Nature Parks staff also included the access point in patrols and had conversations about the breeding terns whenever the opportunity arose in the vicinity of the site. The breeding site is off-limits to dogs and compliance was extremely pleasing with cameras not detecting any dog activity. Very few visits were made by staff inside the colony to minimize disturbance and consequently most breeding parameters were estimated from a distance.

Foxes have been eradicated from Phillip Island, but feral cats still occur on most of the Island. Cats have been found to predate heavily on adult Fairy Terns at night in Western Australia (Claire Greenwell and Nic Dunlop, pers. comm.). Nature Parks staff supported by State and Federal funding through the Port Phillip and Western

Port CMA Ramsar Protection Program have removed most of the cats from the 36ha hinterland of the nesting site over the past two years and only one feral cat was detected and caught by the trapping program during the time the terns were breeding and none were seen on the camera grid in the area.

A total of 31 adults was the highest number recorded in the nesting area during the incubation period. In January 2020, when some birds were incubating and most were feeding small chicks, the maximum count of adults was 63. From these two maximum counts it is assumed that at least 31-32 pairs bred at the site. Fledged young continued to be fed on the intertidal areas adjacent to the breeding area at low tide and from observations made of these fledged birds from mid to late February, a minimum of 49 chicks fledged.

This successful outcome was due to the management efforts of the Phillip Island Nature Parks Environment team and support of the DELWP-funded Fairy Tern Working Group, BirdLife Australia and the Federal funding support through the Port Phillip and Western Port CMA Ramsar Protection Program. These birds bred later than is usual in this part of Victoria which was fortunate as the nests would have been washed away by the November high tides had they bred six weeks earlier. Reduced mammalian predator activity in the area was an important component of the success, particularly as the usual avian predators of eggs and chicks (Silver and Pacific Gulls and Little Ravens) were present but apparently naïve to the potential food sources available or unwilling to risk the attentions of the whole colony in defending the eggs or young.

Photo: Roger Whitelaw, Phillip Island Nature Parks; Fairy Tern adult on Phillip Island with egg and newly hatched chick.

SOME SMALL SUCCESS, FAIRY TERN MONITORING, BIRD ISLAND, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Emma Stephens and Aleisa Lamanna, Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife, BirdLife Australia, supported by the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board

BirdLife Australia and Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (NRAMLR) partnered for a second season of Fairy Tern monitoring on Bird Island, Outer Harbour. Bird Island is one of 16 Fairy Tern breeding locations in South Australia.

This season, 2019/20, our monitoring recorded 80 nests, 8 chicks and 5 fledglings. We had very low numbers of chicks hatch this season due to Silver Gull predation on eggs. Unfortunately for the Fairy Terns, Bird Island is also a breeding site for hundreds of Silver Gulls and this year the timing over their breeding overlapped. With so many Silver Gull adults and juveniles our small colony of Fairy Terns, 20 pairs, didn't stand a chance in defending their nests.

They did persevere though and continued to nest until late in the season (mid March) and by then most Silver Gulls had left the Island. The Fairy Terns that laid eggs late in the season chose to nest very close to a small colony of nesting Caspian Terns on the north end of the island. Unknown to us at the time, but nesting so close to the Caspian's added the advantage of having a much larger and aggressive Tern species to defend off aerial predators such as Whistling Kites which are consistently observed flying and hovering over the island. We also learned more about the prey species the Fairy Terns were catching thanks to one of our talented and knowledgeable volunteer. Davide, which used photo-sampling to assess the diet of Greater Crested Terns for his PhD, was able to use the same technique to capture the photo below along with several more and have them identified, which revealed a species of Anchovy and Trumpeter were two of the prey items this season. Thanks Davide.

Photo: Davide Gaglio; Fairy Tern with a Striped trumpeter, *Latris lineata*

International News

SHOREBIRDS IN LOCKDOWN

Brittany Arendse - Conservation Ecologist, Nature's Valley Trust, South Africa

We have seen wildlife all over the world coming out of hiding and reclaiming what was once their natural habitat, albeit now mostly built up and concrete. Enforced isolation 'Lockdown" has given the working of humanity a pause and radically reduced our effects on the environment; carbon emission for instance have plummeted.

How is the reduced noise pollution and foot traffic treating our beloved beach-nesting bird, the White-Fronted Plovers? Let's see what the little birdie has to say! Well, to be honest for them, the lockdown was just too late; if the ban on beaches had happened just a few months earlier our Lookout Beach (Plettenberg Bay) population may perhaps have been much better off.

On Nature's Valley there were only two plover chicks and one very young nest on the ground when lockdown started. Lookout had one plover chick and at least 4 African Oystercatcher chicks whose fates we cannot account for. We were generous when calculating breeding success for this season; counting chicks that had hatched as fledged. The two on Nature's Valley Beach probably did fledge as those parents, Wilma and Fred, are normally successful. The one plover from Lookout, Mark and I saw running near the lifeguard hut a few days before lockdown - so fingers crossed. The nest on Nature's Valley definitely failed with the two eggs still in the nest two weeks after predicted hatch day.

The situation on Lookout is deteriorating with the lowest breeding success in 5 years. We hope there were some late nests laid during Lockdown and that this is an under-representation of the actual breeding success.

On a positive note and we are so happy to report, Nature's Valley has experienced the highest breeding success since we've started. We will continue to do the best that we can for our birds so that everyone may enjoy them on our beaches for years to come.

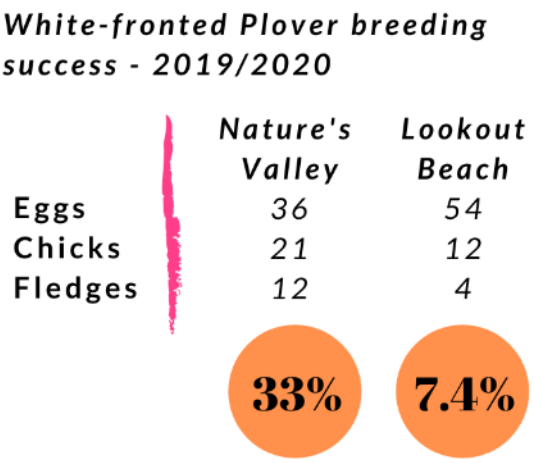


Photo supplied by Natures Valley Trust; newly 'ringed' chick running for freedom!

Photos supplied by Natures Valley Trust; L: White-fronted Plover family. R: adorable White-fronted Plover chick newly hatched

PLOVERS IN A DANGEROUS TIME

(if you are familiar with the Canadian song by the Bare Naked Ladies)

Lynne Richardson, Plover Lovers CANADA

On Mother's Day in May 2007, a teenager and his mother were walking Sauble Beach – the second longest freshwater beach in Canada – when they serendipitously discovered a pair of Piping Plovers – the first breeding pair found in all of Ontario in 30 years.

These endearing and endangered birds have returned to Sauble Beach every year since. Being listed as an endangered species federally and provincially, protection measures have been in place and a band of merry volunteers have monitored the birds throughout each subsequent breeding season.

Until this one.

Photo: Cheryl Ferguson; Piping Plover adult brooding super fluffy chick

Prohibitions on gatherings, events, group-size limits, travel limitations to essential trips only, and physical distancing came into force just prior to the Piping Plover's annual mid-April return to Sauble Beach. On March 30, the province closed all Ontario beaches to the public.

With the beach closures, Birds Canada, the provincial overseer of the plover recovery program, made the necessary decision to suspend all field work. Sauble Beach is a public beach and remains closed to the crowds of up to 10,000 per day that would normally soon be arriving with the onset of our summer. For now, the access prohibition is strictly enforced. No one knows if there is the usual one-three nests on the beach.

The beach closure has of course also cancelled the "Plover Lovers" (our "brand name") Outreach, Education and Monitoring program for the season. Even should the beach open for the tail end of the plover breeding season, we made the decision to not start running the volunteer program then, due to ongoing C-19 safety concerns. The purpose of the volunteers is to have the public approach them to ask about the birds, and physical distancing concerns would be too high in this situation.

On the brighter side, while the beaches are closed, human pressure and their subsequent threats are greatly diminished on the beach right now, and perhaps predator threats will be also as predators are heavily attracted to the food beachgoers inevitably leave behind.

We are hoping that this break from the norm will allow our plovers to have a safe and successful season!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF FUNDERS OF THE BEACH-NESTING BIRDS PROGRAM

BirdLife Australia's 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, educational materials or to provide support to volunteers and key regions.

Donors, grants and philanthropists make the program possible and we often leverage smaller amounts of funding to go for bigger grants to achieve special projects.

Currently, our major funding sources include the Victorian Government's Icon Species fund, the Australian Government's National Landcare Program via the Glenelg Hopkins CMA, Yorke Peninsula NRM, and Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM. Several targeted projects were funded by Coastcare grants, Australian Bird Environment Fund and works on Kangaroo Island by the Letcombe Foundation.