



VOLUNTEER REGIONAL COORDINATOR TRAINING – SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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

Volunteer Regional Coordinators are integral to the coordination of local recovery actions for Hooded Plovers. They help guide new volunteers into the program, coordinate volunteers, coordinate the logistics involved with on-ground management, awareness raising, and can liaise with land managers and advocate for positive changes in beach habitats. They are a dedicated few who really are, a key ingredient in Hooded Plover (and other Beach-nesting Birds) conservation.

In 2023, BirdLife Australia ran a Volunteer Regional Coordinator workshop in Victoria. Given the positive feedback from that workshop, we applied for a grant to undertake a similar event in South Australia. Thanks to a grant from the South Australian Government's Citizen Science Fund, we were able to bring South Australian Regional Coordinators and Beach Leaders together in Adelaide, for the two-day training workshop. The workshop focused on the behind the scenes registration processes for new volunteers and how to get the most out of the BNB Hub and the resources available to all volunteers.

Guest speaker Vanita Schwarz, Manager Stakeholder Engagement, from Volunteering SA&NT shared with the group all about the volunteer experience, supporting volunteers, training requirements, recognition and a range of different topics. She emphasised that all volunteers bring a wealth of different life experiences to their role and how to get the most out of volunteers and support them through their time volunteering with BirdLife Australia.

The group split up and were able to brainstorm and plan for their local regions, goal setting, dream structure of the group and how to achieve this. It was a valuable opportunity for everyone to share information of what they have tried over the years, different ideas and advice of what has worked best in each region. The feedback was that the attendees enjoyed the training session and as it was the first time we've had the Regional Coordinators from SA together in the one room (in person). It was a great opportunity to meet everyone and share experiences.



*Regional Coordinators and Beach Leaders learning all about the BNB Hub, resources available and the behind the scenes management of the Hub.
Photo: Renee Mead.*



A well earned dinner after lots of information and learning at the workshop. Photo: Renee Mead

Word about the Hood

South Australia Update

PT SOUTTAR STORMS!

Felicity Hoff, Volunteer, Friends of the Hooded Plover Yorke Peninsula

The weather has been particularly horrendous this year and it was true for us too on the lower Yorke Peninsula in SA. Our Hoodies in two bays have tried two and even three times to raise a successful first clutch this year. They have battled gale force winds, much higher tides than are usual for this time of the year and that's before contending with predators (native and non-native), human interference, unleashed dogs, horses etc.

Against all odds one of our pairs had three eggs in a second clutch which they started incubating on September 17th. Things were going well until another night of high winds and high tides on October 5th. We checked the nest first thing the next morning but could only find two eggs and seaweed pushed right up to the two eggs remaining. It also looked like the two eggs remaining had moved up the beach relative to the posts and fence around the nest. We left the eggs in the vain hope that perhaps the remaining two eggs might hatch. The birds kept on incubating and several days later we realised the third egg was still there! It had clearly been under the seaweed but our resourceful and resilient parents had removed the seaweed and had all three eggs back together. We tentatively waited to see what would happen and on October 15th all three eggs finally hatched!



Incubating three eggs, note sand around the nest. Photo: Philip Hoff



Two eggs remain after storms surrounded by seaweed. Photo: Felicity Hoff



The third egg appears! Photo: Felicity Hoff



All three chicks successfully hatch! Photo: Felicity Hoff

All three chicks seemed to be doing well although one became separated from the family on day 9 and it seemed the chick didn't know what to do. It fossicked around in a small area by itself but didn't seem confident to move on. We found the rest of the family some 600+ metres away and gently walked the family towards the abandoned chick. This worked for about 200m at which point one parent and the other two chicks stopped, with the two chicks sheltering under that parent. Thankfully, the second parent continued on and found the abandoned chick. They remained

together as a family for a further 2 weeks. On our return two weeks later only 2 chicks remained. Did the one egg which was missing after the storm hatch but had issues and was the abandoned chick? Or was it just a coincidence that one chick didn't make it for any number of reasons?

SOUTH COAST FLEURIEU FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER UPDATE

Sue Thorn, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula (Tunkalillia to Goolwa)

Bashams Beach:

We had a very slow start to the 2024-25 season. The Bashams Beach site belonging to MS white and partner spent most of last season inactive. MS lost his partner after their second attempt at the end of October 2023.

Then MS appeared with a new Hoodie VZ white, and we observed aggressive behaviour between them on ever survey to the Bashams site for the rest of the season. VZ's gender was not known and we presumed he was a male because of their aggressive behaviour.

At the start of the 2024-25 season MS and VZ were still together at Bashams site and at the end of August we had the great surprise of



The Bashams beach site fencing team, Richard, Roslyn, Sally, David and Sue. Photo: provided by Sue & David Thorn



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Fenced area for MS white and VZ white's nests with the tide coming close. Photo: Sue & David Thorn

finding a new nest belonging to this pair and incubation was shared between them. So, I guess we now definitely have confirmation that VZ is female! This pair's first, second and third nest attempts have all failed. Fox tracks went across the first nest and hence is the likely culprit. Ravens took the eggs of the second and third attempts.

They hadn't decided on a site for their fourth attempt and had been very evasive as to their whereabouts. However, they have decided to move 700 metres west of their previous attempts and we have just fenced and signed their fourth attempt.

Middleton East Site:

Pair YV white and Partner were travelling through their second nest attempt, placing their nest safely high on the dune. On day 26 of incubation, we had two very agitated Hoodies flying in and out of their nest, so decided to investigate and to our horror, the

perfect eggs, still in situ had become invaded with a stream of ants. They had come in and out of the nest site from outside of the fenced area. We did a bit of lateral thinking and decided to treat the ant holes outside of the fenced area that were delivering the ants onto the eggs.

We watched the Hoodies from afar as they tested the nest for ants. They went into the nest many times before they were able to settle on the eggs to get on with their last two days of incubation. These eggs eventually hatched but only one chick survived, and this trio left their fenced area and moved a kilometre west onto the next side, far away from ants.



Eggs under attack from ants! Photo: Leanne Barnes

UNUSUAL HAPPENINGS IN THE KANGAROO ISLAND HOOD

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

This season we have seen some unusual beach-nesting bird behaviours on Kangaroo Island.

Some Hooded Plover and Pied Oystercatcher pairs around KI are opting to nest higher up the beach profile than usual. Maybe this is an adaptation to storm surges and significantly higher tides this spring? One Hoodie pair took a big punt,



switching from their usual upper beach or foredune nest sites, to hard pebbly ground on the edge of a secluded clifftop carpark, 12m above the beach. Luckily, we found the nest and had an opportunity to protect it.

This windy south coast site didn't seem suitable for a rope and stakes fence, so BirdLife staff suggested a great alternative. With help from Landscape SA KI and materials from National Parks SA, volunteers installed a "soft" barrier of witches' hats, secured with stones and wooden stakes, to keep vehicles off the nest. We thought the Hoodies might not like bright orange cones nearby, but they settled back to incubate full-term and hatched two lovely chicks. Soon after, the pair moved their offspring down to the beach and one chick was seen during follow-up monitoring. Sadly, the chicks didn't survive, cause of failure unknown.



Protection for the clifftop carpark Hooded Plover nest. Photo: Jean Turner

As this is a popular surfing spot, we were relieved when the pair started their second nest at the far end of the beach, away from cars and surfers!



Pied Oystercatcher nest with two eggs in grazing paddock near Cape Rouge. Photo: Jean Turner

Two pairs of Pied Oystercatchers have also opted to nest well above the tides, in dry grassy areas. Their usual territories are low-profile beaches which have been lashed and eroded by storm-driven high tides this spring. One pair is nesting in a farm paddock near Cape Rouge, 100m inland above the beach; the other pair is nesting in a reserve at Nepean Bay, 50m inland. A local person painted a beautiful sign alerting walkers of the Oystercatchers nesting in the reserve. We have installed BirdLife Australia signs as well. With sheep grazing in the paddock and daily human disturbance around the reserve, prospects for chicks hatching don't look great...but you never know!

In October 2020 a Pied Oystercatcher and a Sooty Oystercatcher became close companions at Rocky Point, Island Beach. This uncommon pairing formed after the male Pied Oystercatcher and chick disappeared from the territory, leaving the female Pied Oystercatcher alone. The female remained in her territory, forming an alliance with a visiting Sooty Oystercatcher. They have stayed together since. We affectionately call these birds the 'Odd Couple'.



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They have remained on site, holding and vigorously defending this breeding territory from intruding Pied Oystercatchers, but showing no signs of breeding...until now! The Odd Couple have a nest with two eggs, sharing incubation and guard duties like any other pair. The genetic makeup of the eggs is unknown but they appear darker than other Pied Oystercatcher eggs. There are few published records of 'Odd Couple' nests and chicks, so we are eagerly waiting to see if the eggs are viable and what colour and pattern the chicks will be.



Pied Oystercatcher incubating nest in the reserve at Nepean Bay. Photo: David Potter



Pied Oystercatcher Nesting sign created by a Nepean Bay resident. Photo: Jean Turner

CONVERTING NEGATIVES INTO POSITIVES – THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADVOCACY

John Cobb, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of the Hooded Plover Adelaide Metro

We've had an early success at West Beach with a single fledging on a beach more resembling an industrial site because of the importation and distribution of quarried sand. Cooperation by contractors and the neighbouring caravan park combined with bird spotters and a great effort by volunteers, all contributed to this great outcome. Of, and well-done RT and partner!

Otherwise, we've experienced failures including two tragic incidents, firstly involving an unleashed dog chasing adults during which a Kestrel took a chick and, secondly an e-bike repeatedly riding at speed in front of a breeding site and volunteers observing a dead or injured chick in a tyre rut being taken by a Silver Gull.



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After the first loss the City of Holdfast Bay Council posted details on their Facebook site and following strong public reaction, BirdLife volunteers have been engaged in discussions with Councillors and Council staff. This has resulted in a formal review of the measures undertaken by Council to protect the birds and improve breeding outcomes. A presentation at a residents' association attended by a number of elected members and influencers was followed by a meeting with the Council's Community Safety Team and contract compliance officers. This resulted in the adoption of modified portable signs positioned below the high tide line, dedicated beach patrols and more open lines of communication.

Tragically and despite these improvements, the second incident involving the e-bike occurred with notifications made to the Council and police. A radio interview by BirdLife staff, and a further Facebook post again created strong public reaction. The review by Council is proceeding and we've been asked for suggested improvements based on "best practice – what works" elsewhere which has been shared with BirdLife Australia.

Threats to Hooded Plovers are many and varied and unfortunately, the proliferation of various types of electric modes of transport can now be added to our local list. Our experience is that the voice of the public, including volunteers, does influence elected representatives who are best placed to drive change at local government level. Our hope is that these two negative experiences will ultimately lead to more positive outcomes in the future.



*E-bikes, a new threat!
Photo: BirdLife Australia
Volunteer.*

FAIRY TERN BREEDING YORKE AND EYRE PENINSULAS

Deborah Furbank, Fairy Tern Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia



BirdLife Australia volunteer Christine observing Eyre Island from the water. Photo: Deb Furbank.

During the 2023- 2024 season a Fairy Tern breeding monitoring project, funded by the Australian Government, was coordinated by BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds team. I was the project coordinator on the Yorke and Eyre Peninsulas in South Australia. Based on outcomes of the first count of The Fairy Tern Census across Southeastern Australia in late October 2023, local knowledge, and historic records, three sites were selected on Eyre Peninsula and two sites on Yorke Peninsula for breeding monitoring.

The two largest known breeding colonies on Eyre Peninsula were on offshore islands. The first was on a small island 70 metres off Clare Bay on the far west coast of SA. Seventy adults were recorded in October, with 25 incubating and by November, chicks were present. A large storm in early



December impacted the island and by late December only 3 adults and one chick were present. No fledglings were recorded.

The second site, Eyre Island, is approximately 1.5km offshore near Smoky Bay. In October, 148 Fairy Tern adults, including a small number of incubating individuals, were recorded at this site. This increased to 65 incubating birds by late November, resulting in at least 15 fledglings by December. This was the highest number of fledglings we recorded on Yorke and Eyre Peninsula this season. This site was particularly challenging to monitor, and I am grateful to Christine for introducing me to a new monitoring technique, off the boat with scope, in high deep water. What an experience!

The third site on Eyre Peninsula was Seagull Lake in Sceale Bay Conservation Park. Breeding started in late November at this site with 22 adults present and incubation was still occurring in mid-February. Three chicks successfully fledged at this site. Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board staff monitored this site and National Parks assisted by undertaking fox control around the colony.

The largest counts of Fairy Terns on Yorke Peninsula was in an operational salt harvesting facility in Price owned by Cheetham Salt. The staff at Cheetham Salt were very supportive and allowed a small group of BirdLife staff and volunteers access. Only five incubating birds were recorded at the salt works during the season, no chicks or fledglings were observed. In late March, however, 450 adults and 30 juveniles were recorded. This is four times the number recorded in February and suggests that this area is an important overwintering site.

Although breeding was recorded in previous seasons, no breeding was recorded at Point Pearce on the Yorke Peninsula in 2023/2024. This Indigenous Protected area (IPA) has recently been expanded and eight new Indigenous Rangers have been recruited to support the two existing rangers cover this long stretch of coastline. A training session was delivered to the new rangers who were highly engaged and very enthusiastic to learn about beach-nesting birds. Having extra rangers to manage this important habitat is very exciting.

Four training presentations were delivered throughout the project, with over 60 people attending. It is fantastic to have so many keen eyes looking out for Fairy Terns on our beaches and islands. The activities within this initial project have built the foundations for future works to invest and improve the conservation outlook for Fairy Terns. This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of land managers and BirdLife Australia volunteers.



Juvenile recorded at Price salt works. Photo: Provided by BirdLife Australia

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ADELAIDE AND AUSTRALIA'S FIRST FLEDGLING OF THE SEASON

Kerri Bartley and Julia Roetman, Sharing our Shores with Coastal Wildlife Project Coordinators, BirdLife Australia

A pair of Hooded Plovers have successfully bred on an Adelaide Metropolitan beach with one chick making it through to 'fledging' status on Thursday 10th October, 2024.

On the 17th August, after a tip off from the public, a 3-egg nest was found high up in the dunes in front of West Beach Parks. This is the first time Hoodies have ever nested in this location.

One of the parent birds was banded and flagged 'RT' White as a juvenile at the Torrens River Mouth on 8th December 2022, making RT White two years old. RT White and partner attempted to breed late 2023-24 season at the Torrens River Mouth with 3 separate nest attempts, producing 2 chicks but no fledglings.

Only two of the three eggs hatched at the West Beach site on the 5th September producing two tiny chicks. One of the two West Beach chicks went missing on 27th September, but the cause of failure is unknown.

The West Beach site is challenging because it is in the beach sand replenishment area where carting sand trucks are operating directly in front of nesting area. BirdLife Australia staff worked closely with Department of Environment and Water (DEW), land managers and stakeholders in the area to keep the birds safe and sand carting operations ceased until the chick reached fledging stage.

City of Charles Sturt Dog By-laws, require all dog walkers to have their dog on a leash within 100m of the Hooded Plover breeding site. It was great to see so many dog walkers doing the right thing near the chick.



*The 30 day old Hooded Plover chick at West Beach on 5th October 2024
Photo: James Robins*

This juvenile is the first chick to ever make it through to fledging in the City of Charles Sturt since the birds first started breeding there in 2019-20. This is also the first fledgling for 2024-25 breeding season across the Adelaide and Fleurieu region!

It has been a wonderful collaborative effort by the BirdLife Australia volunteers and staff, Department of Environment and Water, City of Charles Sturt, Green Adelaide, West Beach Parks, and City of West Torrens – it certainly took a village! DEW has now recommenced sand carting at the site with Birdlife Australia trained spotters keeping an eye on the family of Hoodies.