

# Word about the Hood

## Queensland Update



### BEACH-NESTING BIRDS IN QUEESLAND

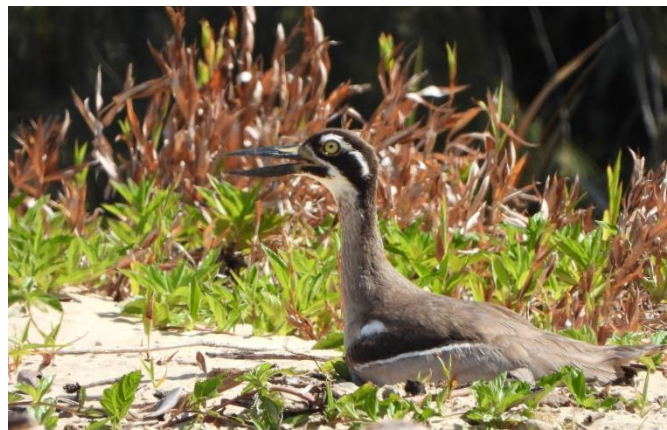
**Simon Kennedy, Wetland and Coastal Birds Coordinator, BirdLife Australia**

The Beach-nesting Bird season is underway and at North Kurrimine Beach near Innisfail in North Queensland had its first Little Tern nest in October. Pied Oystercatchers were minding a chick nearby, and the eight-kilometre stretch is also home to three pairs of Beach Stone-curlews. Simon Kennedy from the Beach-nesting Birds Team joined James Epong and Sean Kyle from Mandubarra Land and Sea Incorporated and James and Sean put a sign up for the Little Tern nest.

The Mandubarra Rangers patrol this beach regularly. All-Terrain Vehicles are prohibited here under council bylaws but constant vigilance is needed to enforce this, with tracks often found within the Little Tern colony in 2023.



*Little Tern with nest at North Kurrimine Beach. Photo: Simon Kennedy*



*Beach Stone-curlew at North Kurrimine Beach. Photo: Simon Kennedy*



*Sean Kyle (L) and James Epong (R) of Mandubarra Land and Sea on a patrol at North Kurrimine Beach, Queensland. Photo: Simon Kennedy*



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### LET'S GIVE THEM A CHANCE

**Sandra Bayley, Bribie Island Environmental Protection Association (BIEPA) Inc, Project Coordinator of the Securing Shorebirds Project** - *Article first featured in The Bribie Islander, September 2024.*

Spring has arrived, the time that brings new life in nature all around us. Buds, blossoms, young in pouches, nests with eggs and a concentrated effort among parent creatures to ensure the future of their species.

Most birds nest up there in trees and with that, are out of sight and out of the way of people and their activities and pets. But beach-nesting birds, as the name implies, only know how to nest on the seashore. In the past millennia, they flourished and their numbers were stable. Now they face many challenges as more and more people and dogs claim beaches as their own. How many beach goers even know about this category of birds, called beach-nesting birds?

When it comes time to nest, instinct tells them to find a spot on the sand above the high tide mark, amidst the sea wrack (the bits of seaweed, leaves, driftwood and other flotsam and jetsam). This material provides camouflage for their eggs and chicks. They don't build a nest with sides that would require gathered materials. Once they've chosen a spot, they nestle into a shallow hollow in the sand. They lay a couple of eggs and sit on them for 28 days. The eggs are speckled and blend with the wrack, such that they are barely visible. The parent birds share the duties of sitting on the nest or being the one to keep watch. When the chicks hatch, they are vigilant co-parents over many months.

There are a number of bird species which rely on Bribie Island's sandy coast to nest. These include the Little Tern, Striated Pardalote and three species of resident shorebirds. The beach-nesting shorebirds are the Red-capped Plover, the Beach-stone Curlew and the Pied Oystercatcher. Probably the best known of these is the Pied Oystercatcher, a black and white medium sized bird with a distinctive long orange beak and longish orange legs. You may have seen them around the waterfront or on the ocean beach. They mate for life, so it's often a pair that you might see.

This story is a sad tale of one of the island's resident oystercatcher pairs, as they attempted to nest on the beach at Buckley's Hole Conservation Park. On discovering the nesting activity, members of BIEPA's Securing Shorebird project contemplated the location of this pair and concluded that they may need some help for their nest to survive given the challenges of a shared beach.



*Nest with two Pied Oystercatcher eggs, Buckley's Hole Conservation Park, Bribie Island. Photo: Darren Jew.*

Given the alarming decline in numbers of these beach-nesting birds, Birdlife Australia provides training for volunteers to monitor nests and assist them to survive. They also provide educational materials and mentorship to build capacity in local communities. Fortunately, there was a BIEPA meeting on Monday night 26<sup>th</sup> August. A call was put out for volunteers to join a roster to unobtrusively monitor the pair during high tides and to request any people who were about to disturb the nest to take a wide berth or a different route.



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We were all set to commence the roster starting on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> August and looking forward to this opportunity to help care for the expectant family. This pair were known to have been preparing their nest since the 24<sup>th</sup> of August, but perhaps a little longer. They had fortuitously chosen the NO DOGS area within the Buckley's Hole Conservation Park and two speckled eggs were sighted around lunchtime on Monday the 26<sup>th</sup>.

BUT, on the mid-morning of Wednesday the 28<sup>th</sup> August, the eggs were gone, the parents had abandoned the nest, and the nest site was covered with many paw footprints, a reminder that while Bribie Island's sandy coast is prime beach-nesting bird habitat, very few metres actually provide sanctuary from development, people, dogs or 4WD vehicles.

Amidst the sadness of this discovery, our minds turned to what we could do to prevent more losses like this. We at BIEPA can promote this issue by means of a public campaign that will help remind people that the future for beach-nesting birds on Bribie Island is a whole-of-community responsibility.



*Empty nest with evident paw prints. Photo: Darren Jew*

YOU can help keep  
Bribie Island's beach-nesting birds safe  
over the spring & summer breeding season

please  
**DO NOT DISTURB**

- Beach-nesters excavate simple nests & rely on camouflaged eggs
- ✓ Be aware and take care – human-caused disturbances are preventable
- ✓ Keep well clear of nests – parents need to stay on their eggs
- ✗ Dogs will stress the birds, causing them to abandon the nest

Newly created "Please DO NOT DISTURB" campaign  
brochure/sign featuring one of the incubating Pied Oystercatcher  
parents prior to loss of eggs. Photo: Darren Jew