EDITION 31 – SUMMER 2024 /2025

INTRODUCTION

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

We are well into another breeding season for our beach-nesting birds in Australia and 2024 is another biennial count year for the Hooded Plover, adding to the long-term population trend monitoring occurring since 1980. Our program is so lucky to have such a diversity of participants, some of whom have been there from the very beginning and are a wealth of knowledge about their local birds and sites and the history of efforts that have been undertaken. Many others are completing their training and may well be just starting to get to know the quirks of the breeding pair they are observing and recognising the habitat that looks suitable on their beach for nesting or chick rearing! It's such a privilege to be part of a program that can connect so many amazing people across the country to help our coastal habitats survive the constant changes, we as humans introduce. The larger we grow as a program, the more likely we can halt ill-conceived proposed changes or we can develop mitigations to avoid impacts on our coastal birds. It is through this exchange of information and the input of fresh ideas for our experts to weigh up, that we continue to grow and adapt. The world continues to throw new challenges our way, but we approach these carefully by weighing the information at hand, collecting new data and ensuring we talk to people around the world to learn from each other's efforts.

First fledgling on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula for the 2024/2025 season. Photo: Glenn Ehmke

Many of you will be aware of the devastating impacts of the highly pathogenic bird flu H5N1 that has been detected in every continent, with the exception of Australia, to date. Large-scale outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of bird flu in the past two years have killed millions of wild birds and tens of thousands of mammals around the world. This has led to an emphasis on emergency preparedness including surveillance within Australia, to ensure if an outbreak does occur, we can detect it quickly and we can respond to minimise the threat of spread to our wild birds and across sites. BirdLife Australia has a key role to play and is sharing extensive data and expertise with government and wildlife health authorities to assist their preparedness and planning. This includes data-driven assessments of threat pathways and points of sensitivity for threatened birds, supported by the data collated in Birdata. We are keeping project teams and volunteers on the ground as up to date with the information we receive, to boost surveillance of wild bird populations. The beach-nesting birds network have such a strong presence on our coast, that you have a critical role to play in surveillance and reporting any signs of H5N1 as per the advice of the authorities. You may be keen to read more in our dedicated BirdLife Australia webpage: https://birdlife.org.au/avian-influenza/

I was very fortunate to attend the International Wader Studies Group conference in Montpellier France this year, where I spoke at a Plover forum, bringing together plover experts from around the world to share our breakthroughs and our continued challenges, related to understanding population changes and demographics, identifying habitat preferences and managing and restoring habitats, mitigating predator impacts, and managing recreation on beaches. I learnt that much of the work we do here in Australia is drawn upon to shape and advance efforts to protect breeding plovers and terns in Europe! I think this continues to highlight how the value of the time each and every one of you put into collecting and reporting data, implementing the on-ground managements and again, collecting and reporting the data on threats, so we can understand how best to help these birds and build resilient coastal habitats for the future.

STAFF MOVEMENTS

Dr Meghan Cullen, Beach-nesting Birds Project Manager, BirdLife Australia

It was with sadness that we bid farewell to Lisa Nicholson in September this year. Lisa joined the team to kick start the Beach-nesting Birds project in south-west WA in July 2023. In just a little over a year, she had spread the word about the importance of Hooded Plovers through the community, recruited and trained new volunteers, developed positive relationships with land managers, coordinated and installed nesting site protection at new sites and engaged with local traditional owner groups! We wish Lisa all the best in her next adventure and are delighted that she is sticking around as a Beach-nesting Bird volunteer.

Lisa Nicholson. Photo: Renee Mead

We welcome Tegan Knowles, who has hit the ground running, as she steps into the Beach-nesting Bird Project Officer role in south-west WA. Tegan lives in the Margaret River region and had been volunteering for the project over the last year. We were extremely lucky to have a new team member with such a strong background! In just her second week on the job, she had Beach-nesting and Migratory Shorebird team members join her for a weeklong trip banding Hooded Plovers and delivering training workshops! Tegan has significant experience working on Coastal and Marine projects, particularly supporting groups and communities to make a difference in their local area. Tegan has already shown her passion and enthusiasm for the project, and we are simply thrilled to have her as part of the team!

Lindall (Migratory Shorebirds Coordinator), Grainne (Coastal, Wetland and Seabird Director), Tegan (Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer), Dan (Coastal Birds Coordinator). Photo: Dan Lees

Long term BNB'er, Dan Lees, has recently flown to a new role at BirdLife as a Migratory Shorebirds Coordinator. But lucky for us, he will still be working on the Beach-nesting Birds team one-day a week, helping to deliver the Discovery Bay Ramsar site project.

We also welcome back Emma Stephens from Maternity leave. Emma will be working one-day a week with the team and will be assisting Kerri and Julia with behind the scenes with permits, ethics, reporting and many of the other critical pieces of work required to keep such the project functioning. It is great to have Emma, and her substantial knowledge and experience, back on the SA team!

SPEAKING WITH THE PUBILC – NEW COMPULSORY TRAINING COURSE FOR VOLUNTEERS

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

BirdLife Australia takes volunteer safety seriously. While you are on the beach, we need to ensure that we've taken every step possible to ensure you are safe to participate in the Beach-nesting Birds Program.

While speaking with the public is not a task outlined or required in all volunteer roles, it is often something that happens naturally when volunteering on the beach. Beach-nesting Bird volunteers may have the opportunity to chat to people on the beach, resulting in an opportunity to educate the beach user about the conservation of beach-nesting birds. Volunteers are also within their rights to not initiate a conversation with beach users if they are not comfortable doing so.

Which is why we have created a new 'Speaking with the Public' training course and guidelines for volunteers who are in these roles:

- Citizen Scientist/Monitor (breeding season monitoring)
- Site Protector (on-ground management)
- Site Guardian (chick wardening)
- Other volunteer roles such as participating at events and schools that involve talking to the public

This induction focuses on your health and safety, basic communication training and various scenarios in regards to *when you can initiate a conversation* with beach users (if you choose to initiate a conversation), so we can ensure volunteers are not inadvertently placed at risk. Within the Beach-nesting Birds Hub, you can enrol yourself in the "Induction to Speaking with the Public" course by clicking going to the My Courses section. In there you will find the guidelines, communicating with the public training videos and the Induction.

It is *compulsory for all volunteers, existing and new*, to complete the Speaking with the Public Induction – which is 8 questions long.

BirdLife Australia have also provided brand new vests for Beach-nesting Bird Volunteers (in areas that don't already have them). These are a light blue colour (as we don't tend to use High Vis for monitoring), and they will ensure that volunteers are easily identifiable on the beach. Remember to have something with you that identifies you as a volunteer – landyard with nametag, hat, iron on patch or the new vests. Your Volunteer Regional Coordinator or BirdLife staff member will ensure you obtain a new vest.

Volunteers Philip and Felicity Hoff with the new BirdLife Australia volunteer vests. Photo: Phil Hoff

If you are having any issues accessing the BNB Hub, the Speaking with the Public training course, or have questions about the vests, please email beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au

BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA WELCOMES $1.6MILLION FOR THREATENED BIRD RECOVERY

Originally posted on BirdLife Australia website: https://birdlife.org.au/news/birdlife-australia-welcomes-16m-for-threatened-bird-recovery/

BirdLife Australia welcomes the announcement by Federal Environment and Water Minister Tanya Plibersek of $1.6 million in funding for threatened bird recovery through the Australian Government's Saving Native Species program.

The funding allocated to BirdLife Australia will provide dedicated Recovery Teams with an urgent uplift through to 2026, with a focus on 9 threatened priority birds; Australasian Bittern, Carnaby's Cockatoo, Eastern Curlew, Hooded Plover (eastern), King Island Brown Thornbill, King Island Scrubtit, Regent Honeyeater, South-east Red-tailed Black Cockatoo and Swift Parrot. The funding will also provide additional support for governance and coordination for several other priority listed and threatened birds' Recovery Teams.

BirdLife Australia has long been involved with national recovery teams and has led the implementation and coordination of recovery plans for a range of threatened birds including the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater and Swift Parrot.

"These Recovery Teams do vital work on the frontline of bird conservation in Australia," said Lyndel Wilson, BirdLife Australia's incoming Executive Director Conservation and Science. "The government's decision to engage our expert staff to coordinate these teams emphasises BirdLife Australia's pivotal role as the national leader in bird conservation.

"Currently, one in six Australian birds face the threat of extinction. Species Recovery Teams are vital for guiding the monitoring of important bird populations and coordinating actions to protect them and restore their numbers.

"This funding is a welcome boost to existing Recovery Teams. It will also allow BirdLife Australia to establish and coordinate new national Recovery Teams for three iconic threatened birds; the Australasian Bittern, the Eastern Curlew and the Eastern Hooded Plover. That means we can collect more data on how these species are tracking, scale-up recovery efforts and boost our collaboration with communities, experts and partners to safeguard the future of these birds."

"We thank the Minister and the Commonwealth Government for awarding this funding, and we're looking forward to working with dedicated Recovery Team partners on much-needed actions for these threatened birds."

Hooded Plover adults with newly hatched chicks. Photo: Glenn Ehmke

MARK LETHLEAN

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

Before I had retired in 2012, my daughter Hannah encouraged me to join her to meet Dr Grainne Maguire on an Ocean Beach at Rye on the Mornington Peninsula. She had organized the meeting and thought that I might like to learn a little more about the Hooded Plover and how BirdLife Australia was involved in the conservation of the species. At the time I was getting more and more obsessed by my new hobby of bird photography, especially as the technology of DSLR cameras began to blossom. The walk and talk got me hooked and I found another use for my telephoto lenses, a tool for monitoring shorebirds and especially in the reading of engraved flags.

Mark Lethlean with daughter Hannah, Cape Hillsborough, Nepean. Photo: Stacey Lethlean

It turns out that the beaches we were to monitor had been abandoned for a period due to some aggressive encounters between volunteers and a couple of locals. I think it was hoped some fresh faces might be able to reestablish the data collection on this stretch of beach. Hannah started monitoring continuously and we both became members of the local FoHP group. Before we knew it, she had signed up to be their treasurer, not having a single idea about what the position entailed. I soon followed but with greater time constraints due to my work as a local veterinarian. But still, before I knew it, I too was roped in and elected vice president of the organization. I subsequently took over the presidency, by default, in 2018.

Mark Lethlean holding a Hooded Plover, Rye. Photo: Hannah Lethlean

In the following years, Hannah moved on to further studies leaving her poor old Dad behind to carry the load. I'm sure it had always been her strategic plan to get Dad involved and then walk away knowing that his obsessive-compulsive nature would maintain his involvement. As it turns out, my relationships with the staff of Parks Victoria, the BNB team at BirdLife and with other volunteers, particularly our hardworking committee, have become a very important part of my life. It has been immensely rewarding to develop a level of expertise in the biology and conservation of beach-nesting birds and to be involved in several of their important projects.

I have particularly enjoyed being part of the Hooded Plover chick transmitter project, the foxwatch project, the Red-capped Plover banding scheme on Westernport Bay beaches, nest camera studies, monitoring of the restricted access areas of Point Nepean and the shorebird surveys of the Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park. Apart from keeping me very busy it has introduced me to some fantastic like-minded people and enabled me to develop a whole range of exciting new skills. I wouldn't change a thing.

ROS SCRASE

Ros Scrase, Volunteer Beach Leader, Friends of the Hooded Plover Eyre Peninsula, South Australia

I have been a volunteer on the Beach-nesting Bird Project for about 10 years and enjoy monitoring Hooded Plovers along the beautiful coastline of Port Neill on Eyre Peninsula. My walks along our unspoilt isolated beaches became even more interesting as these fascinating, bossy little birds, used to call and run out in front of me. I now know they were leading me away from their nests. When I discovered my first Hoodie nest, I became hooked.

Through my involvement with the local Progress Association I met Rachael Kannussaar, Coastal Management Officer for EPNRM Board (now Landscape Board). Rachael encouraged my interest and after providing training opportunities, suggested I enter sightings on My Hoodie Portal and so began my obsession with Hoodies and interest in beach nesting and migratory birds on our beaches.

It is not a past time for the faint hearted as there are far more tragedies than successes as foxes, cats and ravens take their toll on the more isolated beaches, while vehicles and dogs off leash give the Hoodies closer to town a tough time. However, when you see three little chicks running around the beach it's an absolute delight and when one actually fledges, it makes it all worthwhile.

So many highlights such as attending Beach-nesting Bird Conferences in Willunga and Moonta or witnessing members of the Birdlife Australia team banding hoodies on Eyre Peninsula. Also, monitoring remote cameras set near nests and coding thousands of images, which provide some interesting and amazing pictures. The behaviour of these special little birds never fails to entertain and is seldom predictable.

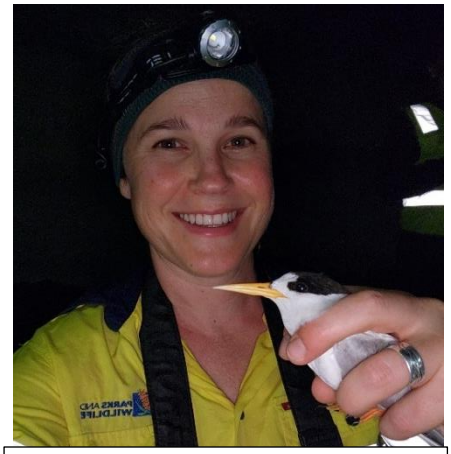
RS White (Rastas) caught for the second time. He had recently been jilted by TY (Tammy) who had taken up a new partner. RS spent the next couple of years flitting from beach to beach but I am now pleased to report that he has found a new partner and settled at a different beach. Photo: Kym Montoya.

I enjoy chatting with people I meet on the beach about the hoodies and most are genuinely interested. Hopefully I can encourage more Hoodie monitoring volunteers in the future.

Ros looking for Hoodies. Photo: Renee Mead

Land manager spotlight

CHRISTINE TAYLOR, CONSERVATION OFFICER, DEPTARTMENT OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS, WA



Christine Taylor with Fairy Tern. Photo: supplied by DBCA.

Q1. What organisation do you work for and how does your organisation work with beach-nesting birds?

Parks and Wildlife Service Blackwood District, which is part of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). The department manages Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park, which spans most of the beaches between Cape Leeuwin and Cape Naturaliste in Western Australia's south-west. DBCA's Blackwood District is responsible for protecting and managing threatened beach-nesting birds along this stretch, which is often referred to as the "Margaret River" population for hooded plovers. Fairy terns, red capped plovers and oystercatchers are also observed nesting along this coastline.

Q2. How big is the team which contributes to beach-nesting bird conservation?

Several staff within DBCA's Nature Conservation team are involved in the hooded plover conservation effort and have responsibility for managing volunteers, training, nest protection, signage, surveys and event management. Many other DBCA staff such as rangers, marine rangers and conservation employee staff assist with on ground works such as installing fencing and signage.

Q3. How long have you been working with beach-nesting birds and what types of activities do you participate in as part of your role to help these birds?

I have been involved in hooded plover surveys of the Margaret River population for more than 15 years. In 2018 we recognised there was a need for a centralised volunteer group for monitoring and reporting nesting in the region, and as most of the lands were managed by DBCA the decision was made that we would start a new volunteer project working closely with the local BirdLife WA Cape to Cape Bird Group, to increase monitoring and management of the Margaret River hoodie population.

Hoodie banding in 2023. Photo: supplied by DBCA.

I am responsible for volunteer coordination and management, so I developed a training manual and sign-up process using BirdLife beach-nesting bird team resources and departmental requirements. We held several training workshops in collaboration with BirdLife, to attract and train volunteers and now have more than 30 active volunteers who regularly monitor the coastline for hoodies and other beach-nesting birds.

I am also involved in monitoring and managing a regular, large fairy tern nesting site, which last year was the largest and most successful to date with approximately 250 breeding pairs. This involves regular beach visits to monitor nesting progress, predator detection and human impacts, and initiating protection measures such as fox and cat trapping, installing chick shelters and the capture and banding of fledglings with WA Seabird Conservation Network and BirdLife WA.

Q4. What are some of the greatest challenges facing the birds in your region?

The Margaret River hoodie population is the most at risk population of hooded plovers in the state from human impacts. Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park is the busiest national park in WA, attracting more than 4 million visitors per year. The Cape to Cape track, which runs the 125km along the coastline, is also becoming increasingly popular, increasing foot

traffic along several beach sections. Some pairs have recorded very high rates of failure, assumed to be from unleashed dogs, pedestrians, feral and native predators which frequent the beaches. Sensor camera work recently revealed that a pied oyster catcher nesting nearby predated on one of the hoodie's eggs! Many of the beaches are also remote and difficult to access without a 4WD or a fair amount of walking, so gathering data on nest outcomes or installing the protection required can be difficult and very time consuming.

Q5. What are some of the benefits of working together with BirdLife Australia and the beach-nesting birds program volunteers?

We have been working with BirdLife Australia on hooded plover management for many years and use all the BnB training and management resources. Prior to a WA officer starting in 2023, we worked closely with the local BirdLife Cape to Cape bird group, as well as the National BnB team. The training presentations and management guidelines developed by the BirdLife BnB team have been invaluable in providing our staff and volunteers with the knowledge and skills to undertake surveys and nest protection. The support and expertise from the BnB team has been sought on many occasions. Is it possible for five eggs in a nest and a threesome of hoodies? How to give hand-raised hoodies the best start? How to catch entangled oystercatchers? There is never a question too random that the team can't assist with!

The National BnB team has been over for the past two seasons to capture and flag hoodies in our population, with 28 birds now flagged. The engagement and excitement from the volunteers and staff were a major highlight for our team and the information these hoodies are providing in identifying territories and population trends, will be invaluable in the future management of our population.

Q6. What is one of the achievements for beach-nesting bird conservation that your organisation is most proud of delivering or being a part of?

We now have more than 30 active volunteers who regularly monitor and report hoodie nesting in the Margaret River region. When we started this program, we hadn't been able to follow any nests through to confirm fledging, so one of the main goals was to be able to prove nest success (or failure) and start to gather information on likely causes of failure, as well as determine the likely number of birds in our region. Throughout the 23/24 season, volunteer surveys confirmed nine fledglings for the season from 18 pairs. The data being gathered, though most often about nest failures, is painting a picture of the plight of our hoodie population and will help inform management priorities and further engaging the volunteers and the general public.

Q7. What has been one of your personal highlights of working with beach-nesting birds?

Working with all the volunteers. They are so passionate and committed and just generally wonderful people! I don't get to make it to the beach myself very often to see hoodies but I love seeing the updates come through and still get very excited each time a nest is located. When the BnB team came over to capture and flag hoodies, we asked the vollies to survey as much as possible in the week prior, so we had the most up to date information to inform the capture team's efforts. And oh boy did they walk some beach miles and come through with the goods! Being on the beach with the vollies and seeing their ecstatic (and sometimes a little teary) faces when all their hard work paid off and 'their' local bird was captured and flagged with their initials was priceless. As much as I love birds, it's the people that make this program extra special.

Kimberly Page, Tayla Cartagena and volunteer Jenny Kikeros with BirdLife staff; Lindall Kidd, Grainne Maguire and Tegan Knowles. Photo: supplied by DBCA.

Behaviour change and awareness raising

SPEAKING WITH THE PUBLIC WORKSHOPS – BELLARINE PENINSULA AND SURF COAST

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

Thanks to funding from Coastcare Victoria, the Beach-nesting Birds team set out for Anglesea and Barwon Heads in October 2024 to deliver "Hooded Plover Monitoring" and "Speaking with the Public" training workshops. Steve from Conflict Resolution Training and Consultation attended both workshops and became very well acquainted with our program. He was able to cater the training to reflect our typical interactions on the beach, with one of the workshops involving acting and roleplaying (sounds terrifying, but it was great!). While most interactions with members of the public are positive and of compliance, it was agreed that there is the odd unfortunate occasion where the situation escalates and can become aggressive.

Steve walked us through de-escalation techniques and aggression management. He spoke on the importance of 'letting them talk', empathy and open body language. He was able to eloquently explain the ladder of highly charged emotions that people can 'walk' up when agitated and explained strategies on how to curb that.

For one of the workshops, the afternoon session involved setting up two roleplay scenarios involving 'difficult' people. We had actors refusing to put their dog on the lead and unwilling to listen to volunteers, which occasionally happens on the beach. This was an opportunity to put into practice everything we had just learnt. Volunteers then had the choice to (bravely!) watch the recording of the scenario together with the group. It is a very unique experience to get to observe yourself from another point of view and watch how your interaction went. One of the difficulties volunteers faced was remembering the techniques of de-escalation under all of that pressure and adrenaline.

These workshops were a huge success and we received positive feedback on Steve's delivery. Learning through seeing, hearing, doing and reviewing was found to be very helpful and we hope to run these again in future.

These sessions complimented our new online "Speaking with the Public" course, now live on the BNB Hub. While interacting with the members of the public is not a task directly outlined or required in all volunteer roles, it is something that will naturally occur when volunteering on the beach. It focuses on your health and safety and basic communication training. We hope to make your experience as a volunteer a safe and enjoyable one and to increase your awareness of the project.

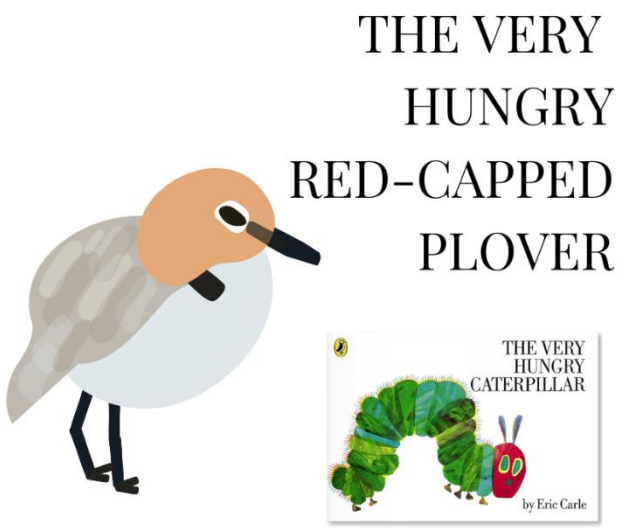
Speaking with the Public Workshop, Surf Coast. Photo: Melissa Sheedy.

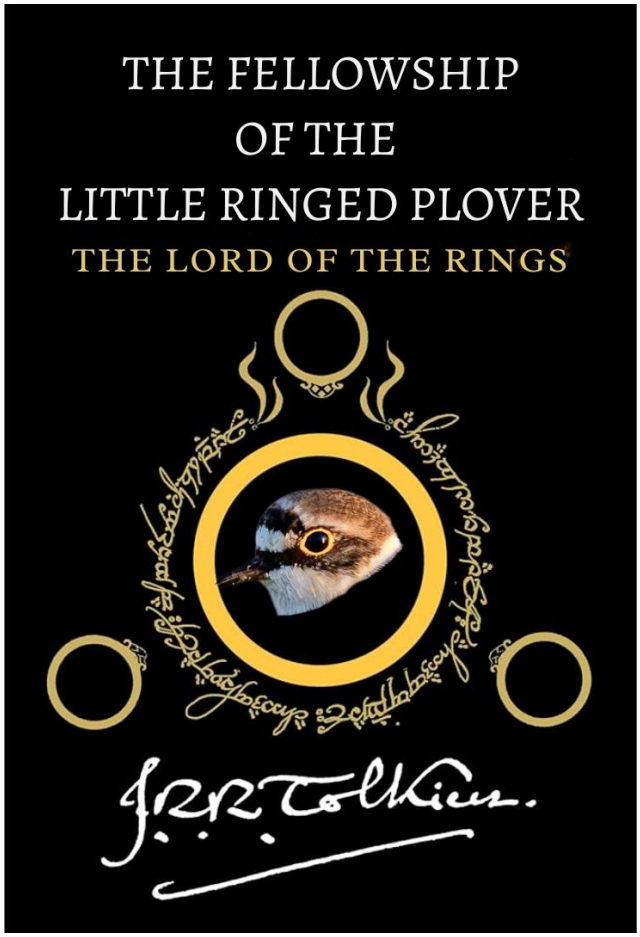
PLOVER APPRECIATION DAY 2024

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

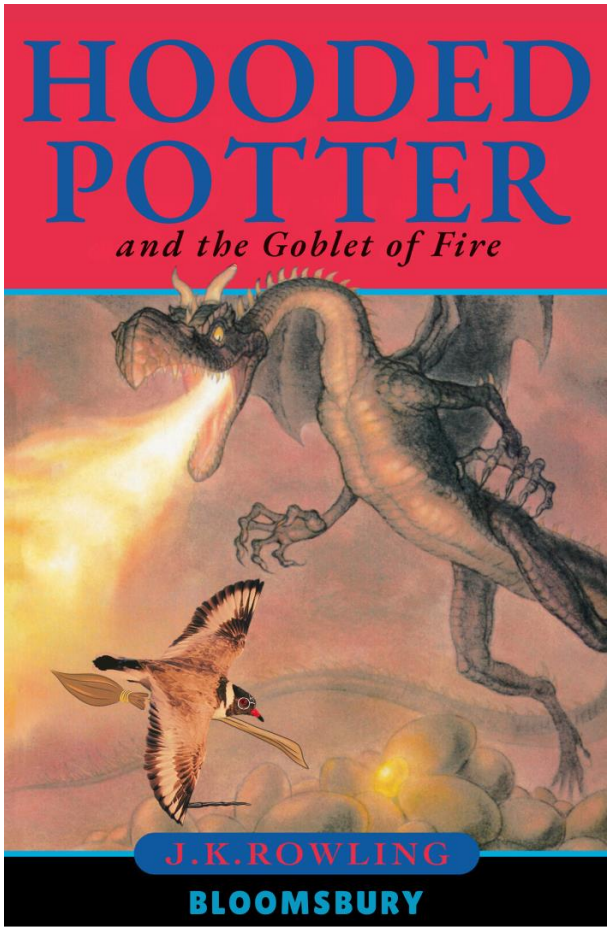
Plover Appreciation Day 2024 (September 16th) was all about raising awareness of the plight of ground-nesting plovers around the world through focusing on plover books and novels. We celebrated the art of storytelling as a way of using science and creative writing to inspire people to care for the environment. Our aim was to get as many people and groups from Australia and around the world involved by asking them to share their favourite books, including picture books and novels. We also had a bit of fun and shared some never heard before book titles... check them out below!

We're so pleased to say that plover advocates around the world as far as Canada, the United States and South Africa joined in on the fun too.






Behaviour change and
awareness raising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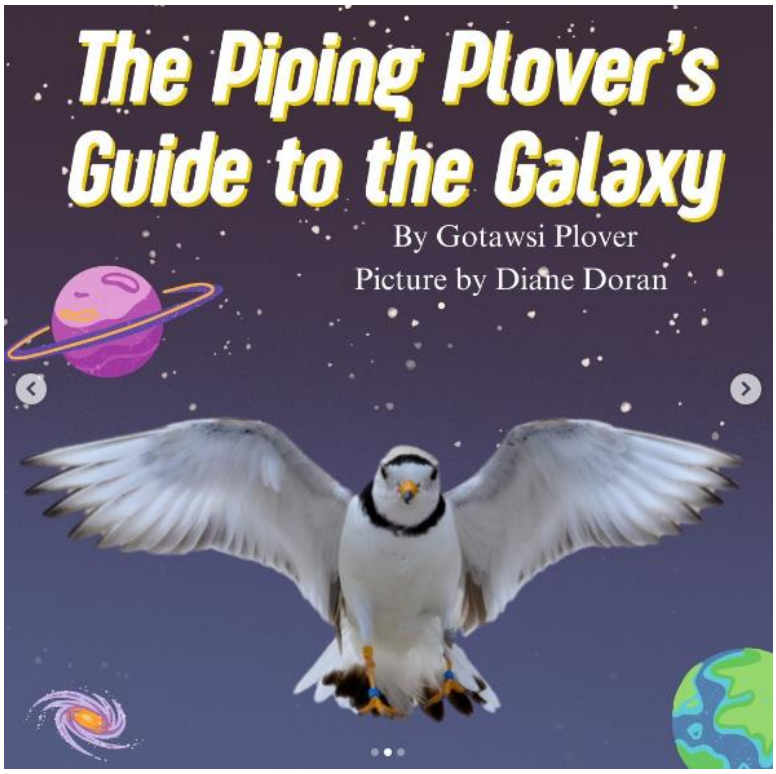

The Piping Plover's
Guide to the Galaxy
By Gotawsi Plover
Picture by Diane Doran


GUADALUPE NIPOMO
DUNES

AVIAN INFLUENZA:

BirdLife Australia has created a website where you can keep up to date with the new H5N1 and has lots of information on what to expect, what to do if you suspect a bird is showing symptoms, links to a very informative webinar and contact details for authorities: https://birdlife.org.au/avian-influenza/

Also have a look at the Australian Governments website for more information.
https://www.agriculture.gov.au/campaigns/birdflu

Watching for H5N1 Avian Influenza (bird flu) in Australia

birdlife AUSTRALIA

Summary

Avian Influenza, or bird flu, is an infectious disease of birds caused by strains of Influenza A virus. It affects poultry and wild birds and can be spread to mammals including humans. The H5N1 strain is a highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) being closely monitored by Australian authorities due to the potential risk of spread to Australia.

Large-scale outbreaks of the H5N1 strain of bird flu in the past two years have killed millions of wild birds and tens of thousands of mammals around the world. H5N1 bird flu has spread to all continents apart from Australia and experts predict it could arrive here with the spring migration of shorebirds and seabirds from the northern hemisphere.

An outbreak of H5N1 in Australian birds could be catastrophic. It can be expected to cause large numbers of birds becoming infected and dying. This could have disastrous consequences, as one in six Australian birds are already facing the threat of extinction.

BirdLife Australia is sharing extensive data and expertise with government and wildlife health authorities to assist their preparedness and planning. We are keeping project teams and volunteers on the ground informed to boost surveillance of wild bird populations.

Image - above: Christmas Island Frigatebird - Kay Parkin.
Back: Australian Pelican - Stephen Garth

What are the symptoms of bird flu in birds?

Numerous dead birds in a location, including small groups or clusters (five or more) of wild birds of any species could be a sign that H5N1 has infected local populations and should be reported.

Individual dead birds, or less than five sick or dead wild birds, should be reported if they are seabirds, waterbirds, shorebirds or birds of prey.

In individual birds, warning signs that should be reported include:

- A lack of coordination, tremors, swimming in circles
- Twisted necks or other abnormal posture
- Inability to stand or fly
- Diarrhoea
- Difficulty breathing, coughing or sneezing
- Swelling around the head, neck and eyes
- Cloudiness or change in colour of the eyes
- Sudden death

Threats and management

What should I do if I see or find a sick or dead bird?

AVOID

Avoid contact with sick or dead wildlife and their environment. Do not allow pets to touch or eat sick or dead wildlife.

RECORD

Record what you see, the location the animal was found, and take photos or video if possible, without approaching the bird (see below).

REPORT

Report any unusual illness or death in wild birds and other wildlife immediately via the **Emergency Animal Disease Hotline on 1800 675 888.**

Details that will assist the response include:

- Location (address and/or GPS coordinates if possible)
- Date and time of the sighting (and when signs of disease were first noticed)
- The estimated number of sick or dead animals and other animals at the site
- Notes of any clinical signs that sick animals are showing
- Contact details of any observers

Scan here for more information

Other ways to help:

Never handle or move dead birds or any birds with suspected Avian Influenza.

Be ready to report a case.
Familiarise yourself with the warning signs and immediately report the details of any suspected case by calling 1800 675 888. Save this number to your phone.

Reduce the spread.
Wash your footwear before and after visiting national parks, nature reserves or agricultural areas to help reduce the chance of accidentally spreading H5N1 in contaminated soil. Be sure to remove all mud, soil and debris, on-site.

Help birds with their social distancing by not feeding them.
It is best not to feed birds as this brings them into close contact with each other, increasing the likelihood of diseases being spread. This applies to several diseases already present in Australia.

Be aware.
Avoid disturbing flocks of birds and keep dogs leashed on beaches when birds are present to prevent unnecessary movement and mixing of birds, and to reduce unnecessary stress that can weaken immune responses.

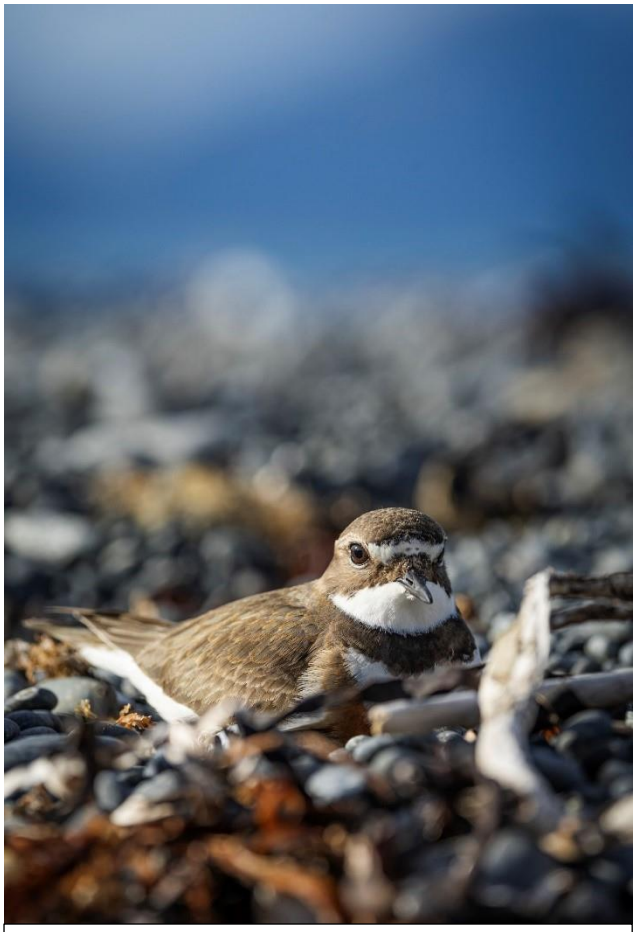
Save Birds. Save Life.

BirdLife Australia. Suite 2-05, 60 Leicester Street, Carlton VIC 3053
www.birdlife.org.au ABN 75 149 124 774 September 2024

BANDED DOTTEREL STUDY IN KAIKOURA – NEW ZEALAND

Banded Dotterel Study Team

The Banded dotterel (officially the Double Banded Plover) is a New Zealand endemic species. Many of you will recognise it, as a significant portion of the population undergoes an unusual east to west migration to Australia in autumn, before returning to NZ to begin breeding in early spring. Unlike the famous NZ Wrybill plover with its bill strongly curved to the right and whose nesting is almost totally confined to the edges of healthy river braids in Canterbury, Banded dotterel shows its breeding resilience by choosing a wide range of habitats including beaches from the north to the south of NZ, braided rivers and river terraces, and some are even found nesting in our high country at altitudes as high as 6000ft. For such a widespread bird, inside knowledge and studies have been very few. However, on our beaches in Kaikoura where we suspect several hundred birds breed, in 2013 we noticed that the breeding rates seemed dangerously low.



Banded Dotterel. Photo: Provided by Banded Dotterel Study Kaikoura

The Kaikoura Banded Dotterel Study began in Kaikoura in 2015, with the goal of measuring reproductive success, identifying the barriers to successful nesting and using this knowledge to support the species for the future. After 10 years our breeding success is still horrifyingly low. So far, our first 30 nests at South Bay this season, have produced only 2 fledglings, with two tiny chicks in waiting. Advocacy has raised interest in this species nationally and many such projects have arisen to give it greater protection throughout the country.

As for your gorgeous Hooded Plover, modern day beach nesting has many threats. The most significant for our dotterels are cats (both feral and domestic), dogs on the beach and the ever-increasing problem of more and more vehicles. We find the contribution of motor bikes, quads and 4WDs very hard to measure but we suspect it might be quite high. With the purchase of a thermoscope to enable us to cover large areas of monitoring, we see that too often chicks when disturbed, move to the lowest close depression and huddle as a response to disturbance. Thus, sometimes we find chicks dead in the quad tracks but of course there are probably many that we don't see.

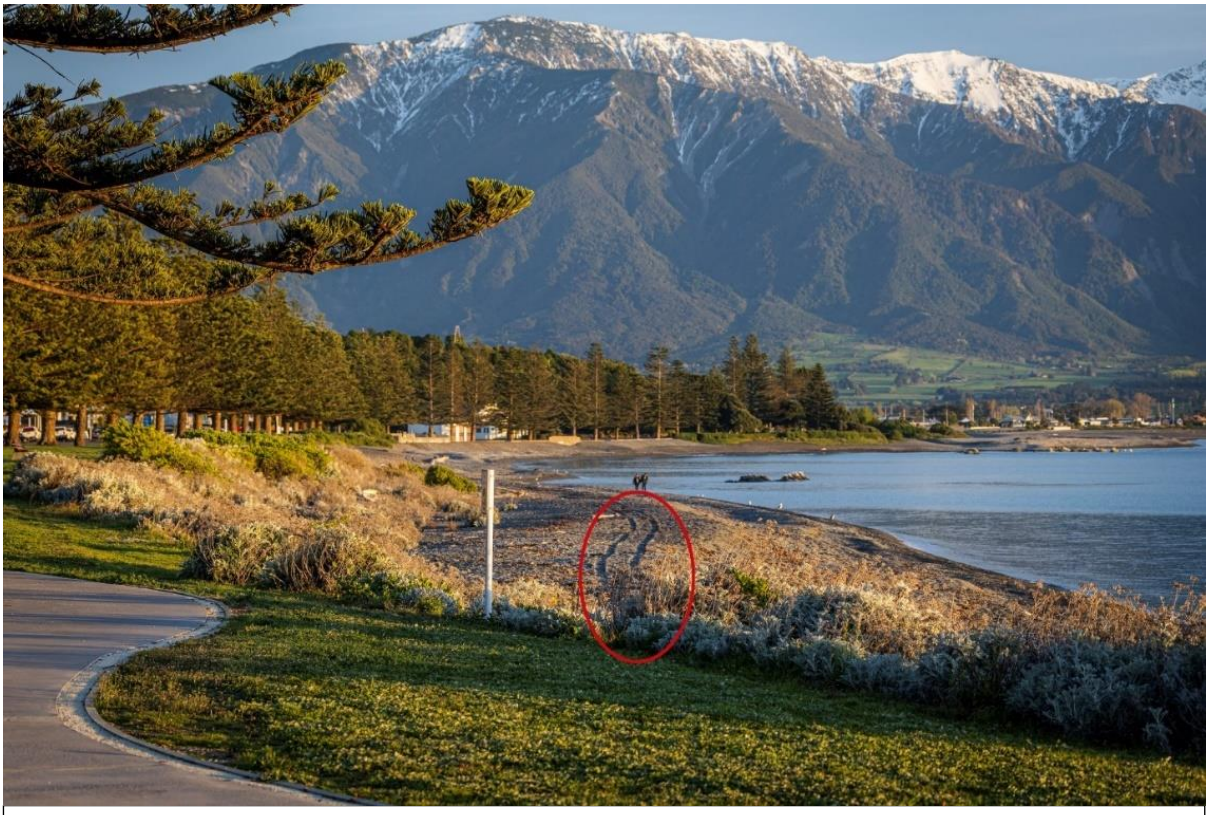
NZ has poor environmental law, though protections and fines for death of native creatures are written in. However, this law is almost never activated and our current government has recently designed and enacted new "Fast-Track Law", which dilutes the value of our wild species and habitats. Conservation law is not fit for purpose and dates back to times where things were very different and our wildlife hugely more abundant.

In NZ a beach is a designated public road in law. This was of course a response to the need to travel in NZ's early days when mountainous lands had no roads and most land was densely forested. At that time, coastal travel was really the only option. As technology has exploded, the ability of a vehicle to easily drive the beach has exploded too but the requirement for the initial law was never revisited. This has led to the development of an entitlement to access and drive the beach at

every point. The NZ Government who passed the initial law, has (along with predator and dog control laws) passed the responsibility for managing our beaches to local governments. With outrage that would be generated by the loss of driving privilege, it is unlikely that any of this will change soon.

In late September, our team and many people in our local and wider community were gutted by the death of a 7 year old female dotterel who was run over as she was hatching her clutch in a marked nest. We have seen many, many losses over the years, as adult deaths that we know of, are sometimes greater than the number of fledglings our area produces. Someone in the community, outside our team was so distraught by this incident, he followed the beach tracks back to a residence and was able to locate the vehicle that did the damage. Several people have made signed statements to forward the prosecution of the driver. However, one difficultly in our law is to prove beyond reasonable doubt the act was intentional. So far, despite the outcry in our national media, our team and our community have no justice for the death of one of our most viable breeders.

It is important for us to stay on track. Our next step will be to advocate for our beaches to be free from dogs and vehicles for a portion of the season. Wish us luck and watch this space.



Quad bike tracks where the nest and adult female were run over. Photo: Provided by Banded Dotterel Study Kaikoura

NEW RESOURCES FOR BEACH-NESTING BIRD CONSERVATION

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

The Beach-nesting Birds team are always busy coming up with new materials and resources to assist in the conservation of Beach-nesting birds. Whether it be awareness raising materials, training resources for volunteers, on-ground management equipment – it's ongoing! All of our resources go into the BNB Hub Document Library.

Recently, we've organised for these wonderful signs by ChrissieCanDraw, and they are temporary nest management signs for areas with multiple beach-nesting birds in the same area.

If you're interested in having these signs in your area, please contact your relevant BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Bird Coordinator (printing is subject to grant funding).

Hooded Plover, Red-capped Plover and Pied Oystercatcher

Beach Stone-curlew and Pied Oystercatcher

Threats and management

Beach Stone-curlew, Red-capped Plover and Pied Oystercatcher

Little Tern and Red-capped Plover

Fairy Tern, Hooded Plover, Red-capped Plover and Pied Oystercatcher

Science and research

BIRDLIFE AUSTRALIA'S 9TH NATIONAL BEACH-NESTING BIRDS CONFERENCE, ANGLESEA VICTORIA

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

BirdLife Australia held their 9th National Beach-nesting Birds Conference on Wadawurrung and Eastern Maar Countries, (Anglesea and surrounds, Victoria), in early June. Over 160 scientific experts, Traditional Owners, land managers, volunteers, government representatives and students came together to learn and to share knowledge on beach-nesting birds and their coastal habitats. Participants came from across VIC, WA, SA, QLD, NSW and New Zealand to attend. The three-day conference included expert presentations, field trips to highlight the local area and do weed identification plus capacity building workshops, where participants can learn more about migratory shorebirds, wetland birds, seabirds, photography, beach-nesting birds, communication skills and there was even a sketching workshop by great local artist, Ursula Shepherd.

Weed identification field trip with Pete Crowcroft. Photo: Kasun Ekanayake

Photo: Kasun Ekanayake

The Beach-nesting Bird Conference is aimed at sharing the latest research findings and stakeholder knowledge around beach-nesting bird species, their habitats, threats and conservation management. With talks from BirdLife Australia Beach-nesting Birds experts on the drivers of nest survival in the Eastern Hooded Plover, Little Tern and Fairy Tern Conservation, how research has shaped beach-nesting bird conservation and achieving behaviour change among beach users. Guest speakers came from the Conservation Regulator (Victoria), Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service, Deakin University, New Zealand Department of Conservation, Great Ocean Road Coast & Parks Authority, Mandubarra Aboriginal Land & Sea Inc, Edith Cowan Uni and Volunteers.

We also had a Welcome to Country on Eastern Maar Country, and cultural education sessions on Wadawurrung Country.

The 2024 Beach-nesting Birds Conference is proudly funded and supported by BirdLife Australia. We wish to thank the family of John Rawlins, and the Madden-Sainsbury Foundation who made this conference possible. Elements of this project received financial support from BirdLife Australia, via a successful grant application to BirdLife Australia's Community Conservation Grants, by Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast.

Thank you to all our presenters, workshop and field trip leaders for the generosity of their time and expertise.

2024 Conference attendees. Photo: Kind member of the public!

The next Beach-nesting Bird Conference will be in South Australia, in May 2026.

Science and research

LOVE MAKING - RED-CAPPED PLOVER STYLE

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

Red-Capped Plover Mating, Pt Leo. Photo: Mark Lethlean

I have been monitoring Red-capped Plovers on the semi-urban beaches of Westernport Bay for nearly 10 years now. In all that time I have rarely ever seen them mate and when I do, it's an extremely brief, no-nonsense encounter.

So, I was pretty surprised when I captured this love-making sorte earlier in the season.

Not only was it quite aggressive, with the male holding onto the female's head with his beak; it was also prolonged with the couple eventually falling backwards onto the sand. It was a copulatory encounter lasting an epic 20 seconds. After that experience, the poor girl shook herself down and promptly fled the scene.

Collapsing onto the sand, after the event! Photo: Mark Lethlean

A LONG JOURNEY FOR A TOUGH LITTLE BIRD – EZ [EASY] DOES IT!

David Hartney, Volunteer, Beach Team Leader, Friends of the Hooded Plover Bass Coast (Cape Paterson to Harmers)

One of the joys of volunteer monitoring to help the Hooded Plover conservation effort is watching a bird evolve from the discovery of a tiny, well camouflaged egg in a nest through to fledging as a juvenile and hopefully growing into full adulthood. These are remarkable achievements with low odds of success. This is the life story so far of a sub-adult bird, EZ White, which was recently reported at Lorne on Victoria's Surf Coast, having travelled all the way from Cape Paterson in southwest Gippsland. That's 145 kms in a straight line and considerably longer by the coastal route. But there is more to this story which makes it remarkable.

Cape Paterson on the Bass coastline has a 'solid' breeding pair at the highly disturbed Pea Creek estuary site. YW Orange, a 9-year-old male and UV White have been the resident breeding pair since the 2018/19 season. Over six seasons, they have nested 24 times, layed 59 eggs, hatched 10 chicks and had 2 fledglings, including EZ White, with just 5 juveniles from the site since records began in 2006.

EZ White was part of a 3-egg clutch discovered on 14th December 2023, the breeding pair's 3rd attempt for the season. The eggs hatched on 13th January 2024, with the first chick lost at 10-days. Sadly, around day 24, the second chick

disappeared. Things were not looking great for any success. Despite a wide range of disturbances and threats (predominantly human holiday activity and an increasing indication of fox activity), the one remaining chick managed to reach the 'official' fledgling age of 35 days. Parks Victoria undertook some quick fox eradication leading up to this important time and we increased monitoring to 'support' the birds. For some reason, the volunteer team were yet to see it fly any distance and the parents were working very hard protecting it by moving it constantly to lower threat areas around the breeding territory.

Juvenile Day 46, Pea Creek. Photo: David Hartney

With the young bird still on its natal territory at day 55 of its journey, the Beach-nesting Bird Team decided to band the bird for research purposes and on 7th March 2024, it became known as EZ White. At this time, it was discovered to have suffered a trauma injury to one wing, probably explaining the length of time it had stayed on site and why it had not been seen flying. It remained in the natal territory until 16th March 2024, and was finally observed flying strongly at the 64-day mark. At last, after 92 days of monitoring by volunteers, it was strong enough to spread its wings to discover a whole new world!

Banding EZ White, Pea Creek Photo: Kasun Ekanayake

This tough little juvenile found its way to a popular winter flocking site, the Powlett River Mouth on the Bass Coast, joining other Hoodies. This was also the fledging site for its father, YW Orange, some nine years previously. EZ White was first reported here in early April 2024 through to late September 2024 using this period to grow stronger and socialize with other birds. Despite its slow start, EZ White decided the 'world was its oyster' and took off to discover a whole new Hoodie world. By 8th October 2024, at around 8 months of age, it had undertaken a challenging journey for a Hooded Plover when it was observed at Lorne, all alone, a long way from 'home', trying to hang out with some high-profile Hoodies (EV White and partner). It was not warmly welcomed!

So, tough little EZ White is hopefully still out there somewhere, finding its way, in a not so easy world. Good luck little bird and take it EZ!

EZ White at Powlett River Mouth. Photo: Hendrick Prins

BEACH-NESTING BIRDS BANDING TRIP SOUTH-WEST WA NOVEMBER 2024

Tegan Knowles, Beach-nesting Birds Project Officer, BirdLife Australia

Earlier this month Dr Grainne Maguire and Dr Dan Lees flew to the south-west of WA to join Lindall Kidd (National Migratory Shorebirds Coordinator) and myself for a whirlwind week, packed with community and stakeholder workshops and banding of Western Hooded Plovers. Workshops, taking place in Bunbury, Margaret River and Denmark, engaged with over 80 community members and land managers. These workshops equipped attendees with knowledge of the beach-nesting birds that we are lucky to share our shores with, along with an introduction into the monitoring of the threatened Hooded Plovers and what we can do to protect them.

Margaret River Community Scoping session. Photo: Tegan Knowles.

KP at Hamelin Bay, WA. One of the 14 birds banded. Photo: Jenny Kikeros.

Thanks to the WA beach-nesting birds' community who, leading up to the banding team's arrival, conducted extensive surveys to confirm locations and breeding activity of the local Hooded Plovers. This up-to-date monitoring data guided the teams planning and banding efforts which resulted in a total of 14 Hooded Plovers banded and flagged. As part of BirdLife Australia's current State NRM Community Stewardship Project, 16 Western Hooded Plovers were also banded in 2023. With over 20 years of dedicated monitoring by local bird groups and individuals, it is very exciting to now have 30 Hoodies banded in Western Australia. The monitoring of these flagged individuals, combined with the genetic analysis of blood samples and morphometric measurements, will provide a greater understanding of this threatened species and will ultimately inform ongoing conservation and habitat protection efforts.

I wanted to say a massive thank you to the volunteer citizen scientists, organisations and land managers that made this week such a huge success. I look forward to working with you into the future to continue to achieve great outcomes for these birds, their habitats and our south-west community.

This Project is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program.

INTERNATIONAL WADER STUDY GROUP CONFERENCE

Dr Grainne Maguire, Director Coastal and Wetland Birds, BirdLife Australia

Plover workshop. Photo: Grainne Maguire

Flying back to Australia, after what was probably the most inspiring conference I've been to, I'm looking forward to building new information into our program and embarking on new collaborations! As mentioned earlier, I spoke at a Plover workshop on the theme of recreation management, sharing our approach in Australia with many groups from around the world facing similar issues. The most striking difference was plover monitoring and management in Mexico, where researchers had to identify the local Cartel and then reach out for access to the land and an assurance that they would be safe while working out there. In one very important

region there is currently a Cartel war and so it is so incredibly dangerous that they essentially must cease their work until things settle and the power dispute is resolved. It is incredible what some people go through to learn and protect birds!

During the plover workshop, there were many vigorous discussions around mitigating predator impacts, in particular around caging of nests and the risks of adult mortality when using this as a tool for increasing hatching success. The RSPB were carefully investigating the outcomes of nest cage trials and advised that there should be no 'one-size-fits-all' rule for use of cages, and that risks can far outweigh the benefits for some species, or even some species in particular environments. This is the nature of adaptive management, ensuring that we monitor any management put in place so that we can identify any changes in predator behaviours and respond by altering or even ceasing use of a given tool. One of the projects we as plover collaborators, will now work on together in the coming months is a survey of management focus and effort for plovers around the world.

The Plover workshop preceded the International Wader Studies Conference which had diverse representation from around the world, with 172 participants (plus 34 online) from 30 countries. France, the Netherlands, UK, and Germany were the most highly represented, while Mike Weston and I were representing as the only Australians. The importance of everyone coming together is so easily understood when you see the tracking routes of migratory species (they do not operate within our human 'boundaries') or hear of so many groups undertaking similar research projects. If you don't proactively communicate what you're doing or share what worked and what didn't with the broader shorebird research and conservation community, then you will quickly find that you won't be able to get all the answers to your questions! It was therefore so fantastic to see collaborations unfolding during the conference, and efforts such as 'Global Wader' where people can register their wader/shorebird tracking projects, or international surveys of managers around their approach to solving the challenges of climate change.

There were some brilliant talks, often the passion of the presenter making them all the more engaging. My favourite was learning of the Black-tailed Godwit flying altitudes of between 6000-7000km to cross the Himalayas, and not all flying in the same routes, or selecting routes with lower altitudes to climb as we might expect. Amazing birds!

A researcher was looking at responses of breeding Dunlin to nest flooding over years to see if they adapt their nest location (the answer was no, as it is thought the flooding events are too stochastic to allow for learning and also they are limited by availability of habitat). Another was investigating the effectiveness of gas cannons used to dissuade birds from feeding in agricultural areas (these only immediately scare the birds but they return rapidly and there is no overall advantage, <1% damage reduction!). I learnt that Godwits are adapting to climate change and earlier snow melt, not by changing their departure times, but instead, making the journey faster by reducing their stopover times at sites in the Wadden sea. This means less time to refuel, so that they must forage more frantically during stopovers. You can imagine that this means disturbance would be far more impactful to their ability to adjust to climate change.

A talk by Wouter van Steelant discussed use of artificial habitats, for example rice fields, by Godwits, and warned that novel, anthropogenic systems (especially those now collapsing due to drought) are no substitute for resilient, natural ecosystems (possibly even an ecological trap), and that the future should focus on wetland restoration alongside bird-friendly farming practices.

David Douglas from the RSPB spoke about building resilience in shorebird populations to predators, by not taking the typical approach of 'treating the symptoms' but instead exploring the factors that influence population growth of predators and the conditions that favour their spread. For example, foxes being positively correlated with the proportion of farmland in the landscape, being 'released' from their apex predators such as wolves, lynx and birds of prey which are now largely absent or reduced across the landscape, and having prey resources 'subsidised' such as the high availability

of rabbits, deer, domestic mammals and human waste. To truly tackle these meso-predators, we need to be working hard to restore the natural landscape, minimise fragmentation and reduce artificial resource subsidies.

I particularly enjoyed learning about 'headstarting', where eggs are taken from the wild, artificially incubated, hatched and raised in captivity, then released, which has great potential for Curlew in Europe. Hatching rates from headstarting projects being around 0.73 (from 2133 curlew eggs collected) compared to 0.1-0.6 in the wild, and release rates being 0.77 compared to 0.1-0.5 fledging rates in the wild. However, what was shocking to learn is that 'headstarting' is largely uncoordinated across Europe, and so the British Trust for Ornithology embarked on a study to learn about the use of this conservation tool including whether there was appropriate monitoring in place, whether learnings were being shared across groups about the factors influencing hatch and release rates, and whether headstarted birds then successfully bred in the future. So few studies actually monitored the birds in the subsequent years post release. Of course, if the threats have not been tackled in their environment, their future breeding success is then dependent on continued interventions.

I was incredibly privileged to attend the IWSG conference and to be sponsored by NABU / BirdLife in Germany as part of their new national species recovery program for beach-nesting birds (supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with resources from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection). Special thanks to Dominic Cimiotti and Melanie Theel for organising such a successful plover workshop.

Montpellier Conference Group Photo. Photo: Provided by Dr Grainne Maguire

FAIRY TERN CENSUS IN SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA

Dr Sonia Sanchez, BirdLife Australia's Fairy Tern Project Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

Last season, we received funding from the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water to conduct the first ever Fairy Tern population census across the entire eastern Australian range of the species, from the western Eyre Peninsula in South Australia to southern New South Wales and Tasmania. More than 200 volunteers and staff from regional state government departments participated in the census. This census aligned with the recovery actions of the National Recovery Plan for the Australian Fairy Tern, which aims to sustain a positive population trend by 2030, and, in the long-term, to increase the population size of the species to such an extent that the species is no longer considered nationally threatened.

The current Fairy Tern population estimate in eastern Australia is 1,500 mature individuals (range 1,300 – 1,700). This estimate comes from a population census conducted in South Australia in 2011/2012 by the former Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and other state estimates based on localised breeding monitoring efforts. Given

Australian Fairy Terns are highly mobile and we do not have a good understanding of their movement patterns, a coordinated and simultaneous census across the entire eastern range of the species would provide our best attempt at a reliable and accurate eastern population size estimate to assess trends.

Based on historical records and local knowledge from volunteers and stakeholders, we selected 134 sites across South Australia, Victoria, southern New South Wales and Tasmania for the Fairy Tern census. Surveys took place on three occasions within the breeding season, in the months of October, December and February and all sites were surveyed within a two-week window. Fairy Terns were observed in all regions but the Fleurieu Peninsula (Encounter Bay islands) and Western Victoria. In October, a total of 793 adults were recorded across eastern Australia, 919 in December and 1,146 in February. South Australia consistently recorded the highest abundance, accounting for 56 to 73% of the total adults recorded in each of the three months. Within South Australia, the highest abundance of Fairy Terns was detected in the western Eyre Peninsula. Our highest count (1,146 adults) may be an accurate estimate of the population size within our survey coverage, but the next census needs to ensure the extent of Tasmanian habitat and more offshore islands of the Eyre Peninsula are included.

Adult Fairy Terns showing courting behaviour on Boxbank Island in Corner Inlet, December 2023. Photo: Glenn Ehmke.

Breeding was also detected in all regions but Kangaroo Island, Fleurieu Peninsula, and Western Victoria. We recorded 25 breeding colonies (9 in SA, 11 in VIC, 3 in TAS, and 2 in NSW) at 23 different sites. Eleven of these colonies were located within Ramsar sites: the Coorong, Lake Alexandrina & Albert Wetland, Port Phillip (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula, Western Port, Corner Inlet, Gippsland Lakes and Lavinia (King Island). The number of adults per colony ranged from 3 to 200, with the largest colonies occurring on King Island, Tasmania (200 adults) and the South Lagoon of the Coorong (160 adults). Nine colonies (6 in SA, 1 in VIC and 2 in TAS) fledged at least one chick. It is important to note however the census purpose was not to follow through the fates of colonies and most data on fates came from alternate monitoring projects by BirdLife Australia and other groups, and that other breeding colonies in Tasmania (E. Woehler 2023, *pers. comm.*) and the Coorong (D. Paton 2024, *pers. comm*) were not detected during the census surveys.

In order to evaluate future population trends of the eastern population of Australian Fairy Terns, we would like to repeat this census every two to four years using the same methodology than in 2023/2024 and to include the full extent of the Tasmania and Eyre Peninsula's offshore islands range. Thank you to everyone involved!

The full Fairy Tern Census report can be accessed here.

VISIT FROM NYC PLOVER PROJECT

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

In March, we were privileged to have a visit from Chris Allieri, founder and executive director of the NYC Plover Project – a wonderful conservation initiative in New York focused on protecting the endangered Piping Plover and other beach-nesting birds. Volunteers in the project participate in education of beach users via their Beach Ambassador Program, run outreach programs in local schools, advocate for policy changes, monitor and install on-ground management and advocate for the conservation of local shorebirds.

Chris Allieri releasing NY Green. Photo: Bron Ives

It was a great opportunity for the Beach-nesting Birds Team to meet Chris and his partner Sam and talk all things about Plover conservation between New York and Australia. Staff and Volunteers met Chris on the beach at Point Roadknight (Victoria) so he could see Hooded Plovers while he was in Australia. We organised a banding session at the same time, so the NYC team could see how we catch Hoodies and we gave Chris the chance to "name" the juvenile Hoodie we caught. Naturally, he chose "NY Green" – a fitting name to reflect the NYC Plover Project.

We also had compliance officers from the Conservation Regulator come down and observe the process. It was great to meet Chris and be able to show him how the Beach-nesting Birds Program works together with volunteers, land managers, compliance staff and birdlife Australia staff. We look forward to continuing sharing research and ideas towards beach-nesting bird conservation – and of course sharing updates of where NY Green moves to along the coast!

Chris stated that "*It was an experience I'll never forget - holding a Hooded Plover*!" and that "*NYC Plover Project is so proud to call the Birdlife Australia Hooded Plover effort friends and colleagues. We have so much to learn from them."*

Learn more about the NYC Plover Project here: https://nycploverproject.org/ and keep up do date with their social media page: https://www.facebook.com/nycploverproject

BirdLife Australia staff, volunteers, Conservation Regulator officers and Chris and Sam from NYC Plover Project. Photo: Bron Ives

Science and research

AN ATTEMPT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT HOODIES ON KANGAROO ISLAND

Kasun Ekanayake, Beach-nesting Birds Coordinator, BirdLife Australia

We were fortunate enough to visit Kangaroo Island twice in as many years to catch and flag adult Hooded Plovers thanks to a grant we received from the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation. The main aim of these banding expeditions was to attach leg flags to as many adult Hooded Plovers currently being monitored throughout the breeding season by volunteers of BirdLife Australia's Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island. In turn we were also able to gain a better understanding of movements, longevity, site and partner fidelity of Hooded Plovers who live and breed on Kangaroo Island. While we were there, we are also able to deliver a Hooded Plover monitoring training workshop to recruit new volunteers and to catch up with and mentor existing volunteers, to share learnings and experiences.

Wren observing Hoodies at North Cape West. Photo: Kasun Ekanayake

After our first and successful visit in October 2023 where were caught and flagged 15 adult Hooded Plovers belonging to 14 different breeding pairs, we were left with the challenging task of catching the unflagged partners of already flagged birds on our second visit. With this in mind, we set out to Kangaroo Island in early October this year for our second visit. After spending a few days on some stunning beaches at sites like North Cape, Vivonne Bay, Nepean Bay, D'Estrees Bay, Emu Bay and Snelling Beach, we were able to add another 10 adults to the flagged bird tally. We now have flagged birds at 20 Hooded Plover breeding sites including seven that have both adults of the pair flagged.

Wren walking down to the stunning North Cape East site. Photo: Kasun Ekanayake

One of my highlights of our recent visit was visiting the Hoodie sites at North Cape. I had never visited these sites before and so we were guided by the experienced Hoodie monitor, the wonderful Wren Lashmar who monitors these sites regularly. As we walked along the cliffs to access the beaches, we were accompanied by dolphins and seals in the water, ospreys and white-bellied sea-eagles in the air. Not many people access these beaches as you have to walk a fair distance on private farmland to reach them. Therefore, they look pristine but due to the lack of fencing, unfortunately at some sites sheep walk down to the beach and trample the upper beach where Hoodies nest. Cat prints were also evident at most sites and prints of natural predators like Goannas were abundant, too. We had the best time learning from Wren who is Kangaroo Island born and bred, not only about these Hoodie sites but also about the island's history.

We have already started learning about the movements of Hoodies thanks to eagle-eyed volunteers like Jean Turner who observed a couple of interesting movements a week after we concluded our visit. One of the birds we flagged at Browns Beach was sighted at American Beach (just over 5kms as the crow flies) with one of the resident birds there. Both birds of the pair at American Beach were flagged but the most recently banded bird of that pair was not around and so its partner was mingling with the flagged bird from Browns Beach. We have also learned from volunteer Caroline Paterson that the banded pair at Snelling Beach have disappeared! A new pair of unflagged birds are breeding there now, without the flagging knowledge, we would have just assumed this was the original pair! This gives you a taste of what flagging can tell us about their lives!

CALL OUT FOR VOLUTNEERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SITE GUARDIAN ROLE

REGIONAL ROUND UP

Click on the links below to read more from each of the regions about their Beach-nesting Bird Project activities and updates from the 2022-2023 breeding season:

Victorian Update | South Australian Update | Queensland Update

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Beach-nesting Birds program is funded by a diverse range of funding sources and each year we apply for new grants and opportunities to develop new resources, carry out targeted research or to provide support to volunteers and key regions. Donors, grants and philanthropists make the program possible, and we often leverage small funding to go for bigger grants to achieve special projects.

Thank you to everyone who provided an article, and to Felicity Hoff, our fabulous volunteer who assisted with the production of this newsletter.