



# Word about the Hood

## South Australia Update

### FIRST SUCCESSFUL HOODED PLOVER FLEDGING AT CARRICKALINGA ESTUARY, SA

**Wendy White, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Friends of Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula Central**

In a heartening development for local volunteer efforts, a Hooded Plover chick has successfully fledged at Carrickalinga Estuary for the first time. This achievement marks a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to protect this vulnerable beach-nesting bird species.

The nesting began at Carrickalinga Sands, an off-leash dog beach, with CS and an unbanded Hooded Plover but the pair soon made a smart move. Within a day, they relocated to the Carrickalinga Estuary, where they began foraging along its banks. This location offered more natural protection and crucially, the estuary mouth had dried up, allowing volunteers to install fencing right across the area. The fencing helped shield the chicks from disturbance and threats.



*Surviving chick at Carrickalinga Estuary, a first for the area! Photo: Chris Fitzgerald.*

Despite these proactive measures, two of the three chicks were lost to assumed fox predation, a recurring issue at this location over the years. Foxes continue to pose a major threat to Hooded Plovers all along the Carrickalinga coastline, a popular holiday destination for the rich and famous.

However, the remaining chick stayed along the estuary banks, continuing to forage in relative safety. Even with off-leash dogs (permitted at all times as of late February), the combination of dedicated volunteer monitoring, smart fencing, and the parents' attentive care proved effective. Against the odds, the chick fledged successfully on March 19th, a landmark first for this site.

Ongoing challenges remain, particularly the need for responsible dog management and continued predator control. Nevertheless, this fledging event brings hope and motivation to volunteers working to protect the Hooded Plover population across the Fleurieu Peninsula.

As more people become aware of these fragile birds and their habitat needs, the chance of more success stories like this one grows, a small but vital victory for biodiversity on our shores.

Volunteers are finding that estuaries provide vital support for Hooded Plover chicks during breeding season. Unlike oceanfront feeding areas, estuaries offer a safer, more sheltered environment where chicks can find food without venturing down to the beach. This reduces their exposure to predators and harsh conditions. In fact, the three successful





# Word about the Hood

## South Australia Update

fledglings observed this year all fed along the estuary, highlighting its importance. These environments act as natural nurseries, offering abundant food and greater protection. Supporting estuarine habitats is essential for improving fledgling success and sustaining Hooded Plover populations into the future.

### HARVEY THE HERO

#### Sally Crafter, Beach Leader, Friends of Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula

HV (known affectionately as Harvey) was banded as an adult at Snapper Point, Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia in January 2013 and was recorded breeding at Blanche Point at Port Willunga that year. Harvey is well known by the local community on Port Willunga beach and they are kept informed via information boards at the entrance to the beach.

He is the oldest breeding bird on the Port Willunga beach and is one of our most reliable birds, managing to fledge chicks in most years. In the 2023-2024 season, he and his partner fledged 4 chicks, including one that he saved from a kestrel attack! The chick was slightly injured but they managed to keep it safe, ensured that it could forage and it eventually recovered and fledged.



*Harvey the Hero, Port Willunga. Photo: Sue and Ash Read.*

Harvey keeps giving us examples of the tenacity and resilience of Hooded Plovers. This year he showed us that Hooded Plovers can rescue eggs that have been washed away by tides and continue incubation. He and his partner recovered lost eggs three times in the 2024-2025 breeding season. In the first instance the egg was not viable as it had been washed away several times. The second time two eggs were washed away, HV and partner saved one egg and re-incubated it. Several days later it was washed away again and they rescued it for a second time and continued incubation. The chick hatched, proving that Hooded Plovers have an astounding range of breeding skills and that rescued eggs can be viable.



# Word about the Hood

## South Australia Update

Sadly, an off-leash dog killed the chick after a few days. A bitter end but we have learnt so much more about Hooded Plovers from Harvey and his partner.

### AGAINST THE ODDS, KANGAROO ISLAND UPDATE, AUTUMN 2025

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

Beach-nesting birds are the epitome of the 'Little Aussie Battler', trying again and again to succeed and returning next season, no matter how hard it was last time.

In December 2024 I reported on two Pied Oystercatcher pairs nesting in grassy paddocks. Despite our worst fears, their unusual choice of habitat proved successful. Both pairs not only hatched chicks but also raised one chick each to fledging.

At Cape Rouge beach, the grazing paddock may have reduced the threat of tidal inundation and human disturbance but there was a high risk of the eggs being trampled by stock. The pair got their timing right, promptly moving the chick down to the beach, away from stock and well hidden from predators. It was heartening to see this paddock nesting duo succeed for the first time in five seasons.



*Pied Oystercatcher nest in grassy paddock adjoining Cape Rouge beach.  
Photo: Jean Turner.*



*The Nepean Bay grassy paddock chick with its mum, a few days after hatching. Photo: Jean Turner.*

At Nepean Bay, local residents were a big factor in their oystercatcher pair's success. Locals protected the birds from disturbance through incubation, then kept watch and took care when the little family moved down to the beach. The settlement really got behind these birds, with people regularly checking how the chick was going. Along with BirdLife signs, we did handwritten updates on the chick's progress. In recent years this pair has tried other unusual nesting habitats without success. Sometimes it takes a village!

Hooded Plovers at Pennington Bay also pulled off an unusual double success this season. It's one of the most visited tourist stops on KI and a popular surfing, fishing and dog-walking spot for locals. Clearly very challenging for the Hoodies. Usually, they nest on the main beach but after failures they often move to the less visited second beach for another try.





# Word about the Hood

## South Australia Update

With one bird flagged (RR White Right), we can track the pair's movements and successes. This season, RR and partner started breeding on the second beach, leaving the main beach open to another breeding pair. The adventurous new Hoodies took several weeks to settle in. Finally, they laid their first clutch in early January. We roped-off the nest and put up signs, doubting that high tides and beach users would remain outside the area. Meanwhile on the second beach, after two unsuccessful attempts, RR and partner laid another clutch in mid-January.

Monitoring the nests over peak holiday season was nerve-racking. The chicks hatched one week apart. Only one tiny chick of the new pair survived. Not great odds! However, with vigilant, protective parents the chick fledged. On the second beach one of the three chicks fledged. Two juvenile Hoodies at Pennington Bay is a terrific outcome!



*Pennington Bay beach 2 Hooded Plover RR roosting with their 6-week old fledgling (left). Photo: Jean Turner.*

### SOUTH COAST FLEURIEU UPDATE 2024/25 SEASON

**Sue and David Thorn, Volunteer Regional Coordinators, Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula (Tunkalilla to Goolwa)**

Our Hoodies had 50 nest attempts up to 23/1/25 and on the 24/2/25 our Yilki pair RR and KV decided to have their 5th attempt, with a two-egg nest which hatched two chicks. One chick survived for 26 days of growth before it was lost, we strongly suspect it was taken by a fox. We have a flock of 23 Hoodies that have been on this site for several weeks. Eleven of these Hoodies are flagged and some have come from our remote beaches, west of Victor Harbor where a Toxic Algal Bloom has pushed large amounts of greenish foam up into the foredune and has made foraging for our Hoodies unpleasant.



*Yilki site shows our flock of 23 Hoodies. Photo: David Thorn*

We had great success with PVC banner frames (photo). Mitre 10 gave us a 20 percent discount on materials for four frames and these are light, strong and easy to dismantle and look very neat on site with some staying up for seven weeks.



With Birdlife permission, we ran a trial with the ultrasonic FoxWatch devices with cameras. We used three devices arrayed behind the nest, spread 15 metres apart within the fenced area with a camera near the nest. This trial was used on four nest attempts. The main reason for this trial was to have more eggs hatch, rather than protect chicks but if we have more eggs hatch, we have a chance to fledge more chicks.

The first site at Olivers Reef was a success with two chicks fledging. Second site, Yilki was going well but was washed out at day 26 of incubation. Third site at Sheepies Beach, one of our remote sites, was travelling well up to day 21 of incubation when a fox ate the eggs. On inspecting the devices, we found they had stopped working and the camera footage shows a fox making very wide detours away from the site until the devices stopped working. We realised the devices are not “Set and Forget”, they need attention every five to seven days by a trained volunteer to check battery levels and ensure the speaker is free from sand which can block the sound emitter. The fourth trial was a two-egg nest was fenced, the trial equipment set up and the devices attended often. The two eggs successfully hatched.



*PVC Banner at Oliver's Reef, site where 2 chicks successfully fledged. Photo: David Thorn.*

There is no doubt that banding Hoodies can tell a tale at times. One such Hoodie YM white banded on 28/1/24 on Waitpinga Beach. YM stayed until September, then was seen on a Tunkerlilla beach site until December 2024. A report came in from Kangaroo Island in January 2025 that YM was now at Antechamber Bay. YM was not welcomed so flew back to Tunkalilla West site, where YE white and partner had twelve-day old chicks. YM took over the site to the detriment of the chicks who were not seen again. On subsequent visits it was observed that YM and YE were now together.

## 2024/25 LOWER SOUTH EAST SOUTH AUSTRALIA REPORT

### Jeff Campbell, Friends of Shorebirds SE Inc.

The Friends of Shorebirds SE have carried out Hooded Plover counts every November since 2004 from Kingston to Green Point, west of Port MacDonnell. The counts were extended to cover The Granites to Kingston and Green Point to the Victorian border in 2018. This was done in order to cover the area encompassed by the Enhancing the Coorong and Managing Ramsar values along the Limestone Coast Project and we have continued covering this area. A huge thank you to all the wonderful volunteers who have made this possible.





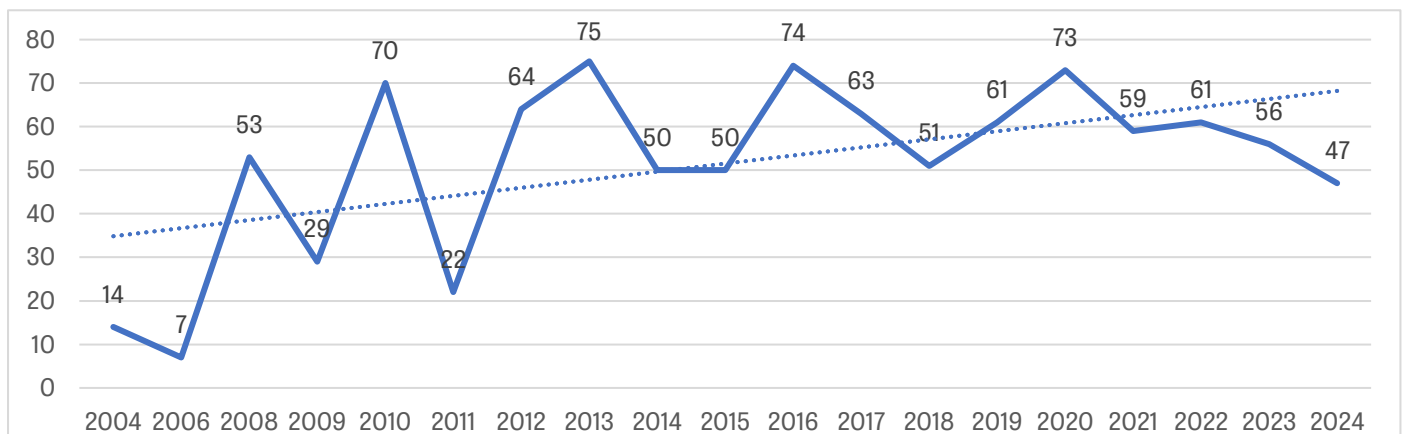
# Word about the Hood

## South Australia Update

The November 2024 count total of 47 birds was the lowest since 2011, when some count sections were not surveyed. No chicks, juveniles or immature birds were recorded, none in November 2021, three in November 2020 and five in November 2019. The November 2024 overall count total of 56 birds was a decrease of nine from the corresponding 2023 count, and a decrease of 17 from the November 2020 count total. It can be seen from the figure that despite this very low number the overall trendline over the long term continues to rise. It must be borne in mind however that this comes from low base numbers for earlier counts when coverage was sometimes limited. The increase in the trendline is due to a higher number of adult birds counted, not chicks, juveniles or immatures as breeding success has been very low in recent years. It may be that at some time in the future we will reach a 'cliff', where older birds in the population die off, and overall numbers suddenly drop dramatically. This could lead to an unsustainable population level. With a total count area distance of approximately 200 km, the numbers from this survey equates to around 0.235 adult birds per kilometre and 0.0 chicks, immatures or juveniles per kilometre.



*Hooded Plover juvenile ET. Offspring of adult AH, originally banded at Port Fairy Abalone Farm in 2015.  
Photo: Sarah Campbell, 2025.*



*Hooded Plover Count totals, 2004 to 2024.*

### HOODED PLOVERS 2024/25 SEASON OF EXTREMES ON YORKE PENINSULA

**Nanou Cabourdin, Volunteer Regional Coordinator, Yorke Peninsula**

In spring we had really strong winds pushing the tide higher than usual and several nests were washed out. Other nests were just at the edge of the tide and in several nests, eggs were dispersed not too far from each other and the adults



managed to regroup some of them and keep incubating. Unfortunately, one egg was left out in one nest and became unviable. These factors all lead to a higher than usual percentage of eggs not hatching.

An admired trait of the Hooded Plover is its resilience. I had one pair that kept nesting after failure (in this case the resident crow spying on them and eating the eggs nearly as soon as they were laid), this pair tried 7 times during the 2019/20 season. Also, I often witnessed Hooded Plover pairs chase their first fledgling(s) born early in the season, away from their territory, so they could nest again.

But this season, none of this happened. The West Cowie pair had their first chick fledge on the 5th of November but the juvenile was still seen with the parents until the 17th of February. Similar story with the Flaherty's pair whose chick was fully fledged by Christmas but they never tried to nest again. The heavy vehicle traffic on this beach during the holidays is a dangerous time for them and perhaps they realised their efforts would be fruitless. Sadly, this pair is still not accounted for as yet!

The Esplanade pair lost their 3 week old chick just before Christmas and again never tried to nest again this season.

Similarly, the Turton Swimming Centre pair who had their chick at Christmas only lasted one week, but no other nest was attempted by them.

Maybe the Hoodies could feel that this extreme weather (significant drought, high tides and strong winds across the Yorke Peninsula) wasn't conducive to breeding? Was the hot weather reducing their food source?



*Flaherty's Beach is a Carpark it's entire length over the Christmas Holidays. Photo: Nanou Cabourdin.*

In addition, we have sustained an ever-increasing tourism load on many of our beaches and in particular on Flaherty's Beach, which sometimes looks like a giant car park and clearly poses extreme risk to the Hoodies, especially the chicks before fledging.





## YORKE PENINSULA UPDATE

### Vaughan Rattley, Volunteer, Hardwicke Bay – Port Rickaby, Yorke Peninsula

Perhaps due to very windy, rough weather I found the Hoodies didn't start nesting until late October/early November this season. Of the 11 or so sites that Hoodies have nested in during previous seasons, only found 6 were used this season, one of which was a new site discovered just south of Port Rickaby. The birds at this site produced 3 eggs and although I suspected chicks hatched, I never observed any.

There were 4 other sites on the stretch of beach from the Bluff to just North of Barkers Rocks where pairs laid eggs (3 in each) but I only observed chicks from one nest just North of the Bluff. Unfortunately, the only one to fledge from all these nests that I observed came from this site.

It was a similar story on the beaches at Hardwicke Bay, two sites were found with nests, each with 3 eggs; one site proved successful in that 2 chicks were observed but I only noticed these once. Again, the birds at Longbottoms Beach site produced 3 eggs but again no chicks were observed.

Apart from the stretch of beach from Barkers to Rickaby, the other beaches are open to use by 4WD vehicles and camping is permitted on some of these. The disturbance caused by people walking, playing, fishing etc, usually with unleashed dogs has surely had a huge influence on the lack of success the Hoodies experienced this season. While most campers I speak with are really keen to assist the beach nesting birds there are some who couldn't care less and worst still, some go out of their way to destroy nests. I have twice had to go and search in nearby sandhills for the remnants of nest site fencing at Longbottoms Beach.

One other factor that could help reduce some of the stress that campers cause the Hoodies is limiting the number of people who can use a camping spot. There are no limits on numbers who camp at Barkers Rocks so people cram in, often overflowing from the designated campground to the nearby parking bay. If councils had sites numbered then campers would know when spots are full and look elsewhere.



*Barkers Rocks campground was full so a car parking bay, which is clearly displaying a 2 hour time limit became a camping site! Photo: Vaughan Rattley.*





# Word about the Hood

## South Australia Update

### DHILBA GUURANDA-INNES NATIONAL PARK UPDATE

Kelly Allen, Ranger, Dhillba Guuranda-Innes National Park, Department for Environment and Water, SA



*One of only a couple of fledgelings, Dolphin Bay, Dhillba Guuranda-Innes National Park. Photo: Kelly Allen.*

Unfortunately, we had a very poor season in the park. Only a couple of fledglings and very few attempts overall. I've attached some pics including some of one of the fledgelings which was from Dolphin Bay. We did have a nest with 3 eggs from the pair on Innes Lake, it is among some old broken glass and quite well camouflaged but the eggs didn't survive.



*A well camouflaged Hoodie nest but still no chicks hatched. Photo: Kelly Allen.*