



**Tell me and I'll forget
Show me and I might remember
Involve me and I'll understand**

Theodore Roosevelt

FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER (MORN PEN) NEWS

Issue Number 5
April 2011

Education continues to be an important factor [if not the most important factor] in the survival of Hooded Plovers.

Signs are great but informed and engaged people on our beaches are much better.

Recent meetings I had with two beach goers reminded me of how easy it is to misinterpret or misunderstand the things we see.

One interested surfer suggested I make sure the signs are updated regularly - he had seen one up at London Bridge for weeks. He was surprised to hear a chick can take up to 5 weeks to fly.

Another day I was approached by a young man on Koonya who said "what do you mean there is only 360 left? Go to 90 Mile Beach there's hundreds there". I might have looked a little puzzled but once I established he was talking about hoodies, we worked out he was probably seeing Red-capped Plovers.

He too was surprised and wished us luck.

Both now know more about our Hoodies.

A capture workshop was held in March by Dr Michael Weston (Deakin Uni) and Dr Grainne Maguire (Birds Australia) to provide Parks Victoria rangers with an interest in Hooded Plovers and a few FoHP members the skills to assist if necessary when a bird may need to be caught. We all left wiser but a bit intimidated by the skills needed.

This week (March 28-April 1) FoHP and Birds Australia have had a Marquee at "E Week at The Briars". Kindergarten and Primary schools were invited to visit and see what different companies and groups are doing to help improve their environment.

We all had fun helping to man the stall.

The kids had lots of things to do as this is a very interactive display.

One very popular activity in our marquee was making a 'Save the Hoodie' badge.

One outstanding misunderstanding in parents, teachers and the kids was the confusion between the Masked Lapwing (Spurwinged Plover) ["Plover"] and our Hooded Plover. With a taxidermied sample borrowed from BOCA we were able to show everyone, including the Mayor, the difference.

Another highlight for all who attended on Thursday was Chris Wilcox's collection of different birds - it was impossible not to touch them.

Thankyou to the 10 FoHP volunteers who have supported this week and made it possible.

Our new banner looks most impressive – thanks Val.



Tanya, Birds Australia, with Sorrento Primary School students

Val Ford

The Beach-nesting Birds Team at Birds Australia have organised a get together for all the Hooded Plover groups across the Victorian coast to meet at Point Nepean on 29th April.

Come and hear what other volunteers are doing and share your stories. This should be a most interesting day. Lunch will be provided. Please remember we do need a reply by 19th April.

Things still on the go while the Hoodies take a break:

- A logo is in the making with the assistance of Birds Australia.
- Mornington Peninsula Management Strategy Group continues to look at ways to improve the coexistence between beach goers and Hooded Plovers. Val Ford is representing FoHP. A paper should be released soon for public comment.
- Meetings with Parks Victoria to determine priorities for the next season.
- Healthy Parks Healthy People Community Grant applications to be prepared and submitted.
- New 'Chick's on the Beach' banners are to be ordered with FoHP's name and logo on them. They will be ready for next season.



The Hooded Plover Management Strategy Group visits Franklin Road beach, Portsea.

Grainne Maguire

My highlights this year:

Assisting Grainne with the banding of two adults and later two chicks, then releasing an adult after banding – what a buzz.

Sitting on the bay beach at Pt Nepean on a beautiful sunny morning, watching 3 tiny week old chicks running around on the sand, while dolphins played in the shallows and a seal - lying on his back - played with a buoy. Can't get much better

Four weeks later seeing the surviving chick fly – another buzz.

Great news from Martin Downs - the Franklin Rd chick is flying.

The breeding season has come to a close, 9 chicks have fledged this season (two more than last year) and the birds have started flocking at Franklin Road.

I hope you all enjoy the winter break and come back refreshed and ready to put a pair of binoculars round your neck, walk down to the beach, maybe don a vest and protect a hoodie.

Oh the highlights just come by themselves.

With nearly all the information from our members collated, the total volunteers' hours for FoHP (August-March) is approximately 2800.

Diane Lewis

WANTED

Newsletter name: Put on your thinking caps and send us possible names for the newsletter.

Newsletter contributions: Tell us about your Hooded Plover experiences, frustrations, successes,

Show us photos of your birds and beaches.

Send articles/notes and photos to Val Ford at hploversmornpen@gmail.com

HOODED PLOVER END OF SEASON GET TOGETHER

At Point Nepean National Park

Friday April 29, 9am to 4pm

Hooded Plover groups from all around the state have been invited so it will be a wonderful chance to meet people from different areas, share Hooded Plover 'highs and lows' and learn how others are managing 'their birds'.

Keynote speaker: Janette Gallant, Canadian ranger on exchange, "Piping Plover project".



Nine legged Piping Plover

Agenda: Not finalised but there will be guest speakers, short summaries from each of the regions on the Victorian coast and then a facilitated group discussion, plus food and conversation.

Volunteers required: If you would like to help out on the day please contact Val Ford, hploversmornpen@gmail.com or 5984 0039.

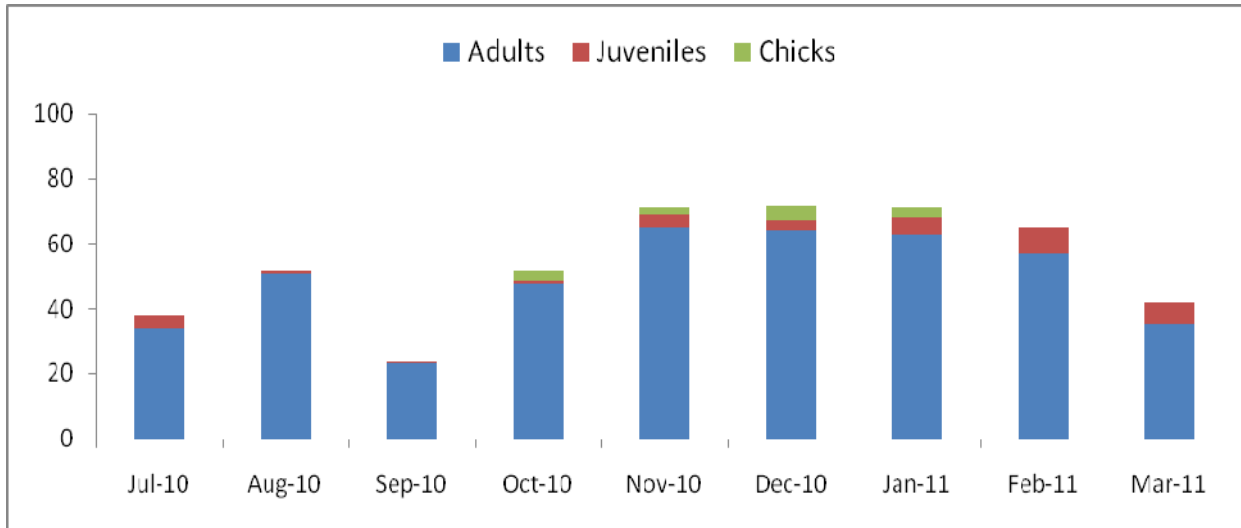
RSVP by April 19 to:

Grainne Maguire, g.maguire@birdsaustralia.com.au or Val Ford, hploversmornpen@gmail.com

MONTHLY HOODED PLOVER COUNTS

Monthly Count Results

The chart below shows the results of the monthly counts for the last nine months, however we are missing some data for this period (Portsea in August, Rye & Gunnamatta in September, Avon in October, November & February). Adults are birds more than 12 months old, juveniles are birds less than 12 months old but flying, and chicks are birds not yet flying.



Now that we have more data available for the beaches we monitor (ie. at Portsea, Koonya, Avon, Rye and Gunnamatta), some patterns are starting to emerge. From the above it appears that:

- The numbers of birds recorded increases when breeding commences;
This raises the question of where do the adults come from?
- The number of birds recorded remains relatively constant during the breeding season, however the number of juveniles and chicks fluctuates from month to month (which is to be expected);
- The number of birds recorded decreases at the end of the breeding season, plus there appears to be an increase in the number of juveniles and a decrease in the number of adults.

This raises the question of where do the juveniles come from and where do the adults go to?

It will be interesting to see if this pattern continues and is repeated in future years.

Neil Shelley

Want to be involved?

If you would like to be involved in Hooded Plover monthly monitoring contact Neil Shelley, birdrock16@gmail.com or 0438 557 178.

Month	Date	Low Tide
April 2011	Thu 29	12:49 PM
May 2011	Thu 26	11:36 AM
June 2011	Thu 23	10:30 AM
July 2011	Thu 21	9:28 AM
Aug 2011	Thu 18	12:00 PM
Sept 2011	Thu 15	11:08 AM



Harry De Vries

Other birds seen are also recorded. On the March 2011 count the Gunnamatta beach monitors found a dead Shy Albatross on the beach. Its identity was confirmed by Rohan Clarke.



Ross Brewer

Shy Albatross taking off near Port Phillip Heads

SUMMARY OF WARDEN ACTIVITIES - SUMMER 2010/11

The summer of 2010/11 is the second season for Hooded Plover chick Warden activities on the Mornington Peninsula. There were 6 warden events.

The objectives of the wardening program are to increase the fledging rate of Hooded Plover chicks by direct action which includes the following:

- Establish a group of volunteers who can partake in direct action conservation activities.
- Increase the awareness of beach users to the breeding behaviour of Hooded Plovers and Park regulations.
- Organise and fine tune a range of "beach signage and equipment" to increase Hooded Plover chick protection.
- Monitor and record activities of (a) beach users, (b) Hooded Plovers and (c) potential predators, to increase the understanding of threats to Hooded Plover chicks.
- Accumulate volunteer hours as a means to support "in kind" grants to support warden activities.

The table shows the number of days in which a volunteer visited the beach, number of volunteers involved, minimum hours of volunteer time and whether or not the chick fledged.

Beach	Days	Volunteers	Hours	Outcome
St Andrews Beach (Moana Court)	14	5	20	Successful
St Andrews Beach (main car park)	11	5	19	Successful
Portsea (east SLC)	18	8	83	Chick most likely taken by Kestrel
Portsea (London Bridge)	10	2	11	Successful
Koonya East	10	9	25	Chick most likely taken by Kestrel
Portsea (Franklin road)	5	1	6	Successful
Totals	68		164	

In general the 2010/2011 season has been an improvement on the previous and it demonstrates having a warden increases the chances of survival for chicks. However, I believe there are still far too many chicks perishing within the National Park and positioning of a warden on a beach should be an adjunct to Parks Victoria activities and not be the only form of personal attention this species receives.

Malcolm Brown
Warden Coordinator, FoHP

PLOVER PUBLICITY

"Chicks on the beach, Australia

Through an active volunteer network right across Eastern Australia, the Beach-nesting Birds project coordinate monitoring of the Hooded Plover mainly during the breeding season and implement various management techniques to mitigate these threats. Besides erecting fences and signs encircling the nesting sites and also raising awareness amongst the public in various other ways, the volunteers engage in chick wardening during the chick rearing phase where two big signs (as shown in the picture) are displayed on either side of the birds' territory and they watch over the chicks by stationing themselves next to the signs to inform beach recreationists about the plight of this little bird and to ensure they abide by the guidelines."



Melinda Ballard has been permitted to publicise the precarious status of the Hooded Plover in an important environmental photo library. Melinda works for the United Nations Environment Programme/ Global Research Information Database (UNEP/ GRIDA) in Arendal, Norway, where she manages the company website & photo library. Thanks are due to Birds Australia, & in particular to Grainne Maguire, Kasun Ekanayake & Glenn Ehmke for supplying appropriate images & text to Melinda. The Hooded Plover is the only example relating to any Australian environmental concern currently in the global photo library collection.

GRID provides the sole means whereby the United Nations is able to draw attention to & act on environmental issues. Accordingly, the photo gallery is perceived as critical & is receiving world -wide recognition. To view the photo library & the Hooded Plovers please find the GRIDA website at www.grida.no. Go to the photo library button & search 'Australia'. To locate the relevant text, place your cursor on the selected image.

Anne Ballard

THE 2010/2011 BREEDING SEASON AT GUNNAMATTA

As the Hooded Plover breeding season is now over at Gunnamatta, it is time to reflect on what actually occurred there.

So first of all, some facts:

- Breeding commenced on 22nd September (ie. the first nest was detected) and concluded on 20th February (ie. the last chick fledged) – a period of 152 days;
- The beach was visited 18 time during the season (a visit ~8 days);
- There were 13 nesting attempts, three of which were successful (~23% success rate);
- The average clutch size was 2.8 eggs (n=3, range 1-3);
- There were 36 eggs laid, nine of which hatched (~25% hatching rate);
- The average survival time for eggs 21 days (n=36, range 5-35);
- The average incubation period was 30 days (n=5, range 23-35);
- There were three chicks that fledged (~33% survival rate for chicks, ~8% survival rate for eggs);
- The average survival time for chicks was 19 days (n=9, range 3-36);
- The average fledgling period was 39 days (n=3, range 28-54).

In relation to the above, I would add the following comments:

- The weather over the summer period wasn't all that warm, so it is likely that there were less people on the beach this year than in previous years. However the majority of Hooded Plover nests at Gunnamatta this year were well away from where people usually gather in large numbers, so a hotter summer may not have had a significant impact on them anyway.
- To get more accurate data it would be better to visit the beach every three to four days (ie. twice a week, perhaps before and after each weekend), and we will aim to do this next season.
- The highlight was obviously the fledging of three chicks – how fantastic it was to see those little birds fly for the first time, even if we did have force them to do it, just so we could be sure.

This is the first breeding season I have been involved with and I have found it very enthralling, and often could not wait to get back to the beach to see what was happening, or get the latest results from the others monitoring this stretch of beach. Thanks to Larry Wakefield (who did most of the work), Jan Dwyer and John Rawlins for your company on many a day, and I look forward to joining you next year to see another chapter in the life of these endearing little birds.

Neil Shelley

Transfer of information from data sheets to the computer

The Hooded Plover nesting season is nearing the end, however the pile of datasheets in the Birds Australia National Office is growing and growing. We would love to have some help to get this information off the sheets and onto the computer.

If you have some time to spare and are happy to spend some of it in front of the computer, please contact Meg Cullen m.cullen@birdsaustralia.com.au to organise a time to come in. Even if you can just spare a half day here and there, we'd appreciate the help. Tea and biscuits provided.

Meg Cullen

FOX CONTROL PROGRAM AT GUNNAMATTA

During February 7th to March 11th 2011 at Gunnamatta Ocean Beach a Fox Control Program was conducted.

A total of four baits were taken over the month of the fox control program. These baits were taken in the first two weeks.

It was a frustrating program to run as the weather was so unpredictable with above average rainfall. This didn't help with the scent from the baits being able to attract the foxes. The rain also affected the baits by making them at times rather soggy. High tides over the course of the program also didn't help with tides at times forced right up into the dunes.

As to the foxes no amount of scenting or refreshing of bait stations could get any more takes. Tracks were observed all around bait stations and even at one stage one bait was dug up by a fox but discarded and not eaten. It was also observed that the fox scat that was around was full of seeds as though the foxes were in a vegetarian stage. Also what didn't help one weekend was huge amount of discarded fish bait from a person who had been fishing.

The signage was really good this year and no signs had to be replaced over the course of the program. Having so many signs out did help in the limiting of dogs into the area.

Also of note was that the signs did help in lifting the profile of the program and the Hooded Plover.

All comments from the Public were positive.

This baiting program complimented the Fox Trapping Program that was run in September last year when 3 male foxes were caught. The removal of four foxes during this baiting program at this critical time of the nesting season was good to achieve, making a total of 7 foxes removed over the breeding season.

The contractor who ran a fox control program on the National Golf Club that borders the Park at the same time as the PV program had 22 takes this year compared to 33 takes last year. This was a great result as the neighboring area of the Golf Club fox population feeds onto the back beaches.

Also of note is the 4 foxes that were removed during a baiting program from the Melbourne Water Boags Rock Reserve during December.

Bruce McFadyen

Ranger, Mornington Peninsula NP

HIGHS & LOWS OF A FIRST TIME HOODED PLOVER OBSERVER

As a first time Hooded Plover observer/manager/worried Ranger, I have been asked to share some of my recent experience.

This breeding season I have had the pleasure of becoming involved in the lives of two breeding pair of Hoodies at Point Nepean National Park. This has involved a lot of highs a few lows and a fair bit of confusion for a first timer such as myself. What follows is a broken account of my observations of my new little friends of the avian variety.

For the first month of the breeding season I was only aware of the one breeding pair that had made our beautiful stretch of coast home. So from December until January I concentrated my observations on the pair nesting at Observatory Point (put all my eggs on the one beach, so to speak). To my dismay this nest failed due to an extreme weather event. But to their credit the little battlers tried again. Unfortunately this first pair were never successful as the second nest failed and one of this pair later died from unknown causes (I suspect a broken neck).



Brendan McKay



Brendan McKay

At around the same time as this pair's second attempt, we located a nest with three eggs about 400-500 m west of this pair. Due to the fact that I didn't even know this new pair existed and had done no observations, I estimated the eggs to be about a week old and settled in for a wait. **WRONG!!** A week later we had three new chicks running around on our beach. For all of you who have spent over a month worrying about the safety of a nest and its unhatched inhabitants I strongly suggest this approach.

Watching these chicks growing up has been one of the most harrowing and exciting things I have ever experienced. I have experienced extreme lows (the disappearance of two of the chicks) through to extreme highs (the most prominent being the fledging of the remaining chick). After this season I am sure that I have a few more grey hairs due to worry and can honestly say that I would do it all over again, maybe not until next breeding season though.

I would like to send out a thank you to Diane, Val and Grainne for sharing their knowledge and coming down to share in the fun and giving the March Flies something to chew on besides me. Especially to Grainne for showing me how fast a Hoodie chick can run whilst trying to capture one for banding.

For all of you out there that give their time and effort I congratulate you and implore that you keep up the good work.

Regards...

Brendan McKay, Ranger, Point Nepean National Park

MONITORING AT MUSHROOM REEF

Dates for the next few Sea searches have been scheduled so clear your dairies. This is an intertidal zone monitoring volunteer group, which has been monitoring Mushroom Reef at Flinders since it became a Marine Sanctuary in 2002ish.

If you can assist: please RSVP to Brian Thomas on 5931 4000.

Next monitoring day: Sunday, April 24 at 9.00am at Mushroom Reef Marine Sanctuary Car Park.

What to Bring: Sturdy footwear that can get wet or booties [NO THONGS], warm clothes,

jackets etc. Hats, sunscreen etc. If it is Hot, it will be very hot on the Reef, if it is Cold, it will be very cold on the Reef. If it is windy, ...you get the picture - but let's hope for a good day. If you have any friends or family interested please feel free to bring them along.

Please note that access to Mushroom Reef is very rocky and unstable, good mobility is essential.

Following dates are:-

2011: Saturday August 6, 9.00am Sunday November 20, 11.00am

2012: Sunday January 29, 9.30am

PARK VIC NEWS

Park Matters

A sharp end to the season seems to be upon us. The Point Nepean chick fledged last week, the London Bridge chick the week before. Remaining now is the Franklin road chick and with no more nests reported or recorded that may be all. Nest 1 this season started at Koonya around 25th August with 3 eggs. The final nest known to date is number 60 at Franklin road, fledged chick pending. From these 60 nests this season we have been most fortunate to have 8 chicks fledge from beaches at Point Nepean, London Bridge, St Andrews, Boags and Gunnamatta, Gunna proving the most successful beach with 5 pairs producing 3 fledged chicks. Way to go Larry.

Big thanks from me to FoHP & BA for the excellent ongoing monitoring and support during the breeding season, look forward to hearing the stories from the beaches on the 29th. Also a big thanks to Mike, Grainne and Glenn for the capture training day, informative and funny. Reports are flooding in from the public about strange people flapping their arms and running along the beach.

A quieter year for visitors than last year due largely to the lack of hot weather. The cooler days resulted in fewer people being on the beach's during the peak January period and fewer days when car parks filled to capacity. Whilst fees are no longer collected and therefore the ticket boxes not manned, casual and summer ranger staff still patrolled at and around key nodes.

New coastal risk signage has been installed throughout the national park. These signs incorporate the coastal risk, general warnings and emergency marker signs into 1. We have also upgraded the large coastal risk and national park entry signs. New general information signs have been installed at vehicle entrances which can be changed daily to advise of risks as they occur. New dog totem signage is about to be rolled out. These signs do away with the "dog in green" symbol, the dog in red remains and the permissible times are written underneath. Finally new park and coastal interpretation panels have been installed at Sorrento and Portsea. Panels for London Bridge to be installed shortly, followed by Rye, Gunnamatta and Cape Schanck.

A palm oil spill which spread from Koonya to Point Nepean was detected on 12.2.11. [photo opposite] Monitoring and cleanup occurred over the period of a week and concentrated around active HP nesting sites at London Bridge, Franklin road and Point Nepean. Investigations are continuing by the Port of Melbourne Authority.

Staff continue to be deployed to fuel reduction burns across the state. Again the unseasonal weather is providing excellent windows of opportunity to reduce ground and elevated forest fuels in strategic locations.

Second year Fire fuel reduction breaks as part of the Melbourne Bushfire Protection Plan have been completed. Strategic breaks have been formalised at London Bridge, Portsea, Sorrento, St Pauls, Rye, St Andrews, Boags and in Greens Bush. Information signs have been installed at London Bridge, St Pauls and Boags where the most obvious vegetation thinning has occurred.

Compliance in the park

Rubbish dumping continues to be a problem particularly at Diamond Bay, No.16 and Pearses road car parks. Apart from the usual TV's, mattress's and household waste, green waste such as lawn clippings and plant cuttings present longer term problems. Lawn clippings breed flies, can create a fire risk and smother and kill native plants. Plant cuttings apart from being unsightly have great potential to germinate and create new and emerging weed issues through the park.

This season to date has seen the issue of approx 160 warning letters, 130 infringement notices and several pending matters to be heard in court for various offences in the national park.

Parks and Fisheries staff are working cooperatively on operations targeting shell fish removal and fisheries offences particularly in the intertidal zone during this season along the ocean beach coast in the park. As a result in excess of 100 infringement notices have been issued. It is worth noting that shell fish



Glenn Ehmke

removal and collecting crabs is generally a cultural activity that is permitted provided it is done in accordance with regulations on the specified days and that the person collecting has a current recreational fishing licence. For example Abalone can be collected on 60 nominated open days which are listed on the DPI web site and in the 2010/2011 Victorian recreational fishing guide.

Court round up

A 48 male of Cheltenham, faced a number of charges including abusing and threatening an authorised officer, failing to pay a fee, driving off road and littering. The male failed to pay a parking fee when entering the Gunnamatta car park. After entering the car park he parked his vehicle on an off road area. A Ranger left a pink slip on his windscreen advising him to pay upon leaving the Park. The Ranger later found the pink slip on the ground with the licence plate details crossed out, but still visible. Another officer approached the male in relation to failing to pay and littering, and he still refused to pay. The male was asked to leave but refused. He then abused and threatened the officer. He was convicted and fined \$1000 with \$71.44 costs.

A 40 female, of St Kilda, was charged with bringing a dog into a Park and failing to have immediate control over it. At London Bridge a Parks Victoria ranger saw the female walking a dog along the beach. The dog was running off lead. The Ranger spoke with her, who said she had known that dogs were not allowed on the beach at that time, but had forgotten. The route she had taken to enter the Park meant she had passed two sets of signs indicating that dogs were not allowed after 9:00am. She received an adjourned undertaking to be of good behaviour for 6 months and pay \$124.31 costs.

A 44 male of Mt Eliza, faced a number of charges including bringing dogs into a national park, failure to have control of a dog and being owner of a dog that rushed at wildlife. The male was seen walking along the beach at Rye with his 2 dogs off lead chasing seagulls. A ranger approached and spoke with the male who said "this is ridiculous you know their hardly, look tiny little dogs" and walked away from the ranger refusing to answer further questions. Entering the park by vehicle he passed two sets of signs indicating that dogs were not allowed after 9:00am. He received a \$1000 fine and pay \$42.74 costs.

Please report any issues or concerns to Parks Victoria at either 13 19 63 or www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Martin Downs, FoHP contact ranger

DOG OWNERS OR DOGS BEHAVING BADLY?

There is a high rate of pet ownership on the Mornington Peninsula. While 60% of the Shire ratepayers own one or more cats &/or dogs, there are many more animals in the area during holiday periods, when visitors bring their pets with them. As the beaches are a major attraction & their animals need activity, beach-goers often take their dogs along, too. At the risk of using stereotypes, different people have different patterns of usage of beaches & surrounding areas such as the National Parks. These include the following.

- 1. Quiet contemplative users:** These people are unobtrusive on the beach & in the general area. Some will visit the beach as a break from concerns or difficulties. But many others come there for the sole reason that they appreciate being there.
- 2. Users who are clearly familiar with & generally follow regulations:** They may report any 'problems', such as illegal fishing. They often collect rubbish found on the beach & generally advocate responsible use of the area.
- 3. Users who take the beach for granted:** This group may manifest a lackadaisical or even careless approach to beach use. This may be due to lack of interest or any commitment to the area, or to lack of information or knowledge. They may perceive 'taking care' of the beach as someone else's responsibility.
- 4. 'Difficult' users:** Some beach-goers make a point of openly not-conforming to any signage requirements or regulations. They may also demonstrate this non-conformity in an exhibitionist manner so that their actions are made obvious to others on the beach.

Of course, dog walkers fall within each of these groups. However, it is the smaller number of such walkers who do not abide by various regulations that create & draw attention to the issue of 'dogs on beaches'. In this way, attention is thereby drawn to any & all dogs on the beach – whether law-abiding, or not. A couple of examples of the above behaviour patterns of dog owners at the beach follow.

A rare hot Sunday afternoon at the height of the tourist season found Robert & I checking the eggs in the plover's nest at the base of a Koonya East dune. The plovers were nowhere to be seen as there was sufficient activity in the area to keep them off the nest. Holiday-makers were generally walking quickly past the nest along the shoreline, but we waited near the nest, as a couple with a large dog approached, walking along the back of the beach. As they came closer, the dog – a large friendly boxer,

bounced up to us, wanting to be friends. Robert & I placed ourselves around the nest & physically fended off the dog, who, along with its owners was about to tread on the eggs! We explained about the nest & offered to show them, but the owners did not react, or alter course. As the situation required quick action, there followed a series of fairly unproductive verbal interactions, whilst we guarded the nest. Belatedly, the man produced a leash & attached the dog, but the woman was argumentative. She disputed the regulations, the existence of signs, the 'dog rules', the rights of individuals using the beach & the species of bird – "We have these all the time in our backyard – they're not Hooded Plovers & they're not special." Following this altercation, they wandered off on their stroll with the leashed dog, disappearing over the sand dune into a fenced-off & heavily wooded area with no paths!

More frequently encountered perhaps, is the type of occurrence outlined next.

One morning on the recent Labour Day weekend, the weather was hot, & from the Koonya car park & to the many people arriving the beach looked inviting. Two more families with children, teenagers & dogs pulled up. They got out & admired the view, continuing to eat their take-away breakfasts. They were not selective about what happened to their empty food packaging. Meanwhile, their two active work dogs were exploring the car park & the surrounding bush down the hills behind the fences. Their car doors had remained open & in the crowded area I needed to ask them to please close their car doors so that I could open mine. One man leashed his dog & suggested that his friend should also do so. The suggestion was ignored & the entire group then spent an hour on the beach, where I am sure that the dogs would have roamed free.

In both these examples, it is clear that the animals were well-behaved & under control when leashed. It is the behaviour of the owners which is more problematic.

The condition of the so-called 'dog beach', (aka 'leash-free area') at Cameron's Bight demonstrates the complexities of human - animal interaction on the crowded Mornington Peninsula.

The 'leash-free' area comprises a strip of 600 metres of rocks & beach, much of it inaccessible at high tide, & which is shared

with other beach goers.

During the four months from December until the end of March, it is 'leash-free' only until midday. Obviously this does not always match the low tide.

In hot weather there are sometimes hundreds of dogs & their owners crammed into this small play area, along with hundreds more beach-goers who choose to go to the 'dog beach'! It is in overcrowded conditions like these that tempers, including dog tempers fray.

People regularly make complaints to Council about 'noise from dogs on the dog beach' & it is a normal occurrence for dog walkers to receive regular random abuse, even when the dog is on-leash & under control.

There have also been examples of criminal threat to dogs & their owners.

In the 2010 –11 summer season, The Leader newspaper ran an article in which Council urged all dog walkers in strong terms not to take their dogs to the 'leash-free' beach on hot days as there would be large numbers of people there!!

In short, this situation is rapidly becoming untenable, as there is too much pressure on these 'leash-free' beaches. The unintended result of these attempts to provide for & regulate dog-walking is that dog-owners who visit a 'leash-free' area now increasingly find it unworkable & unpleasant. They then choose to go elsewhere to walk their pet in less stressful surroundings.

At the same time, it is unfortunate & irritating that some people, who happen to own a dog, demonstrate arrogant egocentrism or a general lack of respect for the environment & others with whom they come in contact. It is these behaviours that give all dog walkers an undeservedly bad reputation.

It is in our long-term interests to develop a range of possible approaches to better deal with these difficulties. This will be in the interests of all users of the beaches & Parks.

In the meantime, Council should consider opening up more 'leash-free' beaches in order to accommodate the increasing number of visitors with their pets.

However, an increased number of 'dog areas' is not the ONLY solution.

Anne Ballard

Neither Robert nor Anne owns a dog.

DOGS AND HOODED PLOVERS

It is extremely difficult to understand the rationale behind the regulations pertaining to dogs on beaches in the Mornington Peninsula National Park.

My own observations are largely based on the Koonya back beach where two pairs of HPs have and continue to attempt to nest.

That area is designated as "dog free" from 9 am till sunrise and "dogs on leashes" from sunrise to 9 am.

Dogs are frequently exercised before 9 am and it is rare, very rare, to see dogs actually leashed and quite common to see them similarly unleashed during the rest of the day.

This is not only the case during the peak visitor season but also at other times and the fact that the same dogs appear, suggests that it is also locals who choose to ignore the regulations.

On several occasions, the appearance of a binocular carrying, vaguely official looking person, [myself !] prompts an immediate leashing of the dog, but usually, having satisfied themselves that there was no chance of censure, the animal is again un-leashed.

My most telling experience was the smartly dressed couple

emerging from an expensive vehicle, mid-morning, bounding down the path with their large dog, who, when I politely asked if they were aware of the restrictions on dogs, replied, "Oh, what's the fine?" Enough said!!

I believe that Parks Victoria needs to be challenged on the rationale behind the current policy. Dogs are simply not compatible with endangered species. While the organisation's support for HP conservation is appreciated, it can be seen as a waste of resources and almost futile if it allows such a contradiction to continue. There is a designated dog area at the bay end of Hughes road, [where again, the Council regulations are largely ignored but at least there is no clash with HPs]. The Koonya back beach should be totally dog free and signage provided directing dog owners to the bay area.

Martin Drerup

At St Andrews beach we have experienced surfers taking dogs to the beach and leaving them whilst surfing, dogs off leads at all times during the day, abuse by owners (why shouldn't their dogs be there) with no thoughts that they are within a national park, etc.

Maggie Kelly

Dogs on Beaches: Barriers to compliance with dog regulations on Victorian beaches with regard to beach-nesting bird conservation

Stacey Henry, November 2006

Want to read Stacey Henry's honours thesis? An electronic copy can be obtained by emailing Friends of the Hooded Plover at hploversmornpen@gmail.com or Grainne Maguire at g.maguire@birdsaustralia.com.au



Glenn Ehmke



Glenn Ehmke



Glenn Ehmke



Glenn Ehmke

THREE DAYS IN THE LIFE OF A FRIEND OF THE HOODED PLOVER

Whilst I enjoy wardening, confronting dog owners [sort of enjoy!], picketing nests and seeing that we are really achieving the seemingly impossible - reversing the decline of a threatened species, there are some real highlights as well.

Day 1: Thursday 27 January 2011: POINT NEPEAN

A really beautiful still sunny day dawned. After getting the OK from the Parks Vic ranger, Brendan McKay, Diane and I went down to Point Nepean to check out some Hoodies who were reported to be nesting on the bay side of Point Nepean.

We met Brendan at the ranger station, which gave me time to check out the ranger's Troopie 4WD and their Toyota SR5 HiLux 4WD [it's not just birds that I like!]. Brendan then took us to 2 nesting sites.

Diane saw 2 eggs in the first nest which Brendan had identified, but I kept my distance. We did not want the Hoodies "stressed".

However there was a treat or two in store for me as we walked along the beautiful bay side sand, past the ruins of an old jetty as a pod of dolphins came in close – maybe 20 meters from us and some great photo opportunities arose.

Brendan then escorted us to the Bend and to a second nest with 3 eggs and where the birds appeared less stressed and moved away down the beach. We had a good look at the nest site and 3 eggs.

Wonder of wonders, one of these three eggs produced one of



Although not a HP was seen, it was our membership of FoHP that led to the opportunity to see this amazing island and learn so much from the more experienced and friendly group who came with us.



the successful fledglings this nesting season.

Brendan was terrific and is a true FoHP. He even made sure we knew what we were doing when he escorted us to the 2 nests on our first visit. He remains an important cog in HP survival – I do hope he remains deployed at Point Nepean.

Day 2: Saturday 26 February 2011: MUD ISLAND

Another still sunny day dawned and we wound our way down the Sorrento hill to the Ferry Jetty to board our Cat with a group of Twitchers and be escorted by more dolphins on our calm ride to Mud Island.

The place is amazing, so unexpectedly covered in undergrowth and teeming with life. Just as we landed a seal drifted close by and we found him asleep on the low-tide sand later in the day.

The group had monoscopes worth more than my car and headed off to see the bird life, with Diane and me in tow. They saw 40 species but I only recognised 17 or so species.

I found the juvenile Pelicans the most interesting – "Don't go too near them, they could panic and rush into the water and drown". They were almost full height but typically gangly adolescent and they have shorter beaks and gather in crèches.

The mud nearly got my shoes in several places.

On the way back to the mainland, we passed sleeping and fighting seals and a marker buoy covered in Australian Gannets. The Twitchers thought they saw a Cape [South African] Gannet, which had them pretty excited.



Rob Lewis

Day 3: Friday 18 March 2011: CAPTURE TRAINING

An early start at the Rosebud office of Parks Vic with a group of interested FoHP commenced with nearly 2 hours of highly educational and interesting information about HPs and how to build suitable traps to catch them unharmed. Our talk was given by Dr Michael Weston and assisted by Dr Grainne Maguire.

The concern of both Parks Vic and Birds Australia was how to deal with serious pollution issues (like the Gulf of Mexico) if they arose and how to help entangled or injured HPs etc. At present there are only 2 trained people available on the Mornington Peninsula who have the knowledge and practice in doing this – hardly enough!

Even fewer people know how to make and use traps and also the tortuous protocols to follow before acting. Mike indicated that to obtain all necessary permits can take up to 13 weeks!

Luckily, there are short cuts in emergencies but Mike or Grainne are the best sources of advice and contacts to help this process. As serious legal consequences can follow if protocols are ignored, no one should try to catch a HP without talking to one of them first and [hopefully] they can do it too. Mike said he has caught more than 400 HPs and Grainne about 40, yet both still find it hard and fear harming HPs in the process.

Jan Taylor

With a head full of theory we headed to Franklin Road Portsea Beach for a demonstration – what fun, though the day was a bit overcast and windy.

Seeing Grainne at full speed in bare feet with net in hand chasing an almost fledged adolescent HP along the sand, is a sight I will long remember. She is both quicker than I expected and quicker than the chick, which was caught and banded.

Then we went out, set a trap and left it to Mike and Glenn Ehmke to herd a flock of about 14 adults and 6 fledged adolescents toward the hidden trap. They had remarkably little success.

Amazingly a bird was caught but it was not from the targeted flock but from the two birds which had been guarding their chick until Grainne's turn of speed took it away briefly. So even our experts caught a bird they didn't intend to.

It was taken in, checked, measured, weighed and released, as was Grainne's captive chick.



Val Ford

We waited until the chick was reunited with its parents and packed up after a long day.

What I learned was that to catch HPs is for the experts. What we learned was that we can help the experts as we now know a bit about what is involved – let's pray there is no oil spill that makes a catch and clean program a necessity.

So, by joining FoHP I have had these 3 fabulous days – more please.

Rob Lewis

FRIENDS OF THE PROM HELPING TO IMPROVE HOODED PLOVER HABITAT

We had a fantastic turnout of Friends last working bee in February who were able to chip away at the Sea Spurge on Norman Bay again. It is a slow job, but the results of the work that had been done last year were evident with many native species now dominating that area. Birds Australia have identified the removal of sea spurge (and thus restoration of the dune system to a more natural form) as a key component of Hooded Plover management. Spurge alters the dynamics of the dune in numerous ways – it can make dunes more rigid than they would be naturally (affecting habitat requirements) and can harbour different micro-organisms (affecting food availability). We even had passers-by showing a keen interest in the project, with one boy and his mum assisting the Friends for half an hour. This kind of exposure is great for the Friends in attracting new members.

Ranger Emily

As you all know, Hooded Plovers have been having a hard time of it lately and their numbers are declining. Due to loss of habitat and interference from domestic animals such as dogs and cats, the Plovers are finding it difficult to nest and therefore breed and increase their population. In response to this situation, birds' hides have been established on the beaches favoured by the Plovers and surveys are being undertaken to monitor their progress.

In order to help improve conditions for the birds to nest FOTP spent the February weekend weeding out everybody's favourite pest plant, sea spurge. The presence of large amounts of sea spurge binds up the sand dunes and makes it difficult for the Plovers to find adequate nesting sites. FOTP volunteers headed to the southern end of Norman Bay Beach at the end of Biddy's Track to remove the spurge and plant native plants such as Pig Face and other coastal varieties.



Plucky volunteers pick out sea spurge on Norman Bay Beach to help improve Hooded Plover nesting opportunities.

In the future, we will be taking part in surveys to keep track of the fortunes of the Hooded Plover and it will be interesting to see if our efforts have helped the birds establish new nesting sites. Luke Johnson and I visited a Hooded Plover site on Squeaky Beach, keeping well back so as not to disturb the birds. This was something which we had noticed others were not observing, judging by the amount of footprints close to the nesting area. One of the main concerns is to communicate to Park visitors the importance of giving the Plovers room to nest, as Ranger Emily has often pointed out. Let's hope that our hard work pays off and we see an increase in the number of birds. This would be a wonderful reward.

Deb Henry

Friends of The Prom newsletter, March 2011

HOODED PLOVER AGGRESSION - ST ANDREWS DISPUTE 1/12/2007

Aggression of Hooded Plovers towards other Hooded Plovers and their chicks during the breeding season has been reported on a number of occasions, sometimes resulting in death of chicks. Check out <http://glenne.zenfolio.com/p710591624/h2e679138#h2e679138> for Glenn Ehmke's photo essay. Some snippets are shown below.



Interloper ignores parent 2's leading and attacks parent 1 forcing it away from chick.



Chick runs, interloper flies at chick attacking it with beak open (seemingly trying to bite)



Interloper attacks parent 1 again as chick runs west away from combat



Both parents attack interloper, one charging along ground and the other flying at interloper from directly above

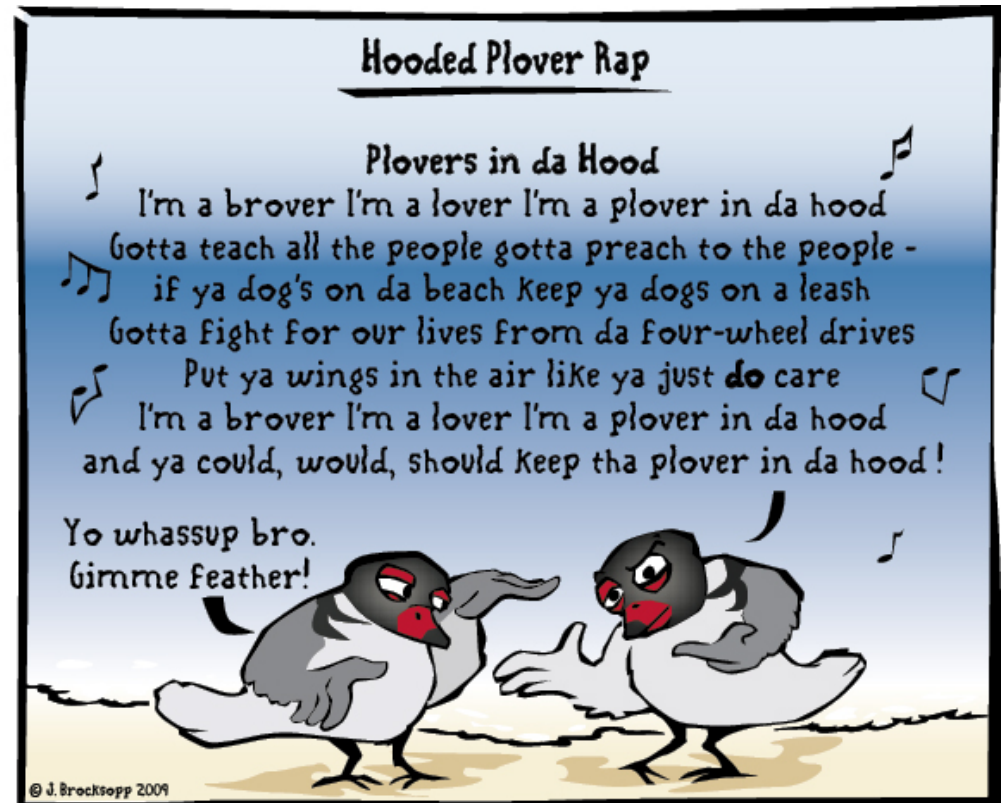
A LITTLE NOTE FROM CAPE LEEUWIN

I live on virtually the opposite side of the continent to the Mornington Peninsula, near Cape Leeuwin at the most southwesterly tip of Australia. I am however, familiar with some of your beaches as my Grandmother lived in Tootgarook for many years and we would often wander down to Rye via the lazy shores of Port Philip Bay or explore the more thrilling coast along the Western Port side. Back then I didn't have my hoodie glasses on though.

Hooded Plovers - although I'd seen them around and knew who they were, my first real run-in with one occurred about seven years ago while dawdling along a beach on the Indian Ocean side of Cape Leeuwin. Foul Bay, known to us as 'Stinkies' (nevertheless I've not witnessed it to be foul or stinky yet), is the name of the beach I meandered along, - enthralled by whatever flotsam had been cast up in the immediate vicinity of my feet: examining a smooth shard of grey driftwood; the curl of a tiny glossy shell; a pebble with a hole worn through; stepping over a withered blowfish sunken into the shore... when a sudden blur of dark something shot across the sandy corner of my vision - rather like the fleeting shadow of a gull sweeping overhead. It was a hooded plover. A plump little dart, cutting emphatically into my path with flurries of feathers, demanding attention, and challenging me to follow its own erratic route down towards the waters edge. I then noticed another movement - rather more subtle and discreet - a few feet further up the beach. Another hoodie was quietly guiding a tiny mottled ball of fluff away between mounds of crispy black seaweed. The nearer to the safety of the dunes, the quicker they scurried, so that the adult seemed to float on an orange blur and the chick became a minute downy hovercraft. I retreated and left the endearing little family to reunite and get back to business.

My personal sightings since then have been fairly irregular, not ever having observed another chick, and since adopting Foul Bay as my annual hoodie survey beach four years ago, I haven't managed to record a single one. They seem to be a bit elusive like that, I tend to spot them when I'm not looking and in the places I don't expect to see them - like a dog beach. On one occasion I surprisingly came upon a flock of twenty or thirty hoodies at the far end of the last sand stretch before the rocky headland of Cape Leeuwin where the Indian and Southern ocean meet (and the local hoodie population apparently).

The statistics from recent surveys for the Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin area are:
2006: 9 Adult/2 Juvenile 2007: 31 Adult/4 Juvenile 2008: 21 Adult/4 Juvenile
2009: 15 Adult 2010: 21 Adult/5 Juvenile



The Hooded Plover Rap appears on my website jobrocksopp.com.au as part of a series of nature facts (mostly native Australian plants and animals), with each set of facts accompanied by a cartoon style illustration.

Jo Brocksopp

GIVE BUCKLEY A CHANCE

The Bellarine chicks (2 locations) are doing very well and Anglesea just fledged their second chick this season (two separate clutches).

The Breamlea ladies who monitor Pt Impossible to Black Rock have set up a wonderful chick update with a theme 'Give Buckley a chance' and they've called the chick Buckley after the local bay! It's very clever and people are taking to the chick having an identity! They have another 3 chicks at Black Rock doing well and their third pair is on a nest.

Every season at least 2 of their pairs breed successfully, this year it might be all 3 plus the new nudist pair, very exciting for them!

Grainne Maguire, 3/2/11

SHOW & TELL

TO SAVE A HOODED PLOVER WORKSHOP

First take Mike Weston, lecturer in Wildlife and Conservation Biology at Deakin University and Grainne Maguire and Glenn Ehmke of Birds Australia. Add a group of concerned and committed people, and you have the recipe for a training session for intervention which could save the lives of Hooded Plovers. Grainne instigates research programs and workshops such as the one this group attended on Friday 18th March this year, to protect this very threatened, unique and tiny shorebird.

These little creatures, well adapted to their environment before the advent of white settlement, must now contend with a multiplicity of threats. These include foxes, cats, dogs and black rats, as well as the traditional birds of prey, among the latter an unprecedented proliferation of silver gulls and ravens. There is too the threat of entanglement in fishing line and oil spills from shipping.

The group, which included members of the Friends of the Hooded Plover, learnt safe techniques for the capture of ill or wounded birds, or for banding as a research tool. The protocols for assisting were emphasised, for example that it is mandatory to obtain permission from the authorities before intervention. A good first call would be to Parks Victoria or Grainne Maguire (Birds Australia), who can direct the caller to the appropriate authority. Birds should NEVER be removed from their habitat without this, no matter how good the intention.

Jan Dwyer



Val Ford

THE "CORK" EGG

Heyfields beach in the Mornington Peninsula National Park is a very difficult beach for Hoodies to fledge chicks. It has a high human usage with surfers, walkers and dogs off leads throughout the day during the summer season. It has been reported that some weekends the beach looks like "Bourke Street at its busiest" (no doubt an exaggeration, but approaching the truth).

A few strange things have happened on the beach in the last two seasons. Last season two nests were discovered close to each other with 2 and 4 eggs respectively. Three birds were seen to be responsible, but in what way we never found out. Ultimately no eggs survived!

This year we have the weird situation of one bird appearing to be incubating a well-rounded "cork"! After monitoring this situation for some time it became obvious that the bird was not interested in hatching any "real" eggs and the cork was removed. We are still waiting for the bird to move on to laying real eggs! Keep an eye out for the next instalment of this strange tale, probably in the next Newsletter when we will be reporting fully on the 2010 / 2011 breeding season.



John Franklin

John Franklin

FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER (MORNINGTON PENINSULA) INC

Incorporation number: A0054904Y

COMMITTEE

President: Diane Lewis **Vice President:** John Franklin
Secretary: Val Ford **Treasurer:** Virginia Franklin
General members: Malcolm Brown, Neil Shelley, Jan Dwyer

CONTACTING FOHP

Phone: 0419 320 205, 5984 0039 or 5988 0439
Email: hploversmornpen@gmail.com **Post:** PO Box 36 Rye 3941

NEWSLETTER

Contributions: Are welcome as emails, word documents, typed or hand written articles, photos & sketches. Please send photos as separate attachments, not embedded in word documents.
Send to: Val Ford [5984 0039] at hploversmornpen@gmail.com or PO Box 36 Rye 3941.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF
FRIENDS OF HOODED PLOVER (MORNINGTON PENINSULA) INC.**

PO Box 36 Rye 3941

I, (Print full name)

Of(address)

Phone:.....Mob :.....(occupation).....

apply to become a member of Friends Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc.

I attach my payment of \$5.00 for my initial Annual Subscription Fee. I agree to be bound by the rules of the Association as from time to time in force, if I am admitted as a member. If my application is rejected the \$5.00 is to be refunded to my postal address above.

For the purpose of any Notices under the rules or otherwise, I request these be sent to me either by:

post to my above address;

by facsimile to :

by email to :

I request the Association to adopt any one of the above alternatives at its complete discretion.

I have the following skills, interests and time to commit to the objects of the Association:

Skills:

Interests:.....

Time(s) available:.....

My particular interest in Hooded Plovers is:.....

(Optional) DONATION: I would like to donate to the Association and attach my cheque payable to Friends Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc. for: \$.....

Signature of Applicant :.....(usual signature)

Date:...../...../.....

I,..... (Print name), a member of the Association,

nominate the applicant, who is personally known to me, for membership of the Association.

Signature of Proposer:.....dated:/...../.....

Signature of Seconder:.....dated:/...../.....