

Word about the Hood

Fifth Edition May 2011



photo by Dean Ingwersen



CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY



The end of one breeding season seems to merge into the start of another as time moves at a pace that I'm sure was different when I was younger! These birds certainly try their hardest when the weather is on their side but this season, nature wasn't really an ally. High tides made it impossible for many pairs to even nest and incubating birds had to sit on their eggs through hail storms, gale force winds and sweltering 40 degree heat (and that's just for one nest!). [This may be either a bad season which happens or might signal a future that would involve more active management of natural threats, something we will continue to monitor and adapt to].

Personally, I think that this season was one of our best yet – it may not be mirrored by the number of fledglings successfully produced (although this was still good and better than when we first started - around 44 in Victoria; 18 in NSW; 9 on the Fleurieu SA) but I think the beach-nesting birds project goes beyond that, and if we've made a difference to people's awareness or love of the natural coast, then that's an equally important measure. I know that I got such a buzz this year out of new areas coming onboard, meeting more inspirational people, and getting to know existing volunteers better so they become more like friends every day. The regional coordinators do such an amazing job and are the foundation of the project. As recognition of our Victorian coordinators and of the team at Birds Australia (Meg, Kasun, Chris, Tanya and I), we were lucky to win the Victorian Coastal Award for the Natural Environment and to be a finalist in the Education category, thanks to all of Meg's hard work. At the awards, there were so many familiar faces and it was brilliant to see there are so many people out there doing great things for the coast and to feel a part of that.

A highlight was holding little hoodie chicks for the first time; their fragility really hits home and you can't help but want to make their future more hopeful (don't tell the scientific world I have emotions, uh oh!). Not so fragile is their ability to run! Already our flagging of adults and chicks has uncovered some interesting stories.

A new volunteer, Geoff Gates (a fantastic photographer) found 'PA', a bird we'd flagged as part of a flock on 13th beach had set up a new territory with an unbanded bird further west at the nudist beach at Torquay (perhaps curiosity about all that activity in the dune led them to discover a good nesting place!). This was the first time in at least 6 years that this site had been occupied by hoodies and the new pair had two nesting attempts, one successfully hatched and one chick survived right up to 4 weeks when it disappeared. This is a good story regardless because it is one of about 8 new territories that have popped up, some that haven't been occupied in a decade, indicating we definitely are boosting the size of the population.



Bird PA- photo by Geoff Gates

We also recaptured some of Mike Weston's banded birds that have lost some of their colours and whose identity had become a mystery, one in need of solving! Steve and I captured one that had been banded as a breeding adult at that same site in February 1998! Steve has captured others that have been in the area for 14 years and more. Tanya and I captured black and white at Breamlea that Mike banded as a juvenile at that very same site in April 1996. It was sighted mostly around Breamlea, then east to Franklin Rd at Portsea, and West to Pt Addis, then to Point Roadknight Anglesea in March 1997 where it bred and lived and was seen till March 1998, then it shifted via Franklin rd back to Breamlea where it bred in 2002! We've been spotting what we can assume is the same bird with one less band breeding at that same site from 2006 onwards. What an interesting life they lead!

To everyone involved, please take a decent break this winter and join us again next spring to be part of conservation efforts that are making the beach a better place for wildlife. You do a terrific job and it's a pleasure working with you. We have lots of new things planned for you this coming season and lots of data to explore, until then, take care.

-Project Manager Grainne Maguire.





photo by Jodie Dunn

Far South Coast New South Wales



-Jodie Dunn of NSW national Parks and Wildlife Service reports

The Hooded Plovers have had another great breeding season on the South Coast of NSW with an increase in breeding pair numbers and the fledging of at least 11 chicks. This may not be as good as last season's amazing 17 fledglings but still better than the previous decades usual 6 or 7 fledglings each season. 2010/11 has been another promising season for this Critically Endangered species - less than 50 adult 'Hoodies' remain on the NSW coast

The National Parks and Wildlife Service South Coast Shorebird Recovery Program began monitoring Hooded Plovers in the 2000/01 breeding season with 7 or 8 Hooded Plover pairs generally monitored each season. Despite all the nest protection, threat management and successful fledgings, the adult population did not appear to be increasing..... until two seasons ago. In 2008/09 we finally identified returned fledglings at the start of the season by their not quite black hoods and then we actually gained an extra breeding pair. Things were looking up! The following season, more returned fledglings and the amazing season record of 17 chicks fledged. Now this season we have had a significant increase in 'Hoodie' numbers with 11 breeding pairs. Very exciting!

The northern extent of Hooded Plovers in NSW is Jervis Bay (~200km south of Sydney). We generally have one pair nest in the area, but this season we gained an extra breeding pair. Both pairs were seen with eggs and chicks, however disappointingly insufficient site visits means we are not sure if any of these resulted in fledglings, although we remain hopeful as this site is usually successful. Further south at Sussex Inlet and Berrara, both nests of the resident pair were predated by ravens. However down at Inyadda Beach after years of trying, the 'Hoodie' pair finally fledged one of their chicks. Another two chicks were fledged further south from the remote Narrawallee Creek Nature Reserve but a fox took their second clutch.

At the town beaches, three 'Hoodie' chicks were fledged from Pockets (Rennies) Beach early in the season but subsequent nests were predated by a fox. The usually successful nearby Racecourse Beach pair also suffered repeated nest losses as predator control is not possible in these urban areas. Sadly, ravens also took eggs of the Wairo Beach pair only hours after the nest was located. But further south Hooded Plovers nested at Lake Tabourie for the first time on record and successfully fledged their two chicks.

In Meroo National Park at Termeil Creek, 'Hoodie' eggs here were also predated by ravens. The pair then relocated to Meroo Beach and successfully fledged a chick. Down at Willinga Lake the resident pair nested three times however a whistling kite and perhaps a hawk picked off the little chicks. Thankfully the southern pair at Kioloa Beach managed to fledge two chicks from their three nesting attempts. Despite all the losses and predation, these 'Hoodie' nests, eggs and chicks have resulted in quite a good season with eleven fledglings for the south coast of NSW. The general trend is looking good for the recovery of our 'Hoodie' population. Very promising

-Amy Harris of NSW NPWS reports:

The 2010/11 Hooded Plover breeding season on the Far South Coast has so far been rather successful for a number of breeding pairs. The region, like other parts of southern Australia, experienced above average rainfall, this may have influenced the later onset of breeding for the majority of pairs in the region this season. Indeed the first nest was not confirmed until early in November. This contrasts with previous seasons when breeding has commenced as early as August.

Many of the favoured Hooded Plover breeding sites on the FSC are within coastal National Park estate, including Mimosa Rocks NP, Ben Boyd NP, Bournda NP and Nadgee NR. Some of these sites are very remote which assists with their minimal disturbance from beachgoers and visitors but reduces their frequency of monitoring, particularly for Nadgee NR. We are always so thankful for the efforts of our wonderful shorebird volunteers who really do the miles to find and check up on our Hooded Plovers in the FSC region.

The most successful site in the region was again Twofold Bay, near Eden, which demonstrates repeated annual success due to two pairs nesting at various locations within the bay's protected waters. These two pairs usually contribute up to half of the season's total fledglings and often 'double brood' hatching out and fledging two successful clutches. This season was no exception with 5 of the current confirmed total of 7 fledglings originating from these two pairs.

The sustained rainfall over the winter months and into spring/summer on the FSC meant that Wallaga Lake, a favoured and successful site for Hooded Plover nesting, remained open to the sea. As a result the favoured Hooded Plover sand island near the entrance was tidal. Incubation was successful for the resident pair (one of which is confirmed as returning annually due to leg band), but despite the NSW NPWS Threatened Shorebird Recovery Program team providing huge sandbag 'stacks' for roosting during extreme king tide events the chick was lost when large waves entering the lake augmented the tidal height. Amazingly a nearby nesting pair of Pied Oystercatchers successfully 'swam' their similarly aged newly hatched chick repeatedly to the mainland during these events and then back to the island at low tide to roost/hide within the sandbag stacks.

Two more fledglings have been confirmed for Ben Boyd NP in recent days, this is exciting as the site has not successfully fledged chicks in many years, due to predation by goannas. We are now waiting on two more pairs within Bournda NP and Mimosa Rocks to fledge their chicks and hopefully the current total of 7 confirmed fledglings can be increased by a few more!



Brunswick Heads Nature Reserve

-Hans Lutter of the DECCW reports

A critically endangered Beach Stone-curlew (*Esacus neglectus*) chick fledged at Marshalls Creek in Brunswick Heads Nature Reserve in late February. National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Ranger, Lori Cameron, said that it's the first time on record that a pair of Beach Stone-curlews has successfully raised a chick in this location.

"The Beach Stone-curlew is listed as Critically Endangered in NSW under the Threatened Species Conservation Act" Ms Cameron said. "Currently there are only 28 individuals estimated to reside in NSW. Beach Stone-curlews usually live at estuary mouths or on ocean beaches, foraging for crabs and other prey



photo by Ian Montgomery

when tides are suitable. They are a large, heavy-set wader, with a body length of up to 56cm, a wing span of up to 1.1m, and a massive bill. When they nest, one well-camouflaged egg is laid in a shallow scrape in the sand, just above the high tide mark."

"The Marshalls Creek pair arrived in September 2009. NPWS commenced a successful fox baiting program to target this major threat. Other threats include predation by dogs and cats, disturbance and habitat loss. They are a very shy bird and will desert their nests or territories if disturbed by people or dogs."

"They laid their first egg in early November 2010. Thirty-one days later a volunteer on her first shift was lucky enough to see the egg hatch from a distance. When the chick was old enough a metal band was placed on one leg and a yellow plastic flag on the other marked 'A1'. The tag enabled people observing the birds to pinpoint its maiden flight, which occurred when the chick was 11 weeks and three days old. All of this information is a significant contribution to the limited knowledge base for this species, especially fledging times."



"NPWS would like to express its appreciation to the many people who contributed to the survival of this endangered chick, namely Byron Bird Buddies and Brunswick Valley Bird Watchers, the Cape Byron Marine Park Authority, Byron Shire Council, NSW Maritime, Byron Hire, and members of the public who respected the temporary closure of the Beach Stone-curlew breeding area within the reserve. We request visitors to the nature reserve to stay well clear of the Beach Stone-curlews and any other shorebirds. We are hoping that, if left undisturbed, the pair will continue to successfully breed in this location," Ms Cameron said.

Sightings of the Beach Stone-curlews can be reported to the NPWS on 6670 8600.

special thanks to volunteers Lori and Heather (who dedicated hundreds of hours between them), also Jan, Reid and Isabel, as well as Ann and Tor and Brigitte (the chick was named Bridgitte as she witnessed its hatching).



The Bass Coast

-Steve Johnson reports

Banding and Flagging arrives along the Bass Coast

Season 2010/11 saw the arrival of chick and some adult banding and flagging for the first time since formation of their Hooded Plover Friends Group. Of the 18 fledglings for the season 15 were banded and flagged with Orange engraved leg flags displaying two black letters. As well, 16 adults were banded and flagged or had their old colour bands updated to an engraved flag. Some were 14 year old birds first banded by Mike Weston. We now have 18 of our 22 pairs banded in some form or another. This is a fantastic result which will yield some excellent data in the years to come.

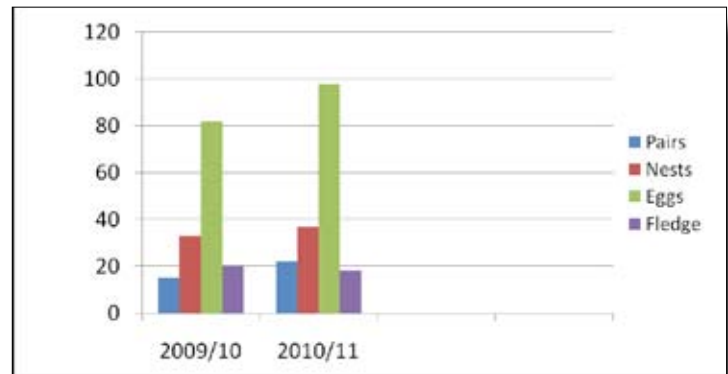
Oil Stained birds

During our catching processes we came across two instances of oil stained birds. Three chicks at The Oaks on the Bunurong Coast had oil stained feet and a small smudge on breast plumage while an adult bird found on a Wonthaggi ocean beach had a breast stain of a 20cent piece proportion. No obvious oil spill was detected or reported along the coastline so the origins of the contaminate remain unknown. The three chicks went onto fledge successfully after some personal care work. We were unsuccessful in a catch attempt for the adult and can only hope it will survive. The oil detection highlighted yet another threat to our little battling Hooded Plover.



“Stumpy” the amputee survives.

during the November 2010 census weekend two Bass Coast Volunteers came across a fishing line entangled bird at Point Norman, Inverloch. Over the following frustrating weeks many visits to attempt a catch or photograph the bird were unsuccessful. Its feet began to swell up and it endured considerable pain. By mid December its general health was withering despite support and comfort from its loyal partner. Unsighted for three weeks thereafter it was felt to have fallen victim to the strangling fishing line and perished, but on 7.1.11 it was sighted by Parks Ranger Jono Stevenson on Point Smyth at Inverloch. This inspired the local Hoodie coordinator who set off in search of the determined little bird. On 5.3.11 Steve Johnson and Paul Venosta located the bird and its partner on a sand island within the Inverloch inlet. The resilient little bird had both feet strangled and amputated by the fishing line and was now feeding and flying about on two stumps. Lets hope this bird survives the winter into next summer and is able to breed again .



Phillip Island

-Jon Fallaw Phillip Island Nature Park Ranger reports

Jon Fallaw - Phillip Island Nature Park - April 2011

One of the highlight this season was the improvement in the coexistence between beach goers and birds nesting on our beaches. An example of this was when the pair of hoodies that was having a tough time with the weather at Ventnor west moved east of Grossard Point to Elizabeth Cove in mid December and laid a 3 egg clutch on Shire foreshore. This is the first time Hooded Plover have nested on shire managed foreshore since they were displaced in the early 1990's at Saltwater Creek west of Cowes. What followed was comprehensive management of the site between Phillip Island Nature Park, Bass Coast Shire and the locals, with temporary fencing, signs and nest progress signage, media and nest monitoring which resulted in 2 chicks hatching. This is a very busy stretch of beach and there was great public support. Perhaps the birds found it a little too busy as they then decided to walk the chicks nearly 1.5km west around the point back to their previous nesting habitat were we believe that just one of the chicks fledged.

There has also been intensive cat and fox control across the island and a public awareness campaign. Fox numbers are very low and 84 cats have been removed from the reserves so far this financial year. At Observation Point Hooded Plover, Red-capped Plover, Pied Oystercatcher and Chestnut Teal all nested and disturbance by people and dogs was generally low.

As the Hooded Plover breeding season draws to a close the end of the season will be close to the following results:

38 nests

93 eggs

23 chicks

6 fledged (will be 7 if the Farm Beach chick fledges and 9 if we can find the Hutchison Beach chicks which disappeared).



Derek Hibbert from the shire and Jarvis Weston from the Nature Park at the Elizabeth Cove nest site.

The 2 chicks at Flynn's Reef fledged and have stayed at their nesting site, and the last chick for the season was banded at Farm Beach on the 4/04/11.

Some fantastic news was recently received from Steve Johnson. A bird seen by him at Cape Paterson Bay beach at 4:30pm on 26/3/11 was one of 2 chicks from Surf Beach banded 23/2/10. We were not sure that it fledged so it wasn't counted. This therefore take last year's total up to 10 fledged!

Many thanks to all of the volunteers who have helped with the counts this year and sent in band sightings. Please contact me jfallaw@penguins.org.au or phone 5951 2813 if you can help.



The Mornington Peninsula

-John Franklin Vice president of the Friends of Hooded Plover MP reports

Well, the 2010/2011 Hoodie season has come to end along the Mornington Peninsula National Park coast. The season started in late August with the initial sighting of a nest at Koonya West. From then on the number of nests increased rapidly so that by about early December nearly 40 nests had been detected, 105 eggs produced, 32 hatched and 3 chicks fledged. All nests and chicks were monitored and managed by the members of the newly incorporated Friends Group, Parks Vic rangers and Birds Australia staff

In all we recorded about 60 nests over the breeding season with the end result being 9 chicks fledged. This is 2 more than in the previous year, but certainly not anywhere near the numbers required to ensure survival of the species.



Wardening at Portsea- photo by Val Ford

While it is not possible to be precise about the amount of effort that went into monitoring and management this year compared to previous years, there was a significant effort put into improving the co-ordination and collaboration of the three groups involved, namely the Friends Group, Parks Vic and Birds Australia.

As with any endeavour involving groups of people, there were issues and some differences of opinion. Such division is exacerbated by resource limitations and the imprecise knowledge of the relationship between habitat and threats, both direct and indirect. Dogs on the beach where birds are nesting and rearing their chicks continue to be a concern, particularly given the tendency of people to disregard the regulations in the National Park.

Many important actions / activities occurred during the season. The following represent some of those:

- Membership of the Friends Group increased from initially 14 to currently 35;
- Co-ordination of the monthly surveys for Parks Vic was taken over by the Friends Group with great success;
- Production of a regular high quality e-Newsletter;
- Volunteer bird monitors were provided with essential equipment, including binoculars, GPS units and first aid kits;
- Major wardening efforts on several beaches when chicks were being reared (one in particular was on Portsea back beach during the Iron Man competition – see photograph);
- Publicity material was prepared such as a flyers, “I am a Hoodie” booklet, a rollup banner and chicks on beach banners (to be available next season);
- The Friends Group facilitated the presentation of two training days in January 2011 for interested parties;
- The Friends Group applied for and obtained money from two grants and applied for a Coastal Excellence Award; and
- Committee Members of the Friends Group joined others on the Parks Vic Shorebird Conservation Strategy working Group to contribute to the review of the strategy.

As noted above wardening formed a key role in our attempts to protect chicks during their rearing stage.

There were 6 wardening events on as many beaches, involving up to 9 volunteers, 164 hours of time over 68 days, with 4 successes. We believe that this activity is key to improving outcomes in future years.

In March 2011 members of the Friends Group assisted Birds Australia by volunteering to attend a stall at The Briars, Mt Martha, for the Environment Week. This was a great success, particularly with regard to informing many young school children, their teachers and parents about the lifestyle of the Hoodies (see photographs).

Planning for the next season is about to get underway in earnest over the coming weeks and months. We are all looking forward to taking up the challenge yet again.





Portsea- nest site photo by Glenn Ehmke

Mornington Peninsula Shorebird Working Group

-Grainne reports

In Victoria, it was the Mornington Peninsula National Park (MPNP) that led the way in Hooded Plover conservation back in 1991 when they formed a monitoring group in response to the Action Statement for Hooded Plovers. In 1998 this had evolved greatly due to keen volunteers and dedicated rangers, and led to the formulation of a Hooded Plover Management Plan for the Mornington Peninsula, which included the MPNP and also Point Nepean National Park. More than a decade later, a shorebird working group has been formed to review and update this document given not only the massive swell in numbers of beach users since the last plan was written (growing from 2 to 3.5 million!) but also due to all the research and management lessons that have been learnt since. Representatives from across the community were invited to join the group and have their say in the plan, including surf life saving clubs, surfriders clubs, local naturalist and conservation groups, dog walking and training groups, as well as Parks Victoria (PV), local shire and Birds Australia (BA). Many of the invitations were declined so that the group consists of representatives from the shire, PV, BA, Friends of the Hooded Plover MP, Nepean Conservation Group, SPIFFA, and Dogs Victoria. We are currently reviewing and rewriting the plan, and will meet soon to tease out the management actions we wish to see in the future. The plan will be open for public comment before going into effect. [with the photo i sent through on 12/5/2011]





Point Nepean

-Brendan McKay, Ranger, Point Nepean National Park reports.

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 pairs 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. 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 was never successful as the second nest failed and one of this pair later died from unknown causes (I suspect a broken neck).

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. Since 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 Dianne, 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.

Photo by Glenn Ehmke



-Meg Cullen Beach Nesting Birds Project Officer reports

Anglesea

Well the Hoodies of the Point have been reliable as usual! This season gone the pair has produced two fledglings from two separate clutches. Unfortunately the pair to the west only showed signs of nesting, but no nest was ever confirmed ... let's hope they can copy their neighbours next year – maybe we should start calling the pair on the Point 'The Jones'!

We did have some unusual excitement in this part of the woods over the summer. For the first time in years we had a nest recorded at Point Addis, although it created a stir amongst the local Plover Lovers, the nest did not survive and no further nests were recorded.

Bellarine Peninsula

The Nudist beach west of Point Impossible was the new hang-out for bird lovers this season, and yes I do mean Hoodie Lovers! Recently banded Hoodie 'PA' was flagged on 13th beach and then made its way down the coast to pair with an unbanded Hooded Plover at the Nudist beach. This pair then got down to business and nested – the first time nesting has been recorded here in over a decade. This reoccupied territory indicates that the Hooded Plover population is starting to rebuild and rather than lose pairs, we are starting to see some gains!

The Point Impossible pair struggled to have any success and the volunteers are definitely seeing this pattern. With initial nests flooding at the estuary, a nest finally hatched with one chick (named Buckley by the volunteers) surviving for 3 weeks. The friends group gave it an amazing shot with the 'Give Buckley a chance' campaign!

Breamlea was also unsuccessful, with the pair seeming quieter than previous years, luckily further west, the Black rock pair had success on their fifth nest attempt. The parents were not going to let anything happen to their chicks after finally getting eggs to hatch! A number of us had no luck in spotting the chicks, although the parents behaviour was very obvious. However some luck, and the help of very experienced hands, resulted in two young chicks being spotted and flagged. And they both fledged!



photo by Geoff Gates

13th beach (30w) had chicks from one nest, however, like so many they did not survive. A nest camera was set on their second nest and captured a common culprit of nest predation in action – a Raven! 13th Beach (40W pair) have chosen to nest to the east of access so that they had horses to contend with and you can guess who wins between a horse and a hoodies – no chick survival here either.

Heading towards the bay, the Collendia pair did a great job with a chick fledging in December 2010 (banded with metal only), but no further nesting attempts led to success. And last but not least the Point Lonsdale pair had a nest hatch, but the chicks disappeared early on.

Lots of work was done over the summer by these volunteers on the beach and educating the locals and holidays makers. BA staff and volunteers work together on a number of events including a dog's breakfast at Point Lonsdale and children's activities (painting 'Hoodie' Bags) at Breamlea, Barwon Heads, Ocean Grove and Point Lonsdale.



photo by Geoff Gates



Apollo Bay

- Gary McPike Executive Officer Otway Coast Committee reports

As the breeding season draws to a close it appears that the local Otway Coast hoodies have had some success this year. It is believed that 2 birds from separate nests have fledged at Wild Dog Creek 3kms north east of Apollo Bay and at least one has fledged at the Barham River nesting site between Apollo Bay & Marengo. Thank you to the volunteers who keep us informed; making it easier for us to respond with fencing, signage and chick shelters when required.

The main threats to the plovers remain and are predators and people. This year we have had some great success in trapping foxes in the nesting areas using soft jaw traps; with 3 trapped in 2 days at Wild Dog Creek. It is a credit to one of Otway Coast Committee's staff, Bill Pomorin and the skills he has developed, that since we have started a soft jaw trapping program more than 25 foxes have been removed in the last 12-14 months. People, their actions and their dogs still present a major threat to this timid bird that needs parts of 'our' beaches to breed at the exact same time we use the beaches the most. We will be back next year with the fences and improved signage hoping to improve the chances of survival for this important inhabitant of our beaches.



*A fox caught in one of the soft jaw traps-
photo by Gary McPike*



SE South Australia

-Maureen Christie, Friends of Shorebirds SE reports

The summer was a busy time for Friends of Shorebirds SE taking on a series of Dog Breakfast events - much of our time was devoted to organising displays and filling doggie bags. However, we did manage a couple of excursions onto the beach – and were rewarded with our first Little Tern flag sightings of the season. We had been wondering what had become of the Little Tern originally banded in the Coorong in Nov 2006 and which had nested at Piccaninnie Ponds beach every summer since, except this one. On 28th December it was at Stony Point, but early in the New Year it was sighted with a small colony at Danger Point. We only have four Little Terns with colour codes, and they were all flagged by the VWSG in March 2007. One of these had been banded as a chick in January 2007. And, 4 years on, here it was back at Danger Point, where it had hatched! On 25th January there were 12 small terns present. Four of these were definitely Little Tern (including the Coorong tern) and five definitely Fairy Tern. There was one clutch of 3 Little Terns hatched (and banded!). There was also one Little Tern nest with 2 eggs and one Fairy Tern nest with 1 egg. The mixed Fairy/Little Tern pair

was also present but did not have a scrape.

But what of Hooded Plover? - on the 31st January, I received this from Cath -

You have tough and savvy HP's down here in the SE! You're probably aware of the HP's re-nesting on Longbeach but thought I'd report that their 2 chicks are hanging in nicely, despite the umpteen games of beach cricket, picnickers, swimmers, dogs and loads of people there on Australia Day.

Unfortunately the hoodies of Beachport aren't so tough..... and the Pool of Siloam pair have had no success so far despite surviving the Duck Race!! There have been several nests in the



photo by Dean Ingwersen



A nest camera takes the guessing out of nest fate in the far west

Carpenter Rocks/ Blackfellows Caves/Nene Valley area. To date I have seen three fledged young – 2 right in front of Lorraine’s home! You would wonder how they manage the holiday crowd – perhaps it is a combination of clever parents and pebble banks; both people and dogs avoid walking on pebbles whenever possible!

Of course, we have been busy with the Bayside Festival and a series of 5 Dog’s Breakfasts. Friends members were out in force – thank you to all who helped. It was very encouraging that we were well received everywhere, there was quite a deal of interest and no negative reactions. Advice and support from both Grainne from the Birds Aust Hooded Plover team and Emma Stephens from the Fleurieu Peninsula was extremely helpful.

Fleurieu Peninsula

-Emma Stephens of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board reports

We have come to the end of a very busy Hooded Plover breeding season! First of all I would like to extend a bit thank you, on behalf of the Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board, to all the volunteers and project partners (Dr Grainne Maguire - Birds Australia, DENR, DC Alexandrina, City of Victor Harbor, DC Yankalilla, City of Onkaparinga, and Normanville Natural Resources Centre) who were involved in the 2010/11 Hooded Plover breeding season.

Volunteers – your dedication to the program, and in particular the pair(s) you monitor at your sites, is phenomenal. We all very much appreciate your regular site visits, filling out datasheets, posting/emailing datasheets to me, education of local beach goers, fencing, signage, photography...and the list goes on! The conservation of the species is greatly enhanced by your regular data collection, assistance with management and community education.

The support and enthusiasm shown by all project partners is hugely appreciated and ensures the program, particularly the on-ground management, can function in an effective and collaborative way.

A few highlights from the 2010/11 breeding season:

- 9 chicks have fledged!! (preliminary results for the 2010/11 season are attached, please let me know if I have recorded any of the details incorrectly. The final results will be available soon from Birds Australia).
- Hooded Plovers have been regularly observed at 3 new sites – South Port beach, Moana south and Lands End (Cape Jervis).

- Hooded Plover pairs at Parsons and Waitpinga beaches have both laid one nest each this season. Nests have not been observed at these sites for a number of years.
- New volunteers! We have had 7 new volunteers join this season – welcome! We had quite a few new volunteers starting in late 2009/10 season and they have done a fantastic job throughout this season. Many of the volunteers who joined back in 2006 continue to do an excellent job at their sites!
- 12 Hooded Plover fencing and signage kits have been made available across the Fleurieu. These kits enable us to respond quickly when management is required. Thank you to the volunteers for using the kits so regularly. Thank you to the Councils for storing kits at their depots and to those volunteers who are storing equipment in their garden sheds!
- 7 Dog's Breakfast workshops were held across the Fleurieu over the summer. Lots of four-legged friends were treated to 'pupcakes' while their owners had a sausage sizzle and learnt about the benefits of leashing their dogs near HP nests and chicks. Thanks to Kristy Manning (NRM Board) and Wendy White from Normanville NRC for organising the majority of the workshops, Andrea from the RSPCA, Council staff and volunteers for attending these workshops.
- There has been a lot of media coverage in newspapers, radio and on Channel 10 news.
- Nest cameras – we have installed 2 cameras (at Tunkalilla and Shelly Beach). Each set of photos tells a tale, please see a snapshot of photos attached. The Tunkalilla nest was abandoned by the adults after 2 days of extreme heat (the only hot weather we had this summer!), 2 days after abandonment a fox came visiting.... The Shelly beach nest actually hatched 2 chicks (please see photo attached of one of the chicks). We only ever observed 1 chick at the site which did not survive unfortunately. We don't know what happened to the 2nd chick, but we would never have known 2 hatched without the camera. We will be putting more photos on the AMLR NRM Board's website soon.
- The National Biennial Hooded Plover Count occurred in November 2010 – 25 sites were surveyed by 20 volunteers, a fantastic effort by all.

The nest camera at Shelley Beach captures a young Hoodie.



2011/12 HP Breeding season:

- The NRM Board will be running a workshop in conjunction with Birds Australia for volunteers and project partners in July. I will be sending out details as soon as possible.
 - For those volunteers who are keen to continue monitoring next season, this will begin in August and go through to March 2012.
 - We will look at installing more nest cameras to capture images of threats to nests and young chicks.
- A report detailing the results of the 2010/11 breeding season will be made available soon. The AMLR NRM Board provides funding to enable Birds Australia to enter all the data (collected by the Fleurieu volunteers), and analyse the data and produce the report.

Thanks once again everyone – individually and collectively we are making a difference for the Hoodies on the Fleurieu!



Eyre Peninsula

-Jane Cooper reports

We counted 127 adult hoodies across 1800 km during the biennial count with an additional 20 adults observed at several 2020 count areas not previously accessed in November. There are still many gaps in our biennial count coverage given the large number of offshore islands within our region which support Hooded Plover breeding pairs.

Eight breeding pairs at selected sites were monitored intensely from late July 2010 to early April 2011. These pairs raised 19 chicks; 9 successfully fledged. Two pairs produced 2 single fledged juveniles from separate clutches – one early in the season and one later.

We are slowly progressing towards improved management of our key sites. District councils have formally supported new permanent signage as well as approving the use of temporary signs during the breeding period. Park rangers and work crew have agreed to install multiple signage where critical beaches have more than one access point.

Jane Cooper : gerygone43@bigpond.com

Threatened shorebirds nest on this beach between August and March

These birds have one of the lowest rates of chick survival in the world.

In the breeding season, please:

- Stay out of the dunes
- Stay close to the water's edge
- Keep dogs on a lead



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for more information visit www.birdsaustralia.com.au/beach

Proposed new signage for National Park beaches where both species nest. **17**

Western Australia



Bremer Bay

-Anne Sparrow, Western Fitzgerald Biosphere Project Officer reports



The Fitzgerald Biosphere Group and Friends of Wellstead Estuary instigated a multigroup approach to protect the shore nesting and migratory bird that reside and visit Bremer Bay in Western Australia.

Bremer Bay is home to three species of shore nesting birds-Pied Oyster Catchers, Red Capped and Hooded Plovers. There are 14 species of migratory birds that spend the summer on the Wellstead Estuary. The hatching survival rate of these species at this site in recent years is less than 10% due largely to human activity and predation.

The first section of fencing was erected in November in preparation for the tourist season. A HUGE Thank-you for their valuable assistance goes to Jerramungup Shire Ranger Dean Jolly, Sheryn Prior from South Coast NRM Inc and Eugene Eades from Gondwana Link and his crew of interracial able bodied youth from the WA Ministry of Justice HALO program. This group of guys provided much needed support for the project and also treated us to some fantastic artwork in the sand.

The second stage of the fencing project is a pilot area in the centre of the sandbar. In March the Jerramungup District High School students assisted with the construction of extra temporary fencing of the vegetated area of the sand bar to offer further protect for the migratory birds. This area has not only enormous feeding and



recuperating value for our migratory and shore nesting birds, but also the merry little rock parrots who are frequently seen at the site.

The fences aim to direct traffic in an orderly manner around the central area of the sandbar. Vehicular traffic in this area has steadily become invasive over last month or so. There has been several access points through the vegetated area to the beach all summer but for some reason vehicles have started inroads over these vegetated hillocks.

This fence will only remain in place until the migratory birds have left or we have sufficient rains or tides that inundate the area—approximately the next 8 weeks. The local groups are currently on weather watch observations to ensure the fence will be removed as necessary.

Our migrant birds travel in excess of 20 000km to visit us. Lets hope they can rest and feed enough before heading on the flight path back to the northern hemisphere.

All the hard work was followed by a sausage sizzle and quick swim afterwards.

Yalgorup National Park

-Bill Russell and Dick Rule report

With funding from NHT and the Peel Development Commission, BAWA (Birds Australia West Australia) commenced colour banding Hooded Plover in Yalgorup National Park in February 2002 to find out more information about their movements within and outside the National Park. Yalgorup National Park is on the coast, south of Mandurah. To the end of 2010, 43 have been banded and monitored.

Different catching techniques have been tested over the years—small and big drop nets, tangle mats and decoy models of Hooded Plover. All methods used were reasonably successful. In 2008 we changed to catching runners with prawn scoop nets. This has been very successful and has the added advantage that you know exactly how old the bird is. Runners were caught just before fledging at about three weeks old. We initially banded



with colour rings but have changed to colour leg flags as these are more visible in the field. It also encourages visitors to get involved in observing flagged birds and reporting their sightings online.

What have we found?

1. There have been two reports of banded Hooded Plover moving to inland sites. One was at Lake Norring and the other at Flagstaff Lake, both near Wagin and about 160 km from Yalgorup National Park. The fact that many other birds disappear over winter and reappear in spring/summer suggests that other birds are probably out there waiting to be recorded.

2. Once the young birds are able to fly, they leave the parent birds and move away from the breeding area, joining up with mixed flocks of adults and other immature birds. The breeding adults tend to stay close to the breeding areas.

3. Some birds are very faithful to breeding/home territories, generally being recorded there through most of the year, depending on water levels.

A bird ringed as an adult on Martins Tank in March 2004 was still occupying the same breeding area at the end of December 2010, a period of 6 years.

4. Apart from birds reported inland, none of the ringed birds have been recorded more than about 20 km from where they were ringed. There is regular movement between and within the lake system.



Hoodies flocking on an inland saltlake - photo by Steve Elson

- Marcus Singor of BAWA Hooded Plover Committee reports.

In West Australia, the annual Hooded Plover survey is held each February.

The survey provides a snapshot on population numbers, the recruitment of juveniles and their general distribution.

The weekend of 5 and 6 February 2011 was characterised by extreme winds along the coast and these had an impact on the outcomes of the survey. The unfavourable weather conditions made many Hooded Plover seek shelter and as a consequence the numbers recorded were lower in some locations than in previous years.

The total number of Hooded Plover counted was 528. This figure does not include 65 Hooded Plover seen at Stockyard Creek in late January. The component of juveniles was 10% indicating a good breeding season in comparison to previous years. Based on the data from the past 8 years the percentage of juveniles as part of the total count averaged out at 8.6% .

The southern inland areas of Western Australia have been in the grip of drought. In periods of drought Hooded Plover tend to flock to coastal regions. This was evident as flocks were sighted at inlets and coastal lakes along the southern coast. For example Gordon Inlet (40), Yokinup Bay (21), Lake Kubitch (64).

John Tucker battled through 6 kilometres of thick mud to record 54 Hooded Plover at the eastern side of the Jerdacuttup Lake. Christine Wilder covered over 100 kilometres of coastal beaches which must be some kind of record.

The Esperance region, true to form, recorded the highest number of Hooded Plover.

At Harry Davies Lake 136 Hooded Plover were sighted on a lake bed largely dry but still containing three pools of water

Most inland lakes were dry such as Lake Chillinup, Lake Kwoornicup as were lakes near Pingrup. At Lake Noring the water level was very low and extremely salty over 200EC (ms/cm) which is just short of crystallizing and David Secomb was very surprised to still find six Hooded Plover in this extreme habitat.



Tasmania

Bruny Island

-Marg Graham reports

The “little hoodie” project on Bruny Island reached an important stage mid December with the production of signs to be erected at popular beaches over the summer. Funded by a ‘Naturally Inspired’ grant from NRM South this project by the Bruny Island Environment Network (BIEN) is highlighting the serious impact human disturbance is having on the breeding success of sand nesting shorebirds like the Hooded Plover and Pied Oystercatcher. During the year Bruny Island school children have put a lot of effort and skill into creating posters to alert beach users that shorebirds nest on our beaches over summer and that we need to take particular care to share the beach and give them space to improve the survival rate of the tiny chicks.

These posters were on display at the bird festival art exhibition in October and drew lots of admiring comments. Two designs, by Elizabeth Stokely and Elly Bowd, were selected to be reproduced as signs and another by Romeo Farasin will be featured on an information leaflet.

This project was designed to increase local community and visitor awareness about the vulnerability of those shorebirds that nest in the sand high up the beach. Bruny Island has a small resident population of around 650 but it is a popular summer holiday location with all the consequent impacts on the breeding success of shorebirds. The Bruny Island District school embraced the project wholeheartedly in keeping with the school logo “We Care”. They have been wonderful ambassadors for the Hooded Plover!

At the beginning of the project Dr Tonia Cochran, a respected local bird expert and nature tour operator, conducted a classroom session showing the children the shorebirds that frequent our beaches and explaining the many hazards that affect the success of breeding. The children discussed how we might all help and enthusiastically set about designing signs and information leaflets to place at our nesting beaches. The children’s work was displayed at the school and was a prominent part of the inaugural Bruny Island Bird in October. Two poster designs were selected for reproduction and another design selected to feature on an information brochure to be placed in shopping and other public locations.



A further information session was held on the beach, this time conducted by Birds Tasmania member Liz Znidersic, where the children made nest scrapes and viewed Hooded Plovers through binoculars and scopes. This was a fun day and the children were delighted to be able to view and identify the Hooded Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers up close through the scope.

Temporary fencing was erected around three nesting locations when it was evident that pairs were trying to breed. Children were not involved in this activity for fear of disturbing the birds, but were encouraged to talk about the reasons for the fencing with their families, friends and visitors.

Regular articles about this project were published in the monthly Bruny News and also in the regional newspapers. Readers were informed of the reasons behind the project and also on the breeding activity being observed. Updates were also written up on the signs at the beaches as chicks were noticed.

In March this year the children were shown photos that had been taken of the chicks over the summer and were especially thrilled to be visited by Dr Anna Giordano, a world acclaimed conservation activist from Sicily, who told the children about her long fight to protect migrating raptors from illegal hunters as they crossed the Straits of Messina. She praised the children for their efforts and urged them to continue telling everyone the important messages they had learned.

It was a difficult year for the birds with several storms and high seas destroying early clutches. In all, four Hooded Plover chicks and two Pied Oystercatcher chicks were successfully raised on the project beaches. The previous year three Hooded Plover chicks were observed but did not survive to fledge. There is no doubt that the interest and awareness created by this project had a positive impact through reinforcing the message to share the beach and avoid the nesting areas.

Marg Graham of BIEN said "The signs have a blank space where we will be noting what is happening with the

birds during the summer. It takes 35 days from hatching for chicks to fly. For all this time they feed and rest on the beach and are very vulnerable.”

Other Actions

Temporary fencing has been erected around nesting sites on some beaches as an extra measure to protect the eggs and chicks. But it is important to watch out for these birds on all Bruny Island beaches and give them space over the breeding season, October - March. It is hoped that these actions and increased awareness will have a positive impact on the breeding success of the Hooded Plover and Pied Oystercatcher.

St Helens and Binalong Bay

-Liz Znidersic reports

Students, residents and visitors of the St Helens and Binalong Bay areas have fully embraced and participated in conservation efforts for our beach-nesting birds. Birds Tasmania, Parks and Wildlife and the Break O’Day Council (NRM) have worked together using signage, education in regard to dog zoning and temporary fences to inform residents and visitors of the high conservation values found on our beaches. In an area which has a high



tourist population during the summer months, protecting beach nesting birds and their habitat is becoming increasingly important. Grade 1 and 2 of St Helens District High school are active participants in protecting our Hoodies. During the year they spent time on the beach and in the classroom learning about beach-nesting birds. They also performed a play about Hooded Plover conservation at the Bay of Fires Festival in front of 200 people. Their efforts gained them ‘The Velvet Worm Award’ for significant contribution awarded by the Break O’Day Council. Well done!



Centre: Hooded Plover pair, one on nest at Binalong Bay, carefully monitoring the ever rising water level caused by heavy rain flooding the adjacent lagoon

Flanking: Residents, Birds Tasmania and Parks and Wildlife Service fencing a Hoodie nest on Binalong Bay
photos by Liz Znidersic

One of our busiest beaches is Binalong Bay and it attracts hundreds of people over the busy Christmas period. This beach is also home to two pairs of Hooded Plovers. Birds Tasmania, Parks and Wildlife and Hoodie friendly individuals and families were involved in fencing these areas once eggs were laid in small scrapes. Three small chicks successfully fledged from one fenced area with the help of the efforts of committed residents who monitored the site, fence and Hoodies daily. The other Hoodies always seem to select a site right in the centre of the highest human activity, or is it the other way around, humans chose the best Hoodie nesting spot. With the fencing, signage and ongoing education at this site, our little Hoodies took care of their 3 eggs and managed all the human disturbance until heavy rain caused flooding from the adjacent lagoon. The tenacity of these Hoodies unfortunately didn't get them through with the water eventually washing the eggs away just before they were due to hatch. Once again, it was a wonderful effort by all residents involved.



Nest Cameras

Twenty five nest cameras were installed this season and we had a few teething problems with cameras on wrong angles or firing too frequently and filling the memory card (6 cameras), but managed to have 10 detect successful hatching of chicks and 9 detect nest failure with 8 causes of failure identified (3 raven predation; 1 high tide; 1 dog disturbance; 1 abandoned due to extreme heat and then eggs predated by fox days later; 1 nest theft by Pied Oystercatcher then fox predated both hoodie and oystercatcher eggs; 1 unknown cause of failure at night). This will be a great tool for further determining cause of failure and identifying which predators are truly having the most impact. We also got some great pictorial evidence for disturbance by dogs, people and horses. In addition found that foxes often visited nests after they failed or days after they hatched, so that if a person were to check the nest and find eggs gone, they'd think because of the fox prints right up to the nest that this was the cause, but in fact, the nest might have actually hatched but failed pretty quick, or the real predator left less of a trace. This season Jason Clifford will be doing his honours project on fates of nests using cameras extensively.



KEEP GUARD 1.30.2011 12:56:15

Birds shading nest and doing everything in their power to prevent the 40 degree day killing the eggs



KEEP GUARD 2.04.2011 8:17:35

Fox that got eggs after they were abandoned due to heat



Photo by Glenn Ehmke

The Victorians are flocking...

An absolute highlight of this season was the recent meeting we had at Point Nepean National Park where so many of the people involved in Hooded Plover conservation in Victoria came together in the once place to share their experiences and brainstorm about common goals and improvements to hoodie conservation. It was such a nice day sitting in the sun and looking out across the flat waters of the bay towards Queenscliff, and being surrounded by what Anne of Green Gables would call kindred spirits!

We were very lucky to have a guest speaker talk about Piping Plover conservation on Prince Edward Island Canada and there were so many similarities between the two programs, even the distinctive white nape of the Piping plover adults and chicks was a striking similarity between the two species. There were definitely differences between the programs too, where on the island, entire sections of peninsula are closed off to the public when the birds are breeding. This is able to be implemented because Piping Plovers are migratory and arrive for a only a short breeding stint within the area where nests are highly synchronous – something which would be very difficult to implement for Hooded Plovers who have a prolonged breeding season and multiple breeding attempts. Another technique used was artificially incubating the eggs and replacing eggs at risk from tide with clay eggs so the birds would keep up their nesting behaviours. They were also trialling hand rearing of chicks and a soft release into an enclosure on the beach before release into the wild.

We earned our lunch break after a morning filled with regional updates from across Victoria, and because there are now so many active groups participating in monitoring and protection of hoodies, this was jam packed with speakers and news of their highs and lows. It was very inspiring to hear each group talk about their involvement and the different ways they've tried to raise awareness or help their birds along. Everyone is so dedicated and no-one is going to give up on their birds. We heard about different approaches to engaging the public, the challenges of managing threats in unregulated coastal reserves, and of the Bass Coast's amazing tally of fledglings (17!) that had everyone else seething with jealousy, not really, happy as anything to hear that at least one area did well in a very difficult season plagued by high tides and unpredictable weather.

The boys worked hard slaving over the bbq to bring us lunch, then we spent the afternoon in the sun in small groups discussing topics such as management; public engagement; resources needed for volunteers; future research, and; legislation and policy. We were on such a tight schedule that we could have spent days discussing these things but had only ten minutes per topic! We reconvened and had a large group discussion where we found that in our small groups, we'd said very similar things. Chris is working hard to write everything up into a report that we'll soon send out! We ended the day with a walk through coastal woodland to a small bay beach where little 'BB' (Brendan's bird after the ranger who has been monitoring this pair) took flight and fledged late this season. We had the best botany teacher (Gidja Walker) teach us so many new things about our surroundings. It was such a fitting end to the day with the descending sun sending its rays through the grey green foliage, the wattlebirds clucking and the waves lapping against the shore – we'd all survived another season and made the world that little bit better.

-Grainne



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For more information on the Beach Nesting Birds Project or to find out how you can contribute please visit:

<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/beach>