Well our new year has begun with the welcome news that the two chicks at Gunida, Rye have finally fledged. They join the single chick at St Andrews East which fledged on the last day of 2018. As I write there are still five chicks on the beach and six active nests stretching from Sandy Point at Cerberus all the way to Sierra Nevada Rocks in Point Nepean. The greatest disappointment was the loss of the healthy and active chick at Miami which was last seen at 34 days. One day off officially fledging- heartbreaking news.

The Mornington Peninsula sector of the Biennial Count was completed over the middle two weeks of November. We had 17 different routes of which some were very long and challenging. We had several one-off volunteers who joined our more experienced monitors with all their data, for the first time, being entered directly into a Biennial Count Data Portal. I thank all those who participated. It is a huge undertaking with the BNB team having 2,300km of coast to cover and they appreciate that our cooperation enables them to concentrate on the more remote regions of the coast.

Over the summer, many members have conducted community educational events and market stalls. I thank Jo, Lois, Karen and Jenny particularly, for their tireless work. Their latest street stall in Sorrento coincided with the Portsea Polo Event which meant that there were a multitude of people on the streets to hear and see the message.

Jo and Lois have also assisted Holly Barker from PV to run Junior Ranger Programs for kids from 4 to 13 years old. While Jo and Karen also assisted Holly to run an educational event with 170, 7 to 9 year old Nippers from the Portsea SLSC at the Quarantine Station.

Early in the season we were noticing that several nests which were well above the high tide mark were failing prior to hatch. We suspected an aerial predator as there were no human nor canine footprints within the fences and the nests were clean but empty. The BNB team supplied us with a couple of motion cameras to see if we could capture the culprits. The cameras are an amazing trove of information. We have so far seen one nest destroyed by tide, another taken by a fox and the final nest hatched but unfortunately we had two brazen bare-chested boys come and try and steal the camera oblivious to the nest. Unfortunately they disrupted the positioning of the camera so that we missed the hatch. We saw dogs off lead, enormous foot traffic within the prohibited Point Nepean and Magpies walk past active nests on several occasions.

This year PV have employed two seasonal rangers, Harry and Jessica, to assist Holly in much of the Hooded Plover data collection and management. Along with a bevy of seasonal rangers there has been a well spread presence on our beaches and they have done a great job communicating with the public. I love their infectious enthusiasm. The committee still see a need for targeted patrols by authorised officers who can issue infringement notices to those recalcitrant dog walkers within the park. Over the holiday period particularly, there has been a noticeable increase in off-lead dog prints.

The Red-capped Plover Project on Western Port Beaches has, thus far, been a disappointing season. Geoff Hall at Balnarring is now up to his fifteenth first Hooded Plover fledgling. Photo by Mark Lethlean
nest with not a single chick. We have just been given word that the BNB team have organised an Honours Project out of Deakin to begin in June to look at the impact of horses on invertebrate density on these beaches. Unfortunately the issue this year is not starving chicks but what is taking the eggs; we might need to consider some nest cameras.

At the end of 2018 we were able to conduct two banding days at our beaches thanks to the MP Flexi Grant and at Bellarine Beaches courtesy of the Coastcare Victoria Community Grant. We now have 3 males and 8 females with engraved orange flags between Point Leo and Balnarring. The quality of the data that we now collect has improved significantly and has enabled us to be the first group to enter data on the ‘restricted access, detailed colony form’ within the data portal.

As an example of the detail, last week I had 5 males, 8 females, 1 juvenile, 4 chicks and a nest within the 250 metre Point Leo Colony in the middle of summer on an urban beach. Of these birds, 9 were flagged and we had 2 pairs where both male and female were flagged. One pair had actually walked their 2 chicks one km from their Shoreham nest to this colony; amazing. In the past we would see birds scurrying everywhere and mixed in with numerous Red-necked Stints. We would struggle to know if we were counting new birds or recounting old ones that were moving all over the beach.

At the moment we have at least 2 chicks of which one is over 3 weeks old; fingers crossed.

Finally, a big thank you for all the work done by so many people. I would like to encourage any of you who are not signed up as members to consider filling in the couple of forms- we value and wish to recognise your support.

Also a big thank you to Val for once again compiling the Newsletter, even after having major knee surgery. Here’s hoping you’re back on your feet very soon.

Mark Lethlean

Deakin student Maddy, Glenn Ehmke, Joan McPhee and I spent a perfect morning visiting Fowlers, Montforts and Koonya while taking part in the BNB Biennial Count. No new birds seen.

Diane Lewis

Photo by motion camera at Pt Nepean National Park.

Hooded Plover Junior Ranger program held at Rye Ocean Beach. 

Photo by Holly Barker

Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc

Incorporation number: A0054904

Committee
President: Mark Lethlean  Vice President: Chris Willocks  Secretary: Jenny Griffiths
Treasurer: Jo Hansen  General members: David Reid, Karen Wootton, Lois Greene

Bank Account Details
Bendigo Bank, BSB: 633000 Account No: 159026897

Contacting FoHP
59857706, PO Box 36 Rye 3941, hploversmornpen@gmail.com

Newsletter Contributions: Thank you for all the great articles, notes & photos. Please keep sharing your Hooded and Red-capped Plover experiences.

Send to: Val Ford, 5981 1445, fordandreid@gmail.com

Deadline for next newsletter: Friday 26 April 2019
Parks Victoria had organised for the Portsea Surf Life Saving Club to run their first Nippers session at the Quarantine Station. Tash (Parks Vic Education person) asked us to join in. Apparently the SLSC was also keen to have us participate.

There were 170 new nippers aged from 7 to 9 years and their parents and interested others, about 120 we think. A total of 290 people on the beach.

They were split into four groups and Karen talked about threats, I talked about the bird’s life cycle, eggs to fledge. PV covered how they manage the Park and how we can help the birds and park. We had 6 minutes with each of the four groups. A bit like speed dating I think, but more interesting and fun.

Some good questions from the children about how many birds we have, where on the beach do they nest and why are they threatened. All questions lead to more information. A few parents also followed up after the talks, although there wasn’t a lot of spare time.

Again a great public relations and community education opportunity. We all agree that if we get a couple of children and adults on board that is a win, and we achieved that.

Thanks again to our great relationship with the Parks Vic staff; Tash, Sally and Jack.

Jo Hansen
Our 19 day old hoodie chick was killed by a black Labrador Sunday morning at 97W, Point Roadknight.
In a split second it was taken. Sadly, the dog owners kept walking away after the incident.
Please everyone, if you are walking your dog in a signed hoodie area put your dog on a lead while you walk through the area at the waters edge—typically only over 200m.

We all need to share the beach and give these precious birds the space they need to breed and raise their young. The Friends of the Hooded Plover Surf Coast have alone spent over 100 volunteer hours trying to help protect this chick in conjunction with its parents.

Sue Guinness, Volunteer Coordinator Surf Coast FoHP, Facebook 7 January 2019

Hooded Plover chick killed by dog. Photo by Sue Guinness
CORRECTION

Not a Great Knot

Mike Carter has pointed out that the bird identified as a Great Knot in the December 2018 Mornington Peninsula Birdlife newsletter was a Red Knot. (The same article was published on page 8 of the October 2018 FoHP newsletter.)

"In my opinion the 'Great Knot' featured on page 19 of the December 2018 Mornington Peninsula Birdlife newsletter is a Red (AKA a Lesser) Knot and not a Great Knot as captioned. This and the record in the 'Interesting Sightings' should be corrected."

This photo by William Betts shows how similar the birds are.

Val Ford

SORRENTO INFORMATION STALLS

November 2018: The Sorrento information stall was a little quieter this time, possibly due to it being the weekend after the cup day long weekend? I need to take this into consideration when planning future dates.

We handed out Wing things to 23 children and they are always a hit and get conversations happening. We spoke to 17 adults and their responses were all positive, however many walked past without even a glance.

We did give out a membership form to an interested person. Card and pin sales were down, 3 cards and no pins, but we did receive $28.20 in donations and lots of positive feedback about seeing the birds on the beach and an awareness of our signage.

Karen, Glenn and I spent Wednesday morning (19 December) checking all the Portsea beaches. Weather was perfect. It takes a good two hours walking from London Bridge to Sorrento. We leave a car at each end so we have plenty of time to sit and watch the birds on each territory if need be. It was as always an interesting walk.

We observed a new HP pair on the stretch between London Bridge and the Farnsworth track territory. They had fresh scrapes low on the dune face.

In front of the SLSC the club was holding a 'rescue' training session. Lots of enthusiastic teenagers chatting or paddling in and out of the surf. Two sand vehicles were parked closer by. Unfortunately there were vehicle tracks all long the beach. When we reached the Franklin road west territory, the birds were off the nest and eventually seen further down the beach. Keen eyed Karen spotted a tiny chick resting on the sand, within a few minutes two more chicks emerged from under one of the adults. Three chicks are always a delight to watch. The adult HPs then moved the chicks towards the water across the vehicles tracks. With all the tracks on the sand we were relieved the chicks had survived the early morning. We were able to contact PV who then contacted Portsea LSC about driving these vehicles along the beach.

Glenn and I returned later to erect signage and some chick fencing.

Further along the Franklin Rd Access territory the HP pair were still incubating - this nest actually hatched the following day. One chick is now running around on that territory.

Finally we reached Coppins no birds seen; we agreed their second nest had failed.

A CHALLENGE FOR FRANKLIN ROAD CHICKS

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Diane Lewis

January 2019:

The street information stalls are always entertaining for people observers but today's was a special treat. It was the Portsea Polo Classic and there was a multitude passing by who were obviously attending the polo, as well as a very busy street with families out enjoying the sun and even a few locals.

We had conversations about the birds with 15 interested adults, including some people who expressed sadness at no longer being able to walk their dogs but were enquiring if the bans had benefitted the birds. They were very positive discussions.

We gave out over 43 copies of Wing things and had some very engaged children who had seen the birds on the beach and were asking about them. I think we have some future twitchers. "The children are our future."

We sold $48 in cards, $25 in pins and received $27.15 in donations, a total of $100.15.

I was wondering about continuing these events but today confirmed how valuable they are in the right conditions.

A huge thank you to Lois, Jenny and Elizabeth for the help with personing the stalls.

Jo Hansen

The weather was perfect for the stall, although the wind had a bit of a bite. We will review Sorrento as a stall location after the January stall.

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Jo Hansen
MIAMI FAILURE

Very disappointing news that the final Miami chick seems to have failed after 34 days. Rosalba didn't see it yesterday and there was no sign of it nor the parent (right yellow band). The male DS was alone on the beach.

Even more disappointing was the huge numbers of dog prints across the whole beach but especially within the winged fence refuge area. Even in and around the signage.

There is a slight possibility that the chick has flown out of the area under pressure but that does seem unlikely. I went all the way to Boags Rock without seeing it. So keep an eye out; the yellow band on the parent is extremely difficult to see.

The only consolation is that the St Andrews chick is doing well. A dog off lead there was promptly dealt with by PV.

Mark Lethlean

Worth keeping an eye on them once or twice more just on that slight possibility as you say Mark but yes that does sound like bad news. Very sorry to hear. (Sitting in footprints is exactly what the Franklin west parents were doing last night (that chick also failed at 2 weeks). It's a classic behaviour when they've just lost chicks - poor buggers doubtless need a rest.)

Not much consolation but its a great effort to make it to 34 days through the holiday period, 40 degree days, gale-force winds and all the rest. It's clear management worked though, imagine that chick surviving 34 days with nothing on the beach!

I've noticed dog prints at Portsea as well since the Xmas period and have seen some dogs on the beach, mostly at dusk. Hopefully it's tourists and they leave soon!

Glenn Ehmke

Below are a few images of disputes within the colony. SC is the male parent of a 2 week old chick while the u/b male is looking to nest nearby. So although they are colonial nesters there is still a lot of territorial disputes. An older chick wandered into an area of the colony yesterday and was viciously attacked by the parents of a nest.

Mark Lethlean

Holly Barker, Parks Victoria

COLONIAL DISPUTE - POINT LEO RED-CAPPED PLOVERS

Below are a few images of disputes within the colony. SC is the male parent of a 2 week old chick while the u/b male is looking to nest nearby. So although they are colonial nesters there is still a lot of territorial disputes. An older chick wandered into an area of the colony yesterday and was viciously attacked by the parents of a nest.

Mark Lethlean
**Hi Jon,**

Just to let you know that Y54 rocked up at St Andrews this morning, 29 October, my first sighting of this bird. It is hanging with Y44.

Would appreciate your updated banding histories.

Hope all is well on the Island.

Mark Lethlean

**Hi Mark,**

Yep all’s good, 6 nests since last Friday with Grand Prix in between, so it’s all happening.

Great photos, if it’s ok I’ll get Alona, who is on our hoodie team, to use them on our social media with credit.

Looks like Y54 is heading back to ancestral home of dad ‘Orange BR’ Boags Rocks 4/04/2014. Great story.

Also great news that Y44 from Smiths Beach is going well as it came from 3 egg nest on pretty difficult site.

Jon Fallaw, Ranger Conservation, Phillip Island Nature Parks

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**VALE MATT STAHMER**

**Much loved shire officer remembered as passionate campaigner, surfer**

A much loved Mornington Peninsula Shire Council officer has been recalled for his passion and commitment. Matt Stahmer, 46, died suddenly while surfing.

He was a shire field assessor with the natural systems team before becoming a conservation officer in 2005. Mayor David Gill described Mr Stahmer as a “well-respected member of the shire team”.

“He was the natural systems volunteers co-ordinator - a position he held since September 2015,” Cr Gill said. “He commenced with the council in 2002 as a casual ranger at Warringine Park, reporting to Sean Willmore and prior to coming to the council, worked at Parks Victoria and has long been involved with the Tootgarook Wetlands. “Outside of work he was a CFA volunteer firefighter at Main Ridge and treasurer for the Peninsula Surfrider Foundation. “My thoughts and those of council and executives are with his family and friends in this difficult time.”

**Online posts praised Mr Stahmer’s commitment to the community. “Matt was a founding member of the Surfrider Foundation on the Peninsula and spent his life as a tireless campaigner for the ocean and the environment,” Arthur O’Bryan wrote.**

“He was a great community man who represented the surfriders with distinction in the campaign to have Marine National Parks around Flinders and Western Port. “Matty always had a great big smile for all his friends and his chilled vibe was utterly infectious.”

Mornington Peninsula Leader, December 11 2018

**Very supportive of hoodies**

Matt was a MP Shire council officer. He worked on committee with FoHP, Parks Vic and BirdLife when we proposed the dog regulations review.

He was also very supportive of hoodies and involved when we had the pairs nesting at Point King bay beach. He organised for the council to pay for all the signage and buy 3000 of our ‘Where can I walk my dog?’ brochures. Only 46, so sad.

Diane Lewis
The Red-capped Plover is widely dispersed across Australia. Although it is not a species listed as threatened by the federal government, there have not been extensive studies into the current stability of their population. With extrapolation from studies of other beach-nesting bird species, the expectation is that there are numerous threats to their breeding success that need to be better understood.

In 2015 BirdLife Australia began an expanded project to study, monitor and manage nesting colonies of Red-capped Plovers on some urban beaches. Thus the Friends of Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) with the support of the combined committees of management from Somers to Shoreham began one of these projects on the Westernport Bay beaches of the Mornington Peninsula. Already into our third year we have held several workshops that have trained local volunteers in the collection and uploading of their observations to the online data portal provided by BirdLife Australia and to erect protective temporary fences for nests and chicks when necessary.

Shoreham began one of these projects on the Westernport Bay beaches of the Mornington Peninsula. Already into our third year we have held several workshops that have trained local volunteers in the collection and uploading of their observations to the online data portal provided by BirdLife Australia and to erect protective temporary fences for nests and chicks when necessary.

The scientists from the beach-nesting bird project are able to collate this data to understand the population dynamics, breeding strategies, nest and chick survival rates and to help recognize and mitigate potential threats. The identification of individual birds by engraved flags is important to this project for several reasons;

- how far do individual birds move and where to?
- how long do individual birds live?
- what are their breeding strategies. Are they partner faithful and territory faithful?
- how far will they move chicks from a nesting site?

We know from our work with Hooded Plovers that identification of individual birds not only increases the enthusiasm of volunteers but also improves the quality of the data collected.

In 2018, with support from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Flexi Grant we were able to successfully extend our Red-capped Plover banding project for the breeding colonies at Balnarring, Point Leo and Shoreham.

In addition, through the support of a Coastcare Victoria Community Grant we were able to conduct a workshop for local volunteers and for volunteers and land managers from the Bellarine Foreshore Community who are initiating their monitoring and management of Red-capped Plovers. We are also very pleased that this Coastcare Grant has enabled us to flag several of their breeding birds.

So, to date, we now have three males and eight females with engraved flags on the Mornington Peninsula with a further four females flagged on the Bellarine Foreshore. Our next hope is to flag some pre-fledged juveniles from these colonies so as to monitor their dispersal and breeding strategies.

Mark Lethlean
RED-CAPPED PLOVER BANDING

Dan Lees from BirdLife and I were able to band six female Red-capped Plovers on 14 December. A very successful outing; we now have 11 birds in total banded.

All birds were female and all had orange engraved flags attached to their left legs. Unfortunately we weren’t able to vary the flags too much so are a lot of O’s and H’s.

Shoreham: Orange OW
Point Leo: Seychelles: Orange HI
Salt Bush: Orange ON (male is possibly OF)
Between Salt Bush and 1st Reef: Orange HE
First Reef: Orange HS (male is possible SC)
Balanarring West End: Orange HW

It would be great to confirm the pairings and to try to keep track of these birds as best you can. With a bit of luck we may have quite a few chicks on the ground for the New Year.

Mark Lethlean

HOW FLAGGING HELPS TO UNLOCK SOME OF THE CONFUSION

It was an interesting morning with 13 birds, 4 chicks and one new nest on the Point Leo main beach and doughnuts everywhere else. Lots to interpret.

The codes we are using: PL= Point Leo, SH= Shoreham. The number = the number of nests seen so far for that colony. The letters relate to the engraved flag for the parent. If both are engraved we put the male first. So PL9SCHS was the ninth nest for the Point Leo colony and the male parent is SC and the female parent is HS. I know I’ve lost most of you already!

Also it didn’t help when I read OW as ON; went down a very confusing interpretive path.

SH3OW: This pair, female OW and male unbanded have moved 2 young chicks about one kilometre east from the nest at Shoreham. I’ve never been able to confirm that they do this.

PL8ON: This nest failed. I previously thought that OF was the male but not so sure now. Last week I saw male OF and female ON doing distraction displays with a Silver Gull and assumed they were a pair but was probably because the OFHI nest was so close.

PL9SCHS: saw single chick about 20m west of nest; both parents attentive.

PL11: this chick is now over one week old and takes shelter in weeds along foredune just west of the Seychelles access. There is no management in this area.

PL12(OF)HI: new nest found today in front of large saltbush; have fenced and signed. Would still be good to absolutely confirm that OF is the male partner.

How confusing is all of that! Just enjoy the images.

Mark Lethlean
Welcome to Our New Environmental Ranger

Environmental ranger Aldrin Woods has joined the City of Greater Geelong team to patrol the beaches of the Bellarine and Breamlea.

This position is jointly funded by the City of Greater Geelong and Barwon Coast and we are very pleased that Aldrin is working with us over the Hoodie breeding season.

Around Our Beaches

A very busy time indeed on all the beaches of the Bellarine and Surf Coast. So far it’s been a season of ups and downs, with two fledglings so date and, sadly, a number of chicks lost, some in very tragic circumstances. The following is a brief outline of what’s been happening.

Bellarine

Collendina/Point Lonsdale

HY & white MD (fledgling from the Mornington Peninsula) have had another attempt near the Point Lonsdale Surf Life Saving Club which, if successful, should hatch somewhere around the 4th February.

EL & PT also have 2 remaining chicks which hatched 100m East of 4W but are now about 1km West of 4W. Fledge date around the 15th February.

*Unb & sb (female metal band only) had their nest fail near Rhino Rocks on 11th January. *unb is assumed to be HY’s former partner.

PL & unb have 2 chicks remaining near Turtle Rock. Fledge date around the 14th February.

Sadly, the old, experienced NZ hasn’t been seen since last November.

JU & unb have a new nest in the dune just West of the 6W access.

Ocean Grove Spit

To the best of anyone’s knowledge, UU & unb’s chick fledged. It had been observed flying well on the 30th and 31st December with the 31st as official fledge date. It was last seen on New Year’s Eve then, on New Year’s Day, the family weren’t observed on territory.

On the second of January, the parents were back at 16W-17W without their fledgling. We are hoping that it’s headed east and not in the belly of a cat or fox!

UU and unb are now onto their second nest for the season, so if this is successful, there will be chicks on the beach when the dog restrictions aren’t in place.

Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club will be holding its annual swim on Sunday, 27th January 2019. The course takes place in the water from 18W to the Ocean Grove Surf Life Saving Club, so nest minders will need to be present to direct spectators to the waters edge. It is believed the SLSC will instruct participants to take the inland path to the starting point.

Thirteenth Beach

In the West, at 30W, SN & CR lost their chicks to kestrels very soon after hatching; captured quite graphically by local Barwon Heads photographer, Sandy Goddard. (See article on page 4).

Regular floater, VL has recently been sighted at 34W with two unbanded birds.

At 36W, white AD (another fledgling from the Mornington Peninsula) & unb’s chicks failed in the first week of January (dehydration/exposure?). The previous resident bird here, XU, has not been sighted for some time.

Breamlea

The first half of the season has seen a number of failed nests and now one chick, who is surviving against the odds. To add to the dramas so far, a huge Life Saving Victoria Junior/Youth carnival was held at Bancoora beach on Saturday, 19th January which would set any birds hearts fluttering. An unprecedented number of people on the beach, with cars overflowing from the surf club car park into Breamlea township, then along Breamlea and Blackgate Roads. The carnival was well managed and the beach section from our chick banner down to Black Rock was not impacted by the activities. Julie and Jennie were very grateful to have local volunteers Jan and Jane assist them in keeping their eye on the chick. However, our pair at 46W Stingray Bay were surprised to see young lifesavers running around poles with a huge crowd of onlookers. They stayed behind the fence near Noble Rocks but seemed to be behaving suspiciously. Then again, that’s their modus operandi!

PC & EH have their 3rd nest for the season at 40W-42W due in the next week or so.

Life Saving Victoria junior/youth carnival, Bancoora, 19 January 2019. Photo by Jennie Turner

At Black Rock, unb & unb have at least one chick. This newly formed pair are every bit as cagey as the former Black Rock legend, female BK (not spotted since August) and her unbanded mate (whom it’s assumed is still there on territory...
teaching his new partner the fine art of concealment).

Bancoora 44W East is still home to **AY & unb**, but after several nesting attempts, seem to be checking out other spots. However, they were back on familiar territory near Black Rock during the surf carnival.

At Bancoora 46W, the cryptic pair, **CP & unb** have been almost impossible to spot and then only singly. On the day of the surf carnival we spotted them behind the permanent fence and from their behaviour, they might have a nest. More investigation required!

Something strange seems to be happening at 50W to Point Impossible. The old pair, **unb & unb** are usually easy to find either lazing on the dry sand or in a blowout but the last few weeks have been an exception. There is concern that increased traffic is a likely cause as walkers, many with dogs, are coming across from Torquay due to the estuary being blocked.

**SURF COAST SNIPPETS**

Some may have seen the coverage in social media and the local free newspapers of the fatal dog attack on Sunday 6th January on **LM & LY**’s 19 day old chick at 97W Point Roadknight. (Full story on page 4).

Very tragically, Ranger, Evan, of the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) found the nudei chick from Point Impossible (Whites Beach) lying on its side in a footprint on the sand but still alive. It was taken into a local vet and then seen by an avian vet from Deakins University, but couldn’t be saved. The necropsy report indicates that the chick died from a blunt trauma, possibly from being trodden on or from a horse. All those involved were very distressed, as were the parents, **JM & EJ** but there is every chance they will have another attempt before the season is done.

The Moggs Creek pair, **unb & unb**, lost their three chicks on the 23rd December. They currently have a new nest in a similar position to their first attempt.

**RP & BL**’s latest nest at Point Roadknight Tip failed, cause unknown, however, there were human footprints through the roped off nesting area.

The pair, **orange NS & white NS** at 100W – 102 The Gulch, Guvvos Beach, Hutt Gully have been partners for two nesting attempts this season. Let’s hope they try again.

At Red Rocks (Point Addis) **CT & unb**’s chick hatched on the 11th January, 2019.

The highlight of the season so far is the fledging of **white SZ** from Aireys Inlet/ Fairhaven on 11th December. (**SZ** is the chick of **white HP & XS**, who is **PC & AY**’s fledgling from, Bancoora 2015).

Andrea Dennett, BirdLife Australia’s Friends of the Hooded Plover, Bellarine

Julie Riley and Jennie Turner, BirdLife Australia’s Friends of the Hooded Plover, Breamlea

**SOME GOOD NEWS FROM AIREYS INLET/FAIRHAVEN!**

On 9 December it was observed that **SZ**, chick of **XS** (orange) & **HP** (white) is looking all grown up and flight ready! (Flights of 15 metres have been observed.) Thanks Graham Lee for these beautiful photos!

The local volunteers have done a great job on this off-leash dogs beach to get **SZ** through.

**XS & HP** are also to be commended on their timing, with their chick independent before the Summer Madness descends!!

The Surf Coast Volunteers won’t have time to rest as there are freshly hatched chicks nearby at Moggs Creek for them to shift their attention to now.

On 11 December I received a message from Margaret McDonald: “I have great news for you! **SZ** has officially fledged. It has certainly been a reluctant flyer but this afternoon as some walkers with dogs arrived on the scene while I was there the chick flew with one of its parents out over the sea and landed about 100 m further along the beach.

**XS** and his partner **HP** have been very good parents and we are thrilled that they have managed to see one chick through to the Juvenile stage.

We realise that the young bird is still at risk but nevertheless time for celebration!”

The Surf Coast volunteers include Sue Guinness (Vol Co-ordinator), Margaret McDonald, Jill Smith, Gretel Lamont and several others and supported by Rachael and Evan of the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee staff.

The main volunteers for **SZ** and parents were Jill & Will Smith, Kaz Paton, Julian White, Graham and Linda Lee, Bron & Brian, Jill Moodie and of course Margaret.

**XS** is ‘our’ Grandchild which makes **SZ** our great grand chick!! He is originally from Bancoora, sole offspring of **PC & AY**.

Jennie, Julie and I plus a handful of volunteers played a role in getting **XS** to fledging. He fell off the radar for a while and was reported by Sue Guinness at Aireys Inlet about a year later.

Andrea Dennett
Week 5
At 4-5 weeks of age the chicks are almost full adult size. They are exercising flight muscles incessantly now. Flying generally happens at around 35 days for Hoodies so there’s a bit to go, but these exercises are important.

Their wings have certainly developed a lot in a week and a half.

Preening feathers is a growing concern for the chicks, but they are still inseparable. They are much more mobile around the sand at this age, but are still flightless and vulnerable, so the parent’s devotion is undiminished.

In the failing late afternoon light, and with the beach nice and quiet, the chicks are capable of short flights (really just ‘jumps’). Mum and Dad’s are also stretching their wings almost obsessively.

Flying!
On the evening of February 4 Friends group president Diane Lewis and I are sitting down enjoying watching the birds resting on the beach when then they decide to get up, stretch wings and take off!

They fly straight over Mum and Dad a head off down the beach for about 100m or so. Maybe this isn’t their first flight, but it’s certainly one of them. The chicks soon land and run straight back to their ‘refuge’.

They have done it. They’ve got to flying age! Later in the evening I watch as the chicks take another flight, this time flying really high into the evening sky. They reach the height of the main car park which is a good 50m or so above the beach. They are clearly having a ball exploring their new found freedom.

They are not yet able to fully fend for themselves though and fences/signs will be left in place for a little while longer.

As Dad turns 20 he and Mum can now have a very, very well deserved rest... at least for a few months. They’ll be back at it again as soon as August 2017 as will birds all over the coasts from Jarvis Bay in NSW to west of Ceduna near the Nullabour in SA.

Moving on
By the end of February the ‘chicks’ (now fledglings) had been seen on nearby Portsea Ocean Beach - a few km’s ‘up the road’.

They are hanging out with a flock of other non-breeding Hoodies. This is a smart move as while they’ve had one of the best upbringings you could hope for, there is a lot to learn and there is safety in numbers for the moment.

And just as the Koonya two are starting to make their way in the world, researchers and parks staff are banding four chicks at Gunnamatta Ocean beach, almost 20 years to the day since JZ got his bands on the very same bit of sand.

Maybe one of them will replace JZ on the Koonya territory one day. At 20 his is probably due to retire soon... although being one of the first of his species to be banded, no-one really knows how long Hoodies live.

With the keen eyes of volunteers and the public looking out for leg flags, we’ll find out one day.

Glenn Ehmke
Can you please help me share this far and wide. Race horses being permitted to train on beaches, up to 160 in a key Hooded Plover area, spells disaster for coastal management, recognition of coastal values and for our hoodies trying to breed on these beaches.

We are trying to build awareness of the issue happening down in Warrnambool where it was found that to permit race horse training on beaches was in fact illegal and in breach of current protective planning overlays. However, within weeks planning overlays have been overridden, laws even changed (well by the 7th of Jan they will formally be changed) and local councils calling meetings out of session the week before Christmas to vote and move this through quickly.

I've never seen government departments move so quickly and manoeuvre among so many layers of bureaucracy to make this happen. It makes me feel revolted that they are quite capable of effecting change quickly, but they've never done this for the environment, only for commercial enterprises such as this.

Race horse training is not a beach dependent activity. Trainers have even replicated sand in artificial tracks to work their horses. This is safer for the horses, the trainers and for the environment. If the State Government gazettes this change to the planning overlay on 7th of January, major infrastructure costing millions will be put in place in a pristine coastal environment to allow up to 160 horses to train per day. There are 3 hoodies pairs in this particular section of beach and the other site is where there is the most important wintering site for hoodies in their range, plus another 2 hoodie breeding pairs, nesting red-capped plovers and roosting migratory shorebirds. The values of this reserve (Belfast Coastal Reserve) make it worthy of a National Park. These are being ignored and put at major risk. Wealthy trainers are exercising their influence and the locals who don't want this on their beaches are being called greenies and told they don't care about their town's economy. The economic figures are being manipulated as the racing club will be as strong as ever with or without the use of the beach.

Please like and share posts from: https://m.facebook.com/noracehorsesonbeaches/

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Subject: Racehorses on beaches
From: wootton@dragnet.com.au
Date: Fri, January 4, 2019 9:03 am
To: daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Andrews,

It has come to my attention that planning laws are scheduled to be changed on January 7th to allow racehorses to train on beaches that provide critical shorebird habitat. I would like to voice my opposition to such changes. As a volunteer who spends many hours each week monitoring Hooded Plover activity and providing important data to Birdlife Australia, I find it inconceivable that shorebird habitat for a threatened species (and all the other animals and humans who share the space) should be handed over to the racing industry. I find it quite shocking and disturbing. Clearly the environmental movement does not have the financial resources to give us the same clout and ‘value’ as the racing industry.

Our precious beaches are not places for thundering hooves. Daily I watch these valiant little birds struggle to raise their chicks on beaches where they face multiple challenges including predation, the vagaries of climate and the swelling human tide. They do not need further insults and they do not deserve disregard. And neither do we, those of us who dedicate time, energy and passion to the cause of saving a species and positively contributing to our environment.

Please rethink your governments position and put our fragile and precious environment, and the creatures who call it home, first.

They have no where else to go, the racing industry does!

Yours faithfully
Karen Wootton
wootton@dragnet.com.au
Wallaga Lake is on the Far South Coast of NSW and, whether it is open or not, has always been a favourite nesting site for Crested Terns, Fairy Terns and Red-capped Plovers, and more importantly, threatened Little Terns, Pied Oystercatchers and Hooded Plovers. This season the lake is closed and the wide beach and sandspit hosted four nesting sites. The Pied Oystercatchers laid three eggs on the spit and were followed by Hooded Plovers with two eggs and, two pairs of Little Terns. Predators are always a threat to the eggs and chicks, but this season a special team is guarding over them.

The nesting site is on NSW Crown Land under the care of the local Council and the birds are the responsibility of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). So the team is made up of the NPWS Threatened Shorebird Recovery Program Coordinator Sophie Hall-Aspland, NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Marine Parks Ranger Shamaram Eichmann, local volunteers Richard and Oung and two young Yuin women, Troylene and Amelia Parsons who are participating in a Sea Rangers Program. The team is also backed up by two pest-animal controllers Nick and Mike.

NSW Crown Lands funding provided an opportunity for Nick and Mike to eradicate any foxes, cats and pesky ravens that might take either the eggs or chicks. So far the Pied Oystercatchers have hatched two chicks out of three eggs and the Hooded Plovers hatched two chicks from their two eggs. Unfortunately one of the Little Terns was injured by an overly protective Hooded Plover and they abandoned their eggs, whilst the other Little Terns somehow lost two of the three caged eggs and abandoned their nest.

The team meets on the site each Wednesday morning to check on the nests and hopefully find new ones and discuss what is happening. This is particularly important for the two young women who are learning about coastal processes. The whole site is marked with signs in an attempt to keep dogs and people out of the area. The nests of the Hooded Plover and Little Terns are caged in an effort to keep the foxes and ravens out. The Hooded Plovers are happy to walk through the large mesh, but the Little Terns need to be able to fly in through the open top of the cage. Nick and Mike disposed of two foxes and were then using solar powered flashing lights at night to deter others from coming into the area, which seemed to work as no new footprints or scats were found on the site.

Once the chicks have hatched the Pied Oystercatchers take the youngsters into the more vegetated areas of the dunes to avoid detection from hungry eyes. Often the only way you know there are young around is the decoy fluttering and calling of the parents. One of the Hooded Plovers has been tagged P2, a male that has been active in the area for many years.

The Sea Rangers Program is a component of the Marine Estate Management Strategy aimed at increasing the participation and decision making by Aboriginal communities on the NSW coast and each area has a mini-project that they are involved in. The Wallaga Lake team was concentrating on the nesting threatened shorebirds whilst other projects include employment as rangers and project officers, marine litter collection and eradicating coastal weeds, cultural site protection, Aboriginal marine tourism as well as capacity building and training opportunities. Apart from learning about the local birds the young women were provided with a range of related training by DPI and NPWS. One morning we were lucky enough to see turtle tracks leading from the ocean into the lake where they possibly feed on sea grass, algae and jellies.

It’s sad that many of our breeding shorebirds are threatened, but also encouraging to see what can be done if a few people get together and put in the effort to protect what we do have.

Alison Kuiter
The Christmas season is a busy one in our region with a large influx of visitors drawn to our beautiful beaches. It’s also a busy time for our beach-nesting birds. Some will be on nests, some will be raising chicks and some will already have fledglings and a few successful ones may even have started on a second brood.

Our main beach-nesting birds on the NSW Far South Coast are Hooded Plovers, Fairy Terns and Little Terns. (A few Fairy Terns usually mix in with the Little Tern colonies and the occasional Masked Lapwing pair also nest on our beaches.)

The main Little Tern colony is at Mogareeka, near the Bega River mouth, and this year consists of about 60 birds with about 25 active nests at the beginning of December. The first chicks hatched on 2nd December and they will grow quickly on a high protein diet of fresh fish delivered by their parents. Those early chicks that survive through to fledging will be flying by Christmas and will be progressively joined by others to seven-year-olds, under the watchful eye of team leaders and some helpful adults.

"The Joey’s built the shelters largely on their own. They drilled, attached screws and labelled the shelters and then lacquered and sprinkled with sand to make them more attractive to the birds.”

Ms Sullivan was thrilled to have the children involved. “It’s a really fun, hands on activity. But the kids are also learning about the beach nesting birds who share the Lakes with us. These shelters are a successful tool in the fight to protect chicks of beach nesting bird species. They offer shade and protection for newly hatched, highly mobile chicks and are used regularly by the young birds.”

The chick shelters have been installed at a number of significant sites for breeding birds across the Gippsland Lakes. Beachgoers are asked not to disturb these A-frame shelters if seen as they provide critical support for endangered beach nesting birds and are a key contributor to assist in survival. The Bairsdale Joey Scout Group will have the opportunity to see their chick shelter constructions in place when they embark on a boat tour later in November aboard the ‘Lady Jodie’. The tour will include conversations and activities with Parks Victoria at Rotamah Island and BirdLife Australia.

BirdLife East Gippsland’s Newsletter, The Chat, December 2018

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We already have our first Hooded Plover fledglings for the season at Aragunnu, in Mimosa Rocks National Park. These birds are critically endangered in NSW, so every new fledgling is warmly welcomed.

Pied Oystercatcher chicks can be found at Saltwater Creek, Aragunnu and Mogareeka and should be soon be joined by others in Mimosa Rocks and Ben Boyd National Parks, given the number of active nests there.

Unlike the birds mentioned above, Red-capped Plovers are not regarded as threatened and they breed successfully on many of our beaches, including such busy ones as Tura. So, if you find yourself grumbling about increased traffic, crowded beaches, supermarkets and restaurants over the summer holidays, spare a thought for our beach-nesting birds who are probably having similar grumbles.

Lisa Berzins, Far South Coast Birdwatchers Inc. Newsletter, Nov/Dec 2018
Application for Membership

I, ................................................................. ................................................................. (Print full name)

Of ................................................................................................................................. (Address)

Phone: .................................................. Mobile: ........................................ (Occupation) .................................................................

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

I attach my payment of $10/ person or $20/ family (select one) 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 and any membership rules that are adopted. If my application is rejected the money 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:

(a) post to my above address  (b) email to .................................................................

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

I would like to assist in some of these activities: (please select one or more by placing X in the front of the statement)

Preferred activities:

Hooded plover biennial count Monitoring breeding birds Writing media articles
Helping locate new nests Distributing information brochures Helping put up fences/signs
Wardening busy sites Activities to raise community awareness Constructing chick shelters

Previous experience:

Observing birds/animals Bird/animal population surveys Bird Identification
Monitoring nests Data collection Finding nests Public education

(Optional) DONATION: I would like to donate to the Association and attach my cheque, or have used internet banking, for: $.............

Signature of Applicant: ................................................................. Date: ......./........../.............

Please send completed form to friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc. PO Box 36, Rye 3941

Payment Options:

1. Cheque, made payable to Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc, posted to PO Box 36, Rye 3941

2. Internet banking - Account Name: Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc

Bendigo Bank: BSB No. 633000 Account No. 159026897 (Please identify the payer, and also notify the Treasurer, by emailing hplpowermorpen@gmail.com of the transaction).

Official use only:

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:............./............./............

March 2017