



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER NEWS

Issue Number 25

The 2015/2016 Hooded Plover breeding season officially finished on Sunday 3 April, when Summer Ranger Renae Haylock filmed our last chick for the season flying.

Unofficial numbers are: 78 nests monitored; 182 eggs laid; 53 nests failed; 51 chicks hatched and 7 chicks fledged.

This season FoHP have had 33 people monitoring the beaches and entering data onto the Portal (this includes PV staff).

- 2567 observations were made
- over 200 dogs reported off-leash to FoHP by members
- one new Hooded Plover nesting site – Dimmicks beach
- nests also reported at PT Leo and Flinders.

Volunteer contributions:

- over 1300 hrs spent on the beach
- 282 hours in providing education to schools
- 20,000+ km travelled by our volunteers since July 2015.

A big thank you to the Summer Rangers this year, not only did they keep a watchful eye on Hooded Plover nests and chicks this season, erected fencing and signage when needed, they have also done an equipment audit and made up nest kits, and then distributed it all out to the ticket boxes for next season. We all hope to see you back next season.

Thank you to all the FoHP volunteers who helped monitor our beaches or helped at many of our events. Your commitment is gratefully acknowledged. I hope you all have a well-deserved break before we start again in August.

Some unusual reports:

- Gunnamatta: children seen chasing and catching Hooded Plover chicks – they apparently thought chicks were baby penguins
- Flinders: off-leash dog seen running into fenced area, disturbs Hooded Plover off nest, raven swoops in and eats eggs
- Pt Leo: castle made around Red-capped Plover nest
- St Andrews: woman on horse entering beach via car park then riding towards Moana.

Of course the biggest news this year is the Governments decision to ban dogs in the National Park from 1 November 2016.

This decision had tri-partisan support from Labour, opposition and the Greens.

The Dog Ban will not only benefit all our beach-nesting birds but all flora and fauna in the park, like the White-footed Dunnart and Southern Brown Bandicoot (both EPBC listed as endangered).

For more information go to:

<http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/mornington-peninsula-national-park/plans-and-projects/dog-walking-review>



First chick to fledge, at Fowlers beach. Photo by Glenn Ehmke

In light of the Dog Ban I feel there is a bigger question: How do we engender the importance of our National Park and the need to cherish it, protect its biodiversity and a history that encompasses people living there for over 40,000 years?

The Mornington Peninsula has the highest visitation rate in Victoria. It's close proximity to Melbourne and the many activities it offers bring thousands of people each week.

'Victoria's National Park network provides habitats for 91% of the states 306 listed rare and threatened species and 90% of Victoria's 1857 listed rare and threatened plant species'. Hon Lisa Neville MP

Comparison of behaviour

Compare visiting a friend to visiting a National Park; some really do behave very differently!

- do we walk through a friend's garden beds (trampling plants) to get to the front door a little quicker or do we take the path?
- would we take our dog, unleash it on arrival, allowing it to chase our friend's children,

chickens or cat?

- on leaving, would we leave any rubbish on our friend's garden or lawn?

Why is it acceptable?

- for some to walk through the dunes trampling on native plants, ancient middens, and nests
- to ride/ surf down dunes causing excessive erosion and destroying habitat
- allow dogs off-leash to chase birds, annoy other beach goers and interfere with native animals.

How many have a National Park on their doorstep, beautiful bush and coastal walks, spectacular scenery and dolphins swimming in the bay only minutes away. We live here because of its beauty now we need to encourage other to cherish it too.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this newsletter.

Diane Lewis

A windswept shore they make their home,
these small birds with spindly legs,
who make sandy scrapes and lay freckled eggs,
amongst the sand and rocks and foam,
they make their home.

Where seaweed and shells festoon the beach,
there are signs and fences and shelters erected,
Friends trying to keep Hooded Plovers protected,
to educate, inform and even beseech,
Please care for the Hoodies and share the beach.

Karen Wootton



Fox at Guinida



Feral cat at London Bridge. Photos by Mark Pinney

FRIENDS OF THE HOODED PLOVER (MORNINGTON PENINSULA) INC

Incorporation number: A0054904

COMMITTEE President: Diane Lewis **Vice President:** Mark Lethlean **Secretary:** Lois Greene
Treasurer: Jo Hansen **General members:** Chris Willocks, Jenny Griffiths, Sandy Brewer, Hannah Lethlean

BANK ACCOUNT DETAILS BSB: 063 891 Account No: 10127668

CONTACTING FoHP 0419 320 205 or 5986 7660, PO Box 36 Rye 3941, hploversmornpen@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER Contributions: Thank you for all the great articles, notes & photos. Please keep sharing your Hooded Plover experiences.

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

Deadline for next newsletter: Friday 22 July 2016

A FLEDGLING OBSERVER

Sadly, breeding success is rare in the Hooded Plover world. So, as a newcomer to Friends of the Hooded Plover (FoHP) I've been incredibly fortunate to have witnessed the success of the Fowlers chick. And what a journey it's been - from vulnerable cotton ball on pretzel legs to bold, confident, independence. I've learned about (and I've seen) the challenges these beautiful little birds face, just trying to do what most of us take for granted - live, flourish, raise a family and stay safe. These challenges are almost insurmountable so, to have played a small part in monitoring the Fowlers family group, feels wonderful. Between Parks Victoria, BirdLife Australia and FoHP the aim is to identify, protect, monitor, educate and inform about these little, endangered coastal treasures. These birds must face the harsh ocean beach conditions, the vagary of the tides, predators (both natural and introduced) and increasing human activity. Very few of these factors can be mitigated. But the human impact component is one area where we can all make a difference.

Sure, we all want to enjoy the natural environment and there is nothing more Australian than a day at the beach - but our increased use of the beach over summer coincides with the Hooded Plovers breeding season.

Shallow sand scrapes and tiny freckled eggs are no match, even with their plucky and determined guardians, against a relentless human tide. If we could all just be a bit more respectful and thoughtful with what we do on those days at the beach we might be able to tip the balance in the Hoodies favour. They have nowhere else to go. The beach is their home. Seeing these birds struggle valiantly against the elements is inspiring and yet we can have such a negative impact on them, often without even being aware of it.

Awareness is the key. An unleashed dog can trample a nest, crush an egg, traumatise or kill a chick. Protective parents may hide a chick from danger and, whilst that chick is protected, neither parents or chick will forage and feed for the duration of the disturbance. Repeat this disturbance on multiple occasions and 'failed' will be entered on the Hooded Plover database. Another loss.

Failure in nature is inevitable but failure, because we didn't try (or care), is not an option. Such simple things that we can do - leash your dog, visit the beach with your dog only during permitted hours, or take your dog to another one of the Peninsula's splendid dog friendly areas or bay beaches. Sit away from the signed and roped areas that indicate a

nest is present. Walk along the waters edge where you will be less likely to destroy a nest carefully hidden amongst the seaweed and cuttlefish on the sand above the high tide line or on a dune face. Give these birds some room. Our choices and actions can have a positive or negative impact. Four weeks of incubation, five weeks until fledging (being able to fly adds an element of independence and ability to decrease the risk of predation). All during the peak human beach usage season. Unless we learn to share the beach we will eventually lose this endangered bird. Why should we care you ask. Does it matter if these little birds struggle and are eventually erased from our coastal beaches?

Of course it matters. They add to the biodiversity of our beautiful coast line, part of the fragile web of life to which we all belong. And they have as much right to be there as we do. Can we all just be a bit kinder, a bit more informed, a bit more of a beach using community, a bit more sharing. A 'bit' more can make a 'lot' more difference.

These are the things that I am learning through my involvement with FoHP and I thank all the members who are helping me to learn about these gorgeous little birds.

Karen Wootton



Bottom arrows indicates location of dune face nest at Fowlers beach. Photo by Glenn Ehmke



Fowlers beach Hooded Plover chick, 20 days old. Photo by Glenn Ehmke



Val Ford, Diane Lewis, Karen Wootton, Rosalba Catena and Jo Hansen toast the fledgling. Photo by Lois Greene

HEARTS FLUTTER AS 'FOWLERS CHICK' TAKES FLIGHT

The flight of a small bird on a quiet southern Mornington Peninsula surf beach saw people jumping for joy.

A young hooded plover that stretched its wings before gaining altitude from Fowlers beach is the first recorded successful take-off by a fledged hooded plover chick this season.

However, a note of caution underlies the applause and relief experienced by the small band of people dedicated to the hooded plover's survival on the peninsula.

If the small birds are to remain in viable numbers, that chick needs to be joined in the air by at least another nine before the breeding season ends.

Sadly, if history is any guide, this number is unlikely to be reached.

Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) president Diane Lewis described the flight of the chick at Fowlers as being "a joy and relief".

"It is such a wonderful feeling seeing these little chicks fly."

Ms Lewis said that since last August volunteers had spent more than 1000 hours "investing time and energy" watching "these shy little birds" at various beaches, many facing the frequent fury of the Bass Strait surf.

Although this breeding season's statistics are still coming in, the volunteers and Parks Victoria rangers have since September monitored 74 nesting attempts by 32 pairs of hooded plovers. Some of the pairs have nested up to five times without result, while others have given up after the first attempt.

Of the 35 chicks that have hatched just six were alive two weeks ago. And of those survivors three were more than four weeks old and the others just days old.

Four nests were still classed as "active".

The situation for the plovers is dire. Calling where they lay their eggs a nest can be misleading. There is no structured nest, just a depression in the sand.

Although well camouflaged the eggs are easily spotted by marauding seagulls, ravens or magpies. They are also trampled by roaming dogs and favoured by foxes.

Once hatched, the chicks can run but not fly and again be-

come prey to a variety of animals and birds. A kestrel was recorded by a time-lapse camera earlier this year attacking a fledgling.

The amount of rejoicing by the protectors of the hooded plover at the survival of just one chick is so high because the chances of a chick ever taking to the air are so slim.

"After 19 years of weekly monitoring hooded plovers on Fowlers and nearby beaches I still walk onto the beaches with my fingers crossed," Val Ford of BirdLife Mornington Peninsula said.

"Will the nest still be there or will it have been washed away by a very high tide? Arriving on the beach and seeing both parents feeding on the rock shelf is always a worry – why isn't one bird on the nest and the other on guard nearby?"

The vulnerability of the birds heightens Ms Ford's fears.

"How many dogs will be either on or off lead and roaming the beach? Unfortunately, Fowlers and nearby beaches are dog central; many beach users ignore the no dogs and dogs on lead regulations.

"Have the parents been able to see every potential danger and get the chicks hidden away before they are trampled on or chased by dogs, have the parents been able to brood the chicks in their critical first 10 days.

"After the adults' three failed nesting attempts the Fowlers beach hooded plover chick achieved lift off - the chick had survived 35 days and fledged. I can now uncross the fingers."

Karen Wootton, a relatively newcomer to the Friends of the Hooded Plover group feels "incredibly fortunate" to have seen what is now known as "the Fowlers chick".

"From vulnerable cotton ball on pretzel legs to bold, confident, independence. I've learned about – and I've seen - the challenges these beautiful little birds face just trying to do what most of us take for granted: live, flourish, raise a family and stay safe," she writes in an account of her time with the group.

Ms Wootton said the only challenge facing hooded plovers that could be changed is "the human impact component".



Plover count: Volunteers, from left, Val Ford, Lois Greene, Karen Wootton, Jo Hansen and Rosalba Catena, at Fowlers beach on the southern Mornington Peninsula where the first hooded plover chick of the season has managed to take flight. Photo by Diane Lewis

"If we could all just be a bit more respectful and thoughtful with what we do on those days at the beach we might be able to tip the balance in the hoodies favour.

"They have nowhere else to go. The beach is their home.

"An unleashed dog can trample a nest, crush an egg, traumatise or kill a chick. Protective parents may hide a chick from danger and, while that chick is protected, neither parents nor chick will forage and feed for the duration of the disturbance.

"Repeat this disturbance on multiple occasions and 'failed' will be entered on the hooded plover database. Another loss."

Ms Wootton said hooded plovers would stand a greater chance of survival if dogs were taken to "dog friendly" beaches and if people would sit away from fenced off areas and walk close to the water's edge.

Failure in nature was inevitable, but simple changes to human behaviour could bring success to the hooded plovers.

Keith Platt, Southern Peninsula News 16 February 2016

FLEDGED CHICK- BUT NOT WITHOUT ITS DRAMA

The St Andrews East (SAE) Hooded Plover pair of JY and SD have a slightly different set of threats to most on the Mornington Peninsula. No dogs allowed, but plenty of horses to keep them on their toes. It's a compact territory of about 300 metres. Generally their nests are crammed between sheer dune walls and encroaching tides. They have lost a lot of nests to the sea and often the few chicks that hatched didn't survive very long. But this year appeared to be different, there simply was lot more sand.

14 December 2015: The last of 2 chicks from their first clutch had disappeared a week before, having survived 16 days. We were about to call 'failed chick' on the portal when we found this new nest of 2 eggs (soon to become 3) high on the beach.

4 January 2016: Our Monday morning walks after a busy, hot, summer weekend are often full of surprises. This day's was no exception. I was on my way to the Boags Rock territory and on passing the SAE nest site, noticed the eggs had gone and the birds were further up the beach. Disappointing.

The Boags Rock nest was due to hatch that day. It was high in the dune, behind a permanent fence so we were pretty confident of getting some chicks. However, the night before had seen an injured horse rider require an emergency helicopter rescue off the beach. The resultant downdraft had destroyed the nest, eggs and most of our fences. We were lucky that the adults had managed to survive. These birds just can't take a break.

On our way back west along the beach we were considering removing the nest fencing for SAE. It was then that I noticed 2 eggs lying on the open sand 10 to 15 metres east of the last nest outside the fenced area. I had seen them incubating only 5 days earlier. No footprints, no nest and me with no idea. At the time, I thought it had to be either new nest and that I had incorrectly thought they were incubating but my suspicious mind really believed someone had moved them as a malicious joke.

13 January: I had kept checking this pair as I was confident that they had to be the eggs from the original nest. Sure enough, at 6am in the morning, on a very hot day, I found SD brooding 2 chicks.

So had the relocation of the eggs been malicious? Talking

with Ash and Steve from PV, who were present for the helicopter rescue, it is entirely possible that the eggs had actually been blown down the beach and the parents had managed to nuzzle two of them together in a rudimentary nest when I'd found them. It's a logical thought.

1 February: The chicks had progressed well and were 19 days old. This day I noticed from one of my photographic images that one of the chicks had a piece of seaweed stuck to its rump. It appeared superficial and I didn't really think more about it.

8 February: Although I'd checked the chicks in the previous days I hadn't photographed them. Today, at 26 days old, I noticed that one of the chicks looked poorly, was obviously smaller than its sibling and had faecal staining around its rump. It was however active and seemed to be feeding well. I advised the BirdLife Beach-nesting Birds team.

13 February: At 31 days there was no change in the appearance of the smaller chick.

14 February: The difficult decision to capture the chick and have it examined by a wildlife veterinarian was made. Both chicks were captured. The small chick weighed only 45 grams, 15 grams less than its sibling. It had a swollen and inflamed cloaca, loss of all surrounding feathers and faecal staining of the ventral and lateral tail. Its body condition was similar to its sibling. There was no foreign material caught up around the cloacal region.

Cloacal swabs and smears were taken from both chicks and the soiled areas cleaned. Due to the poor survival rates of Hooded Plovers in captivity, it was decided to release the chick.

16 February: The larger chick was confirmed to have fledged but was also the last time its smaller sibling was seen.

The pathology results showed the smaller chick to have Salmonellosis serotype Victoria. We are unable to establish whether this was an acquired disease or secondary to something else. Thankfully, no other birds, but especially the five other St Andrews fledglings have demonstrated similar symptoms.

Mark Lethlean



Two eggs on sand 15 metres away from nest;
Chick hiding behind horse faeces



Brooding two chicks; 19 day old chick with seaweed attached



Siblings at 31 days, smaller chick ruffled and with faecal stains.
Photos by Mark Lethlean



Veterinary examination of 32 day old sick chick.
Photo by Renee Mead

E WEEK AT THE BRIARS

'E'xhausting starts with an 'E', but from 15 to 18 March 'E' stood for 'E'ducate, 'E'ngage and 'E'ntertain primary school students from across the region at 'E'nvironment Week at The Briars in Mt Martha.

For the sixth consecutive year FoHP had a marquee at the event providing the children and their teachers/parents with information about the Hoodies. Volunteers from FoHP manned the marquee from 9 - 1430 each day and we had a total of about 800 children who visited us.

It was a very interactive display with a Hooded Plover beach environment set up outside where the children were able to identify where the Hoodies live and some of the hazards they face. Fake Hoodie eggs placed in the display showed the children just how difficult it is to see them on the sand. This theme was continued inside with a photo board reinforcing what the children had just learned, a 'spot the nest' series of laminated beach scene photos (the 'Where's Wally' of the Hoodie world), and a table of taxidermy animals where the children were asked to identify those that were natural and introduced threats to the Hoodies. There was literature available and of course the ever popular badge making (we were ably assisted by amazing Year 8 volunteers).

Our display, and the information provided, was well received by both the children and adults. There were almost some shoulder dislocation moments with little arms stretched high in the air from those keen to answer our questions. The level of knowledge from some of the students was fantastic and they seemed to infect their classmates with their enthusiasm. The emphasis of the week was on how lucky we are to have these beautiful little birds on our beaches, keeping the beaches clean for all of us (especially the animals who call the beach home) to enjoy, walking along the hard, wet sand to avoid disturbing the birds and crushing any eggs and understanding and respecting any fencing, signage and shelters.



Taxidermied animals and badge making tables. Photos by Diane Lewis

There were many children who proudly declared themselves 'Hoodie Heroes' so I think we can safely declare our presence at 'E' Week an 'E'normous success.

Karen Wootton

Fattening up Red-necked Stints

At Honeysuckle Point on 19 April were seven Red-capped Plovers, four Double-banded Plovers and numerous Red-necked Stints, some with breeding plumage fattening up for the flight to Siberia. In response to my email note Rob Patrick responded:

On 29 February there were an estimated 150 Red-necked Stint on the beach. Since then numbers have declined, most likely due to departures to the breeding grounds. On 9 April the VWSG made a successful catch of Red-necked Stints and one adult Double-banded Plover at Yallock Creek. The following extract from the Catch Report may be of interest.

"Of the 298 Stints, 193 were new birds and 105 were retraps, i.e.35%. Of the Stints 55 were juveniles which, at 18% of the flock, is twice the expected %, which means that many of the adults had already departed for their northern breeding grounds".

Mark Lethlean



Red-necked Stint in pre-breeding plumage; Double-banded Plover in non-breeding plumage. Photos by Mark Lethlean

HOODED PLOVER FEEDING OBSERVATIONS

Hooded Plovers are omnivorous with a diet that is said to consist of polychaetes, molluscs, crustaceans, insects, turions (type of bud) and seeds. I often watch and photograph adults and chicks darting across sand or on rock platforms pecking at invisible morsels. For the first time, this year, St Andrews had five chicks fledge and so there was ample opportunity to watch the varying feeding strategies. We noticed that many of the younger chicks seemed content to feed high on the beach even when the shoreline was free of traffic. Even while watching and photographing their busy strategy of run-stop-peck we still couldn't find their target diet. We assumed an amphipod although they fed off the sand between the seaweed wrack.

As the chicks grew they ventured more and more onto the rocky platforms. It is a dangerous strategy, as they can get isolated by tides if beach traffic blocks escape routes. But the rewards obviously outweigh the risks.

Yesterday I managed to watch the newly fledged chick at Moana scouring the wet sand. I watched him/her devour a dead centipede and dead bee. I guess that makes them a scavenger.

I also watched the feeding strategy of the older fledged chicks at Miami feeding in 1 to 2cm of water on the rock platform. Their strategy was very similar to that of an egret-head on side, studying their prey beneath the water and then, on occasions, grabbing food with their head totally immersed.

I have recently had the opportunity of comparing the rocky platforms within the Point Nepean National Park where there is little human interference. The contrast with our denuded rocky platforms at St Andrews is an important reminder that rock walking and poaching maybe destroying this valuable food reserve.

Not only for Hooded Plovers but a myriad of shorebirds. This year alone we have noted Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers, Double-banded Plovers, Silver, Kelp, and Pacific Gulls, White-faced Herons, Masked Lapwings, Common Starlings, Willie Wagtails, Welcome Swallows, Ruddy Turnstones and even an Australasian Pipit feeding from this valuable resource.

Mark Lethlean



Negotiating the rocks



Devouring a dead centipede



Devouring a dead bee



Feeding on turions



Feeding with head totally immersed.



Stalking egret style. Photos by Mark Lethlean

FIRST YEAR BNB VOLUNTEER'S HIGHLIGHTS

Looking for an environmental conservation project, I joined BirdLife's Beach Nesting Bird (BNB) group as a volunteer early December last year. For me it fulfilled the attributes I was seeking in a conservation project in that it enabled me to pursue my healthy exercise regime of beach walking, the opportunity to learn more about the 'resident' Red-capped Plovers on my local Balnarring beach and finally to facilitate my, now four year old hobby, bird photography. Prior to my retirement, despite my professional background, I had no interest in birds or photography.

Activities on my local Balnarring beach quickly extended to include Somers beach and a weekly six kilometre and return walk to Sandy Point where I located a 'resident' pair of Phillip Island born Hooded Plover, that during my observation time did not manage to successfully breed. Also as I travel frequently within Australia, I now include extended beach walks, with bird observations and photography, in my itinerary.

The highlights of my season's BNB activities include:

1. The location and management of a nesting (2 eggs) Red-capped Plover pair (my first). This first observation of breeding activity on my local beach in recent history caused much interest and assistance from the local foreshore management and other locals. This beach is heavily traversed every morning for four hours by permitted horse riders (most being racing thoroughbreds in training) and walkers with dogs, many of the latter being illegally off lead. One chick successfully hatched before it disappeared at six days of age; cause unknown. Hopefully in future seasons we can build upon this small start to revive breeding on this beach to it's former level.

2. On the observation of a juvenile Red-capped Plover (my first juvenile), flagged 'CO', at Sandy Point on 30/1/2016, Glenn Ehmke was able to ascertain that this bird was tagged by Dan Lees, a BNB Project Officer, at a Deakin research site at Cheetham, Point Cook.

Dan emailed the following information:

"I found the two egg nest on the 3/09/2015, the parents were both already flagged and confirmed as CP (female) and CA (male). The nest hatched some time between 28/09/2015 and 29/09/2015, only one chick could be seen (the other was presumed perished) and was caught (band number 59169 and confirmed as male through genetic analysis). It was radio-tracked

and recaptured on the 27/10/2015 and flagged as CO. I continued to track CO until 3/11/2015 when it was 35 days old and capable of flight. After fledging was confirmed tracking was discontinued."

This was a great effort as this newly fledged bird had travelled some seventy kilometres from it's Point Cook birthplace to Sandy Point, and the researchers were grateful for the feedback.

3. Again at Sandy Point in mid February, I observed a single Grey Plover in company with the pair of 'resident' Hooded Plover before it flew out to sea. This again was a first sighting for me but subsequently I have sighted another six of these plover on an April Mud Island trip. Thanks to Mark Lethlean for the assistance in confirming the identification.

4. On a late December trip to Bruny Island Tasmania, at Adventure Bay I observed two pairs of Hooded Plover with six fledged juveniles and on an adjoining beach another pair with three fledged juveniles. This was very encouraging to see: a happy change from the poor fledgling numbers on our local Mornington Peninsula National Park beaches. All birds were unbanded.

5. Revisiting Tasmania in early March, I walked fourteen, mainly east coast, beaches for a Hooded Plover count of 70 adults, 34 juveniles and 1 late season chick. Again no banded birds. Along with the Hooded Plover were many Red-capped Plover, Double-banded Plover, Pied and Sooty Oyster-catchers, Red-necked Stints, Sanderlings and White-fronted Chats.

6. A more recent walk to Sandy Point on a low tide enabled, after a long commando crawl, the opportunity to photograph in close quarters feeding Crested Terns and juveniles. This was a bonus after the six kilometre and return walk to the point.



Red-capped Plover juvenile (CO)



Grey Plover



Juvenile Hooded Plovers



White-fronted Chat



Feeding Crested Terns. Photos by Andrew Browne

As you can see from the above, I've enjoyed my involvement as a BNB volunteer and have been able to combine it with my other interests. I look forward to my future ongoing BNB participation and a return of successful breeding activity on my local Balnarring beach. Thanks to the BNB team and especially Mark Lethlean and Glenn Ehmke for their advice and guidance: it is greatly appreciated.

Andrew Browne

EGGSHELL REMOVAL OBSERVATIONS

Early on Friday 12 February I was walking with anticipation to check on the Rye Carpark West pair, their eggs were due to hatch anytime now. As I got closer I saw that one bird got up off the eggs and charged down from the dune face toward where partner was standing at high tide mark, dropping something there and then returning to the nest. There it bobbed about a bit and picked up something and again ran very quickly back down to the partner waiting on the beach, again it dropped something and returned quickly to the nest and settled down to incubate.

I was puzzled, but not at any stage did I think that there were any chicks, as on leaving one bird was incubating and one bird was foraging at low tide. (I had not considered incubating and brooding at the same time in the nest)

After reading Jo's observations on the portal the following day, I realised that she had seen similar activity, but she got to see the three chicks! I never saw them, and was saddened that they were all gone by the next day.

Elizabeth Grierson

I visited the birds on the Saturday and saw all three chicks being very well supervised by the busy parents. As with many groups of offspring, one chick was constantly lagging behind, running ahead or coming out from cover before being told it was safe to do so. Karen observed " those gorgeous, energetic bundles." The parents had our sympathy.

When we checked them again on Sunday morning, the birds had moved down the beach approximately 180 metres further east than the nest. We were observing them through the binoculars looking for the chicks when one of the adults raced down to the water, carrying something in its mouth. The other adult followed for a short distance then returned to the beach. The first bird got to the water's edge and dropped what it was carrying, then charged back up the beach. I panicked as the object was the size and colour of a chick so I raced along the beach. I found an eggshell.

This was over a day later than the last egg hatched and nowhere near the nest. So we now know that this pair disposes of their eggshells in the water, but why so much later? Had they hidden the shell until the conditions were safe? The tide on Sunday was very low and the waves gentle, making disposal in the water safe from big waves. So on Sunday there was much charging around the beach and unnecessary panic from observers.

I continue to be surprised and impressed by the cleverness of the birds. I just wish we could be more successful at helping them to fledge their chicks. These three adventurous, busy chicks did not survive another day.

Jo Hansen

A WET AND WINDY MORNING



Brooding three ten day old chicks at Miami



Very wet ten day old chick at Miami. Photos by Mark Lethlean



Wet, but fledged, chick from St Andrews west.

BRILLIANT ARTISTRY

Only a few months ago, Pam Hearn from BirdLife Mornington Peninsula contacted me with regard to painting/drawing some of my Hooded Plover images. She'd heard from a reliable source (Val Ford) that I had 'zillions' of the things and could supply whatever she wanted; side-on, standing, sitting, running, flying or even copulating. Pam ignored the latter suggestion and wisely chose to paint an image of the Moana East parent, MU, with chick, running across the sand. Not only is the reproduction an amazing piece of work, Pam has very kindly

donated the framed painting to the Friends of Hooded Plover to 'use as we wish'.

So we thank Pam for this amazingly generous gift and will utilise her brilliant artistry to further Hooded Plover conservation.

Mark Lethlean



Pam handing over painting to Val and Mark; Pam's painting. Photos by David Reid



Moana East parent with chick. Photo by Mark Lethlean

DOG BAN HELPS PROTECT PLOVERS

Dogs will be banned from Mornington Peninsula National Park in a bid to protect the hooded plover. The ban will take effect from November 1 this year.

Dogs have been restricted to just 14.5km of the 42km park coastline since 2013 and Parks Victoria moved to extend the controls after a 2015 review. That review revealed ongoing impacts to fauna in the area, particularly to the threatened hooded plover.

Environment, Climate Change and Water Minister Lisa Neville said the restrictions introduced in 2013 did not deter dog walkers from the ecologically sensitive areas where the birds breed. "The evidence shows that dogs and hooded plovers don't mix," Ms Neville said. "This ban is the right decision to protect a vulnerable and threatened species for which the Mornington Peninsula National Park is an important habitat."

BirdLife Australia monitoring data from the Mornington Peninsula National Park showed that 70 per cent of hooded plover chicks were successfully fledged in areas where dogs were prohibited.

Friends of the Hooded Plover Mornington Peninsula president Diane Lewis said this season had so far produced five fledglings. A chick is fledged when it is about 35 days old and can fly. "In order to ensure the survival of the species, we need 10 to 12 fledglings every season," Ms Lewis said. "(Banning dogs) is a good decision that should help us get closer to achieving those numbers."

She said the move would help all fauna in the park, including bandicoots and other small marsupials. "There are so many things we can't control when it comes to protecting our wildlife," Ms Lewis said. "This is something we can do and it will make a difference."

Lucy Callander, Mornington Peninsula Leader newspaper, 29 March 2016

RED-CAPPED PLOVERS - POINT LEO/SHOREHAM 2015/16

From East Creek in Point Leo to Honeysuckle West in Shoreham we recorded eight separate Red-capped Plover nesting sites and one Hooded Plover nesting site over a distance of 2.5km.

Initially, all nests were recorded under Pt Leo as a general area. As the season progressed, we began to familiarise ourselves with pairs and assigned each nesting site with a territory:

1. Honeysuckle West, Shoreham: 1 nest (fenced), 2 eggs, 2 chicks, 0 fledge
2. Honeysuckle East, Shoreham: 1 nest (fenced), 2 eggs, 1 chick, 0 fledge
3. Nelson Court Access, Shoreham: 1 nest (fenced), 2 eggs, 2 chicks, 0 fledge
4. Seychelles West, Point Leo: 2 nests (fenced), 4 eggs, 2 chicks (open fence), 1 fledge
5. Seychelles East, Point Leo: 2 nests (fenced), 4 eggs, 4 chicks (open fence), 1 fledge
6. First Reef, Point Leo: 1 nest (fenced), 2 eggs, 2 chicks, 2 fledge
7. SLSC, Point Leo: 2 nests (fenced), 4 eggs, 1 chick, 1 fledge
8. East Creek, Point Leo: 1 nest, 2 eggs, 1 chick, 0 fledge
9. Point Leo Hooded Plover: 1 nest (fenced), 2 eggs

Season Summary: 11 nests, 22 eggs, 15 chicks, 5 fledglings

- These figures are an absolute underestimation; volunteer recruitment needed
- Shoreham Foreshore has had a recent fox control program
- Dog off leash issues from sites 1 through to 6 are an enormous problem to be hopefully addressed with DELWP and CoM in March 15 meeting
- Two nests interfered with, possibly to protect. Sandcastle and rock platform. Need of community education.

Red-capped Plover Behaviour

- Very difficult to ascertain normal behaviour when birds were under so much pressure from beach-goers, surfers, joggers and dogs on and off lead. Did parents move chicks into communal areas 4 and 5 by choice or under pressure?
- Nest fences very effective and afforded protection from crushing. Birds very resilient and would remain on nest even under extreme pressure. SLSC nest would have over 1000 people walking past over a warm weekend.
- Only saw one male incubating in early morning
- Birds readily performed distraction displays to protect nests as well as chicks. Would put themselves at extreme risk with dogs off lead.
- Hard to reconcile which chicks were from which territory
- Very often I only observed one parent with a chick. In communal area there may be one male with one chick and one female with another chick. The assumption was made that they were from different families.



All nests identified were fenced. Open fenced chick refuges with signs indicated in blue.

- Differentiation between pale female and juvenile quite challenging at times
- Open fencing for chick protection very effective for providing refuge. Even for large flocks of Red-necked Stints
- Need better relevant signage
- Are chicks shelters worth considering?

Data collection and community awareness

The Friends of Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc. has voted to be inclusive of, and support the monitoring and data collection for Red-capped Plovers along Western Port beaches.

Community awareness and involvement, thus far, has been amazing. Many community members had no idea that their recreational beach was actually alive. The RCP on WP beaches has become the ambassadorial bird for both the HP and migratory shorebirds.

Mark Lethlean



Female Red-capped Plover on nest.
Photo by Mark Lethlean

RED-CAPPED PLOVER MONITORING - WESTERN PORT AND FLINDERS

Why?

Our involvement with Red-capped Plovers this season came about as a by-product of trying to mentor Hooded Plover volunteers at Western Port. During a walk with Philippa Hoskin we found a very exposed RCP nest adjacent to the Point Leo SLSC and felt the need to protect it. And thus it grew...

Jon Fallow, from the Phillip Island Nature Reserve has been requesting more monitoring of HPs along the Western Port coast. There have been only random reports of sightings feeding back and they were most commonly Phillip Island birds. As a consequence, and in discussions with Val Ford, we put a request in the September 2015 *Mornington Peninsula Birdlife* newsletter for members to report their sightings to me.

We have also had requests from Grainne Maguire and Renee Meed to investigate bird and nest sightings reported to the BirdLife Beach-nesting Birds team by members of the public in the Western Port region. They have always been RCP nests.

Mentoring

Many of the volunteers and rangers on the Western Port beaches are probably more interested in RCP than HPs. It's understandable, as they are far more common. This year was the first HP nest recorded inside the bay for a very long time (thanks to Philippa Hoskin) so although significant, it is an uncommon event. It is impossible, while mentoring, to walk past and ignore RCP nests that are so exposed and not offer some level of protection.

BirdLife are keen for more RCP data. Although the most common of the shore-nesting birds, ironically, less is known about their behaviours and life-cycle than for the HP. In HANZAB there is no fledging time nor complete understanding of territories, nor the dynamics of parenting. They don't know if the populations are steady or in decline.

BirdLife have changed MyHoodie Portal to MyBeachBird Portal and in the future there is the possibility that some FoHP groups may rename to FoBNB. Next year Oystercatchers and Beach Stone-curlews will also be added to the portal.

Outcomes

Community awareness and involvement has been amazing. The RCP on Western Port beaches has become the ambassadorial bird for both the HP and migratory shorebirds.

We began in Point Leo with the support of Tony Walkington the local ranger, and were then invited by Peter Carroll, the ranger for Shoreham, to provide a similar service. The Balnarring ranger has become involved with a nest discovered and fenced by Andrew Browne which hatched a single chick. We regularly get emails and texts from the general public regarding chicks and nests.

Nest protection works brilliantly. The flight initiation distance (FID) for these nesting birds is extremely low and they will remain on the nest in the face of extreme disturbance. Even as I set up the fence they will be trying to get back onto the nest. The open chick fences are also



Volunteer Rob Patrick explaining nest fencing to beach users. Photo by Mark Lethlean

working extremely well affording much needed refuge. There are even up to 200 Red-necked Stints making use of the protection at times.

So our limited results for 2015/2016: Shoreham/Point Leo: 12 nests (all managed) 24 eggs, 15 chicks (2 refuges created), 5 fledglings. Balnarring: 1 nest (managed), 1 chick.

Where to from here?

We are desperately in need of more volunteers. My hope is that we can recruit more volunteers and train rangers and staff to take on more of the work. The rangers have been so supportive but unfortunately spend most of their time during the breeding season managing the camping aspects of their reserves and have little time for much else. It is the basis of their income.

BirdLife BNB team is planning to run a joint workshop for volunteers and rangers prior to next breeding season.

There is a tremendous opportunity for keen observers to be part of the monitoring and data collection that is only just starting to gather momentum. It is quite exciting, as there is so much to learn about the behaviours and life cycle of this supposedly common but enigmatic shorebird.

So we invite people to register their interest at hploversmornpen@gmail.com The breeding season is now over but the birds are still present, flocking on the beaches. Hopefully we will hold workshops this September/October.

Mark Lethlean

BELLARINE/BREAMLEA HOODIE NEWS

BELLARINE NEWS

There's plenty of news to report from the Bellarine, as Andrea's stories below can attest.

Point Lonsdale

I'm pleased to report that both of HY and unbanded's chicks at Point Lonsdale fledged on 5 February, much to the elation of the local volunteers.



HY family 24 February 2016. Photo by Robin Spry

The family had moved to their usual chick-rearing territory - 1km west of their nesting zone, a much quieter section of beach, and were successful with only minimal wardening.

Sadly, nearby EL & PT's chicks were missing after only two days. They hatched on 28 January, the day before the plane crash off the Point Lonsdale coast and the subsequent increased beach activity and traffic may well have contributed to their demise.

Collendina

Typically, late February/March is the wind down season for both Hooded Plovers and volunteers, with most chicks fledged and finding their way in the world. AD and unbanded didn't get this memo and hatched their chicks on 24 February



Tyre tracks SES post-plane crash 30 January 2016.
Photo by John Bowman

at 6W, Collendina.

Their previous nest was abandoned a week before the due date after the extreme heat (44°C) and strong winds of 13 January.



AD eggs after storm 14 January 2016. Photo by John Bowman

Right on cue, all three chicks hatched but sadly, one chick was eaten by a magpie on day 5...right before a volunteer, who was helpless to do anything as it happened so quickly!

It's unfortunate that both hoodie and magpie families have claimed this stretch of beach as 'their' territory as the magpies were an ever-present threat and most volunteers experienced magpie-induced 'near' heart attacks as the magpies and hoodies played 'Cat and Mouse' along the length of the beach.

On several occasions, the hen would protect/brood her chicks, one under each wing, whilst AD would fend off the magpies.

To add to the excitement, these chicks were on a beach which is 'Dogs on Leash - September to March' but as it also abuts the 'dog beach', off-lead dogs were a frequent threat.

Due to these threats the family was warded from 8am until 8pm, in two hour shifts; which sounds intense, but without this volunteer input, I'm convinced the outcome would have been unfavourable.

To make life interesting for the volunteers, three weeks in, the family moved 500 metres west to 7W, the access to the 'dog beach'. A few quick phone calls to Warren at Barwon Coast and signage and fences were relocated the next morning. Of course the family moved back to 6W the next day! Another phone call, this time to Steve at COGG, and new fences and signage were installed to cover the territory from 5W to 6W. The signage and fencing from 7W to 6W was left in place in case they decided to return to that stretch of beach again.

Over the next two weeks, they alternated between both territories, depending upon the presence of magpies and possibly foxes.

Easter was a busy time on the beach, however we were fortunate in that the weather was quite cool, so the feared hordes of beach-goers didn't materialise!

The chicks had been flying up to 20-30 metres at a time but I was reluctant to consider them 'fledged', especially when I observed them being brooded at day 34!! No one had observed the chicks flying out over the water, so on official 'Fledge Day' I was still reluctant to make the call...that was

until 6pm 30 March. The magpies had pushed the hoodie family all the way from 6W to 7W over the course of an hour and a half, it was high tide and the hoodie family were near the 7W boundary fence of their territory with the magpies on the upper beach making life hard for them. A walker, completely oblivious to the situation she was about to walk into, proceeded to walk at the hoodies and split the family up. AD flew at the magpies which flew off into the dunes, AD returned to his family and all four flew off in unison in a wide arc out over the waves and back to the safety of 6W. I asked the walker if she'd seen the chicks fly...she replied "Yeah, I saw the birds" and kept walking...unaffected by the miracle that had just taken place!

The fledging of AD and unbanded's twins brought our total to five fledglings for Bellarine for the season, one up on our previous 'record'. Over the course of 35 days, there were 32 volunteers involved in their rearing.



AD Twins. Photo by Jennifer Carr

Collendina East

NZ and new unbanded partner had at least nine known unsuccessful attempts with losses to foxes/tides and raven predation.

PL and unbanded had two known unsuccessful attempts.

Along 13th Beach

After the success of the early fledgling at 42W, there's been only bad news with the chick of NK & XU going missing at 11 days and PC & EH's nest failing on the day of hatching to unknown causes.

Of interest is this photo from 2012, which shows a juvenile EH in the company of PC & AY.



EH with PC & AY in 2012. Photo by Bev Wood

EH has obviously been biding his time waiting for PC to notice him!

BREAMLEA NEWS

For some of our resident hoodies this has been a season of transition. After the boom of 2014/15 where we had five fledglings from our four resident pairs, including triplets, the current season produced no fledglings, but we came close. Here's how it unfolded:

Black Rock

This wily pair lost their chick early in February, just a week before flying. We suspect fox predation, which was likely the cause of their other chick's demise. A fox control program will be requested in this area before the next breeding season.

46W Bancoora

Our oldest bird, KE, appears to have died aged 20 years, leaving its mate, CP alone for the season. However, it has been regularly seen in the company of an unbanded bird so we expect some nesting activity come September.

44W East Bancoora

Still alone, AY has not found a permanent partner since PC

left him for a new life with EH at 13th Beach and EJ returned to her partner, JM at Point Impossible. He continues protecting his patch but we suspect he might turn up in flock sightings over winter.

50W - Point Impossible

This estuary pair had a tragic nest failure due to human interference (reported in the last edition). However, they have been regularly sighted, hanging out with Red-capped Plovers, Double-banded Plovers and Red-necked Stints.

Meanwhile, over in Tassie

Julie Riley took some time in March from hoodie volunteering at Breamlea to walk and camp at sites on the Bay of Fires. In one 4 km stretch at the northern end of the walk, she counted 40 hoodies, including 8 fledglings. Without the benefit of binoculars she didn't go looking for nests and chicks in the vast white sand beach expanse but was sure they were there as each pair was still defending their territory. A very uplifting experience after a poor Breamlea season.

SURF COAST SNIPPETS

Point Impossible Nudist Beach triumph

Not since the Beach-Nesting Birds Project began have we witnessed a fledgling at the nudist beach! JM and EJ, against the odds, proved themselves to be excellent parents. Volunteer, Jan Lierich gallantly took on the role of 'site coordinator' and the team from the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC), along with volunteers from the Surf Coast and Bellarine, can now savour their success after all their hard work wardening the family.

Point Roadknight

Both pairs at this excellent stretch of beach had success this season. The more experienced pair at 95W had one fledgling, while first-time parents at 96W, LY (originally from Point Lonsdale) and LM (from Black Rock), also had one chick fledge. This followed a successful fledging of a chick at Guvos Beach, near Anglesea.

Celebrations are definitely in order on the Surf Coast!!

Andrea Dennett, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Bellarine
Julie Riley and Jennie Turner, Friends of the Hooded Plover, Breamlea

YILKI - ENCOUNTER BAY VICTOR HARBOR - FLEURIEU PENINSULA

We always said it would be a miracle if any Hoodie chicks made it at Yilki... well, a miracle has happened!!

Despite all odds, the Yilki pair successfully fledged their two chicks on Valentines Day.

Yilki is definitely a very populated beach with threats/disturbances happening there 24/7. What was once the 'dune' now contains roads, houses, footpaths/bikeway and shops. Their nest was only a few metres from a main road/footpath/bikeway along the esplanade. Only a few metres further were the local shops and cafes... and then hundreds of houses. One of the busiest thoroughfares right on the Hoodies doorstep!

This was the third breeding attempt this season for KV & partner, having lost all chicks from previous clutches. The pair have certainly worked hard... we think they definitely deserve a medal.

We have observed behaviour with this Hoodie pair/family we have never seen before:

- KV & partner instead of nesting in the open, chose to have their last nest hidden amongst bushes (no clear visibility from any angle).
- When the chicks were one week old the pair separated the brood... Mum was with one chick and Dad with two chicks on different locations on the beach (at times up to 750 metres apart). They remained separated for one

week. When the chicks were two weeks old they reunited and the chicks continued to be brooded... often all three chicks together under either Mum or Dad.

- The pair were both observed flying at and chasing a Nankeen Kestrel away when it dived down and tried to take a chick. The Kestrel made several attempts and the pair together were very vocal and (with the chicks told to hide) went to the attack and chased it away each time. A few days later they lost one chick although the cause is unknown.
- The pair were also seen aggressively flying at an off-lead dog that came too close to the chicks and, together, they had a go at the dog and chased it away (feisty Hoodies this pair!).
- What was really interesting is the fact the two chicks continued to be brooded every day until they were four weeks old... and that was both chicks under one bird (either Mum or Dad). This was something we've never seen before as chicks usually aren't brooded much past 10-14 days by which time they are able to regulate their own body temperature.

This is the first time we have done so much chick wardening at Yilki... concentrated particularly during school holidays, weekends and public holidays. Raising awareness and engaging the public 'one on one' has been profitable. It's been great to see this resulting in an increase of local support...



Brooding large chicks. Photo by Elizabeth Steele-Collins

with quite a few checking on the Yilki hoodies daily. A great effort by all the volunteers... our hard work has definitely paid off!

Elizabeth Steele-Collins, Hooded Plover Volunteers Facebook

Season not over for Red-capped Plovers

Just in case you thought the breeding season was over, thanks to Phillipa Hoskin we have found a 7 to 10 day old Red-capped Plover chick at First Reef, Point Leo. The male parent has a fractured left leg so is likely the same bird that has been seen on several occasions in the same area since January.

Being late in the season and a lot quieter we will see how it goes without management. They obviously can have a far longer breeding season than we were expecting.

Mark Lethlean, 19 April 2016



Male with fractured leg; chick. Photos by Mark Lethlean

DOG BAN AT MORNINGTON PENINSULA NATIONAL PARK GIVES PLOVER LOVERS COVER TO BREED

The threatened hooded plover has been thrown a lifeline with dogs to be banned from a key breeding ground – the Mornington Peninsula National Park.

From November this year dogs will be banned from the entire park – dog walking is currently permitted in 14.5 kilometres of the 42-kilometre national park coastline.

The ban follows failed efforts to mitigate the impact of dogs on the hooded plover population.

The government said tougher dog rules introduced in 2013 had been unsuccessful with only five chicks fledging (reaching wing-feather age) from a total of 245 eggs during two breeding seasons.

Birdlife Australia monitoring data from the Mornington Peninsula National Park shows that 70 per cent of hooded plover chicks were successfully fledged in areas where dogs are prohibited.

Renee Mead, beach nesting birds project officer with Birdlife Australia, said the dog ban was great news.

"We welcome this announcement ... these birds on the Mornington Peninsula have one of the highest concentrations and lowest rates of breeding success," she said.

She said the hooded plovers are one of our most threatened species and are listed as vulnerable.

Ms Mead said there are 28 to 30 breeding pairs of hooded plovers on the peninsula. She said they nest during spring and summer above the high-tide mark and in the dunes of surf beaches.

Steve Karakitsos, president of the South Eastern Centre for Sustainability, said they were ecstatic about the news.

He said the ban meant the plover "is going to have the best chance ever in terms of being able to regenerate".

"It allows a number of measures to be implemented that previously were an obstacle – for example with regard to fox baiting, you couldn't bait the whole place ... which made protecting the young [plovers] ineffective," he said.

"All the environmentalists, all the locals that have been pushing for this ban for over 20 years, I think they couldn't be any happier today," he said.



Environment Minister Lisa Neville said people were walking their dogs in ecologically sensitive areas where hooded plovers breed.

"The evidence shows that dogs and hooded plovers don't mix. This ban is the right decision to protect a vulnerable and threatened species for which the Mornington Peninsula National Park is an important habitat," she said.

The ban was immediately welcomed by environment groups. "We strongly welcome the announcement," Victorian National Parks Association's Matt Ruchel said.

"There has been a lot of community concern about the plover's plight and dogs have been a key problem," he said.

"The plovers are a specifically vulnerable threatened species to dogs, there are only 600 roughly left in Victoria and we have had cases of dogs killing fledglings," he said.

The ban also won bipartisan support with local Liberal Party state MP for Nepean, Martin Dixon saying the ban was a "great outcome".

"It was just wrong that in a national park with a threatened species you still had dogs allowed there under any circumstances," he said.



Steve Karakitsos from the South Eastern Centre for Sustainability and Malcolm Brown from Friends Of The Hooded Plover at Rye Back beach. Photo by Arsineh Houspian

He said the total ban will make it so much easier for rangers to enforce "rather than having complex rules of when you can walk your dog".

He said it was also important to have alternate dog walking and off-lead areas for dog owners.

Of Victoria's 45 national parks, dogs on leads in specific areas will still be allowed in the Great Otway, Greater Bendigo, Kinglake, Dandenong Ranges, Lake Eildon, Heathcote-Graytown and Lower Glenelg.

Jason Dowling, The Age online, March 11 2016

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/dog-ban-at-mornington-peninsula-national-park-gives-plover-lovers-cover-to-breed-20160311-qngb9m.html>

TOTAL DOG BAN AT MORNINGTON PENINSULA NATIONAL PARK

Yesterday I was informed that a total dog ban would be announced in the Age today.

Although Hooded Plovers have been used as the flag ship, it is not just about them. It's about all beach nesting birds: Red-capped Plovers, Oystercatchers and all the migratory birds. It's also about the many marsupials we have living in the National Park.

A nine year education campaign by BirdLife Australia and Parks Victoria to motivate change in dog owners behaviour included:

- newspaper articles that explained the issues
- signage at beaches explaining ways dogs impact Hooded Plover and other beach-nesting birds
- face to face education by Parks Victoria rangers and trained volunteers
- public information days
- brochures
- website information
- local maps clearly defining dog zones and provide interpretation about threatened wildlife
- provision of free dog leashes with conservation message
- dogs breakfasts, information stalls at local markets and public events
- education programs in Primary and Secondary schools.

Compliance has not improved. Breeding success has not improved.

On the Mornington Peninsula '40% of Hooded Plover pairs in dog free areas produce chicks successfully, compared to 16% of pairs in dog access areas'. (Parks Victoria Managing the Hooded Plover Report: Maguire, Cullen, Reed 2014)

We have had five chicks fledge so far this season (2015-2016). That is five short of what is needed to keep the species viable.

Over this summer period, FoHP volunteers (who each spend upwards of 1-2 hrs twice a week on the beach) reported sighting over 200 dogs off-lead or being walked after 9am.

Over the past seven years, I have seen:

- dogs run down through the dunes and into the water at Portsea - no owner in sight
- dogs running off leash on beaches while owners are out

surfing at Fowlers and Montforts

- uncontrolled dog running through a nesting site while being chased by owner at Koonya.

The list goes on and my photo album gets larger.

The Mornington Peninsula Shire registered over 25,000 dogs last year. These owners need places to walk their dogs on and off leash. There are many areas available on the Mornington Peninsula which could be designated for off-leash use. The shire should not wipe it's hands of the issue and expect a National Park be the answer.

It is now time for the Shire to provide it's tax paying constituents with suitable off-leash areas.

Mornington Peninsula National Park should be treasured. Not many people have such a wonderful resource on their doorstep.

The Mornington Peninsula National Park has the second highest density of Hooded Plovers in Eastern Australia and the poorest chick survival rate. It has excellent habitat for Beach-nesting Birds and is an important flocking site over winter.

Sadly our impact on the this environment has been nearly catastrophic to Hooded Plovers. Our use of the beaches; our dogs off leash; our introduction of foxes.

Parks Victoria will need increased funding from the State Government to implement this dog ban.

Parks Victoria, Mornington Peninsula Shire, Melbourne Water and DELWP now need to work together to implement a fox eradication plan.

Diane Lewis

Impending ban on dog walking

Minister for Environment and Climate Change Lisa Neville has announced dogs will be banned in the Mornington Peninsula National Park from 1 November 2016, to provide greater protection for the park's vulnerable fauna, particularly the endangered Hooded Plover.

This follows a review of the increased restrictions on dog walking that were implemented across the park in 2013. The review found there were significant levels of non-compliance with the dog regulations across the entire park area, which continues to pose threats to the park's fauna and Hooded Plover populations. Mornington Peninsula National Park is identified as one of the highest priority areas nationally for Hooded Plover breeding, and has one of the largest adult breeding populations across the state. However the Mornington Peninsula population has one of the lowest breeding success rates nationally. Hooded Plovers are listed as endangered in Victoria. Parks Victoria will work with the community to educate and inform park users about the impending dog ban over the coming months prior to the implementation of the ban from 1 November.

Current restrictions that will remain until 1 November 2016 are outlined in the [Dog regulations](#) visitor publication.

For background information about the review and subsequent ban on dogs in the park, see the documents below.

- [Questions and answers - Dog prohibition in Mornington Peninsula National Park](#)
- [Dog Access Review 2015](#)
- [Protecting Mornington Peninsula's Threatened Species - Minister's Media Release](#)
- [Independent Consultant Summary Report](#)
- [Independent Consultant Full Report](#)
- [Fauna Species List](#)
- [Technical Series No. 4 – Managing the Hooded Plover in Victoria 2003](#)
- [Managing the Hooded Plover in Victoria](#)

Parks Victoria Mornington Peninsula National Park webpage: <http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/mornington-peninsula-national-park/plans-and-projects/dog-walking-review>



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. 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	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:

- Cheque, made payable to Friends of the Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc, posted to PO Box 36, Rye 3941
- Internet banking - Account Name: Friends of Hooded Plover (Mornington Peninsula) Inc BSB No. 063 891 Account No. 10127668 (Please identify the payer, and also notify the Treasurer, by emailing hbloversmornpen@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: / /