Life’s a beach – protecting the Hooded Plover (*Thinornis rubricollis*) on the Fleurieu Peninsula, South Australia.

Hooded Plovers make their nests on the beach between the foredune and the high tide mark during spring and summer, coinciding with the busiest time on our beaches. As a result, their nests and chicks are vulnerable to a number of threats. Hooded Plovers are listed as Vulnerable in SA, and with less than 70 Hooded Plovers left on the Fleurieu Peninsula – what are we doing to help?

**Threats....**

- Vulnerable nests are temporarily fenced by the local Hooded Plover Response team (Volunteers, Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board and council staff).
- Fences are accompanied by temporary signage.
- Fencing and signage kits have been distributed across the Fleurieu Peninsula.

**What are we doing to help? Management**

- **Fencing....**
  - People, unleashed dogs, horses and vehicles on beaches pose a direct threat to eggs and chicks. They also disturb adults, resulting in temporary nest and chick abandonment which exposes the eggs and chicks to harsh temperatures and predators such as ravens, gulls, foxes and cats.

- **Temporary signage....**
  - Is used to accompany fencing and to warn people of the presence of nests or chicks.
  - People are asked to walk at the water’s edge, stay away from the fenced area, and to leash their dogs.

- **Chick shelters....**
  - Birds Australia have developed shelters for chicks to hide from predators and take shelter from the extreme temperatures. Research has found that chick survival increases by 80% in areas where little natural shelter exists.
  - Yankalilla Area School students have made shelters for the Fleurieu Peninsula.

- **Community and the media....**
  - The plight of the plover has been in the limelight on TV (Stateline), radio and local newspapers.
  - Community awareness and volunteer numbers have increased through not only media, but community workshops such as Dog Breakfasts and volunteer training workshops.

**Does management work?**

- 26% eggs hatched
- 35-40% eggs hatched
- 30% nests survived
- 38% chicks fledged
- 80% chicks fledged
- 18 nests, 19 chicks, 7 fledged
- 36% eggs hatched
- 50% nests survived
- 36% chicks fledged
- Thirty volunteers regularly monitored their local pair and recorded breeding and threat data.
- Management was employed in both breeding seasons (August - March).
- Due to insufficient data:
  - The increase in success between 2006/07 and 2009/10 is unknown.
  - Management can not be correlated with success. However there is a trend for managed nests to be more successful than unmanaged nests.
  - Volunteers will continue to monitor their pairs and collect data over the 2010/11 breeding season.

**Fleurieu Peninsula monitoring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006/2007</th>
<th>2009/2010</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pairs monitored</td>
<td>14 pairs</td>
<td>12 pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nests, chicks fledged</td>
<td>24 nests, 16 chicks, 6 fledged</td>
<td>18 nests, 19 chicks, 7 fledged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eggs hatched</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nests survived</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chicks fledged</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Working together.....**

- The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board is working with volunteers, Birds Australia, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and local councils to monitor and manage Hooded Plovers on the Fleurieu Peninsula.
- 30 volunteers regularly monitor their local pair, identify nests and install management (fences, signs and chick shelters).
- Management techniques employed on the Fleurieu Peninsula were developed and researched by Birds Australia. For more information refer to *A Practical Guide for Managing Beach-nesting Birds in Australia* (Maguire, 2008 - Birds Australia).
- The four councils involved in the program all have Hooded Plover Response Plans (City of Onkaparinga, District Council of Yankalilla, City of Victor Harbor and the District Council of Alexandrina). These plans provide a step-by-step guide to ensure that appropriate management takes a coordinated approach.

For more information contact Emma Stephens estephens@holdfast.sa.gov.au