

# Protecting our endangered Hooded Plovers

Did you know that Point Roadknight is the only place on Victoria's western coast between Breamlea and Apollo Bay where Hooded Plovers regularly nest?

Last summer it was Victoria's most successful breeding site, thanks to the combined efforts of Birds Australia, the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC), Surf Coast Shire Council, Department of Sustainability and Environment and the local community.

This is a fantastic achievement but it can't stop there. We all need to keep up the good work to help this endangered bird species. And we need your help too!

The Hooded Plover is a little Aussie bird battling to survive. The species is already extinct in Queensland and northern New South Wales while only 400 remain in Victoria.

With the breeding season now in full swing until next March, these vulnerable little birds need all the help they can get to ensure they breed successfully. Last year for example, Birds Australia monitored 180 birds along the Victorian coast. Of 353 eggs laid, only 35 chicks survived, which is nowhere near enough to sustain future population numbers.

## Why is it so hard for the 'hoodies' to breed successfully?

The Hooded Plovers' breeding habits put them in direct conflict with humans and animals because:

- they don't build a nest - they lay their eggs on beaches above high tide level
- they breed during the busiest time of the year on the coast (September to March)

- disturbance from people or animals drives the adult birds away from their nests and chicks
- the eggs are almost impossible to see, which makes them very easy to step on, and
- the chicks are tiny and extremely vulnerable on busy beaches.



The Hooded Plover eggs are smaller than a 20 cent piece and blend in perfectly with their sandy nests, making them almost impossible to see.

## Don't plovers swoop if their nests are threatened?

People often confuse the small, tubby black and white Hooded Plover with the larger, more aggressive Spur-Winged Plover (Masked Lapwing), which also breeds at this time of year.

Hooded Plovers don't swoop. Instead they run away from their nest and may limp, run or fly in front of a perceived threat – be it human or animal - in an effort to lead it away from the vulnerable eggs and chicks.

*(Continued overleaf)*

Great Ocean Road  
Coast Committee Inc



Published by the  
Great Ocean Road  
Coast Committee Inc

35 Bell St  
PO Box 53  
Torquay VIC 3228

Ph: 03 5220 5055  
Toll-free: 1300 736 533

[www.gorcc.com.au](http://www.gorcc.com.au)

September 2008

## What are GORCC, Birds Australia and other partners doing to protect the 'hoodies' at Point Roadknight?

By working collaboratively together and each doing 'our bit' to help, we made a difference last summer and hope to achieve similarly successful outcomes this one.

GORCC recently built a fenced refuge area for the Hooded Plovers and erected special signs along the beach to alert people to stay away from the nesting sites. Surf Coast Shire Council has designated the area as a dog-free zone to minimise the threats to local wildlife. Birds Australia volunteers visit the site every day during breeding season to monitor the birds and deal with situations that may threaten the birds.



**Chicks can't fly for five weeks, which is a long time for a vulnerable youngster on a busy beach.**  
*(Photo courtesy Glenn Ehmke, Birds Australia)*

## What can I do to help?

You can help by observing the signs and staying well away from the birds. Also remember that Point Roadknight is now a designated dog-free zone to protect our local wildlife.



**Both parents take turns at incubating the eggs to keep them at the right temperature at all times.**  
*(Photo courtesy Glenn Ehmke, Birds Australia)*

## Where can I find more information?

The Birds Australia website (<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au/our-projects/beach-nesting-birds.html>) contains a wealth of information about Hooded Plovers and other beach nesting birds.