

Engaging Remote South Australians in the National Beach-nesting Birds Conference

Grant Final Report – June 2022

Beach-nesting Birds Program, BirdLife Australia

BirdLife Australia's 8th National Beach-nesting Birds Conference was held in Moonta from 13-15th May 2022. It was the first time the biennial event was held on the Yorke Peninsula in South Australia. It was planned to be held in May 2021 however, it was postponed to May 2022 due to risks associated with the COVID pandemic. It provided a great opportunity for beach-nesting bird enthusiasts including volunteers, land managers and other stakeholders to meet and share learnings and experiences after a three-year hiatus. Over the three days, 126 participants from South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania attended the conference.

The conference commenced on Friday 13th May at the Moonta Town Hall, with a Welcome to Country delivered by Bianca Newchurch who is a proud member of the Narungga community. It was followed by the opening presentation from BirdLife Australia's Coastal and Wetland Birds Program Leader, Dr Grainne Maguire who highlighted the achievements of and the progress made by the Beach-nesting Birds Program, over the last three years. Then, Yorke Peninsula's own Marna Banggara project where a new predator exclusion fence has been installed on the foot of the peninsula to protect native wildlife and the efforts of the Yorke Peninsula Council to protect beach-nesting birds were highlighted. After morning tea, there were a further five presentations including one from Victoria's Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning about "Operation SoHo (Save Our Hooded Plovers)," one from Green Adelaide about their "Our Plover Coast" weed program, one from a Deakin University Honours student about Hooded Plover habitat selection in the non-breeding season, one on Western Australia's Fairy Tern Project's latest research findings and one on the use of digital technologies in citizen science programs.

After lunch, participants were offered multiple activities to choose from which included visiting a tech hub set up at the venue to answer queries around the use of the MyBeachBirds data portal, the Beach-nesting Birds Hub and Birdata portal, remaining at the venue to watch the 'On the Right Track' documentary about the use of vehicles on beaches in South Australia and its impacts on wildlife and habitat, participating in a bird watching walk at the local Victoria park, and participating in a plant identification walk at a beach in Port Hughes. After the conclusion of proceedings, nearly 100 participants gathered at the Port Hughes Tavern for the optional conference dinner.

Day 2 of the conference commenced with five presentations including Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board's Hooded Plover conservation efforts, protecting inland habitat (salt lakes) for Western Australia's Hooded Plover population, case studies of working with local councils on the Fleurieu Peninsula, new social project into vehicle use on beaches, and monitoring spatial and temporal impacts of disturbance to breeding Hooded Plovers in the Belfast Coastal Reserve in Victoria. After morning tea, there were a further four presentations which included one on the Ontario Piping Plover Conservation Program, one on monitoring Fairy Terns on Bird Island in Gulf St Vincent, one on the challenges and insights gained from monitoring remote beach-nesting bird areas, and one on Beach Stone-curlew distribution and status on the Wet Tropics Coast in Queensland.

Two workshop sessions were held, one between lunch and afternoon tea and the other after afternoon tea where participants had the opportunity to attend workshops on photography of seabirds in Antarctica, monitoring breeding beach-nesting birds, wetland bird identification, migratory shorebird identification, tern identification, photography, and using art for conservation.

The second day concluded at the end of the last workshop session where all the participants gathered at the main venue for closing remarks and announcements on details of the full-day field trips on day three.



Photos from the 8th National Beach-nesting Birds Conference.



Photos from the 8th National Beach-nesting Birds Conference.

The final day of the conference, Sunday 15th May consisted of full-day field trips to three significant sites on the Yorke Peninsula. A 48-seater coach was organised to take one group of participants from Moonta to the Dhilba Guuranda-Innes National Park at the southwestern corner of the Peninsula. On this trip, the participants were able to enjoy some stunning scenery and visit the historic Inneson township where a pair of Hooded Plovers regularly nests on an inland salt lake. Another group visited the Point Pearce Peninsula which is part of the Wardang Island and Point Pearce Indigenous Protected Area. There, they were guided around the peninsula by Narungga rangers Ian Baker and Lyle Sansbury who took the participants to important shorebird sites and sites of aboriginal significance. Another group visited important shorebird and mallee sites between Port Clinton and Macs Beach on the east coast of the peninsula.



Photos from full-day field trips on Sunday 15th May.



Photos from full-day field trips on Sunday 15th May.

Among the conference participants were five Volunteer Regional Coordinators of BirdLife Australia's Friends of the Hooded Plover groups from across South Australia all of whom received financial assistance to attend the conference from the grant provided to BirdLife Australia by the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation. They were extremely grateful for the assistance offered which they were able to utilise for travel and accommodation expenses. See below for statements of appreciation provided by some of the coordinators.

"As volunteers we were greatly appreciative of the financial support from the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation which made it possible for both of us to attend the Beach-nesting Birds Conference in Moonta. Such events provide volunteer coordinators such as ourselves with the opportunity to keep informed about the latest developments in beach bird monitoring and protection, both here and overseas. We are then able to make this information available to our volunteers to use and adapt to our local conditions. The Workshops and field trips greatly assisted in honing our identification skills by learning from and sharing experiences with others."

Sue and Ashley Read, Volunteer Regional Coordinators of Fleurieu Peninsula (North)

"Thank you to the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation for the financial assistance that enabled me to attend the Beach-nesting Birds Conference in Moonta. I left the conference with a feeling of hope and a renewed energy to continue the work of hooded plover conservation. The camaraderie, shared knowledge and shared conversations once again highlighted the global significance of each and every local project."

Wendy White, Volunteer Regional Coordinator of Fleurieu Peninsula (Mid)

"I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude for the financial assistance given to me by the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation, as Lower Southeast Regional Coordinator of BirdLife Australia's Biennial Hooded Plover Count to assist with the costs of attending the 2022 Beach-nesting Birds Conference in Moonta. This assistance was greatly appreciated and made it possible for me to learn a great deal from the conference, as well as to meet and converse with other like-minded people from throughout Australia on a range of matters affecting beach-nesting birds."

Jeff Campbell, Volunteer Regional Coordinator of Southeast South Australia

Financial Statement

The Beach-nesting Birds Program offered financial assistance to seven Volunteer Regional Coordinators however two of them kindly donated their allocation to the program to cover other volunteer-related expenses. Additionally, none of the five coordinators who accepted assistance, claimed the full allocation provided to them. Therefore, the excess funds were utilised to cover two-day conference registration fees of all seven Volunteer Regional Coordinators, provide sponsorship to cover two-day conference registration fees of eight other South Australian volunteers, and other volunteer-related expenses associated with the conference.

The table below summarises expenditure of grant money. Please note that the Beach-nesting Birds Program only received \$3563.64 of the total requested amount of \$3920.00 due to 10% of the total amount being deducted as GST.

Item	Cost (\$)
Travel and accommodation expenses of five Volunteer Regional Coordinators	2080.25
Two-day conference registration fees of seven Volunteer Regional Coordinators (\$65 x 7)	455.00
Two-day conference registration fees of eight other South Australian volunteers (\$65 x 8)	520.00
Travel costs of Photography Workshop presenter	299.52
Tea and coffee supplies	207.88
Total	3562.65

A final report on the conference will be compiled and it will be forwarded to the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation upon completion. In addition to acknowledging the South Australian Shorebirds Foundation's contribution in the Conference Program (attached separately to this report), its contribution will also be acknowledged in the final report.