

South Australian Shorebirds Foundation: Progress Report 3/Final Report

Kangaroo Island: Banding together to conserve the Hooded Plover

A team of three trained Hooded Plover catchers and banders visited Kangaroo Island between 25th and 29th October 2025. The primary aim of this visit was to catch and colour-mark adult Hooded Plovers of pairs that were being regularly monitored throughout the breeding season by members of the Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island (FoHP KI) volunteer group. Hooded Plovers were to be captured and attached with green leg flags (process known as flagging) with two-letter engraving for monitors to easily identify them individually, to detect movements between sites and to investigate partner fidelity. Blood samples collected as part of the process would enable determination of the sex of birds and would be fed into the larger cohort of samples from the eastern subspecies of the Hooded Plover to explore genetic diversity within the subspecies. Morphometrics of each bird is also collected, including weight, moult, mite load, length of tarsus, bill, black on bill, wing length and percentage of black feathers on back. Volunteers present at each site were able to select the 'name' or flag of the captured birds, which had meaning to them, or the site. 10 Hooded Plovers were captured and flagged during this field visit (Appendix 1). Banding is undertaken with permit to undertake scientific research approval 26037-16 and ethics approval 38/2024 issued by the Department of Environment and Water.

We had a team of four which consisted of one A-class and two C-Class banders, all of whom are trained in the specialised capture method. Banders were Dr Meghan Cullen, Renee Mead and Tegan Knowles from BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds Program. Due to the threat of Avian Influenza (H5N1), all banders handling Hooded Plover were required to wear PPE (Image 1) and undertake strict hygiene protocols (wiping traps, banding equipment, frequent hand sanitizing and washing etc) to reduce the risk of possible disease transmission. Five adult Hooded Plovers were caught, processed, flagged and banded during this field session.



Image 1: Dr Meghan Cullen wearing PPE while releasing Hooded Plover LM Green at Emu Bay after banding. Photo: Renee Mead

Sunday 26th October

The banding team, Meg and Tegan, headed to Vivonne Bay, where they found a pair of Hooded Plovers at the Vivonne Bay Boat Ramp Beach site. One bird was already flagged as VL Right (White). After confirming that the pair were not currently nesting, the team caught the unbanded bird, which was banded as TK Right (Green), (Image 2).



Image 2: TK Green (Right). Photo: Tegan Knowles

The team then moved to the Vivonne Bay Beach Steps (south of estuary) site, where they recorded 2 adult Hooded Plovers and 2 young chicks. They spent time observing the family's behaviour to assess whether banding was feasible. The decision was made to proceed only if they could separate the adults to ensure one parent would remain with the chicks. The team waited for a group of beach users to move away from the area before beginning this process.

Fortunately, they were able to separate one adult from the other adult and chicks, and successfully caught this individual. This bird was banded and flagged as DJ Right (Green). While processing DJ, the team noticed another Hooded Plover enter the territory. After finishing the banding process and releasing DJ, the three adults (both parents and the additional adult) were observed at the water's edge while the chicks remained in hiding on the upper beach. The team decided to leave the site immediately to avoid causing any further disturbance.

Monday 27th October

The banding team made their way to Snellings Beach on Monday afternoon, where the unbanded pair were towards the western end of the beach, near the access point. After setting the trap, we spoke to a driver on the beach, asking them to kindly avoid driving over the trap. Once the vehicle passed by, Meg and Renee worked to catch one of the adults. The adult was flagged CP Right (Green) and subsequently released (Image 3).



Image 3: CP Green (Right). Photo: Tegan Knowles

We then went to Stokes Bay in the late afternoon, to see if the breeding pair were on territory, which they were. The two unbanded birds were midway along the beach, where Tegan and Renee undertook an assessment to determine if we could undertake a capture attempt. A one egg nest was located, which meant that we were not able to attempt a catch at this site.

Tuesday 28th October

At Browns Beach, the banding team observed an individual adult Hooded Plover, where an attempt to catch was undertaken. The adult was caught, and flagged JR Right (Green). Originally it was thought this could have been the partner of the Browns Beach west pair, but when we walked towards that site, there were already two adults on site, which means JR Right (Green) was just visiting the area. It will be interesting to see where JR Right (Green) ends up.

The team were joined by Daniel Clarke, a journalist and filmmaker, who recorded some of the measuring and banding process (Image 4) for an upcoming documentary focusing on Kangaroo Island's environmental volunteering projects. We were able to highlight the benefits of banding Hooded Plover's and the great work volunteers are undertaking to monitor the birds and observe their movements.



Image 4: Film maker and journalist, Daniel Clarke, recording Dr Meg Cullen while she processed JR Right (Green).

Photo: Renee Mead

The team then went to Antechamber Bay, where there was a potential to catch an unbanded pair with a nest at the estuary. It was determined that unfortunately the nest had failed, and there were no adults on site. The Northernmost pair were on territory, but both adults are already flagged. The team went to Emu Bay, where there were a pair of unbanded adults with four week old chicks.

This catch took all three BirdLife staff, due to the tricky site, and the birds being quite deep back within the estuary. Tegan was in the estuary, pushing the adults towards the beach, with Meg and Renee on either side of the estuary. The adults had left their chicks in hiding. One adult was successfully captured, and we left the other adult to return to the chicks. The captured bird was flagged LM Right (Green), then released (Image 5). The chicks at this site have subsequently fledged and were the first fledglings recorded for the 2025/26 season on Kangaroo Island.



Image 5: Dr Meg Cullen releasing LM Right (Green) at Emu Bay Estuary. Photo: Renee Mead

Banded Birds on Kangaroo Island

Capture of Hooded Plovers is time and resource intensive, as the catching method requires one bird to be caught at a time, and a minimum of two people trained in the specialised capture method. During the three seasons, 29 adult Hooded Plovers were caught and flagged. Appendix 1 provides a table of the dates, locations, and flag ID for each Hooded Plover.

This project started in October 2023 and has ended in November 2025. Throughout this timeframe, 572 observations of leg flags have been reported in BirdLife Australia's MyBeachBird Portal, and 513 of those observations have had confirmed flags (letters recorded). The reported number of flags is higher than confirmed flags, as it can sometimes be difficult to read the letters, as the birds are either on the move, incubating, the flag is obscured by feathers, rocks, water and without a scope, can sometimes be difficult to confirm the flags letters. Volunteers often put flagged bird photos in the MyBeachBird Data Portal, some of these are found in Appendix 2 (Images 8 – 11).

Out of the 29 birds, only five have not been resighted since flagging: DJ Right (Green), AA Right (Green), VK Right (White), WW Right (White), and XB Right (White). DJ Green was flagged in October 2025, leaving only a short amount of time for resighting. AA Green and VK White are a breeding pair from Snellings Beach. It's highly likely that they were observed, as there are six observations of flags, but flags were just not able to be confirmed. Similarly, WW White was flagged at Nepean Bay West, and there are 34 observations of birds with flags along Nepean Bay, but letters not confirmed. XB White could have been sighted, as there are four observations from D'Estrees Bay Shacks with flags, but letters not observed.

Banding has occurred sporadically on Kangaroo Island prior to this targeted effort. All flagged bird resightings have been included in this report.

Over the three seasons, HD Right (White) was observed 88 times. RN Right (White) was observed on 48 occasions, CR Left (White) was observed 43 times. Six birds were observed between twenty and thirty times, and a further 8 birds were observed between ten and twenty times. Nineteen birds were observed on lower than ten occurrences. Appendix 3 provides the number of resighting for each individual bird.

Individual bird key movements:

AR Right (White), flagged on Browns Beach in the 2024/2025 season has been observed at multiple beaches across the Island. In 2024/2025 season it was sighted on Browns Beach, Brownlow Beach, Nepean Bay, D'Estrees Bay and in 2025/2026 it has been observed at Island Beach, Antechamber Bay and Nepean Bay.

HJ Right (Green) was flagged in October 2024 at the far end of Emu Bay, where it had an active nest. The next observation of this bird was during the non-breeding season, where bird was sighted at North Cape in May 2025.

At Baudin Beach, NJ Left (White) was flagged where it was breeding during the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 seasons. But during the 2025/2026 season, NJ White is yet to be sighted. The Baudin Beach territory now

has flagged bird JD Right (Green) breeding at this site, taking over the territory from NJ White. JD Green was flagged at American Beach in October 2024, where it didn't breed, but was sighted in a possible partnership with UN Left (White).

UN Left (White) was also flagged at American Beach, but during October 2023 where it was breeding with partner AT Right (White) during the 2023/2024 season. During the 2024/2025 season UN Left (White) remained at American Beach, where JD Right (Green) was also observed. It was never confirmed if UN Left (White) and JD Right (Green) were a breeding pair. During the 2025/2026 season, UN White has been seen with a scrape at Island Beach East with an unbanded bird.

The Island Beach East territory was occupied by XU Right (White), which was banded outside of this project in October 2022. XU Right (White) occupied the territory with DS Left (White), with the latter being banded in October 2023 within its Island Beach territory. After the 2023/2024 season, XU White hasn't been sighted, and DS White has moved to Browns Beach West where it partnered with an unbanded bird in 2024/2025 and in 2025/2026 seasons.

UZ Right (White) originally held the Browns Beach West territory in 2023/2024. It was flagged in October 2023, and managed to successfully fledge one chick in January 2024. UZ Right (White) has not been sighted since. Which is likely why DS Left (White) has moved into that territory.

Another interesting movement is of RR Right (White), which was flagged at Pennington Bay prior to this grant (October 2022). But observations of this bird came through during the grant duration. RR Right (White) stayed on its Pennington Bay territory, where it fledged one chick in 2022/23, two in 2023/2024, and another one in 2024/2025. So a very successful breeding bird, yet in 2025/2026 RR Right (White) has only been sighted once in D'Estrees Bay in October 2025. With two unbanded birds breeding at Pennington Bay. It's unusual for Hooded Plovers to divorce after multiple years of success.

Learning about the movements of these birds and the territory and partner swaps would never have been possible without funding from the South Australian Shorebird Foundation. Some birds however, remained site faithful, only moving occasionally or during the non-breeding season.

YY Right (Green), flagged October 2024, has spent 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 season on Antechamber Bay at the northernmost end, with partner AK Right (White).

AM Right (White) has remained on D'Estrees Bay in the two seasons since it was flagged in October 2024.

CR Right (White) which was flagged in October 2022, has remained on territory since 2022/2023 season, successfully producing eight fledglings over three seasons. During October 2023, its partner was flagged MV Right (White), but MV Right (White) has not been sighted during the 2025/2026 season, leaving CR Right (White) with a new unbanded partner for this season. It will be interesting to see if the success continues at this site due to the partnership change.

RN Right (White) has remained at a North Cape site, since it was flagged in October 2023 and WL Right (Green) has remained at a nearby North Cape site since it was flagged in October 2024.

Some birds have not been sighted yet this (2025/2026) season, either due to the remoteness of sites, the birds may have moved territories or died. The season is only midway through, so some observations may come in at the end of the season.

- EM Left (White)
- JP Right (White)
- LT Right (White)
- MV Right (White)
- NE Right (White)
- NR Right (White)
- NP Left (White)
- XB Right (White)
- XU Right (White)

Birds that have not been resighted since the 2023/2024 season are:

- AT Right (White)
- UZ Right (White)
- XK Right (White)
- VK Right (White)
- AA Right (Green)

BirdLife Australia and our volunteers within our Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island will continue to monitor Hooded Plovers for flags, to determine if these birds re-appear at some stage. Friends of the Hooded Plover Fleurieu Peninsula has an extensive network of volunteers monitoring beaches, across the Backstairs Passage, so any movements to mainland would hopefully be captured.

BirdLife Australia would like to thank the South Australian Shorebird Foundation for supporting this project. With so many learnings within three seasons, there are many more opportunities to learn more about Kangaroo Islands Hooded Plover population over the long term and we look forward to discovering new findings. We would also like to thank the Friends of the Hooded Plover Kangaroo Island volunteers, who are the ones going out monitoring and recording the leg flags so that we can have this dataset to learn more about the birds movements, and of course their assistance on the days of banding.

Appendix 1: Table of flagged Hooded Plovers from the SA Shorebird Foundation Grant. Green shaded cells are from Trip 3 (2025). Grey shaded cells are from Trip 2 (2024). Blue shaded cells are from Trip 1 (2023).

Date	Location	Age	ABBBS Band #	Tarsus	Tibia
26/10/2025	Vivonne Bay South of Estuary	Adult	05-268792	metal on right	DJ Right (Green)
26/10/2025	Vivonne Bay Boat Ramp Beach	Adult	05-268783	metal on right	TK Right (Green)
27/10/2025	Snellings Beach	Adult	05-268784	metal on right	CP Right (Green)
28/10/2025	Browns Beach	Adult	05-268791	metal on right	JR Right (Green)
28/10/2025	Emu Bay Estuary	Adult	05-268785	metal on right	LM Right (Green)
1/10/2024	D'Estrees Bay Shacks North	Adult	052-68775	metal on right	XB Right (White)
1/10/2024	D'Estrees Bay Shacks South	Adult	052-68777	metal on right	AM Right (White)
1/10/2024	Emu Bay 5	Adult	052-68780	metal on right	HJ Right (Green)
2/10/2024	North Cape West	Adult	052-68778	metal on right	WL Right (Green)
2/10/2024	Snellings Beach	Adult	052-68779	metal on right	AA Right (Green)
2/10/2024	Browns Beach	Adult	052-68781	metal on right	AR Right (White)
3/10/2024	Antechamber Bay Northernmost	Adult	052-68901	metal on right	AK Right (White)
3/10/2024	Antechamber Bay Northernmost	Adult	052-68902	metal on right	YY Right (Green)
4/10/2024	American Beach - Nth	Adult	052-68903	metal on right	JD Right (Green)
4/10/2024	North Cape East	Adult	052-68904	metal on right	LT Right (White)
24/10/2023	Island Beach East	Adult	052-87862	metal on right	DS Left (White)
24/10/2023	Antechamber Bay Estuary	Adult	052-88006	metal on left	EX Right (White)
24/10/2023	Brown Beach - Crabby Jacks	Adult	052-87863	metal on left	MV Right (White)
25/10/2023	Nepean Bay West	Adult	052-88005	metal on right	NP Left (White)
25/10/2023	Nepean Bay West - HP	Adult	052-88004	metal on left	WW Right (White)
25/10/2023	Baudin Beach	Adult	052-87864	metal on right	NJ Left (White)
25/10/2023	American Beach - Nth	Adult	052-87865	metal on right	UN Left (White)
26/10/2023	Stokes Bay	Adult	052-87880	metal on left	XA Right (White)
26/10/2023	Turner Drive North	Adult	052-88003	metal on left	RN Right (White)
26/10/2023	Snellings Beach	Adult	052-87866	metal on left	VK Right (White)
26/10/2023	North Cape East	Adult	052-88001	metal on left	NE Right (White)
27/10/2023	Vivonne Bay Harriet river estuary	Adult	052-87867	metal on left	VL Right (White)
27/10/2023	Browns beach	Adult	052-87879	metal on left	UZ Right (White)
27/10/2023	Flour Cask Middle Beach	Adult	052-87868	metal on left	XK Right (White)

Appendix 2: Images uploaded to the MyBeachBird Data Portal by volunteers monitoring and recording flag details



Image 6: VL Right (White) at Vivonne Bay Harriet River Estuary on 05.09.2025



Image 7: DS Left (White) at Browns Beach West on 03.09.2025



Image 8: UN Left (White) at American Beach North on 03.09.2025



Image 9: JD Right (Green) at Baudin Beach on 26.08.2025



Image 10: AM Right (White) at D'Estrees Bay Shacks south on 20.08.2025



Image 11: AR Right (White) at Island Beach East on 28.06.2025

Appendix 3: Table displaying the number of observations for individual birds, over three seasons.

*** indicates birds that were flagged prior to this project.**

Flag ID	2023/2024	2024-25	2025-26	Total
HD Right (White)*	39	30	18	87
RN Right (White)	8	26	14	48
CR Left (White)*	12	21	10	43
DS Left (White)	3	19	11	33
RR Right (White)*	11	17	2	30
WL Right (Green)		16	10	26
XU Right (White)*	19	4		23
NJ Left (White)	10	11		21
MV Right (White)	4	17		21
UN Left (White)	2	12	5	19
SD Right (White)*	9	8		17
EX Right (White)	8	7		15
YY Right (Green)		7	6	13
UZ Right (White)	13			13
AK Right (White)		7	4	11
JD Right (Green)		2	9	11
VL Right (White)	2	3	5	10
EM Left (White)*	5	4		9
AR Right (White)		5	4	9
XA Right (White)*	2	3	2	7
AT Right (White)*	7			7
AM Right (White)		4	3	7
LT Right (White)		6		6
XK Right (White)	5			5
NE Right (White)	3	1		4
JP Right (White)*	2	1		3
LM Right (Green)			2	2
CP Right (Green)			2	2
NP Left (White)	1	1		2
HJ Right (Green)		2		2
YM Left (White)*		1		1
XB Right (White)		1		1
WW Right (White)	1			1
JR Right (Green)			1	1
VK Right (White)		1		1
DJ Right (Green)			1	1

Financial Statement:

Table 1 summarises what the grant money was spent on. The original proposal was for one banding trip and two banding/capture experts. After discussions with the South Australian Shorebird Foundation, negotiations of a two year project, with increased numbers of banding/capture experts was agreed. Each trip had 4 banding/capture experts, who split into pairs to separate and extend their reach and ability to catch more Hooded Plovers. This increased the travel costs.

After savings were made throughout the two year grant period, a re-negotiation of a third year of banding was agreed upon. Thus the project ended up being a total of three years.

BirdLife Australia staff time to attend was not included in this grant, and was provided in-kind.

Table 1: Grant Expenditure over the duration of the three year project:

Item description	Cost
Travel – Flights and Airport costs	\$5,172
Travel – Ferry and Hire car costs (including petrol)	\$5,171
Accommodation – including food costs	\$6,904
Banding Equipment	\$1,037
Workshop costs	\$824
BirdLife Australia Administration Fee	\$909
Project Total:	\$20,017

There were unexpected increases in costs for category “banding equipment” this was due to the threat of Avian Influenza H5N1 and the requirement for banding/catching experts to have appropriate PPE and safer blood handling/extraction tools.

This report and data analysed within it, has been compiled by Renée Mead, Beach-nesting Birds Program Coordinator, BirdLife Australia. Please contact renee.mead@birdlife.org.au for any queries.