

Environmental Indicator

Hooded Plover

Indicator Summary

Optimal Condition: Major wildlife populations attracting visitors are maintained and/or improved in areas where tourism activity occurs

Indicator: Number of Hooded Plovers

Acceptable Range: 0-5% increase in number of birds sighted



Photo: www.birdsaustralia.com.au

What is a Hooded Plover?

These very small shore birds are only found in southern Australia, usually on sandy beaches, although you may also see Hooded Plovers (also known as *Thinornis rubricollis*) on inland salt lakes. These birds like to nest in small scrapings (or hollows) on beaches near the high tide mark, and so are very susceptible to vehicle traffic. These little birds are often disturbed by human activity, especially where people are accompanied by dogs! The Hooded Plover is listed as vulnerable under South Australian legislation.

Why are the Island's Hooded Plovers important?

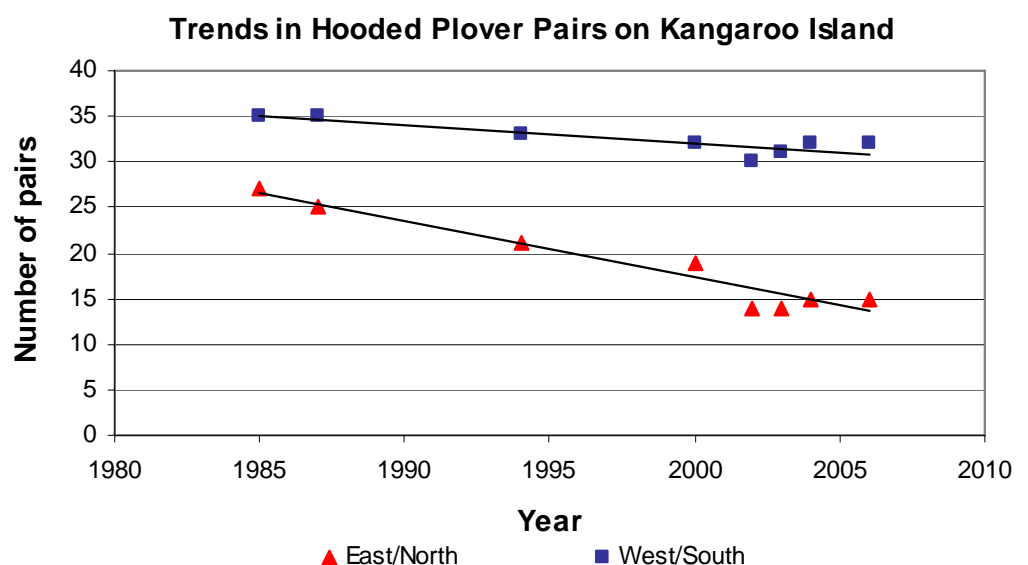
Kangaroo Island has about one third of South Australia's Hooded Plover population. Because of this the Island is recognized as a nationally significant refuge for this vulnerable species. Hooded Plovers are a valuable indicator as they are susceptible to disturbance by humans, vehicles and dogs (as well as foxes on the mainland). It is important to prevent the decline of wildlife populations in our coastal zone, visitors and local residents can assist by minimizing their impacts on wildlife.

Collecting Hooded Plover Information

Hooded Plover surveys have been conducted on Kangaroo Island since 1985, by a variety of people, including local ornithologists, volunteers and Department for Environment and Heritage staff.

Indicator Report

Information shows that there has been a decline in both total number of Hooded Plovers and the number of pairs, and that the indicators acceptable range of a 0-5% increase in total numbers has not been met. Decline was particularly noted on the eastern and northern coastlines of the Island, which have suffered the most disturbance.



Habitat disturbance can occur for a variety of reasons including:

- Beach recreation activities, including exercising domestic animals
- Residential or camp ground developments in close proximity (<1 km)
- Vehicle use, including motorcycles and horses
- Unfenced stock and animals

The Island has experienced increased levels of activity in the coastal zone. Since the early 1990s growth in tourism and coastal development has occurred, attracting increased visitor activity. Many residents also frequently utilize the coastal zone for recreation activities, such as swimming, walking dogs and launching boats. Increased use of these areas has led to increased disturbance.

What can we do?

The good news is there has already been *some* action taken - In 2002 Eco-Action (a Kangaroo Island community based environment group) received funding from Coastcare to develop a series of interpretative signs. These were developed in conjunction with local artist Nicholas Pike, and placed at some key coastal sites to alert visitors and residents to the presence of Hooded Plovers.

When visiting a coastal area, there are some simple guidelines you can follow to help protect this threatened bird:

- Keep your dogs on a lead at all times
- No vehicles on the beach
- If you see the birds, move away quickly and quietly

Management Actions to be Pursued

There have also been some longer term management actions identified, which we will work towards achieving, including actions such as:

- Promote the understanding that beaches are habitat for animals and plants as well as recreation areas
- Work with Council to re-establish and enforce by-laws for vehicle access and dog control on beaches
- Investigate establishing zones on high impact beaches to facilitate both recreational use and wildlife refuge
- Reduce the number of pedestrian access points at key habitat locations
- Assist landowners, community groups and public land management authorities to seek funding for fencing to exclude domestic and feral grazing animals from coastal dunes and beaches
- Ensure that monitoring of the Hooded Plover population continues
- Encourage research projects that will tell us more about those areas that are of greatest importance



Further Information

For more information regarding TOMM and the indicator program, please visit www.tomm.info or contact the TOMM Project Manager, **Phone:** 08 8553 4518 **Email:** info@tomm.info

For further detail regarding Hooded Plover information:

Please refer to: Dennis, T.E. and Masters, P. (2006) Long term trends in the Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis* population on Kangaroo Island, South Australia. *South Australian Ornithologist* **34**: 258-266
Or

Contact the Department for Environment and Heritage, Kangaroo Island, Wildlife Officer,
Phone: 08 8553 2381

This Fact Sheet was developed in partnership with Eco-Action Inc (a community based environmental group) as part of the Leave Only Footprints project.

