

PHILLIP ISLAND (MILAWUL) COASTAL BIRDS 2024-2025

SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATERS (*Ardenna tenuirostris*)



BREEDING SEASON

1.4 million birds arrive each year.

ARRIVAL Adult shearwaters arrive on Phillip Island (Milawul) annually in September. Breeding grounds on Phillip Island (Milawul) centre around key colonies at Summerland Peninsula, Cape Woolamai and the southern coastline.

DEPARTURE Adults arrive for egg laying in late November and depart in late March to early April for foraging near Antarctica. They leave their chicks to fledge in late April to early May and take off for their first northern migration.

Short-tailed shearwaters undertake this massive 15,000 km in approximately four weeks





TACKLING LIGHT POLLUTION TOGETHER

In 2025, the Dark Sky So Shearwaters Fly campaign was extended to a whole island approach targeting residents in key 'flightpath' areas, thus reducing light pollution across key suburbs of San Remo, Cape Woolamai, Newhaven, Smiths Beach, Surf Beach, Sunderland Bay with the addition of Ventnor, Cowes and Rhyll.

Phillip Island Nature Parks called on the community to act as citizen conservationists to help protect thousands of shearwaters about to embark on their 15,000 km migration by turning off outdoor lights and slowing down whilst driving at dawn, dusk and night.

Campaign flyers were sent to over 2,000 residences across the Island and 63 local businesses displayed campaign posters in their shopfronts.

You can help protect the shearwaters every year by following the key calls to action (see campaign poster).



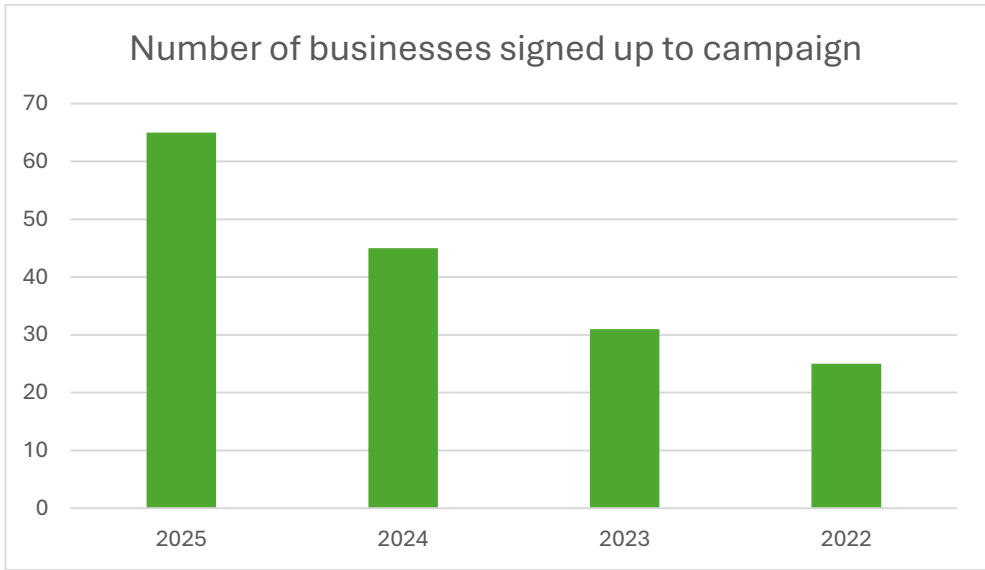
Phillip Island Nature Parks thanks all partners and supporters of the campaign.

Partners

- WE_EF Lighting
- Philip Island Conservation Society
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Department of Transport and Planning

Supporters

- Media Banc
- AusNet
- Local businesses



A Community Awareness Workshop provided to industry, local businesses and government agencies aimed to educate and raise awareness on short-tailed shearwater research, dark sky conservation and wildlife sensitive lighting in a bid to explore future initiatives to further reduce light pollution.

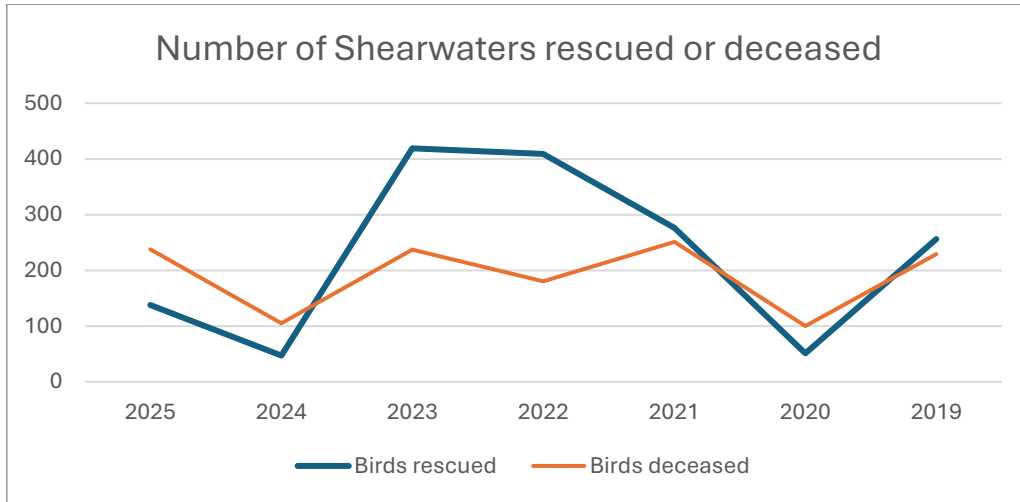
RESCUE, REMOVAL AND ROAD SAFETY PATROLS

Short-tailed shearwater patrols across nine nights during the ‘take off’ period included lights off on the San Remo bridge, visual message boards, roadside signage, traffic management plan and ranger patrols.



In 2025, **138** birds were **rescued** and **since 1999**, the rescue, removal and road safety program implemented by the Nature Parks has **saved more than 8,000 birds**.

Since 2019, the patrol and rescue program has **saved 1,596** short-tailed shearwaters.



In 2025, rangers spent **111** hours on shearwater **patrols** to rescue and rehabilitate birds and remove deceased birds.





FAIRY TERNS (*Sternula nereis*)

'Phillip Island is still a stronghold having produced >30% of the fledglings in the state since 2016 and being the only site with success within Port Phillip and Western Port Bay since then'.

Sonia Sanchez Birdlife Australia - Fairy Tern Project Coordinator

The Critically Endangered fairy terns are closely monitored by the Nature Parks when they breed on Phillip Island (Milawul) with support from Birdlife Australia and the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporations, Strong Country team.

With less than 150 breeding pairs in Victoria, the Nature Parks is committed to protecting and maintaining habitat at Observation Point to support future breeding of fairy terns in the hope it will contribute to the long-term conservation of the species.

In a team effort, 31 days of habitat, weed control and monitoring was undertaken. 5.2 hectares of weed control of marram grass and sea spurge conducted over 131 hours. Installation of 30 x 4G cat monitoring cameras and rabbit management to reduce impacts on the spinifex grass along the sand dunes.

Phillip Island Nature Parks thanks all partners and collaborators who played a vital role in the success.

Partners

Penguin Foundation

Victorian State Government, Department of Climate, Energy and Environment

Collaborators

Birdlife Australia

Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

Melbourne Water

BREEDING SEASON

Fairy terns successfully nested at Observation Point for the first time since 2019-20 and produced at least **65 fledglings** in 2024-25.



Fairy tern on nest

SHOREBIRD DIVERSITY

Phillip Island Nature Parks is committed to monitoring, protecting and managing all shorebird species.

Far eastern curlews (*Numenius madagascariensis*) are listed as Critically Endangered and are one of the priority species in Victoria. As a migratory shorebird they do not nest but were observed between August to March on Phillip Island (Milawul). A total of 25 birds were recorded on four separate occasions in late January compared to two recorded during the February Coastal Bird Survey in 2024.

Greater crested terns (*Thalasseus bergii*) nested on Point Grant at the Nobbies which provides safe nesting for the large colonies. They typically breed between September and December and this season 2,830 adults were counted during the November Coastal Bird Survey undertaken by the Nature Parks. The downy young form creches, where they huddle together for protection which were easily viewed from the boardwalks.



Crested terns at the Nobbies

Pied oystercatchers, sooty oystercatchers and red-capped plovers nest along all beaches on Phillip Island (Milawul) and are given protective refuges when nesting on high visitation beaches. Nesting information for these species and hooded plovers is recorded using BirdLife Australia's MyBeachBird portal by staff and volunteers.



Sooty Oystercatcher

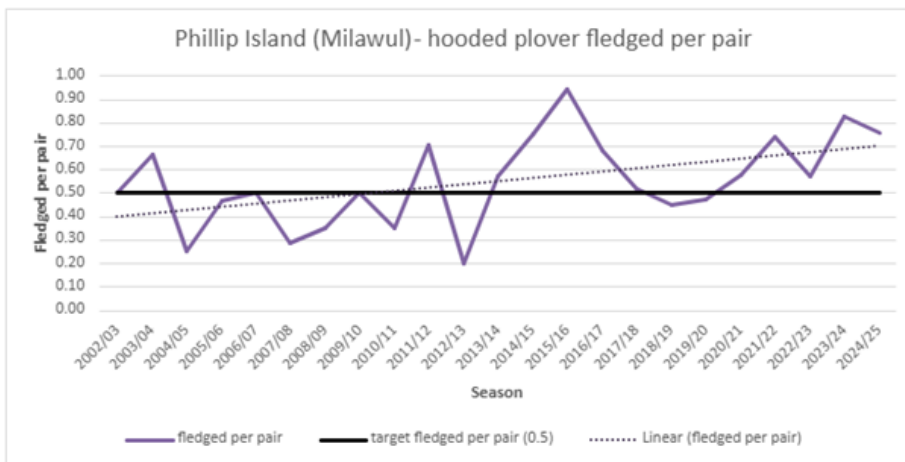
HOODED PLOVERS (*Thinornis cucullatus cucullatus*)

Hooded Plovers are listed as Threatened under Federal legislation and Vulnerable in Victoria. The Nature Parks have actively managed the hooded plovers breeding season since 1998 in Phillip Island (Milawul) as part of a statewide approach to protect the species.

BREEDING SEASON



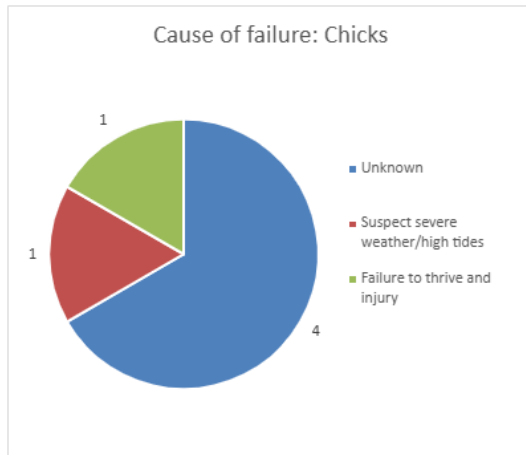
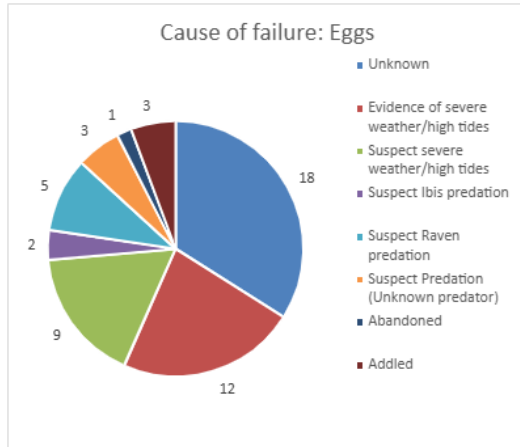
Hooded plover



MANAGEMENT

Active management of hooded plovers includes active monitoring of hooded plover pairs, the installation of wildlife refuges and chick shelters, nest cameras, banding of chicks and beach patrols.

Habitat management includes research, pest plant, animal control, revegetation and dune stabilisation.



INTERNS AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers collect important data throughout the breeding season each year by monitoring hooded plover pairs, habitat and threats and putting that data into the BirdLife Australia MyBeachBird portal, as well as contributing to the Coastal Bird Surveys. **Volunteers** contributed **468 hours** to the Hooded Plover Watch in 2024-45.

Interns Charlotte Bond and Annie Preston dedicated a combined **337 hours** contributing to the shorebird program. The cause of nest failures remains largely unknown. Interns install and manage wildlife cameras on nests to further investigate the cause of failures.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Sharing Our Shores campaign objective is to engage the local community and visitors to the island to raise awareness of the policies and regulations around beach use. The campaign aims to ensure everyone enjoys the beaches whilst protecting wildlife on our shores. The conservation efforts of the community help to protect endangered species on the beaches and dunes of Phillip Island (Milawul).



In 2024-25, the campaign was extended to a whole island approach targeting both holiday makers and the local community to act as citizen conservationists to help protect the hooded plovers and other shorebirds during the critical breeding season from 1 December 2024 to 30 April 2025.

You can help protect the shearwaters every year by following the key calls to action (see campaign poster).



HELPING WILDLIFE TO REST AND NEST TOGETHER

Phillip Island Nature Parks thanks partners and supporters to the campaign.

Partners

- Birdlife Australia
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action Operation SOHO, Conservation Regulator
- Bass Coast Shire Council
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Victorian Wader Study Group

Supporters

- Woolamai Beach Surf Life Saving Club
- 45 local businesses signed up to support the campaign.

With support from Woolamai Surf Lifesaving Club, over 800 people attended the Nipper program at Cleeland Bight in January 2025. More than 200 people engaged with the pop-up education and awareness stall to learn about hooded plovers, what they can do to protect the birds so we can all enjoy our beaches together.



Ranger Jon and Volunteer Peter ready to chat about hoodies

For more information on the breeding season follow the link to the report [Nesting-Shorebird-Breeding-Season-24-25.pdf](#)