

Hooded Plover

Thinornis rubricollis

What Is a Hooded Plover?

The Hooded Plover is a small shore bird found on beaches throughout southern Australia and parts of Western Australia.

Although camouflaged in the sand, adult Hooded Plovers are easy to recognise. They have pink legs, a black head, with grey upper white underparts. The nape (the area at the back of the neck) is white.

Juvenile (young) Hooded Plovers are basically grey versions of adults.

Size

A small bird of about 19-23cm in length.

Where does a Hooded Plover live?

Hooded Plovers are largely confined to high-energy ocean beaches. In coastal areas of Victoria, they spend a great deal of time on the beach, preferring wide beaches, and have a preference for beaches with seaweed. Their nests are usually simple scrapes on the beach or in nearby dune areas.

What does a Hooded Plover eat?

Hooded Plovers feed from the water's edge to the base of the foredune and sometimes even in the dunes. They eat a wide variety of insects, and flotsam and jetsam. Seaweed provides an important component of their habitat and foraging ecology, with rotting seaweed providing food for invertebrates which Plovers then prey upon.

A Hooded Plover's family life

Hooded Plovers nest in pairs, and defend breeding territories. They have a long breeding period, with nests in Victoria being found for at least eight months each year from August to March.



They usually lay two or three eggs and have a very long incubation period which exposes the eggs to a high risk of failure. Like most other shorebirds, chicks leave the nest almost as soon as they hatch and can start feeding immediately. Chicks are thought to fledge at about 35 days after hatching, at which time they often leave their parents territory.

Threats

In Victoria, with an estimated 600 individuals remaining, the Hooded Plover is listed as Threatened under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*. Under this Act the Hooded Plover is:

- Significantly prone to future threats which are likely to result in extinction, and
- Very rare in terms of abundance and distribution.

Disturbance by people is the major threat to the birds. Because they are so hard to spot and their nests are often found in open sand, walkers, horse riders and people in vehicles can easily frighten the birds, forcing them to leave the nest for long periods of



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time. The result is that the eggs suffer from exposure to excess heat or cold. Other threats to the species include feral predators, domestic dogs, and the destruction of nests through flood or storm damage.

Where to see a Hooded Plover in Victoria's parks

The beaches of the Mornington Peninsula and Croajingalong National Parks are good areas to spot Hooded Plovers, remember they are small and camouflage well with the sand so look carefully!

Want to Know More?

<http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au>