

Congratulations to Roz for being awarded the inaugural Minton Medallion.



Presented at the VWSG AGM 24th August, Photo by Ken Gosbell.

At the risk of sounding like a cracked record -

Once again I have decided to pass on this year's report in the VWSG bulletin. For the full report, plus tables, photos and various other articles involving FoSSE, go to the VWSG website – www.vwsg.org.au. Indeed, you are encouraged to download the full bulletin as you will find lots of interest.

The report – masquerading as Newsletter 154.

South Australian Team Report – August 2018 – July 2019

Maureen Christie and Jeff Campbell
Friends of Shorebirds SE Inc.

Predator Control.

The good news is that fox baiting is continuing along the south east coast and in the Coorong with a mix of aerial and ground-based baiting being carried across 60,000 ha.

Our Coorong / Our Coast.

FoSSE had a formal role in two Natural Resources South East grant applications in last year's Federal National Landcare round of funding. Unfortunately the project to protect Australasian Bittern in wetlands throughout our region did not receive funding. However, 'Enhancing the Coorong and managing Ramsar values along the Limestone Coast' ('Our Coorong / Our Coast') was granted \$3.25 million over 5 years. Both FoSSE and Birdlife are 'Partners'. The grant was officially announced by Tony Pasin, Federal Member for Barker, at Noonameena on 5 March,



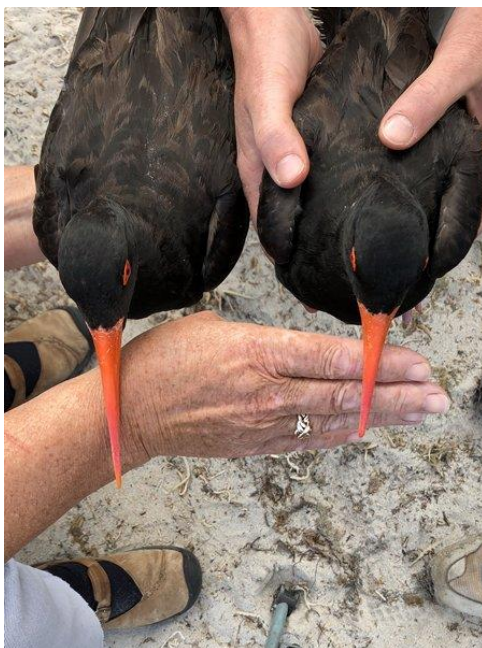
Tony Pasin, MHR;
Maureen Christie, FoSSE;
David Spiers, State Minister
for Environment & Water;
Fiona Rasheed, Presiding
Member Natural Resources
South East.
Photo: Natural Resources
South East

FoSSE joined a tour of the Coorong by Federal Minister for the Environment, Melissa Price, hosted by the Project Team on 19th March.

Local team catches, geolocators and VWSG visits.

Our cannon netting season started well, with 14 volunteers assisting at various stages during the day at Port MacDonnell foreshore on 22 September. 36 Red-necked Stint inc 4 retraps, one originally banded at Werribee and 6 Ruddy Turnstone, with a retrap from a catch at Green Point in September 2015. Fish and chips for lunch and a coffee shop nearby, what more could you want?

Despite high hopes we did not get out again by ourselves until February, when we made two trips to Nora Creina hoping for geos, but only managing to catch two Sooty Oystercatchers



Photos: Cath Bell. Female Sooty Oystercatcher left (L) and rear (R).

With one male and one female photos were taken to illustrate the size difference between the sexes. Male weight 685gm, bill length 63cm c/f female weight 793 and bill length 85cm.

The VWSG geolocator visit in November 2018, was full of ups and downs. Despite very few waders caught, only catching 24 turnstone, we still managed to retrieve (and deploy) 3 geolocators!(see report this bulletin). A further 6 were retrieved in April 2014, with another 16 deployed. So, the total for the season was 9 retrieved and 19 deployed. With 26 deployed last season, this gives a satisfactory retrieval rate of 35%. VAZ/ATZ was seen several times during the season, but we were unable to catch him.

Conservation.

With Natural Resources South East being divided into four sub-regions all of which have Shorebird issues, our commitment to attend as many meetings as possible, and make comment where appropriate, seems to be a never-ending task.

Comment was made on the following:

- South East NRM Management Plan 2019/20 – 2021/22.
- Drainage and Wetlands Strategy – Natural Resources South East.
- District Council of Robe, Coastal Access Management Strategy
- District Council of Grant Rural Living and Township Zones.
- Reward Minerals Lake Disappointment Potash Project.

Beach Nesting Birds.

Protecting and monitoring Beach Nesting Birds continues to be a major part of our work. To meet our obligations under the Our Coorong / Our Coast project, our count area has been extended slightly and is now The Granites to the Victorian border. The extended area of approx 220km was counted in November and May. The November 2018 count total of 52 birds was the lowest November count total since 2014. Although numbers have dropped from the recent previous counts the overall trendline continues to rise, if only slightly. No juvenile/immature birds were seen during the count, however six nests with eggs were found, five suspected nests were recorded, two chicks were seen, and in two instances it was suspected that a chick or chicks were present although they were not seen. The April 2019 fledged count total of 59 birds was lower than the corresponding count in 2018 (85), and considerably lower than the corresponding 2017 count (112). In addition, the low count of just three fledged young birds, was well below the numbers in 2017 and 2018 (10 and 11 respectively). Nest protection, either with signs alone or signs and temporary rope fences (see photo) was undertaken at various sites for breeding events by four of the above species: Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Red-capped Plover, Hooded Plover and Fairy Tern. A Crested Tern colony was on an island in a remote area of Little Dip Conservation Park and it was considered unlikely that disturbance would be significant.

Nest protection, either with signs alone or signs and temporary rope fences was undertaken at various sites for breeding events by Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Red-capped Plover, Hooded Plover and Fairy Tern. Breeding colonies of Crested Tern and Fairy Tern are discussed in a separate article.



Protective fencing, Breakwater Beach, Port MacDonnell, Photo: Sarah Campbell.

A small colony of Fairy Terns was found nesting on Cowrie Island on 7th January. By the 23rd, there were 38 nests. 4 chicks were banded on 31st January. The colony were observed successfully defending itself from the attentions of several Forest Ravens. However, on the 18th February, there were only a few Fairy Terns flying around, surprisingly one carrying a fish. There was no sign of any chicks, dead chicks or broken eggs.

A breeding colony of Crested Tern found in Little Dip Conservation Park is discussed in a separate article.

The South East was well represented at Birdlife's Beach Nesting Birds Conference at Inverloch in May with 3 volunteers and 2 DEW staff attending. For summaries of the presentations go to:

http://www.birdlife.org.au/documents/BNB_2019_Beachnesting_Birds_Conference_summary_report.pdf

Banded Lapwing.

Once again, we had several flocks of Banded Lapwing in the lower south east but only one report of chicks (which was from the Rendelsham area).

Bush Stone-curlew.

The plight of the Bush Stone-curlew in Bordertown and Mundalla grows more parlous in each passing year. Ken McPhee reported only one nest this year.

Thompson Beach and Bald Hill, Gulf St. Vincent.

After a sojourn of several years at Middle Beach, November expeditioners once more enjoyed the luxury of beach front accommodation in Thompson Beach. The reduction in daily travel time was welcomed by all. Progress is slow but we are gradually gaining confidence as we learn more about how the tides/wind/wind direction influence tide height.

Frequent Flyer, Bar-tailed Godwit AKK originally banded 29.12.2012 is building a cult following in South Australia, once more appearing in The Advertiser after being seen yet again in Bohai Bay on northern migration. The Global Flyway Network team also had sightings of several Red Knot flagged 22.11.2017. Both subspecies – *piersmai* and *rogersi*, were represented.

Although we do not have any satellite transmitters of our own deployed at the moment, FoSSE continues to be involved in the AWSG and VWSG program.

South Australian Shorebird Alliance.

Sharing information amongst those involved in shorebird site management and conservation is an important part of the role of this group. Recently bringing to everyone's attention an inquiry being undertaken by the Parliamentary Natural Resource Committee into the use of Off-road vehicles in SA; particularly the impact on the environment illustrates how important this role is. Inaugural Chairman, Ian Falkenberg, has recently announced that he is no longer with DEW, but is prepared to act in the role as a volunteer until a replacement can be found. We wish him well and hope that the Alliance can find an enthusiastic replacement. The only downside is that meetings are always in Adelaide, two volunteers attended a two day workshop in October, and one volunteer a day meeting in February.

The Glenelg Estuary and Discovery Bay Ramsar Site.

The western end of Discovery Bay is Green Point. Obviously, the SA section is not included in this Victorian Ramsar site, but Sanderling move around the bay without any regard to the political boundary. Glenelg CMA included FoSSE in a planning workshop dedicated to Sanderling and beach nesting birds in June. FoSSE has volunteered to try and count SA Sanderling sites at the same time as they do.

General.

We continue to be involved in various counts and projects. Once again, we assisted in the state-wide spring Wetlands and Waterfowl Survey, with members taking on even more and more sites to count. Bittern surveys. Latham Snipe counts. Presenting talks to schools, both in classrooms and in the field. 'Walking the Seasons' with the Aboriginal Engagement team. Shorebird 2020 counts summer and winter, and incidental counts when we can, with Jeff continuing as co-ordinator. Dollies Wednesday continue with a small team venturing out most weeks. A highlight this year was a summer count at the ephemeral Lake Hawdon South when we counted, amongst other things, 16,430 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and 131 Glossy Ibis.

Jeff also continues as the Beach Nesting Birds Co-ordinator. Now that we are involved in the Our Coorong / Our Coast project these co-ordinator roles involve much more reporting than we have needed to do in the past. His team entered 30 Pied Oystercatcher, 85 Hooded Plover and 23 Red-capped Plover breeding records into the Birdlife Portal. Entries are perhaps fewer than some years as we try and concentrate on breeding records rather than general observations.

A very successful AGM was held at the Campbell family home in Mount Gambier in February with Our Coorong/Our Coast Project co-ordinator, Tania Rajic, giving a presentation on the project and Jenny Hiscock presenting her Wrack or Ruin video. Newsletters continue to be issued sporadically .

Thank you to the members of the group who have worked hard to produce these results. Thank you too, to the Our Coorong / Our Coast team and other members of Natural Resources South East and the Department of Environment and Water, who have provided encouragement and practical help. Ross Anderson deserves special mention for all of the support he gives us, both as our Community Liaison Ranger and as a member.

And to finish, our most exciting flag sighting for the year:



Ruddy Turnstone flagged Green Blue. Photo: Helen Bawden

Flagged in Northern China and photographed in a flock of 60 turnstone at Blackfellows Caves on 28.11.2018.