

Resident Shorebird Monitoring Programme, Stanley to Narawntapu NP. January 2010 to December 2019



INTRODUCTION

Background

In September 2009, Cradle Coast NRM sponsored me to attend the 7th Australian Shorebird Conference in Hobart. I attended with Anna Wind and Belinda Colson (CCNRM staff).

At this conference Dr Eric Woehler showed maps of Tasmania with plots for resident shorebird records. These showed there were no plots for most of the section between the Tamar Estuary and Stanley. I knew that there were many records from National Hooded Plover Surveys and records sent for Tasmanian Bird Reports. I thought it would be a worthwhile project for me and other birdwatchers in the area to 'fill the gaps'. Anna Wind thought it could be worked up into a project to involve the public and enhance public awareness of our shorebirds with the necessary message of conservation.

In January 2010 Dionna Newton joined the staff at Cradle Coast NRM and was assigned to work as the Project Manager. Dionna and I designed the project together. We decided to recruit participants from the public through the media (local radio stations and newspapers), and I persuaded knowledgeable local birdwatchers to act as Lead Volunteers.

At the time, I did not know of any similar project that advertised for participants in the local media, rather than in bird journals and ornithological societies. It was necessary to tailor the programme to attract and retain as wide a diversity of participants as possible. This involved flexible monitoring periods and other parameters which would not have been used in a more scientific study.

Aims

1. **To monitor the occurrence of the four resident shorebirds found in our area** (i.e. the Red-capped Plover, Hooded Plover, Pied Oystercatcher and Sooty Oystercatcher) twice a year over a 10 year period. I knew that some beaches may have none of the four target species, so I suggested including the Masked Lapwings, also seen on our beaches. By including this species it would add interest to those sites, and we should get some idea of whether Masked Lapwings were increasing in our area. Large numbers feeding on certain beaches could have an impact on the four target species, and may be something that someone may wish to look at in the future.
2. **To promote awareness of our resident shorebirds and educate the public** about the best ways to share our beach with these birds e.g. walk on the wet sand, control your dog, provide signage at suitable locations, and talk to your family, friends and work mates etc.

Workshops and Provision of Other Events and Resources

Following the call for volunteers in January 2010 and again in the following October, Cradle Coast NRM held two free Information Workshops. 41 sites across the area were identified for monitoring twice a year, one at the end of the breeding season in March/April (when juvenile/immatures would be present) and another in October at the beginning of the breeding season when birds should be in their breeding territories. We avoided the main summer holiday season (which is also the main breeding season) when recreational activity is high. Four extra sites were added at the request of participants (see under individual site reports).

These two Workshops involved Power Point Presentations to explain the scope and aims of the Project; a section on Identification; what information to record on the forms we were supplying; and a section on Conservation and Threats to shorebirds and their habitat.

A pocket ID booklet, "The SHOREBIRDS of North West Tasmania", was produced and distributed to participants. Funding was provided by the Australian Government's "Caring for our Country Program" through Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management. Illustrations by Jeff Davies were provided courtesy of the WWF and Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. This proved to be very popular and being only 10cm X 10cm it really did fit into any pocket. It was reprinted at the end of 2012.

Public response was very good and we started our first monitoring session with 62 active participants, many doing more than one site. It is important to provide as much feedback as possible to volunteers, and our policy was that after every monitoring session the count figures for all sites, together with a Summary Letter, was sent to everybody.

After the first four counts Cradle Coast NRM produced an attractive booklet with details of counts and including a Certificate of Appreciation to each participant. These were distributed at a lunch held in Devonport.

BirdLife Australia (or Birds Australia as it was then) was very supportive and assisted in various ways. Together with Cradle Coast NRM two excellent workshops were organized, with BirdLife Australia sending high profile speakers from their Melbourne office. These took place at the Burnie Arts and Function Centre and were well attended.

Workshop 1. Beach-Nesting Bird Workshop

8th September 2012

Presented by Meg Cullen from the Birds on Beaches Project

Workshop 2. The Wonderful World of Shorebirds

9th April 2013

Presented by Golo Maurer (Birds Australia's Shorebirds 2020 Project Manager)

Both the above workshops were very inspiring and both presenters brought brochures and other promotional material.

Workshop 3. Tasmania's Beach-Nesting Birds Workshop

1st February 2014

Dr. Eric Woehler from BirdLife Tasmania – Presented results from a decade of resident shorebird surveys in Tasmania focusing on the West Coast.

Workshop 4. Shorebird Monitoring: Pied Oystercatcher in the spotlight

24th May 2017

Dr. Mike Newman gave a very interesting presentation on the Australian Pied Oystercatcher in Tasmania, looking at the life history including breeding habits, movements and other aspects of their daily lives,

By the end of 2013 the project had been running for 4 years and Birds Australia was asked if they would do some basic statistics with our count results, including ranking the various beaches by their value to the resident shorebirds. Please see [Appendix 1](#) for their Ranking charts provided on 6th August 2014.

Newsletters

As an added incentive to keep participants engaged with our resident shorebirds I initiated an Annual Newsletter. **Birds on our Beaches – Newsletter 1** was sent out in **July 2014**. Participants were encouraged to contribute, particularly with photos and other news relating to shorebirds. I continued to produce these annual Newsletters, our last one being **Newsletter 5 –July 2019**. The **Beach-nesting Birds Team of BirdLife Australia** produces a great Newsletter – **Word about the Hood** and I regularly sent out a link to our participants.

Education

It was identified from the beginning by participants and staff at Cradle Coast NRM that educating the public was paramount to helping our resident shorebirds survive on our increasingly busy beaches. Over the last 10 years tourism and recreational use of Tasmania's beaches has escalated. Increasing numbers of retirees settling along the NW coast has increased the number of dogs exercising on our beaches, including designated dog free beaches.

Prior to the start of this project Cradle Coast NRM had sponsored a **Dogs Breakfast** during Coastcare Week 2008 with Dr. Eric Woehler as a Guest Speaker and a **Dogs Dinner** during Coastcare Week 2009 with Jim Hunter as the Guest Speaker.

Over the 10-year duration of this project Cradle Coast NRM (supported by funding through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country Program) has produced signage and pamphlets to promote awareness and conservation issues relating to our resident Shorebirds.

In 2010 beach signs were produced and erected, sometimes with the help of National Parks and Wildlife, at many of our beaches supporting vulnerable breeding shorebirds.

Posters were produced in 2013 and distributed to schools and community venues (see below).



In 2015 Brochures were produced prior to the holiday season, entitled 'Our beautiful beaches, Our BEAUTIFUL Birds'. These were distributed widely to Cafes, Surf Clubs, Caravan Parks etc. bordering the beaches.

BirdLife Australia provided a wealth of Educational material which they provided in conjunction with the two Workshops presented by Meg Cullen and Golo Maurer. In particular they provided **Beach-Nesting Birds Education Kits** to some of our participants that were willing to speak to Schools and groups like Cub Scouts. There were also colouring-in sheets and calico bags.

Despite all surveys suggesting that 'Education' was the most important aspect of conserving Beach-Nesting Birds, it proved difficult to do as much as we had hoped. The main constraints were funding and access to slots in busy school timetables.

John Bowden had access to school groups through the NPW Discovery Ranger and Education Programs and he incorporated information on shorebirds in his very varied talks on various aspects of Natural History.

Garry Watts has been a long term advocate for Tasmanian birds, including shorebirds and has been going to Wynyard Primary School and working with students for many years.

Julie Serafin was encouraged to give educational presentations by Dionna Newton (CC NRM staff) and took up the unofficial position of Education Officer for this project. She accompanied Golo to Somerset Primary School where a group of students had a session on their local beach. (Julie would like to thank both Dionna and Golo for their encouragement and enthusiasm which enabled her to go on and deliver many presentations to both schools and community groups). Schools visited were: Port Sorell Primary, East Devonport Primary, Sassafras Primary. Of particular value were the presentations given to the Stanley and Forest Primary Schools in class and on the Stanley foreshore. The Circular Head Landcare group lead by Anthea Fergusson had designed a project that encouraged works of bird art to be the outcome of the presentations; a selection of these works were used to produce a 'Bird Awareness Sign' for the southern end of Tatlows Beach. (See a photo of the sign below, sent in by Lesley Bonnefin, another of our volunteers.)



Sharon Young from Burnie TAFE asked us to give talks to their 'Certificate III Conservation and Land Management' students on several occasions, and Julie Serafin and I had an annual session with them over a few years.

For several years the month of May at the Tasmanian Arboretum at Eugenana has been dedicated to Arbor Week. Julie has been involved with talks and walks over a three week period to school groups from along the NW coast. Up to 800 students have attended over the three week period,

which is a very popular event on school calendars. Julie has also been involved with beach presentations to Freers Shearwater Surf Lifesavers Club, Sea Scout groups, a number of Guide and Cub groups and participation in 'Kids teaching Kids' at Camp Clayton

Over the last 2-3 years presentations have been to various adult community groups such as men's and women's Probus, a number of garden clubs and a library talk. The audience is engaged by the clever brains of birds, the feats of endurance of migratory shorebirds and the unique behaviour, persistence and adaptability of our resident shorebirds in their home territory. The message we try to send is walk on the wet sand, observe their behaviour, and learn how to behave to ensure their safety.

OUR VOLUNTEER PARTICIPANTS

Over ten years there have been many people involved with this community-based project. Of those participating in the first count, 20 were also counting on our 20th count, almost 10 years later. Many others took part in the majority of our monitoring sessions, others moved away from the area and others had to drop out due to illness or reduced fitness. Some young children grew into teenagers and had other commitments and unfortunately at least two passed away. However, on every count there were some new recruits, other family members or visiting friends involved, even on the very last session.

Below is a comprehensive list of 173 participants, from those who only did one count to those who were involved in all twenty. Lead Volunteers and those that contributed over many years are depicted in bold type.

Alderson, Haylee CC Council

Ashby, Richard

Ashby, Erica

Astley, Adrian

Atkinson, Peter

Atkinson, Marie

Atkinson, Thomas

Austin, Maureen

Barker, Linda

Barker, Emma

Barker, Warren

Barr, Lynelle

Bell, Annie

Beswick, Faye

Black, Janie

Boland, Janet

Bonnefin, Lesley

Bonney, Leanne

Bonney, Paul

Bouchard, Jane

Bowden, John

Brennan, Annie

Britton, Hazel

Britz, Tony

Brown, Patrick

Buchanon, Jim

Calmels, Patrick

Campbell, Rees

Carmichael, Emma

Casey, Karen

Charlesworth, Jac

Clancy, Ellie May

Cleverly, Jeremy

Coombes, John

Cooper, Rosalyn

Cordery, Geoff

Coulson, Belinda CCNRM

Dahl, Wayne

Daw, Sue

Donaghey, Carolyn

Dugand, Alison

Edwards, Paul

Gibbs, Spencer CCNRM

Hogg, Will CCNRM

Horne, Eunice

Ellison, Patricia

Fergusson, Anthea

Fergusson, Jamie

Fraser, P

French, Peter

Fisher, Linda

Freeland, Russell

Freeland, Jenny

Fryer, Samantha

Gibbs, Carolyn

Hamilton, Anne

Sally Harman-Pixton,

Harvey, Gina

Harvey, Holly

Hawke, Marianne

Hiller, Eric

Holden, Rod

Holloway, E

Hutcheson, Susan
 Hutchins, Mark
 Hutchins, Emma
 Hutchins, David
 Hortle, Liz
 Hughes, John
Hunter, Jim
 Hunter, Mariamma
 Hyland, Michael
 Ingram, Richard CCNRM
 Ingram, Murray
 Jackman, Andy
 Jackman, Harvey,
 Jackman, Matt
 James, Bronwyn
 James, Daniel
Jennings, Sue
 Kille, Mary
 Kingston, Greta
 Knight, Chris
 Knight, Emily
Lawrence, Jo
 Lawrence, Peter
 Leicester, David
 Loane, Rea
 Lockwood, R.
 Longley, Graham
 MacCormack, David
 Marshall, Lisa
 Marinos, Jan
 Marinos, Michael
McFarlane, Ian
 McLauchlan, Alex
 McMillan, Sally
McNamara, Amanda
 McNamara, Sarah
Meyers, Colin
 Morrison, Jane
 Morrison, John
 Mountney, John
 Murfet, Louise
 Nepustilova, Dasha
 Newton, Dionna CCNRM
 Ogilvie, Ian
Ogilvie, Toni
 O'Malley, Tom CCNRM
 Ostenfeld, Jenny

Owens, Graham
Parker, Robyn
 Parker, Kevin
Parks, Alison
 Paul, Lexie
 Pinner, Shane
 Pixton, Bill
 Prescott, Elizabeth
 Presscott, Charles
 Press, Denise
 Read, Robert
 Reynolds, Kelly
Richardson, Alastair
Richardson, Jean
 Richardson, Martyn
 Richardson, Angus
 Richardson, George
 Richardson, Heather
Richardson, Phil
 Risdon, June
Ritchie, Rebecca-Lee
 Roswarne, Sharon
 Saunders, Dawn
 Serafin, Mike
Serafin, Julie
 Shannon, Geoff
 Sheahan, Mary Ann
 Singal, Ramit
 Sly, Felicity
 Smart, Geoffrey
 Smiley, Marilyn
Smith, Doreen
 Spicer, Lauchlan
 Stott, Cathy
 Sullivan, Phyllis
 Temple-Smith, Mark
 Thomas, Cherry
 Thomas, Peter
 Thorne, Aileen
 Thow, Lesley
 Tidey, Phil
 Timmerman, John
 Tonelli, Peter
Tongue, John
Tongue, Shirley
 Tongue, Peter
 Tongue, Kimberley

Turner, Jenny
 Van Praag, Walter
 Varney, Peta
Walker, Bill
Watts, Garry
 Watts, Bobby
 Wells, Julie
 West, Helen
 Willows, Rodger
Wilson, Frank
 Wilson, Lennice
 Wilson, Rosita
 Wilson, Troy
 Wind, Anna CCNRM
 Winspear, Geoff
 Young, Sharon
 Additionally:
 Launceston Grammar
 21 students and 3 staff

COMMENTS

As mentioned in the introduction the parameters regarding the actual counts were designed to fit in with the aims of the project. Our primary objective was to find out how many of our resident breeding shorebirds were still to be found on our busy beaches. The survey form had sections for recording the four shorebird species which breed actually on the beach above the high-tide line as well as Masked Lapwing which frequently feed and rest along the beach. The two small terns, one of which is endangered in Tasmania, also occur in the far west of the monitoring area and very occasionally are seen elsewhere. After reports of ravens being a significant predator of shorebird eggs and chicks on the mainland we added Forest Raven to our list. Details of weather and human/animal disturbance were also recorded. On the back of the survey forms were sections to record migratory shorebirds, other birds seen on the beach, extra information on breeding attempts, noticeable changes to the beach such as erosion, storm damage etc. However, these sections were optional and it was up to the Lead Volunteers as to how much information they recorded. All bird sightings other than target species, including migratory shorebirds, were incidental observations not surveys. Having said this, many records of interest were noted and entered into databases.

INDIVIDUAL SITE REPORTS

I have prepared a report for all 45 Sites. In order to make these more readable I have varied the wording, in particular sometimes using words for numbers e.g. six, and at other times using digits e.g. 6. For dates, I have also varied the format. I have also used abbreviations (listed below) to avoid being pedantic and repetitive. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of putting readability above consistency in this section.

ad = adult

c/- = clutch (c/2 = 2 eggs)

juv = juvenile (dependent young)

imm = immature (flying young)

BB = breeding behaviour

pers.obs. = personal observations

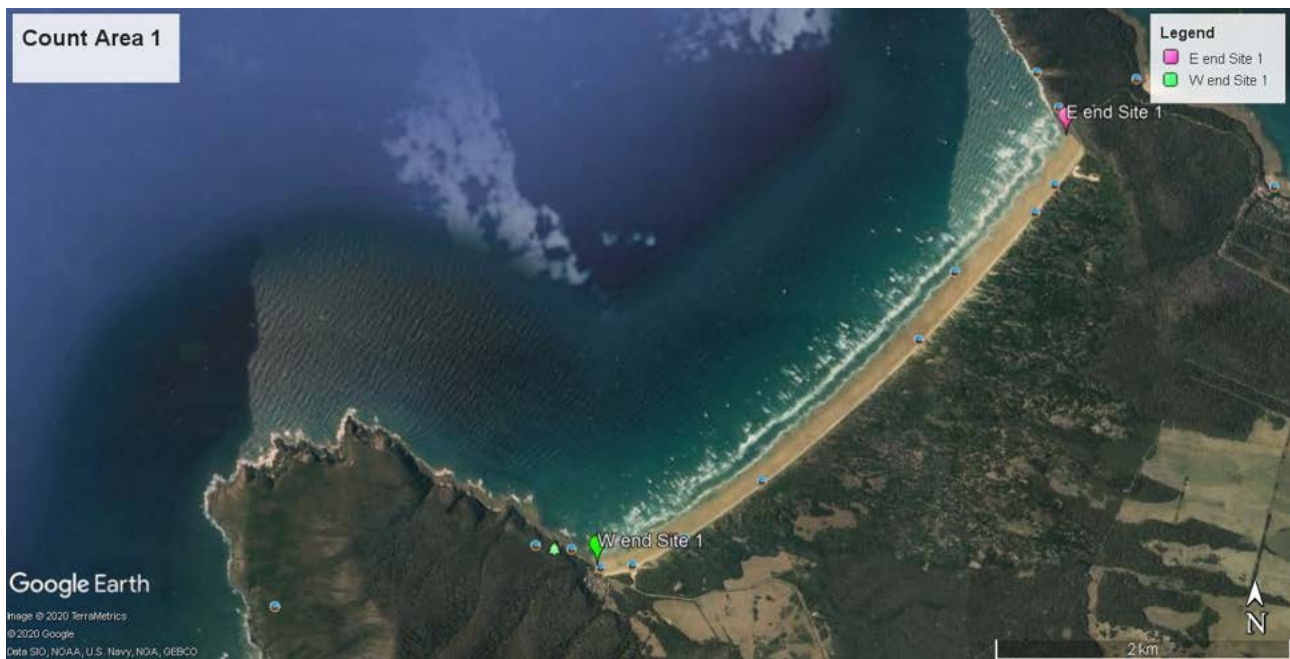
The maps have been downloaded from Google Earth Pro and show the start and end of each site. See **Appendix 2** for Site location co-ordinates

A note on Count Areas 1 to 4

These four sites are all within the Narawntapu National Park. All sites were done at the same time and NP&WS Rangers and staff have assisted us on all twenty counts with transport, dropping counters off at the E end of Badger Beach and collecting counters from Bakers Beach. It was important, in particular to do Sites 3 and 4 together, so that birds were not double counted moving between Sites. We are very grateful for this assistance which saved return trips on these lengthy beaches.

Count Area 1 – Badger Beach

Lead Volunteer – Peter Atkinson



Description of Site

This long sandy beach stretches for more than 4.5 km between Badger Head in the west and West Head in the east, and is close to the eastern boundary of Narawntapu National Park. The foreshore is mainly sand dunes with low native coastal vegetation. Small ephemeral pools form after heavy rain.

Recreational Use

This is a popular swimming and family holiday beach area, with picnic facilities at both headlands. Vehicles drive along the beach from the west end to access the less frequented middle beach area, and dogs are often with their owners. Unfortunately NP&W staff do not have the resources to visit this beach as often as necessary to prevent this behaviour. The eastern corner is popular with surfers who access the beach from the track that leads down from West Head and fishermen fish mainly from the rocks.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The intertidal area does not appear to be particularly good feeding, but three species of shorebirds breed along the edge.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on 18 out of 20 of our surveys, in numbers between one and seven adults. The two surveys when it was not recorded were both in October/November. This species is extremely clever at concealing its presence during the early breeding cycle (pers.obs.). Breeding records are: 28/3/11 a pair with 1 imm; 2/4/15 a pair with 2 fluffy chicks and an older imm; 12/4/18 1 imm; 2/11/18 a pair with two tiny chicks - the parents performed desperate distraction displays; pairs have been recorded in three different locations.

Red-capped Plover

Between two and nine birds recorded on 10 out of 20 surveys. The following records probably refer to birds that have bred on this beach: 27/3/2013 2 imm with 4 adults; 2/4/2015 1 imm with 4 adults; 2/4/2019 2 adults with 1 imm.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 2 and 19 adults. There are at least six breeding territories spread along the beach. Only one definitive breeding record – a pair with 2 eggs about 2 km from E end on 2/11/2018. Other birds noticed furtively going into the dunes. There is an interesting difference in seasonal recording rates:

Birds recorded in the breeding season October/November were 131 (individual counts 8 to 19)

Birds recorded in non-breeding season March/April were 18 (individual counts 0 to 4)

Could this be attributed to birds moving out of their breeding territories to feed in richer habitats like the Rubicon Estuary?

Sooty Oystercatcher

Not recorded on any of our 20 surveys.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 8 and 25. No noticeable seasonal difference or increase in numbers over 10 years.



Pied Oystercatchers. Photo by Faye Beswick.

Count Area 2 – Copper Cove

Lead Volunteer – Peter Atkinson



Description of Site

This is a small sandy cove along the rocky coastline between Little Badger Head and Badger Head in Narawntapu National Park.

Recreational Use

Walkers on the track between Bakers Beach and Badger Beach visit the cove and are known to sometimes camp, although this is not a designated campsite.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

This small beach provides habitat for only a small numbers of pairs of resident Shorebirds. The lack of birds recorded in the March/April surveys (2 Masked Lapwing only) may indicate that the food supply is not sufficient the whole year round.

Hooded Plover

Only recorded on five out of twenty surveys. All records are of a pair in October/ November at the SW end of the beach. Breeding behaviour was noted on three occasions, but we have no evidence of successful breeding.

Red-capped Plover

Not recorded on any surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to four adults recorded on 7 out of 20 surveys. All records are from October/November Counts, which is the breeding season. Four birds recorded on 11/11/15 were two pairs, one at each end of the beach.

Sooty Oystercatcher

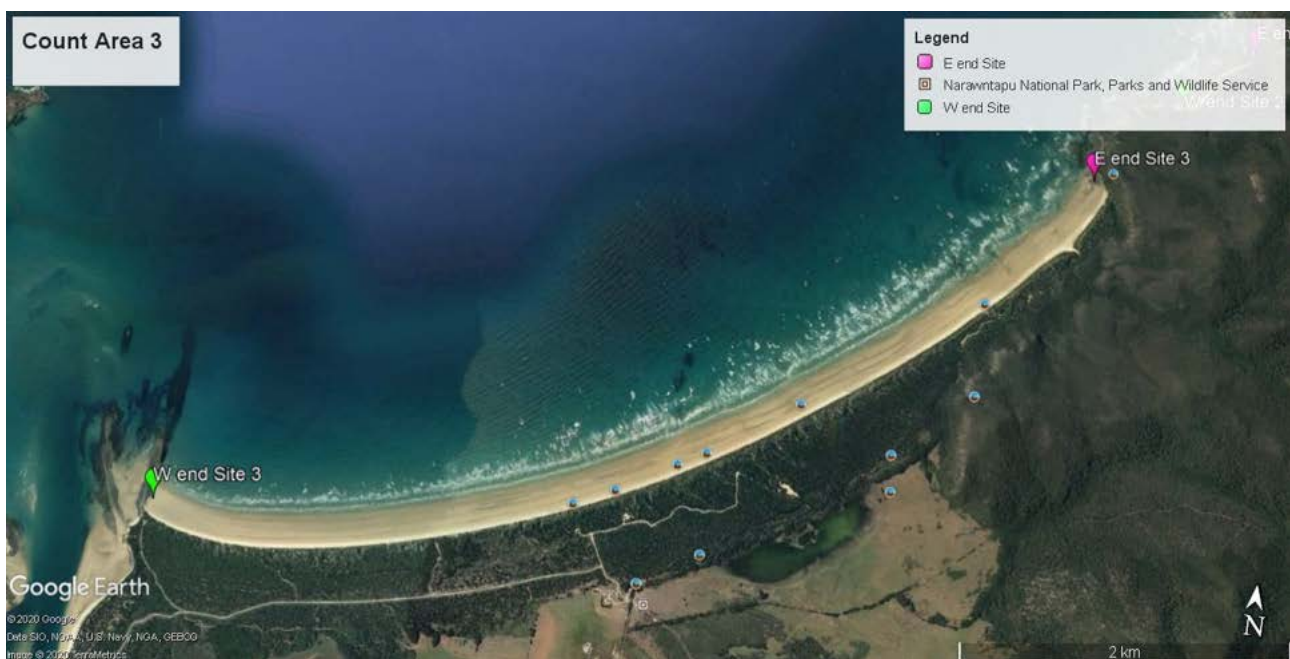
One or two birds recorded on 5 out of 20 surveys. Again, all records are in the October/November breeding season.

Masked Lapwing

Two birds recorded on three occasions. This beach is a long way from their favoured breeding habitat of short grassy areas.

Count Area 3 – Bakers Beach

Lead Volunteer – Peter Atkinson



Description of Site

This is a beautiful sandy beach in Narawntapu National Park. It stretches for more than 7 km from Griffiths Point, at the mouth of the Rubicon Estuary in the west to the rocks of Little Badger Head in the east. The sand dunes on the foreshore merge into coastal heathland with vegetation becoming thicker inland. Sea Spurge has spread over the years and is particularly prevalent at the eastern end, where it occurs some distance from the shoreline. Wildcare received a grant via Cradle Coast NRM to spray this area in November 2016, but it is still a problem. At the western end 'Friends of Narawntapu NP' Wildcare Group' have been 'pulling' sea spurge regularly for several years and are reducing its growth.

Recreational Use

This is a popular beach for holidaymakers, swimming, walking, jogging and beachcombing during the summer months. Tourists and residents use the campsites, and there are several access tracks along the beach. Horses are allowed in the National Park (with holding yards and camping facilities) and trails include along Bakers Beach.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

This is an important breeding area for two resident shorebirds (see below). Small numbers of migratory shorebirds such as Double-banded Plover and Red-necked Stint are sometimes seen feeding here. Silver Gulls are always present and Crested and Caspian Terns fish offshore. The beach is subject to erosion (with wave action, strong winds and king tides) so that there is often a steep step from the vegetated dunes to the high tide mark.

Hooded Plover

Two to eight adults recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys. The two surveys which recorded 0 were both in October/ November which is the breeding season. This species can be particularly illusive when it has eggs or chicks and its presence may easily be 'missed'.

Records and comments indicate that there are three areas where birds have territories. A pair are usually seen close to Freshwater Creek near the eastern end of the beach, where an adult was on a nest on 2/11/18. A pair is often seen towards the middle of the beach, and another pair at the western end. There are records of adults with immatures in March/April in all three areas: 13/3/10 2 ad + 2 imm; 28/3/11 7 ad + 3 imm ; 27/3/13 2 ad + 2 imm; 5/4/16 8 ad and 3 imm; 27/4/17 4 ad + 2 imm; 2/4/19 3 ad +2 imm and 4 ad + 1 imm.

The beach was badly eroded by high tides in October 2013 and there appeared to be only suitable habitat for one pair in that and the following year.

Red-capped Plover

Only recorded (one to three birds) on 3 out of 20. All were on the March/April counts.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all surveys in numbers from 5 to 26. A maximum of 13 pairs recorded with territories spread along the beach approximately 500 m apart. When the beach is eroded this species finds ways to access the area above the beach for nesting. All nests seen were on October/November counts: 4/11/11 a pair with 1 chick; 4/11/14 two pairs seen on nests; 11/11/15 one pair with nest; 9/11/16 two pairs with nests; 15/11/17 two pairs on nests; 2/11/18 one pair on nest and one pair with 2 half- grown young; 6/11/19 one pair with eggs and another pair with 2 immatures. The only breeding record from the March/April counts was of a pair with an immature on 27/3/13.

The following are noted for interest without speculation.

Adults recorded on 10 x March/April Counts	102
Adults " " 10 x October/ November Counts	210
Adults recorded on first 10 counts 2010 to 2014	171
Adults " " last 10 counts 2015 to 2019	141

Sooty Oystercatcher

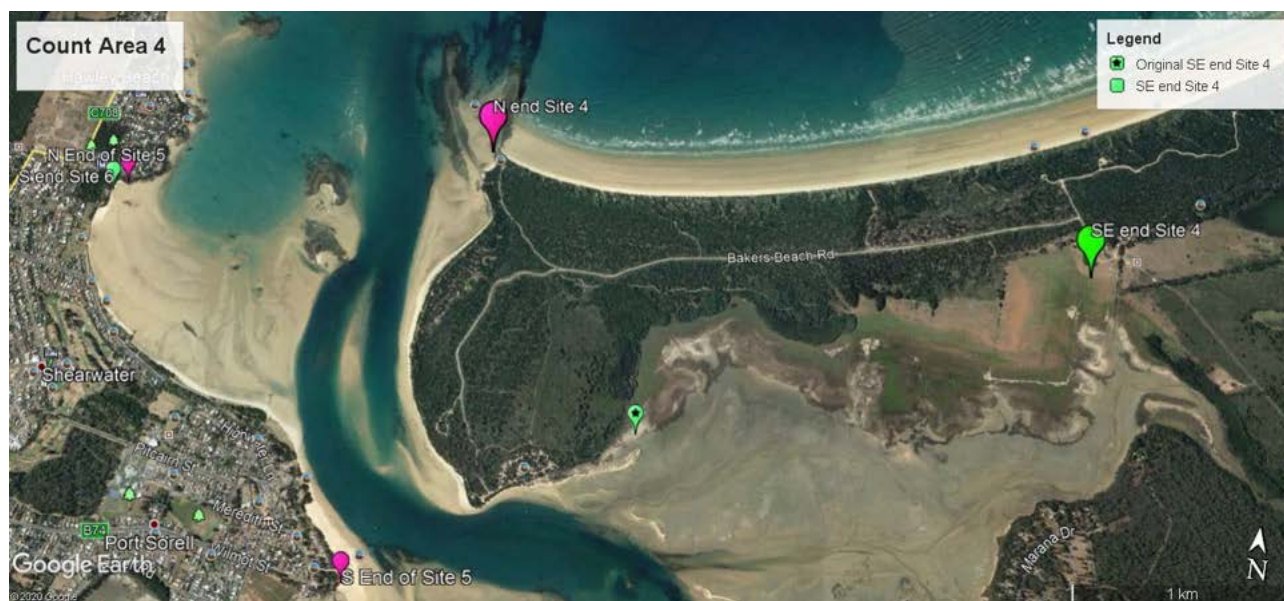
Only recorded on 3 out of twenty counts.

Masked Lapwing

Small numbers of between 1 and 25 recorded on twelve of twenty counts.

Count 4 – NE Arm to Griffiths Point

Lead Volunteer Jim Hunter



It was originally planned (from a map) that this Count Area would start at just east of the shingle spit. However, participants were keen to start on the paddocks close to the NP's Information Centre. The reason for this was that the walk from this starting point would include prime shorebird habitat, high tide roosts for Australian Pied Oystercatcher, Red-capped Plovers, Double-banded Plovers and various migratory shorebirds from the northern hemisphere. Although our counts were always done on a falling tide, many shorebirds were still at or close to their high-tide roosts or feeding on the recently exposed mud-flats of NE Arm.

In this report I will not detail records of shorebirds that are not our target species from NE Arm. A simple list of species seen on these counts will appear at the end of the report for this site.

This site also falls into a **Key Biodiversity Area** listed by BirdLife Australia, as it holds more than 1% of the world population of Australian Pied Oystercatchers (in fact more than 3%). There are also still small numbers of the endangered Eastern Curlew migrating here from their northern breeding grounds.

Description of Site

The intertidal mud-flat area of the North East Arm of the Rubicon Estuary has a shoreline of saltbush. Behind this are paddocks with drains from previous farm use which are heavily grazed by macropods and are a rich habitat for birds and a high tide haven for Double-banded Plovers between February and July. At the western end of the saltbush area there is an extensive shell-spit which turns into a sandy beach further west and this sandy shoreline continues around Bakers Point to Griffiths Point at the northern end of our Count Area.

Recreational Use

East of Bakers Point is a boat ramp and a large Camp Site. Another Camp Site west of the boat ramp in coastal vegetation has access to the beach about .5 km from the point.

Between November and April there is very heavy recreational use, swimming, boating, canoeing, jet skiing, beach games, fishing etc.

This is also the breeding season for our resident shorebirds. Cyclists were riding along the beach out to the spit which often has breeding Hooded Plovers and A. Pied Oystercatchers.

NP&W kindly erected some

roped off areas with temporary signs which appear be making a difference.



Shorebird Habitat and Usage

As already mentioned this is an important area for shorebirds with good intertidal feeding habitat. Cradle Coast NRM have funded Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to undertake Rice Grass (*Spartina anglica*) control works in NE Arm since 2016 and there are plans for further control measures in the estuary. Sea-spurge removal is also an ongoing project for 'Friends of Narawntapu NP Wildcare Group'.

The sandy beach between Bakers and Griffiths Points suffered considerable erosion from storm damage in 2014, and increased recreational activity has likely impacted shorebird breeding success.

Crested and Caspian Terns, Silver and Pacific Gulls, Australian Pelicans and four species of cormorants, White-faced Herons, Great and Little Egrets, Black Swans and several species of ducks are all present at various times. The resident Black-front Dotterel was recorded on one

count but is not usually found here. Migratory Blue-winged Parrots are regular in the samphire, and the estuary has a healthy population of White-bellied Sea-Eagles.

Hooded Plover

One to eight adults recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys. Over the years it has been known to breed in at least three different locations. Eight birds seen on 4/11/2011 were noted as 4 pairs. There are five breeding records: 28/3/11 2 adults with one juvenile; 20/3/12 1 juv with adults; and single immatures with adults on 27/3/13, 12/3/14 and 2/4/19.

Of the 55 adults recorded on our surveys, 41 were in the first 10 surveys (2010 to 2014) and only 14 on the last 10 surveys (2015 to 2019). It is hoped that with increased disturbance birds are becoming more secretive and that some of the apparent decline is due to 'missed' observations. After a roped off area across the shingle spit was erected in early December 2019 an adult was seen apparently incubating on 14/12/19.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys around the shell spit area, which is a traditional high-tide roost, or feeding along the shoreline of NE Arm nearby. There are no breeding records from our surveys although it almost certainly breeds in this area.

It is difficult to know how far the birds at the high-tide roost disperse. As our surveys were all done on a falling tide we do not know how many will have flown off. However, it is worth noting that

Birds recorded on the first ten surveys (2010 to 2014) totalled 301 (maximum count 52)

“ “ last ten surveys (2015 to 2019) “ 106 *

*Maximum number of 40 on 2/4/19 but six counts recorded single figures.

It is the opinion of all counters I have spoken to that this species is declining in our region.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all 20 surveys. Numbers vary between 14 and 219, but because of the vicinity of the high-tide roost these numbers are not indicative of the resident population.

The total of birds recorded on March/April counts (post breeding season) was 1270.

The total “ “ on October/November counts (breeding season) was 543.

This is the opposite seasonal bias to birds recorded in Count Area 1. Further co-ordinated High-tide counts in October and March (to augment the June/July POC counts) with statistical analysis might prove interesting.

There are at least 3 breeding territories along NE Arm, 2 between the eastern end of the shell spit and the other end of the spit nearer the camp site. There are records from another 3 sites between Bakers Point and Griffiths Point. The following are from these 8 breeding territories: 4/11/11 2 adults with 2 chicks on the shell spit. Another two nests on the same date, one with c/2 on a ledge of sand bank 2m above beach north of Bakers Point; another pair with c/3 further north towards Griffiths Point; 14/11/12 a nest with c/2 on the shell spit, and another pair with ¾ grown chick south of Griffiths Point; 4/11/14 three pairs showing breeding behaviour – if they had nests before this date they would have been washed out due to king tides and storms; 10/11/17 two pairs in NE Arm showing breeding behaviour and two pairs between Bakers Point and Griffiths

Point, one pair with 2 chicks; 2/11/18 one pair showing aggressive behaviour towards Sooty Oystercatcher in NE Arm; 6/11/19 two pairs showing nesting behaviour in NE Arm.

Sooty Oystercatcher

One to seven birds recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys. Most birds seen feeding in NE Arm but often seen in pairs or singles near Griffiths Point where it may breed on the extensive rocky area nearby.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on all surveys in numbers between 2 and 28. No obvious seasonal difference.

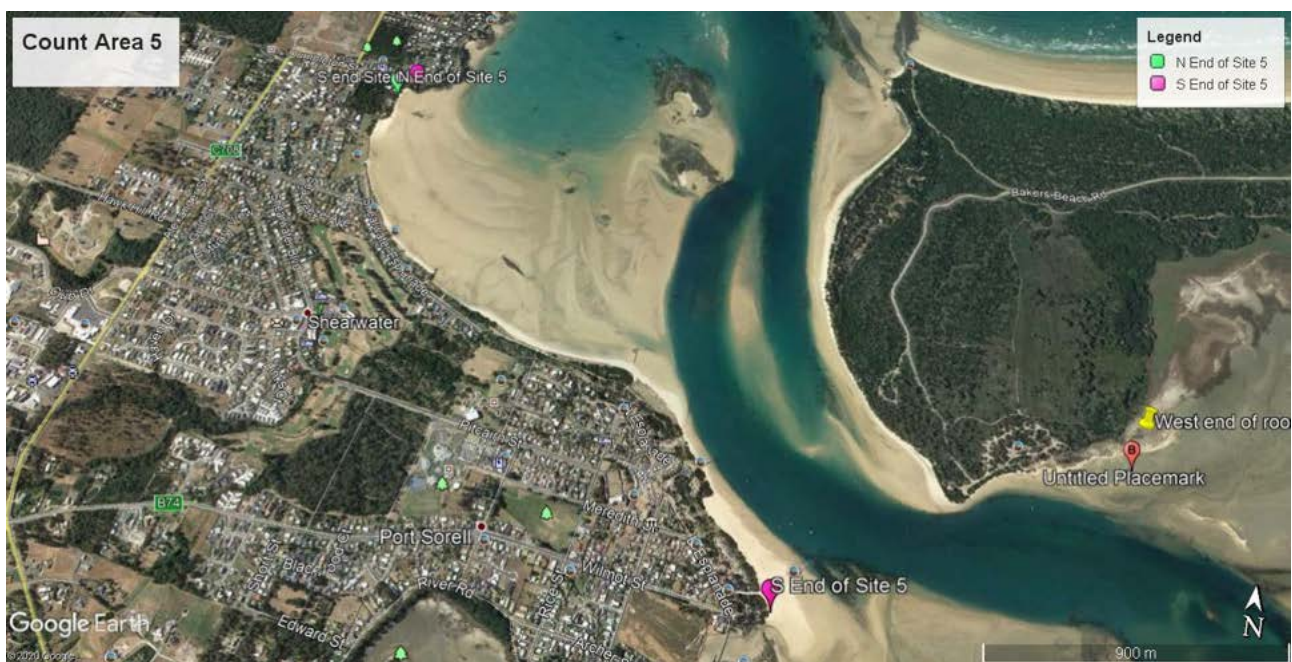
Migratory Shorebirds in NE Arm

The following species were recorded during the 20 surveys:

Eastern Curlew	Double-banded Plover
Bar-tailed Godwit	Pacific Golden Plover
Red-necked Stint	Greater Sand Plover *vagrant
Curlew Sandpiper	Banded Stilt (non-breeding plumage) *vagrant
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	

Count Area 5 – Port Sorell to Hawley Beach

Lead Volunteer – John Bowden



Description of Site

This site is in the Rubicon River Estuary. Freers Beach stretches from the north along a sandy bay to Port Sorell (which is a narrower sandy beach) to the Boat Ramp in the south. The residential areas of Shearwater and Part Sorell behind the foreshore house a fast growing population. At low tide a large expanse of sand is uncovered allowing access to Penguin Island, a part of Narawntapu NP. A very active Landcare Group operate along a large tract of shoreline from the track out to

the Carbuncles to Port Sorell. They have removed many weeds and revegetated much of the foreshore.

Recreational Use

This is a very popular area for residents and tourists, and the beach is used for many recreational activities throughout the year, particularly in summer. Camp Banksia caters for school and community groups and there is more than one Caravan Park.

Many walkers, sometimes in quite large groups, walk out to Penguin Island and over the years, despite restrictions, dogs off leash have been a problem disturbing breeding birds. Present dog exercise hours are from 7pm to 10am during daylight saving and 24/7 outside this time. The authorities have been vigilant in recent times in enforcing these rules.

Shorebird Habit and Usage

There has been an Australian Pied Oystercatcher high-tide roost south of the boat ramp for as long as anyone can remember. Unfortunately, this roost is threatened by constant disturbance from dogs on and off leash. Dogs are allowed on this beach 24/7 without any restrictions, whereas north of the Boat Ramp (as far as Freers Beach) is a no dog zone at all times. Penguin Island is a key breeding habitat for some shorebirds and has a small colony of Little Penguins. Crested Terns have bred here in the past, but in recent years large numbers of Silver Gulls have taken over the Island.

On the last count there were about 200 pairs of Silver Gulls and a nest of Forest Ravens. Caspian Terns are seen here and may breed as well as a few pairs of Pacific Gulls. At high tide other species rest on the Island, including cormorants, terns and Eastern Curlews (in the past). On 17/3/19 there were many rats on the island.

Hooded Plover

Only recorded on three out of twenty surveys when 1 to 2 adults were observed on Penguin Island.

Red-capped Plover

A pair recorded on Freers beach on 24/3/11 is the only record from 20 surveys. However, a pair had 3 new chicks at Freers Beach on 27/1/13, but it is doubtful if any of them survived.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys with numbers varying between 10 and 129. All records of large numbers would be from birds hanging around the boat ramp after high-tide. As the tide recedes birds move out to feed along the estuary. At least two pairs regularly breed on Penguin Island with the following records noted on our surveys: 7/11/11 two adults with 2 chicks; 12/3/12 two adults with 1 juv.; 8/11/14 pair with 2 eggs; 29/10/18 two 2 pairs, one with 1 egg and the other pair defending territory; 30/10/19 pair exhibiting breeding behaviour.

Sooty Oystercatcher

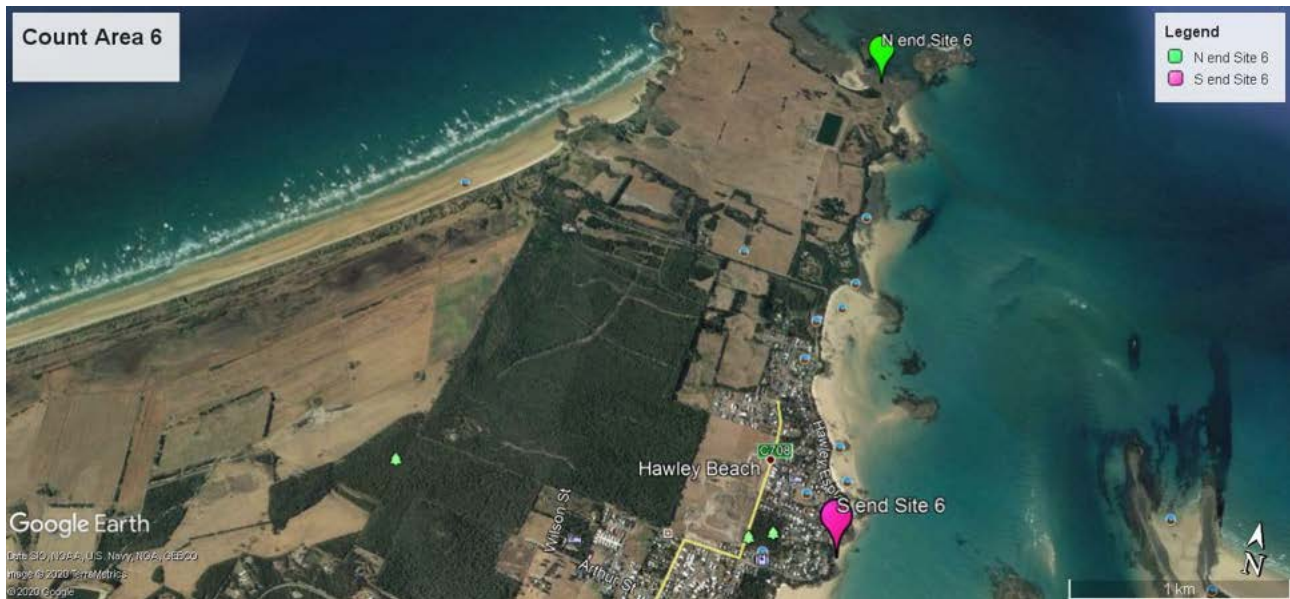
One to eight adults recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys. Most birds were on Penguin Island where there are the following breeding records: 10/11/12 two pairs incubating eggs; 8/11/14 a pair with 3 eggs nesting amongst Silver Gulls; 30/10/19 a nest with 2 eggs. There are probably three pairs on Penguin Island.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys in numbers from 2 to 51. No obvious seasonal pattern but more individuals recorded on the first ten surveys (133) than the second ten surveys (69).

Count Area 6 – Hawley Beach to Carbuncles

Lead Volunteer – John Bowden



Description of Site

The eastern part of the Pardoe Northdown Conservation Area covers the length of this site. A walking track runs from Hawley Beach to the 'Carbuncles', a rocky islet off the point. There are small sandy bays and rocky areas with a mixture of coastal vegetation from casuarinas and tea trees to native shrubs (and weeds) as well as grassy areas bordering paddocks.

Recreational Use

The Port Sorell region has become a fast developing residential area and holiday destination. The walking track is a high use area for holidaymakers, joggers, walkers, cyclists etc. It is a dog free zone at all times. There were past reports of unrestrained dogs and teenage campers disturbing the penguins, but NP&W have been vigilant in stopping irresponsible behaviour.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The Carbuncles have been a breeding area for several seabird species over the years. There are historical records of White-faced Storm Petrels, but they were apparently decimated by rats (Brothers, 2001). Little Penguins, Caspian Tern, Crested Terns and Pacific Gulls bred in small numbers over the years, but recently Silver Gulls have colonised the island to the detriment of other species. At low tide the channel (c.50 m wide) is used by feeding migratory and resident shorebirds.

There are Short-tailed Shearwater and Little Penguin rookeries in the area south of the point between the Carbuncles and Northdown beach. Disturbance to burrows by unsupervised visitors occurs, but the colonies have been considerably reduced in recent times by feral cats. A cat reduction programme has been in place since 2018 and John Bowden, funded by Cradle Coast NRM, has had some success in reducing the problem. The only breeding records of shorebirds are at this northern end and few use the southern end for feeding.

Hooded Plover

Not recorded on any of the 20 surveys for this site. Early records on 14/3/2010 and 1/11/2011 referred to birds in the territory west of the Carbuncles (in Site 7).

Red-capped Plover

There are no records of this species recorded on any of our surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to six adults recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys. There are two breeding territories in the north of this site. A nest with three eggs on 4/11/2019 was near the Carbuncles.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys. Numbers ranged from 1 to 8 adults. There were no breeding records noted on these surveys. However, it is known to breed on the Carbuncles (pers. obs.) and from regular observations there are likely to be two territories in the northern part of this site.

Masked Lapwing

Seen on only 13 of the 20 counts in small numbers of 1 to 16.

Count Area 7 – Northdown Beach

Lead Volunteer – John Bowden



Description of Site

This beach is part of the Pardoe Northdown Conservation Area and stretches east from Moorland Beach Road to Point Sorrell. The beach is mostly shingle with a small intertidal zone becoming wider near a rocky area known as 'The Water Rat'. The foreshore is mainly grass covered dunes bordering farmland with pools and drains.

Recreational Use

Access from the east is difficult and the only other access at present is through private land. In the past vehicles would drive along the beach from Moorland Beach Road, but this is now prevented by large rocks blocking their access. It is not used much by dog walkers except at the west end, as the stony beach is unsuitable. Few fishermen frequent this beach and it is not popular for swimming or with families.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

There is very little feeding habitat for shorebirds except in the north-eastern area around the 'Rat' where small numbers of Ruddy Turnstone and other migratory species can be found as well as three resident shorebird species. White-bellied Sea-Eagles and Wedge-tailed Eagles regularly patrol this region. There are Short-tailed Shearwater and Little Penguin rookeries in the area south of the point between the Carbuncles and Northdown beach. Disturbance to burrows by unsupervised visitors has occurred, but the colonies have been considerably reduced in recent times by feral cats. A cat reduction programme, partially funded by Cradle Coast NRM, has been in place since 2018 and John Bowden has had considerable success in reducing the problem. At the western end towards Moorland Point some migratory species are sometimes recorded feeding at low tide.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on 14 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 1 and 9 adults. Most records are at the eastern end of this site where there are two breeding territories, one close to the 'Rat' and another just west of the 'Carbuncles'. A pair with 1 juvenile on 14/3/2010, a pair with 3 immatures on 4/4/2014 and a pair with 1 juvenile on 13/3/2015 are the only breeding records. However, nests with eggs in the territory west of the Carbuncles have been recorded outside the survey dates.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on all but one of our surveys. Numbers varied from 1 to 19 birds, but it is likely that there is movement between Sites 7 and 8, particularly when disturbed. Single birds and pairs scattered along the shingle beach, particularly at the western end. A pair with 2 immatures on 13/3/15 was the only breeding record.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Between one and six adults recorded on all but one survey. There are two known breeding territories, one on either side of the "Rat". On 27/10/2018 one pair was showing breeding behaviour and another pair had 2 small chicks.

Sooty Oystercatcher

One to five recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. A pair have a territory on a small rocky point east of the 'Rat' where a pair with a juvenile were seen on 25/3/2013.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied from 1 to 168 with no obvious seasonal pattern.

Count Area 8 – Moorland Beach

Lead Volunteer – Julie Ann Serafin



Description of Site

This site runs from Pardoe Point in the west to the Moorland Beach Road in the East. The section between Pardoe Point and the equally rocky Moorland Point is a sandy beach. Moorland Point is a well-known High-tide Roost for the migratory Ruddy Turnstone as well as small numbers of other migratory species and Sooty Oystercatchers (Britton, H.A. and Hunter, J.F. 2016). An extensive rocky shelf is exposed at low tide east of Moorland Point and west of this point, beyond the sandy beach, there is another rocky area. This stretch of shoreline is part of the Pardoe Northdown Conservation Area, but this classification does not provide much protection. However, Cradle Coast NRM and the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service have made some impact on vehicle access with the siting of large rocks in certain areas.

A serious sea-spurge problem was addressed by Cradle Coast NRM when they were able to use a grant to spray sea-spurge over an area of about 1.5 km along dunes on either side of Pardoe Point (the prime shorebird habitat).

Recreational Use

This site is considered by many residents of East Devonport to be 'their' recreational beach, with a long history of disregarding (and destroying) signs which try to restrict activities. Vehicles, quad bikes, trail bikes, horses, dogs on and off leash etc. are all present in increasing numbers, particularly during the summer months. Fishermen, sea-weed gatherers and families also enjoy

the beach. Many are responsive to suggestions on how to cause the least disturbance and it is hoped that education will improve the situation in the long term.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The intertidal zone here is a particularly important feeding area for resident and migratory shorebirds as well as White-faced Herons, cormorants etc. The seaweed build up east of Moorland Point also provides extra feeding opportunities. Silver Gulls, Pacific Gulls, Crested Terns (and other Terns in small numbers) all frequent the area. The migratory Double-banded Plovers feed along this beach and the paddocks to the south have a good population of breeding Banded Lapwings. White-bellied Sea-Eagles and Swamp Harriers, Albatrosses and Australian Gannets can also be seen from the shore.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on 10 out of 20 surveys in numbers from one to four.

Because of the importance of this species Julie Serafin has been making observations in addition to the RSM counts we undertake twice a year. A pair have a territory east of Pardoe Point and distraction behaviour was first noted on 19/2/2014. An adult was again performing distraction behaviour on 27/2/2015 and on 18/3/2015 the pair were seen with two chicks. However, on 3/4/2015 the pair had lost the chicks, presumably to dogs and people. On 4/9/2015 the pair were again showing breeding behaviour and again on 17/1/2016. No birds were seen after the flood in June 2016 until a pair were seen in December, and on 6/2/2017 they had 1 chick. 3 adults were seen on 17/12/2017 and 4 adults on 21/11/2018. On 17/12/19 3 adults were seen with one immature and the following January 2020 a pair had 1 flying young.

We believe than the pair have nested in the dunes rather than the flat beach below and that removal of sea-spurge in this area may have contributed to their success. .

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys with numbers of adults counted between three and thirty-one. The total of birds recorded on the first ten counts (2010-2014) was 145 and on the last 10 counts only 90. Of the 7 breeding records only one was after 2014 - on 16/3/16 one immature noted out of 16 birds.

The count on 26th October 2010 recorded 8 pairs along the beach, but on our last count 6th November 2019 there were two pairs (1 each E and W of Moorland Point and 4 birds feeding at the western edge of the beach).

This species is very vulnerable to constant disturbance and increased recreational use of the beach. As early as 2000 Jim Hunter, writing in the Tasmanian Bird Report, mentioned the detrimental effects of dogs let loose on the beach for a run - "I would suspect they account for most of the Red-capped Plover nests".

There are records of this species breeding on the Devonport Airport grounds (Skira, 2002), and an earlier record of a pair breeding on the land side of the track to the point (pers.obs.). It is hoped that this species may be adaptable enough to raise their young away from this beach.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all surveys, with numbers varying from one to eleven. A pair are always in their territory about 200 m east of Moorland Point and a pair have a territory near Pardoe Point. Little evidence of success with breeding – a small number of juveniles were seen outside the counts (pers.com.).

Sooty Oystercatcher

There is a high-tide roost for this species on the rocks at Moorland Point.

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys in numbers varying from one to eleven; the two surveys that recorded no birds were both in November when birds would be breeding. All breeding records were of pairs with single juveniles or immature birds on the March/April counts, and all in the vicinity of Moorland Point. 10/3/10 pair with 1 juv; 7/3/12 2 adults feeding with 1 imm; 14/3/13 4 adults with 3 juv; 18/3/16 2 adults with 1 imm.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied from 1 to 75. They are also present in numbers on the paddocks behind the beach, where they also breed.

Count Area 9 – Pardoe Beach

Lead Volunteer – Hazel Britton



Description of Site

This beach stretches for more than 3 km and is part of the Pardoe Northdown Conservation Area. At the western end is a shingle ridge which slopes down to a rocky platform exposed at low tide. A narrow strip of sand increases towards the east, becoming wider at the mouth of a drain. This drain (which appears like a creek) is sometimes flowing and at other times completely dry. The area from this drain to the east end of the beach is sandy ending in the rocky outcrop of Pardoe

Point. Behind the foreshore is the Palmer walking track which in some places gets eroded away. Heavy rain and flooding washes away the causeway over the drain. Foreshore vegetation is scarce on shingle at the western end, becoming thicker on the sandy dune area to the east. Various weeds including sea spurge are present (see Site 8 for comments on removal). The Area behind the beach is farmland with drainage ditches and Devonport Airport.

Recreational Use

Dog walkers access the beach from the west, with dogs on and off leash. Vehicles and quad bikes also drive across the shingle from the west. Walkers and joggers are common and horses have been seen on occasion. However, less than half the traffic would go beyond the drain.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

At low tide a rocky platform, with pools, seaweed and channels is uncovered at the western end of the beach. This is frequented by various feeding shorebirds and other species such as White-faced Herons and gulls. Migratory Ruddy Turnstone regularly feed here. At the eastern end close to the point is an intertidal zone which provides good feeding habitat for small plovers. The migratory Double-banded Plovers are usually found here between February and July and other migrant species such as Sanderling and Red-necked Stint are occasionally seen. Feeding birds roost in the corner at high-tide.

Occasional Caspian and Crested Terns and various cormorant species feed offshore. White-bellied Sea-Eagles, Gannets and albatrosses are not uncommon out to sea, and gulls congregate around the drain and scavenge along the shoreline.

NB: Because shorebirds often move around Pardoe Point, Sites 8 and 9 have always been surveyed at the same time, with counters starting at the West end of Site 9 and the East end of Site 8, and meeting at Pardoe Point. This has meant that there has been no double counting.

Hooded Plover

One to three birds recorded on 6 out of 20 surveys, always at the eastern end of the beach. There are no definite breeding records for this site. However, in November 2018 there were three birds on this beach at the same time as three birds at Site 8 were showing breeding behaviour. A total of six birds could mean that a territory at this site is possible in the future.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on all surveys with numbers between 8 and 32 individuals. There is no sign of declining numbers at this site with 150 adults recorded over the first 10 counts (2010 to 2014) and 175 adults on the last 10 counts (2015 to 2019).

This beach and Site 8 are favoured beaches for this species with suitable feeding areas and breeding sites.

At the west end pairs have been recorded breeding on shingle ridges and at the east end at sandy sites, close to the vegetation. Nests in the latter sites can be washed out by king tides, and erosion is a problem. There are several breeding records with sometimes three pairs with chicks noted on the same day. It is difficult to define breeding territories with movements of feeding birds, but on one count at least 8 breeding pairs were identified.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all but one of our twenty surveys. Numbers ranged from 1 to 8 adults.

A pair have a breeding territory at the western end of the beach on the shingle ridge close to a vehicle track. This is a very disturbed site but the following records show some success: Adult with 1 juvenile (still fluffy) on 22/11/12 and a pair with an immature on 11/3/2014.

A pair with a juvenile at the eastern end of the beach on 17/3/12.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys in small numbers (one to four), except on our last count (6/11/2019) when 7 of 9 birds recorded were feeding on the exposed rocky shelf at the western end.

A single breeding record of a pair with an immature at Pardoe Point.

Reports from travellers of a pair with young on the Airport behind the Point would be in the same territory.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys with numbers fluctuating between 2 and 92.

Count Area 10 – Pardoe Beach to Police Point

Lead Volunteer – Julie Serafin



Description of Site

This site has a variety of habitats along the foreshore. There are sandy beaches at the western end, shingle ridges and rocky areas with almost no beach at all. At low tide a considerable intertidal area is exposed in some areas.

South of the western end of the count area is the Ferry Terminal and the township of East Devonport. This region is partly industrial and closer to the sea, more residential. A walking track runs from the Mersey River east along the whole site. Fringing coastal vegetation is sporadic with

a thicker band at the eastern end. The council is revegetating some areas. Sea-spurge is found on the shingle.

Recreational Use

Holidaymakers, both local and tourists, make good use of the sandy beaches and the walking track. Fishermen try their luck off the rocks and it is a popular area for dog owners, who use the walking track and grassy play areas. Dogs must be on a lead at all times of the year and exercising of dogs on the beach is restricted during the summer months. There are two Caravan/Cabin Parks.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Resident and migratory shorebirds feed on the rocky shelf and intertidal zone. At least two species breed on the shingle, and there are high-tide roosts of two species of resident shorebirds and two migratory species. Other birds using the beach include Pacific and Silver Gulls, White-faced Herons, Crested Terns and three species of cormorants. Australian Gannets and albatrosses are often seen off shore.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on nineteen out of twenty survey counts. Numbers varied from 1 to 17.

A total of 93 birds were recorded on the first 10 counts (2010 to 2014) and only a total of 34 on the last 10 counts (2015 to 2019). This is a considerable decrease and supports some counters impressions that Red-capped Plovers are declining on our beaches.

This species breeds on the shingle ridges with at least two territories known. Seven juveniles were with 15 adults in three different groups on 7/03/2012; 1 juvenile with 2 adults on 8/04/2017; a pair with 2 tiny chicks on 27/10/2018 (unfortunately one chick was taken by a Silver Gull) and 2 pairs each with one chick and an extra female on 28/10/2019.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all surveys with numbers ranging from 1 to 33. Apart from two counts of 33 on 12/03/2013 and 20/3/2015 the largest count was 11 which included 3 juveniles.

There are probably two breeding territories. One pair on a shingle ridge laid a third clutch after the first two clutches failed (this was recorded outside the surveys) and a pair are regularly seen further east.

Sooty Oystercatcher

There is a regular high-tide roost for this species on a black rocky spit about 0.8 km from the eastern end of this site. Although counts are always done on a falling tide, birds are sometimes slow to disperse to their feeding areas.

1 to 31 birds recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys. On Spring counts (October/November) the numbers ranged from 0 to 14, and on Autumn Counts (March/April) from 13 to 31. Immature birds were only noted in Autumn, suggesting that the lower numbers at the high-tide roost in Spring may be attributed to birds being in their breeding territories.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on all but the first count. Numbers ranged randomly from 3 to 110, although only 4 counts were above 30. Breeds on the edge of the beach and grassy areas inland of the walking track, and there are records of adults with young in November.

Count Area 11 – Mersey Bluff to Don Railway Bridge

Lead Volunteer - Hazel Britton



Description of Site

This site between Mersey Bluff and the Don River skirts a residential suburb of Devonport. It includes two sandy bays, an area of rocky shelf in the west with a rocky point leading into the Don River Estuary.

Recreational use

The small sandy beach in the east known as Back Beach is a dog exercise area. Coles Bay, a more extensive beach further east, is a very popular recreational beach for Devonport residents and visitors. It is popular for swimming, picnicking, jogging etc. Close to the rocky point is an area used by hardy surfers. A walking track runs along the estuary to the railway bridge and into the Don Reserve. Exercise of dogs on leads is permitted at the far end of Coles Beach all year, but restricted on the beach between 10 am and 6 pm from 1 November-31 March.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Due to heavy recreational use the sandy beaches only seem to be used by Pacific and Silver Gulls. White-faced Herons, cormorants and a few shorebirds feed along the rocky shelf and point in the west; including the migratory Ruddy Turnstone.

The Don Estuary is a much richer habitat with diverse bird species including Crested and Caspian Terns, Australian Pelicans and occasional migratory herons. White-bellied Sea-Eagles and Swamp Harriers are frequent visitors.

Red-capped Plover

Not recorded at this site on any of the twenty surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all surveys. Seen in numbers between 3 and 11 birds almost entirely within the estuary. There are at least two breeding territories on an island in the estuary. A pair with two chicks and an adult with a juvenile recorded on the same day on 3rd November 2017. On 16th November 2016 a pair had two juveniles, one was just able to fly.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on only 9 surveys out of 20. Numbers between 1 and 3 only, feeding on the rocks and also in the estuary. All records of 3 birds were in April and could have been pairs accompanied by an immature from the recent breeding season.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on all counts. Pairs with chicks in November on the grassy areas behind the beach. Numbers up to 86 showed no seasonal pattern or recent increase. Always birds resting on the island in the estuary, sometimes in large numbers and taking to the air when alarmed.

Count Area 12 – Don Heads to Lillico

Lead Volunteers – Adrian Astley and Kelly Reynolds



Description of Site

This site was not included on the first count. Apart from the area in the extreme west it comprises a jagged rocky foreshore backed by cliffs and requires permission to cross private land when the beach is too rocky. Above the beach is farmland used for grazing. There are a couple of bays with small amounts of sand. Adrian and Kelly took this site on from the second count – they were young, fit and had done it before. On the last 5 counts only the area from Lillico Platform to the rocks was counted.

Recreational Use

A few fishermen walk from Lillico Platform and fish off the rocks. Walkers access the beach at the Don River Estuary in the east, but seldom go far as the terrain is difficult. A camp fire and evidence of cows on the beach with private access is the only other use of the beach known. Hang-gliders use the cliffs.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Apart from the beach at the western end, this site is seldom used by shorebirds. A few cormorants and Crested Terns were recorded on some of the surveys. The cliff tops provide thermals for birds of prey, and White-bellied Sea Eagles, Wedge-tailed Eagles, Swamp Harriers, Hobby and Brown Falcon have been recorded.

There are Little Penguin and Short-tailed Shearwater colonies at this site.

Red-capped Plover

Although only seen on 4 out of 19 surveys, a pair have a territory close to the Lillico Penguin Viewing Platform, where breeding behaviour and chicks have been seen on a few occasions. On the last count a pair were seen further east and this may be another territory.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys with a maximum of 6 birds, usually seen feeding at both ends of the site. A pair have a territory about .75 km east of the platform.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Up to six birds seen feeding on the beach on 10 out of 20 surveys.

Masked lapwing

Up to 40 recorded on 9 of the 19 surveys.



Pied Oystercatcher juvenile.

Photo by Els Wakefield.

Count Area 13 – Lillico Beach

Lead Volunteers – John and Shirley Tongue



Description of Site

A flat stretch of the Bass Highway runs for more than 2.5 kms close to the sea. The area north of the highway forms the Lillico Beach Conservation Area. A band of coastal vegetation (comprising a mixture of native vegetation and weeds) about 100 m wide growing on sand dunes and shingle, runs between the highway and the foreshore. Bordering the vegetation there is a pebbly beach which slopes down to a flat intertidal zone of mixed rocky shelf and sandy areas with small pools. The land south of the highway is farmland.

A Weed Management Plan was produced in the early 2000's and much has been done over the last 15 years to remove some of the weeds. A long list of weeds were identified with cape ivy, box thorn and perennial grasses of special note. The process of weed removal and revegetation is ongoing, with the area around the Lillico viewing platform receiving the most attention.

Recreational Use

There is a sign prohibiting dogs at the access point at Lillico Penguin viewing platform, situated at the east end of the beach. This access point is mainly used by fishermen now, but residents say that in the past, when there was more sand, the pool to the west of the steps was a popular swimming spot. It is not an easy beach for walking on and consequently is less frequented.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

This beach hosts a large colony of Little Penguins spread sporadically along its length. There is also a small Short-tailed Shearwater colony. The area is frequented by all of our resident shorebirds except Hooded Plover. White-faced Herons feed along the intertidal zone and Pacific and Silver Gulls as well as cormorants are usually present.

Red-capped Plover

This species, recorded on 14 out of 20 surveys, appears to be less common over the last five years. It was recorded 9 times out of 10 (with a total of 58 birds) during the first 5 years with 4 juvenile birds seen. During the years 2015 – 2019 it was recorded only 5 times out of 10 (21 birds) with only 1 juvenile noted.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all twenty surveys. Numbers ranged from 2 to 11, often being recorded in pairs. Observations would indicate that there would be three to four breeding territories spread along the beach. At high tide, both this species and the next, roost on shingle at the western edge of the beach.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Feeds widely amongst the rocks, pools and sandy patches along the beach and recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied from one to eighteen but no breeding behaviour was observed. As mentioned above it roosts at high tide on the shingle at the western end.

Masked Lapwing

Numbers from 1 to 142 were recorded. During the first 5 years (2010 -2014) a total of 452 birds were noted, as opposed to 655 in the last five years (2015 -2019).

Count Area 14 – Leith

Lead Volunteers – John and Shirley Tongue



Description of Site

This site follows the Forth River to the estuary in the west where there is a sandbank at the mouth. The remainder of the site is comprised of a narrow pebbly foreshore sloping down to a

rocky platform mostly covered at high tide. This rounds the point and continues to the East end close to the main highway. The small community of Leith nestles between the road and the sea.

Recreational Use

There is a boat ramp in the river and the site is used by residents and some visitors for the usual recreational pursuits such as fishing, dog walking, swimming etc. A vehicle track runs close to the beach along much of the area. Horses occasionally use the beach. There appears to be no restrictions to dogs on or off leash at this site.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The only area suitable for small shorebirds is along the river estuary. There are past records of Double-banded Plover with Red-capped Plovers between March and July.

Some Little Penguins are likely to breed in the vegetation along parts of the beach.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded in numbers up to fourteen adults on 15 out of 20 surveys. Almost all records are located along the river when there are adequate sandy edges and at the sandbank at the mouth of the river. There is one breeding record of two adults with two chicks on 18/11/2012 and four more records of adults with two to three juveniles. Maximum number of adults recorded on a single count was fourteen. There are at least two breeding territories in the eastern section along the estuary before it becomes too rocky.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Up to eight adults recorded on 19 out of 20 Surveys. Adults with chicks were seen on 18/11/2012 and there are two other records of adults with juveniles. From regular sightings there would be two breeding territories, one along the estuary and another on a shell-bank about .5 km from the eastern end.

Sooty Oystercatcher

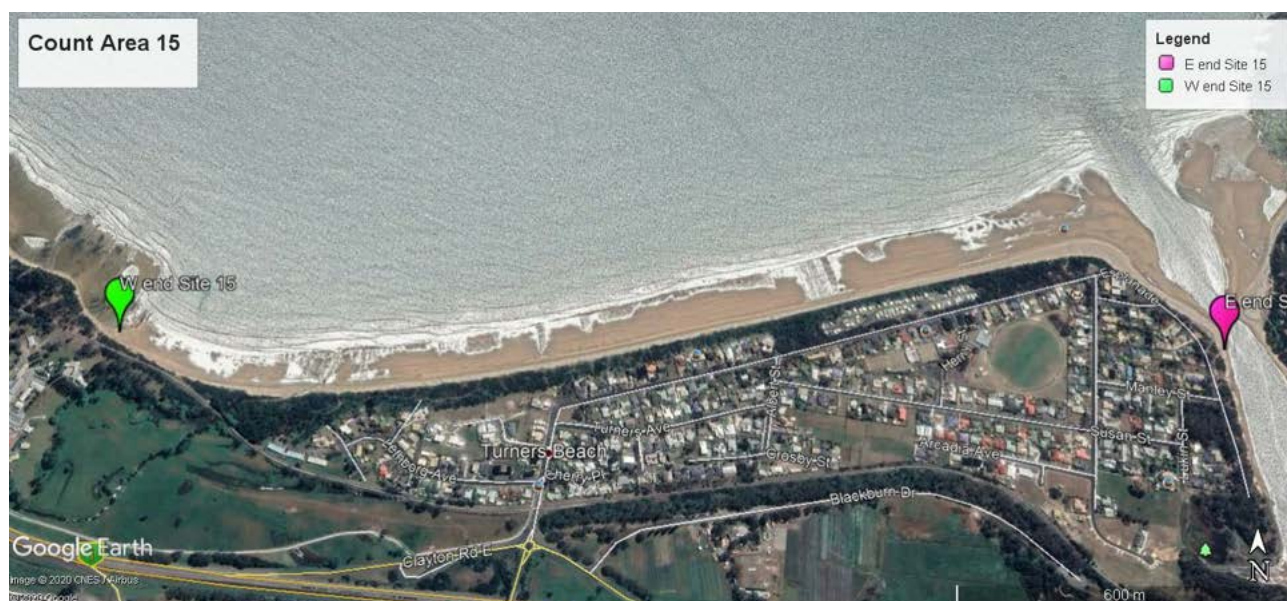
This species feeds widely along the rocky shelf from the Forth River to Don Heads. Seen on 16 out of 20 surveys at this site, the numbers recorded fluctuated between 1 and 24. A pair seen display flighting near the point on 16th November 2017 would indicate a breeding territory somewhere in that region.

Masked Lapwing

Numbers of this species varied considerably with no difference between Spring and Autumn counts. Maximum number was 107.

Count Area 15 - Turner's Beach

Lead Volunteers – Shirley Tongue, Patricia Ellison and Phil Richardson



Description of Site

This is a long flat beach stretching from the Forth River Estuary in the east to the rocky shelf near Camp Clayton in the west. There is a residential community here stretching behind the count site and a caravan park that caters for holidaymakers and tourists.

Recreational Use

The beach is well used by both residents and visitors. There are no restrictions for dogs except from the beginning of November through to the end of March. During this period dogs must be on a lead and can only be on the beach between 8pm and 9am. There is no access for dogs along the estuary. Horses occasionally use the beach and there is no official access for vehicles except at the boat ramp along the river and along a fire trail which opens onto the beach near the Clayton Rivulet. A group of feral/Muscovy ducks along the river are fed by local residents.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The sandy area at the mouth of the Forth River provides some feeding habitat for small plovers including the migratory Double-banded Plover. The foreshore area is shingle, with quite large pebbles, and the considerable sandy beach is not visible at high tide. It is a straight stretch of sand exposed to the wind and mostly used by gulls with the occasional cormorant, albatross and gannets flying by.

Red-capped Plover

Between 2 and 7 birds were recorded on 9 out of 20 surveys. Two groups of seven included juveniles. This species is mostly seen feeding on the sand banks on both sides of the Forth Estuary (Sits 15 and 14), and will regularly move from one side to the other depending on feeding opportunities and disturbance. There is no indication that it has bred at this Site over the ten years of this survey.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 8 out of 20 surveys. The maximum number recorded on a count was three and all records were from the western end of the beach.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Up to 6 recorded on only three of our surveys. All birds were seen at the western end of this site.

Masked Lapwing

Small numbers recorded (less than 25) from various parts of the beach.

Count Area 16 - Clayton Rivulet to Fishpond

Lead Volunteers – John Tongue, Alison Parks, Robyn Parker



Description of Site

At the W end of this site is an area known as the Fishpond which forms two connected pools at low tide. The area surrounding the pools is mostly shingle with a man-made wall between them trapping fish. A creek drains into the Fishpond and there is a sandy bay between the pools and the vegetation. The small creek drains from near the Industrial Site and during the floods in June 2016 lots of wood and debris were deposited along the beach. Unlike other beaches in the area, this was never removed by the council and has trapped seaweed and wrack. It has not washed out with high tides over the last four years, reducing the amount of suitable shorebird habitat. In addition to this the drain has caused pollution with a build-up of algae and a foul smell. Sea spurge is also present amongst other weeds. However, it is hoped to form a volunteer group and nearby residents have started removing rubbish and weeds.

The area to the east is a mixture of rocky shelf, pebbly beach and bays.

Recreational Use

People and dogs sometimes enter the Fishpond from Buttons Beach, and a few fishermen use the area, but access is limited and the nature of the beach to the east is not comfortable for walkers or for dogs. Vehicles sometimes access the beach from Maskells Road, west of Camp Clayton, and drive in both directions. Towards the eastern end of this beach there is more recreational activity from holidaymakers staying at Camp Clayton.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The Fishpond is one of the more important sites for breeding shorebirds in a built up area. It is also an area with diverse birdlife. Australian Pelicans, Chestnut Teal, Great Egret, White-faced Herons and four species of Cormorant have been recorded here. Albatrosses and Gannets sometimes come close to the rocks and White-bellied Sea-eagles are often seen.

Migrant shorebirds from far north in the northern hemisphere, such as Whimbrel and Common Sandpiper have been recorded. The latter species, which is scarce in Tasmania, has been seen each year during our summer since 2012.

Little Penguins also breed in small numbers east of the Fishpond.

Red-capped Plover

Although only recorded on 9 out of 20 of our surveys, there are several breeding records. Nests found have been on the shingle banks on both sides of the Fishpond. First found breeding in October 2011, there are also records in October 2013, October 2014 (two pairs) and October 2015. There have been no breeding records since the floods in 2016.

Surveys are done on a falling tide and records outside of our surveys suggest that birds are feeding at that time, possibly at the eastern end of Site 17. At high tide over the years, up to seven have been seen resting on the shingle bank on the east side of the Fishpond.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys. There are two breeding territories, one on the shingle bank to the east of the Fishpond and another close to an old tennis court on private property (marked on map). Most October/November counts record breeding behaviour. Nests have been found on four occasions and chicks have been recorded on 5 surveys. There are also records of suggestive breeding behaviour at two sites further east.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 13 out of 20 surveys. All of the surveys that did not record this species were in October/November when it is possible that they would be at breeding sites elsewhere.

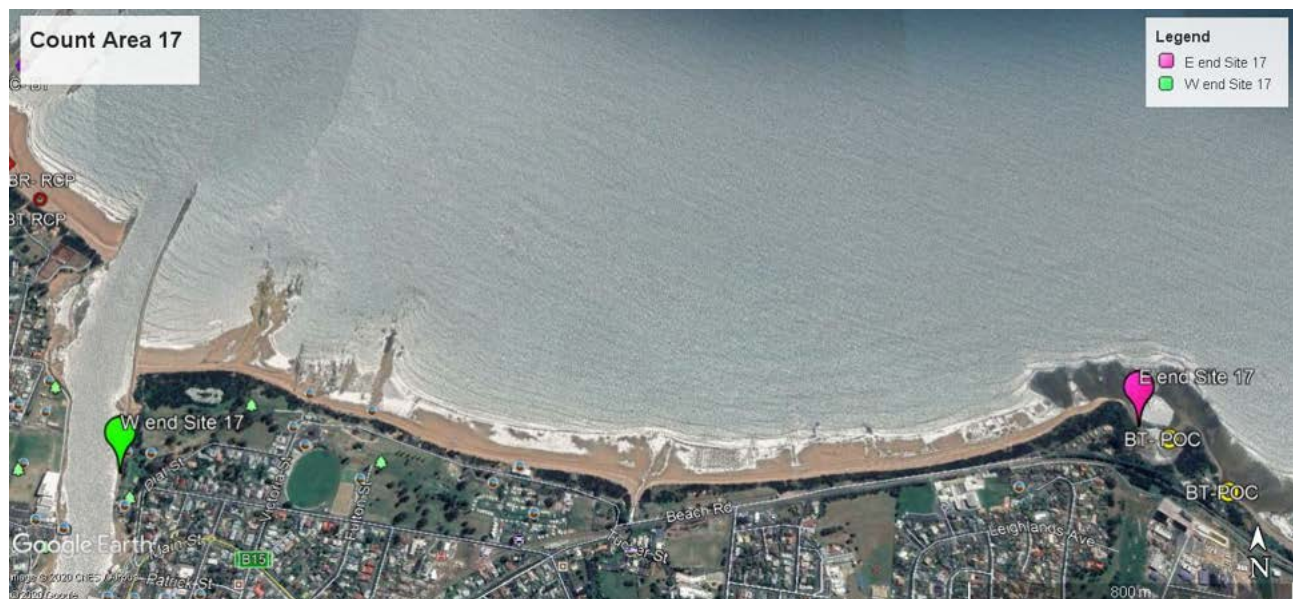
Two records were of 15 in October 2015 and 14 in April 2016. All other records were of 5 or below.

Masked Lapwing

There are often large numbers at the Fishpond, sometimes more than 100.

Count Site 17 – Buttons Beach

Lead Volunteer – Alison Parks



Description of Site

This is the main beach for the Town of Ulverstone. It is sandy along the whole length close to the fringing vegetation. This belt of native vegetation has benefitted in recent years by a council program (aided by a Landcare Group) to remove weeds and revegetate with native flora. The beach slopes down to a flatterer partially rocky intertidal area. The East end of the beach becomes entirely rocky at low tide and the West end is bordered by a breakwater. The small Buttons Creek flows through the centre of the beach and is a magnet for Silver and Pacific Gulls.

Recreational Use

The West end of the beach is a dog off-leash area throughout the year. From Buttons Creek west to the dog beach is a dog-free area, which is a popular swimming area with a surf club, water slide and other recreational facilities. The area east from Buttons Creek to the furthest beach access has limited dog walking hours during the holiday season. The area east from this access point is a no dog section. However, dog walkers sometimes disregard this sign and walk into the Fishpond with dogs mostly off leash.

There are two Caravan Parks close to the beach which are busy during the holiday season.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Shorebirds are regularly seen feeding at low tide in small numbers along the flat area of mixed rocky platform and sand. The upper sandy parts are not suitable for breeding and there are no records of breeding territories.

Red-capped Plover

Up to six birds recorded feeding on 7 out of 20 surveys. On four occasions immature birds were seen with adults. However, it is believed that these were probably from birds breeding around the point along the edge of the Fishpond in Site 16.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 14 out of 20 surveys. Up to 13 recorded on two occasions were near the breakwater where they sometimes roost at high tide. Parts of the adjacent Park become flooded after heavy rain and A. Pied Oystercatchers have been seen feeding in the flooded grassland.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Up to seven birds recorded on 9 out of 20 counts. No evidence of breeding recorded on this beach, but they like the rocks at the far eastern end and the rocky shelf that runs east along Site 16, and probably breed close to the Fishpond.

Masked Lapwing

Several pairs breed in the park behind the beach and sometimes take their chicks onto the beach. They are regular in small numbers i.e. less than twenty.

Hooded Plover

On 1st December 2018 Robyn and Kevin Parker were surprised to find a Hooded Plover at the East end of Buttons Beach (see photo below). We have no other records for this species, nor does it occur on any of the neighbouring beaches.



Count Area 18 - Picnic Point Beach

Lead Volunteer – Hazel Britton



Description of Site

This beach is bordered by the Leven River Estuary in the East and Picnic Point on the West. The rocks at the point culminate in Gull Island and there are several small rocky islets at high tide. Gulls occasionally breed on Gull Island (as in 2018/19) and the rocky islets are favoured resting sites for Black-faced Cormorants (often up to 60+) and small numbers of Little Pied, Little Black and Great Cormorants. Crested Terns also rest on these islets. There is a Little Penguin colony at the western end of the beach.

The beach has been subject to king tides on several occasions during the last ten years causing a step between the high tide mark and vegetation. However, at the moment sand has been washed up the beach and is providing better breeding habitat for Red-capped Plovers. There was a considerable amount of sea spurge, but a volunteer experienced with its removal has been diligently removing it from Sites 18 and 19 over the last three years.

Recreational Use

This is a popular holiday beach with two caravan parks and lots of activity in the summer months. Despite being designated a dog-free zone there are often dogs on and off leash. Recently there have been extra signs erected and there has been a noticeable decrease in dog-walkers.

Shorebird habitat and usage

This beach is quite flat and at low tide there is a considerable intertidal area. There is visual evidence of many invertebrates under the surface and it would appear to provide good feeding for shorebirds and gulls.

In November 2018 three Bar-tailed Godwits turned up and stayed for nearly a month. These birds would have flown from their breeding grounds in the Arctic tundra. They were obviously very hungry and could be seen feeding on the edge or in the shallows continuously. When disturbed by

dogs off leash and horses in the water, they flew short distances and continued feeding avidly. This observation supports the belief that this beach has good feeding habitat for shorebirds.

Red-capped Plover

This species was recorded on 9 out of 20 of our surveys. There is a breeding territory roughly in the middle of the beach and breeding records from 3 surveys. 27/3/2011 – 2 juveniles with 7 adults: 1/4/2014 – 5 immatures with 10 Adults: 12/11/2018 – a pair with 1 chick (incubating on 14th October, probably hatched about 4th November as it was absolutely tiny when seen on 5th November. No birds were seen on 3/11/2019 (our last survey) but an adult with 2 juveniles was seen in early December and a male vigorously defending nest on 25th December; they had a tiny chick on 4th January.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. There is a pair with a breeding territory at the east end of the actual Point. On 23rd October 2015 the pair were acting furtively suggesting they had a nest and in November 2017 they were watched performing an amazing sustained display flight. Again in November 2019 they were actively defending their territory.

Numbers of this species above 4 refer to birds that remain close to their high tide roost in the estuary just south of the count site.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys. A pair has a breeding territory at Picnic Point and have been seen to breed in a rock crevice on one of the small rocky islets close to shore. 1/4/2014 a pair with one immature; 12/11/2016 1 Ad feeding, other bird in rock crevice (? Incubating); 5/3/2019 2 Ad and 1 imm on rocks; 3/11/2019 1 Ad above rock crevice other bird possibly incubating.

Masked Lapwing

Small numbers recorded on most counts but no large flocks. Breeds on the lawns of the caravan park.



Double-banded Plover. Photo by Michael Hyland.

Count Area 19 – West Ulverstone to Goat Island

Lead Volunteer – Hazel Britton



Description of Site

This beach is very rocky with a sandy area at the eastern end and a small sandy bay near the western end.

Recreational Use

This beach is a designated dog walking area and is frequented by residents all year round. There is some increase during the summer due to the proximity of the caravan park at Picnic Point, however, it is not a good swimming beach. There is no vehicle access.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The stretch of shoreline between the sandy area at the E end and the rocky shelf around Goat Island is mostly used by Silver and Pacific Gulls concentrated around rainwater outlet pipes. Little Penguins breed along much of the beach and on Goat Island. During the June 2016 floods huge amounts of debris were deposited on many beaches which must have had impact on the available feeding opportunities for shorebirds (see below).

Although present, Sea spurge has been kept in check over many years.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on only two out of twenty surveys. Occasionally feeds in the eastern sandy corner (records outside survey times). Surprisingly on 30th October 2015 a nest was found close to the steps in the eastern corner, amongst wrack close to the high tide line. It was washed away by high tides within days. On the same count a single male and a single female were seen about a km further west.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

This species was recorded on eighteen of the twenty surveys. It is often seen feeding on the rocks or in the sandy channels. A pair have a territory on the small sandy bay at the far west end. They have been seen displaying and defending their territory but there has never been any evidence of breeding.

Sooty Oystercatcher

From one to seven birds recorded on all but one survey. They are seen feeding out on the rocky platform, mostly close to the water's edge. A pair almost certainly breed on the rocks at Goat Island where a 'sentinel' bird has sometimes been seen on Spring counts.

Masked Lapwings are always present on the rocky shelf east of Goat Island, but usually not in numbers above 20.

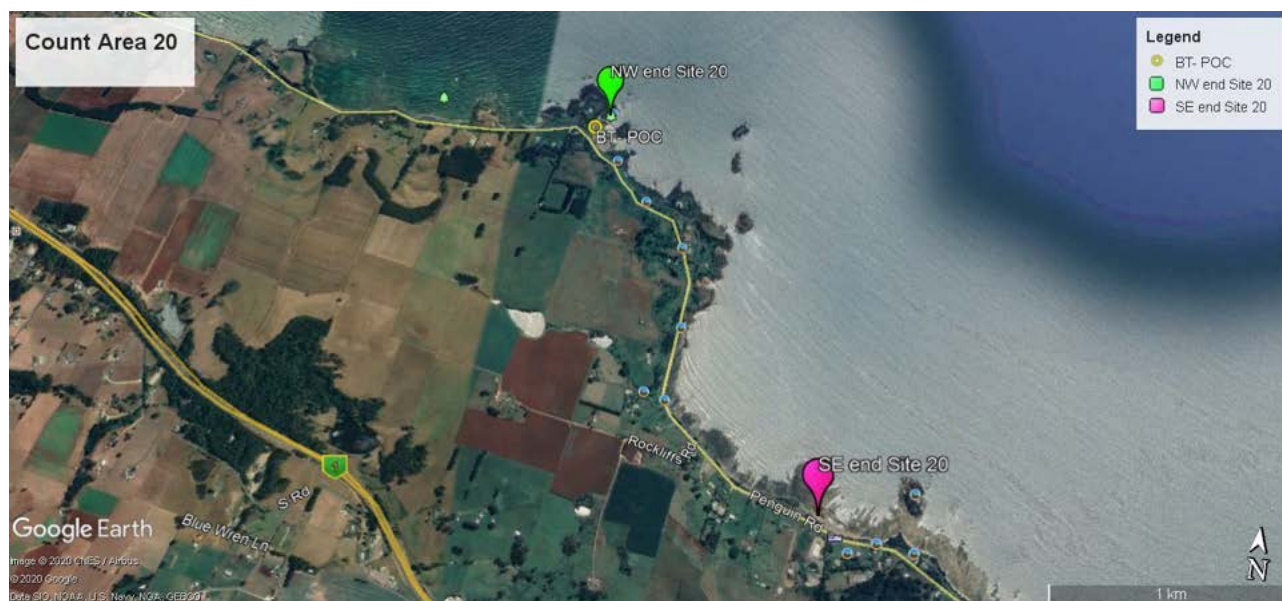


Flood debris at West Ulverstone Beach 7 July 2016.

Photo by Shirley Tongue.

Count Area 20 – Three Sisters

Lead Volunteer – John Hughes, then Hazel Britton



Description of Site

This very rocky section was originally included as a participant lived nearby. It is part of the Three Sisters – Goat Island Nature Reserve. The islands host a large breeding colony of Silver Gulls (southern-most Island) off the headland and all islands are used in various years by breeding Black-faced Cormorants. There is a considerable Little Penguin Colony at the far NW end of this site.

Recreational Use

There are a couple of access points where fishermen throw in lines off the rocks, and limited access to a small sandy beach. Disturbance is negligible.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Very few shorebirds use this site and only the two oystercatchers and Masked Lapwings have been recorded.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 12 out of 19 surveys. A pair appeared to have a breeding territory in the sandy bay at the NW end of the site. On two occasions they showed breeding behaviour but no evidence of breeding was noted.

Sooty Oystercatcher

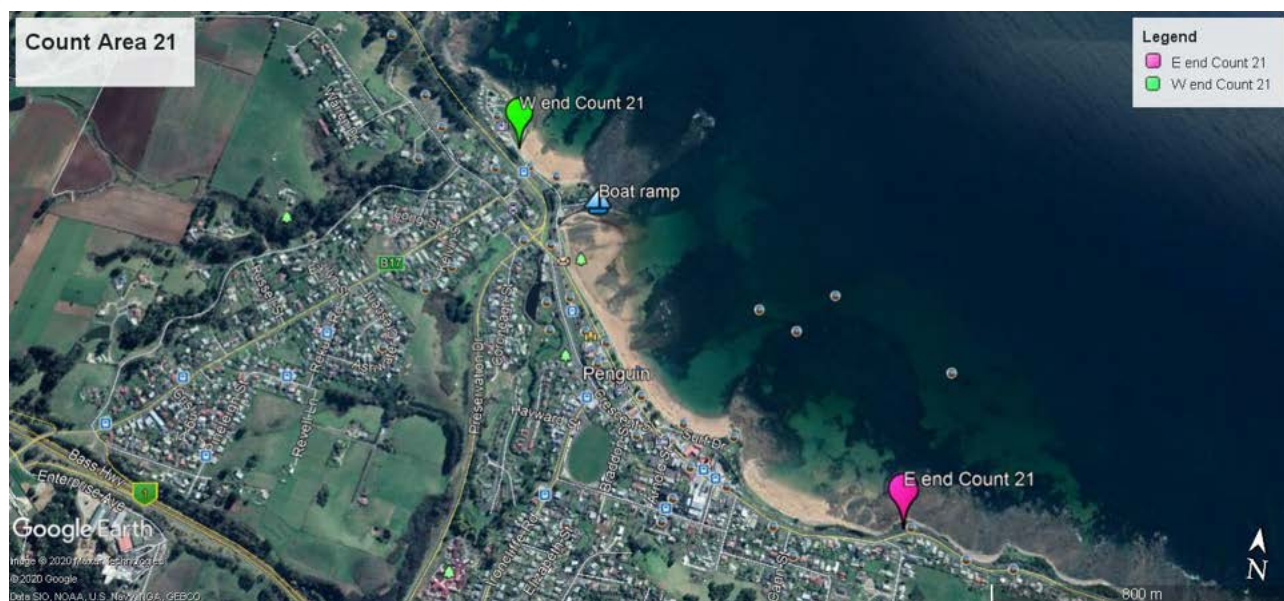
Up to four birds seen on 9 out of the 19 surveys. These birds are difficult to see amongst the rocks and when no birds were recorded in November 2012 a resident reported a pair breeding on the rocks visible from his house.

Masked Lapwing

Present in small numbers at both ends of the count side on all surveys.

Count Area 21 – Penguin Beaches

Lead Volunteer – Frank Wilson



Description of Site

This area of small sandy beaches and rocky headlands borders the residential town of Penguin. To the north of the boat ramp at Beecroft Point is an extensive intertidal rock shelf and pools rich in marine life. Penguin creek winds through parkland to enter the sea just south of the boat ramp.

Recreational Use

This picturesque, landscaped foreshore is very popular with tourists and is a prime residential area. There are picnic facilities and children's play areas as well as a Caravan Park on the shore north-west of the count area. The beaches are well used for swimming, walking, jogging, beach games etc. Dogs are restricted on Penguin Beach during the months of December, January and February to 7pm to 9am, but there are no restrictions at Watcombe Beach to the east.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Small numbers of Red-capped Plovers and Double-banded Plovers (February – July) used to feed on the intertidal zone at Johnsons Beach and rest in the southern corner at high-tide. The exposed rock shelf at low tide provides some feeding for White-faced Herons and gulls and is a favourite resting place for Crested Terns. Penguin Creek flows under the road via a drain and provides a feeding area for gulls and the occasional shorebird.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys in numbers from 1 to 9. Despite considerable disturbance from walkers and dogs, there are three breeding records from Watcombe Beach: 26/10/11 a female incubating (nest in beach wrack above high-tide mark); 25/3/13 a pair with a juvenile; 20/10/15 a pair performing guard duty and distraction display. This pair have been noticed on the gravel of the railway line just above their normal territory. No record of breeding in the last four years but a pair had two small chicks on 13/1/19 on a tiny beach 1.5 km to the east of the count area.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to five birds recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys. Recorded feeding at the outlet of Penguin Creek and there are two breeding records: 12/3/11 a pair with 2 juveniles; 26/10/11 a pair defending their territory and chasing a third oystercatcher some distance away.

Sooty Oystercatcher

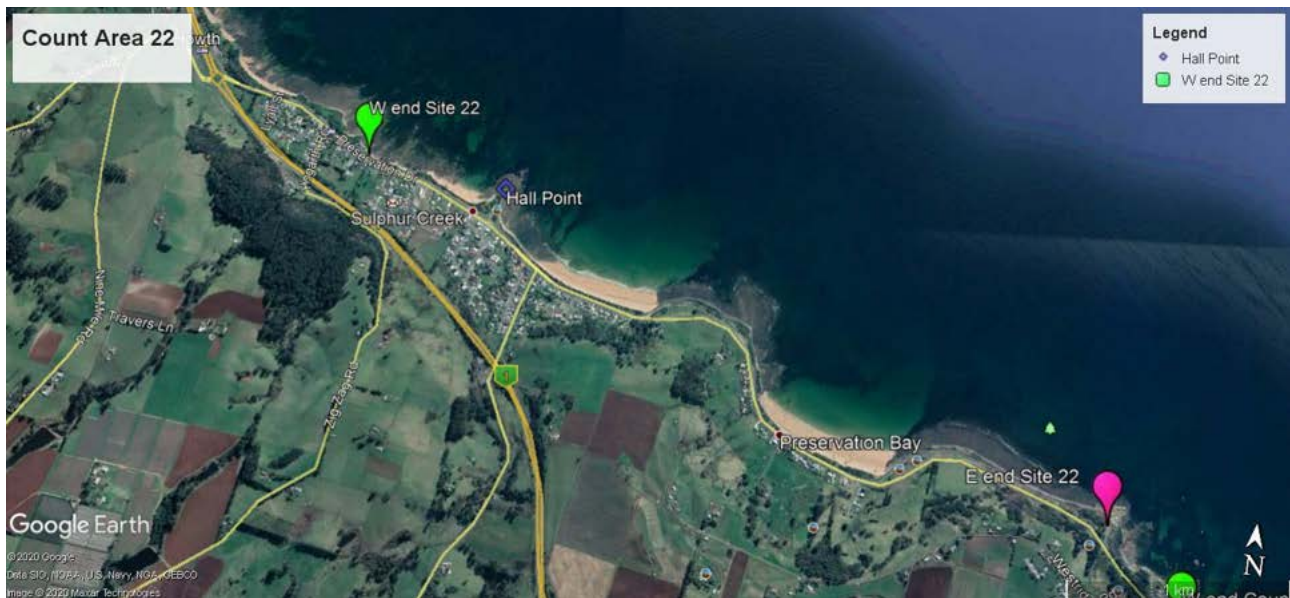
One or two birds only, recorded on six out of 20 surveys feeding at low tide.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys with a maximum of 36 birds. Tends to congregate at the west end of Johnsons Beach, with the highest numbers in March/April.

Count Area 22 – Preservation Bay to Sulphur Creek

Lead Volunteer – Frank Wilson



Description of Site

This stretch of coastline between Preservation Bay and Sulphur Creek is a mix of low rocky areas and sandy beaches. There is native vegetation between Hall Point and the western end, but there is also a variety of weeds. A local Landcare Group is working to reduce Sea-spurge and Cape Ivy. The vegetation to the east along the foreshore is more open, with grasses on sandy areas and low vegetation and mown areas around camp sites and the surf club. Sulphur creek enters the beach east of Hall Point. The beach is sometimes subject to erosion by tides and strong winds (see below). There has been increased residential development at Sulphur Creek over the last ten years.

Recreational Use

There is a Surf Club with restaurant at the eastern end of Preservation Bay and camping is allowed at Midway Point and Hall Point. There is heavy recreational use throughout the summer from local as well as interstate and international tourists, which has noticeably increased over the duration of

our counts. Swimming, surfing, canoeing and fishing off the rocks are all popular. Dogs are restricted during December, January and February to before 9 am and after 7 pm with a dog exercise area at the east end of Sulphur Creek beach to Midway Point. There is, therefore, no protection from dogs for shorebirds breeding in November or chicks in March.

Shorebird Habitat and usage

Small numbers of shorebirds feed along the rocks and intertidal zone, including the occasional migratory Double-banded Plover. There is a high-tide roost situated beside the Sulphur Creek outlet, which is also attractive to gulls. Various cormorant species, White-faced Herons and Crested Terns etc. feed along the shore and rocks. There is a small Little Penguin colony at Hall Point which is being monitored by the Landcare group, as is the impact of feral cats.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on fourteen out of twenty surveys in numbers varying from 1 to 11 adults. The total number of adults recorded on the first 10 counts (2010-2014) was 46 as opposed to only 12 recorded on the last ten counts (2015-2019). This would indicate a considerable decline.

Sea-spurge was particularly thick around Preservation Bay and removal of this just prior to these surveys may have helped the breeding success of this species in the early years. There are breeding records from Preservation Bay and Station Beach (west of Hall Point), involving probably three or four breeding territories prior to 2014. On 10/3/10 a pair with 2 juv; 20/3/11 two adults with 1 juv; 17/3/12 two adults and 1 juv (also noted in Feb, 2 ad with 3 chicks) all at Station Beach. On 20/11/12 a pair with eggs at Preservation Bay and pair with 1 chick at Sulphur Creek; 7/11/15 a pair with 1 chick and on 19/3/18 two adults and 1 imm.

A local resident recorded two successful breeding outcomes at Preservation Bay between 2/11/12 and 7/1/13. There were very high king tides during November and locals placed a log to stop sea washing out nest and eggs. The sea washed over the nest but the eggs were saved by the log and the adult returned to incubate.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

A maximum of four birds recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys. Four birds were only recorded on two occasions and it is likely that there is only the one breeding territory, probably close to the creek mouth, where they are often seen feeding. 17/3/12 a pair with 1 juv; 19/3/18 a pair with 1 imm, the first seen for a long time.

In November 2015 two A. Pied Oystercatchers were run over, or hit by cars, crossing to feed in a paddock between Preservation Bay and Sulphur Creek.

Sooty Oystercatcher

One to four adults recorded on 9 out of 20 surveys. It is likely that one pair have bred on the rocks around Midway Point where a pair were displaying aggressive behaviour to an intruder on 20/11/12.

Although very small numbers are involved, both species of oystercatchers have shown some decline in the last five years, with A. Pied Oystercatchers dropping from 18 to 14 and Sooty Oystercatchers from 14 to 4.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys with numbers varying between 2 and 110. All counts above 50 were in March/April.



Erosion of beach at Sulphur Creek taken on 24th December 2019.

Photo by Frank Wilson.

Count Area 22A – Howth Beach

Lead Volunteer – Frank Wilson



Description of Site

This area comprises two small sandy beaches with a rocky point in the middle and Howth Creek at the western end. A rocky shelf is partially exposed at low tide, and the vegetation along the foreshore is mostly native with the usual weeds such as sea-spurge.

Recreational Use

There used to be no restrictions on dogs along the foreshore in this area. However, after an incident of dogs attacking penguins a sign saying 'No dogs allowed' was erected and there have been no recent signs of dogs on the beach. Very little other recreational activity recorded.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Small numbers of shorebirds and White-faced Herons feed on the exposed shelf at low tide. Rocks not covered at high-tide are well used by Black-faced Cormorants who rest here and feed offshore. Both Pacific and Silver Gulls, as well as small numbers of three other species of cormorant, feed along the shoreline.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on only two out of twenty surveys. However, prior to our surveys a pair had a regular breeding territory, situated in the middle of this count area. No successful breeding has been recorded since.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to three birds recorded on 4 out of 20 surveys, feeding on receding tide. No territorial behaviour noted.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Two to four adults recorded on 12 out of the 20 surveys. There is one breeding record of 2 adults with a juvenile on 9/3/12. This habitat is very suitable for this species and it is likely to breed nearby.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 16 out of twenty surveys with numbers up to 100.

Count Area 23 – Blythe Heads

Lead Volunteer – Faye Beswick



Description of Site

This beach of less than a kilometre has very coarse sand and slopes quite steeply to the water. The sandy area at the mouth of the Blythe River narrows to a reinforced rock bank beyond the count area. The foreshore has native coastal vegetation with the usual weeds such as sea-spurge. There is a small residential community and holiday shacks on the eastern side of the Blythe River.

Recreational Use

Mostly used by dog walkers and fishermen. There is a rough track running behind the foreshore which allows access by 4WD vehicles to the beach.

Shorebird Habitat and usage

This appears to be very poor habitat for shorebirds with little feeding opportunity. Pacific and Silver Gulls and Forest Ravens have been recorded scavenging along the tideline. The occasional White-faced Heron and a few cormorants have been seen on the intertidal zone.

Red Capped Plover

Five birds were seen on the second count in October 2010. These were a group of 3, a female being very furtive (? nest) with 2 males and another 2 males in a different location. The following survey recorded a single bird but no birds were recorded on the other 17 surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

A pair were seen on 27/10/10 but showed no sign of breeding behaviour. No birds were seen on the other 19 surveys.

Sooty Oystercatcher

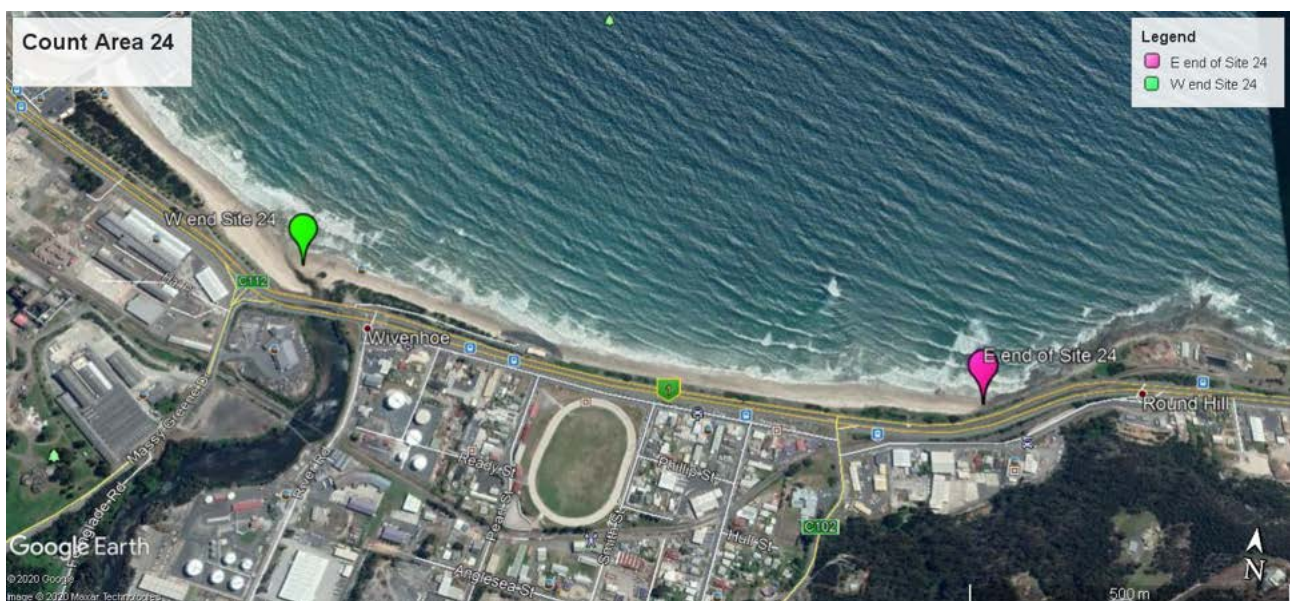
Two birds seen on three of the twenty surveys.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on all of the first 10 surveys in numbers from 3 to 40. Only seen on five of the last 10 surveys in numbers from 2 to 7.

Count Area 24 – Wivenhoe Beach

Lead Volunteer – Garry Watts



Count Areas 24 and 25 were counted at the same time so that birds were not double counted, particularly around the mouth of the Emu River.

Description of Site

This beach stretches from the Emu River Mouth in the west for nearly 1.5 km to a rocky area in the east. There is a narrow strip of vegetation between the beach and the highway. South of the road is Wivenhoe, an industrial/commercial/residential suburb of Burnie.

Recreational Use

This is a designated dog exercise area (on and off leash) and is well used by dog walkers. The TS Emu Naval Reserve Cadets have a centre here. A few fishermen use the beach, particularly near the Emu River.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The only suitable habitat for shorebirds would appear to be the sandy area at the mouth of the Emu River. Other birds using the beach would be Silver Gulls and small numbers of Pacific Gulls and Crested Terns.

Red-capped Plover

One to five adults recorded on 6 out of 20 surveys. There are three breeding records on two dates all close to the Emu River mouth. 28/3/14 2 adults with 2 juveniles and 9/11/15 a pair showing breeding behaviour and another pair with 1 chick. There are probably two breeding territories, one on either side of the Emu River in Count Areas 24 and 25.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One or two birds recorded on only 4 out of the 20 surveys. No evidence of breeding behaviour.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Not recorded on any of the twenty surveys. However, it is worth noting that between the west end of Count Area 23 and the east end of Count Area 24 is approximately three kilometres of rocky coastline with habitat more suitable for this species, which is also relatively undisturbed.

Masked Lapwing

Surprisingly, there were only single birds recorded on two out of twenty surveys. This would indicate a high level of disturbance.

Count Area 25 – South Burnie Beach

Lead Volunteer – Garry Watts



See note at beginning of Count Area 24.

Description of Site

This site stretches for about 1 km from the Emu River Mouth in the east, past the Yacht club and Jetty to the beginning of the Burnie Wharf area in the west. There is a stretch of mixed native and introduced vegetation on the foreshore east of the Jetty. South Burnie, on the other side of the highway, is mainly industrial at the east end and commercial towards the west.

Recreational Use.

Both sides of the Jetty are popular exercise areas for dogs. Walking, jogging and exercise equipment for people are provided as well as picnic facilities. There are sometimes fishermen on the Jetty and an area nearby for canoes. The area is also used as a truck stop and is frequented by workers at lunchtime.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Both sides of the Emu River mouth attract numbers of gulls and provide limited feeding for a few shorebirds. There is a large Silver Gull Colony starting at the rocks beyond the Esplanade to the west of the count area. Pacific Gulls and Crested Terns frequent the shoreline, cormorant species and the occasional White-faced Heron are sometimes seen.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 9 out of 20 surveys in numbers between one and four adults. There are three breeding records from a breeding territory to the west of Emu Creek: 26/10/12 two adults with 1 juvenile; 20/10/14 two adults with 1 chick and 17/11/19 two adults with 1 chick.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One or two birds recorded on four out of twenty surveys. No signs of breeding activity.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on only seven out of 20 surveys with a maximum of six birds.

Count Area 26 – Cooee Beach

Lead Volunteer – Leanne Bonney



Description of Site

West of the city of Burnie, this site stretches from Cooee Point in the east to the Cam River mouth in the west, a distance of just over 3 kms. The highway follows close to the beach and skirts three built up suburbs: the mainly commercial centre of Cooee, the residential Ocean Vista and the more industrial Camdale. There is a mix of nice sandy beaches and rocky areas with little vegetation along the foreshore except in the area east of the Cam estuary (which has been rehabilitated since its early use as an abattoir site).

Recreational Use

A popular area for family beach activities, walkers, joggers etc. especially during summer holiday period. There is a Motel and Caravan Park as well as sporting facilities and schools. Dogs are not allowed on this beach, however, there are often paw prints and dogs are still seen on and off leash. There is a dog exercise area located east of Cooee Beach at Cooee Point.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Little Penguins breed along this beach and there is a 'penguin fence' between the road and foreshore, with several access points. Despite the disturbance, two species of shorebirds continue to breed here and the mix of rocky areas, flat sandy beaches and patches of seaweed appear to offer good feeding opportunities. Other birds using the beach include Double-banded Plovers,

three species of cormorants (often resting on the rocks), White-faced Herons, Silver and Pacific Gulls and Crested Terns. Gannets, albatrosses, shearwaters and White-bellied Sea-Eagles have all been recorded from the beach on surveys.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on all twenty surveys, in numbers between 2 and 30 birds. The total number of birds recorded (excluding chicks and juveniles) over the first 10 counts (2010 – 2014) was 153, as opposed to only 81 over the last 10 counts (2015-2019). This would indicate a considerable decline, as with other beaches with heavy recreational use. Unless performing distraction displays this species can be very illusive during the breeding season, but from observations there are possibly three breeding territories. A pair nesting on 1/11/10 and pairs with chicks were recorded on 6/11/12 and 23/3/14. Also pairs with juveniles on 9/11/14, 14/11/16 and 29/4/17, and immatures among several adults were noted on four other occasions.



Well camouflaged female Red-capped Plover on nest.

Photo by Michael Hyland.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Between two and eighteen adults recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. Only three of these counts recorded numbers of 10 and above and involved birds flying. Observations record three breeding territories and there are the following breeding records: 6/11/12 one pair very noisy suspected to have chicks nearby, another pair with 2 chicks; 9/11/14 1 adult with 1 juv. and 2 adults with 2 juv.; 26/10/15 3 pairs, one pair very agitated and swooping down obviously had chicks hidden; 21/4/16 1 juv. with 4 adults; 5/11/16 pair with nest up on a sandbank; 27/10/18 pair exhibiting breeding behaviour 27/10/18 2 pairs with breeding behaviour and 4/11/19 a pair with chicks snapping at a gull.

Sooty Oystercatcher

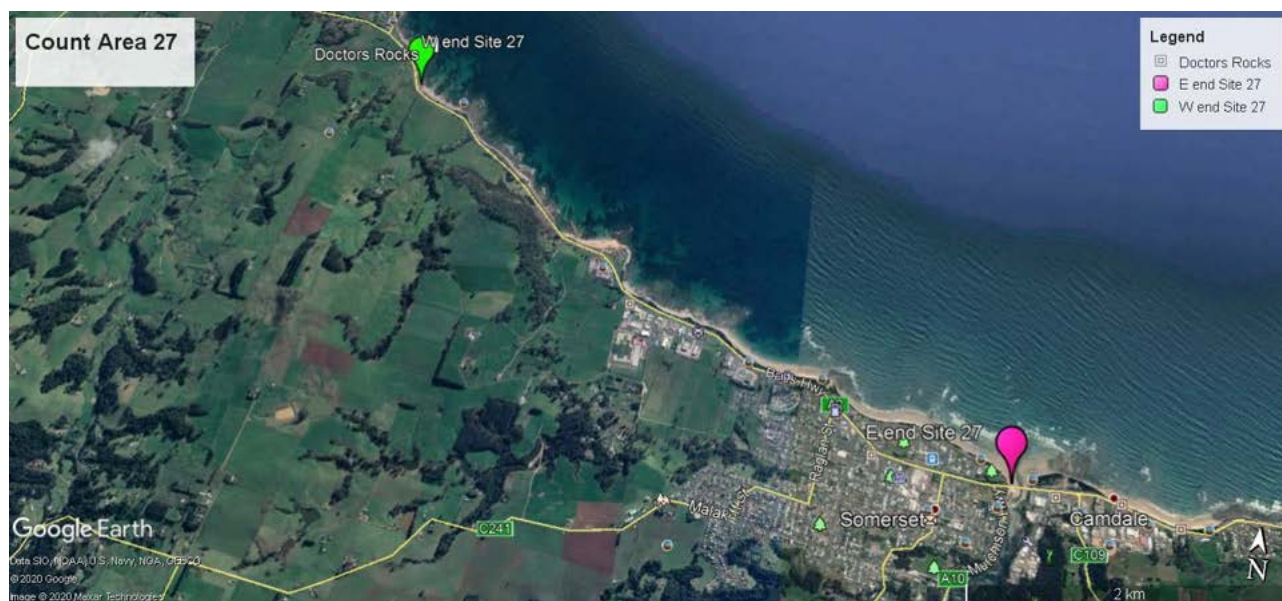
Recorded on only 7 out of 20 surveys with numbers between 1 and 7, mostly feeding or resting on rocks. No signs of breeding behaviour.

Masked Lapwing

Numbers between 1 and 48 recorded on all surveys. No obvious seasonal patterns or change in status. Playing fields and ovals on the other side of the highway provide nesting sites.

Count Area 27 – Somerset to Doctors Rocks

Lead Volunteer – Col Meyers



Description of Site

This site encompasses a 4 km stretch of coastline between the mouth of the Cam River in the east and Doctors Rocks in the west. The first 1.2 km from the river to Rocky Point are the beach area for the coastal suburb of Somerset (Somerset Beach). Further west the highway follows the foreshore with some commercial development petering out after the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) to farmland. A narrow band of vegetation, dominated by *Acacia sophorae*, stretches along the foreshore from the Surf Club to east of the WTP. At the western end is a broader band of vegetation with a high proportion of *Melaleuca ericofolia*, but many other native coastal plants are present; weeds are also represented eg. Sea-spurge and blackberry. Some sandy banks, particularly along the railway line have native and introduced grasses.

Recreational Use

Somerset Beach has a high volume of recreational activity, with a caravan park and motels for tourists, and various sports venues for residents. There are picnic facilities and children's playgrounds and fishing and swimming in summer are popular. There are three categories relating to dogs on beaches: from Arthur St to the Cam dogs must be on a leash at all times and are not allowed between 10 am and 6pm during December and January; from Arthur St to Woody Point there are no restrictions and from Woody Point to Doctors Rocks dogs are not allowed at all times. However, counters found that disturbance by dogs was a problem.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The habitat and distribution of shorebirds is more variable at this site than many of our count areas. Few shorebirds are recorded on Somerset Beach in the east. This is likely to be a result of disturbance and better feeding and nesting opportunities to the west. Fairlands Beach to Rocky Point is also disturbed with no restrictions on dogs. From Rocky Point to Doctors Rocks the shoreline becomes rocky with small stretches of sandy beach. Little Penguins breed along this section and the majority of shorebirds recorded are also from here where there is less disturbance.

Other birds seen using the shore are various species of cormorants, Pacific and Silver Gulls, Crested Terns and Australasian Gannets feeding offshore, White-faced Herons and Chestnut Teal.

NB Looking at the counts for this area there is a noticeable lack of shorebirds (with the exception of Masked Lapwings) on counts between Mar/Apr 2012 to Mar/Apr 2014. I could find nothing on the survey forms to account for this. After 2014 numbers of all species (except Masked Lapwings) increased. A note on the survey form for 11/11/15 recorded a build-up of sand creating more breeding habitat.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys. Comparing the number of adults recorded on the first 10 surveys (2010 to 2014) to those on the last 10 surveys (2015 to 2019) gives the following: First - 31 on 5/10 surveys Last - 74 on 10/10 surveys. This is the reverse of that for most other sites. The following breeding records are from at least 4 territories: 29/10/11 2 ad. with 2 large juv. and 2 ad with 2 small chicks; 4/11/14 a pair with 1 chick; 11/11/15 a female on eggs, also 2 pairs with 1 chick each and a female with 1 chick; 14/11/17 a pair with 1 large chick, a male with 1 large chick and another pair exhibiting breeding behaviour suggestive of nest nearby. 23/10/18 breeding behaviour suggesting nest in known territory; 9/11/19 four adults with 1 juv.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys, with numbers of birds between one and nine. Comparing the numbers of adults, as for the previous species, gives the following: First 10 surveys - 25 on 7/10 counts, last 10 surveys - 47 on 9/10 counts.

The following breeding records are from a territory 250 m west of the water treatment plant: 11/11/15 1 adult creating distraction from a nest nearby; 14/11/17 possibly nesting between beach and railway line; 23/10/18 female brooding two very small chicks.

Sooty Oystercatcher

There is a high-tide roost in this area west of the water treatment plant. Although all our surveys take place at least 2 hours after high-tide, numbers are likely to be influenced by how quickly and how far birds disperse to their feeding areas.

Recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys, in numbers between 1 and 24. As for the previous two species there is an obvious increase between the first 10 and second 10 surveys, see below:

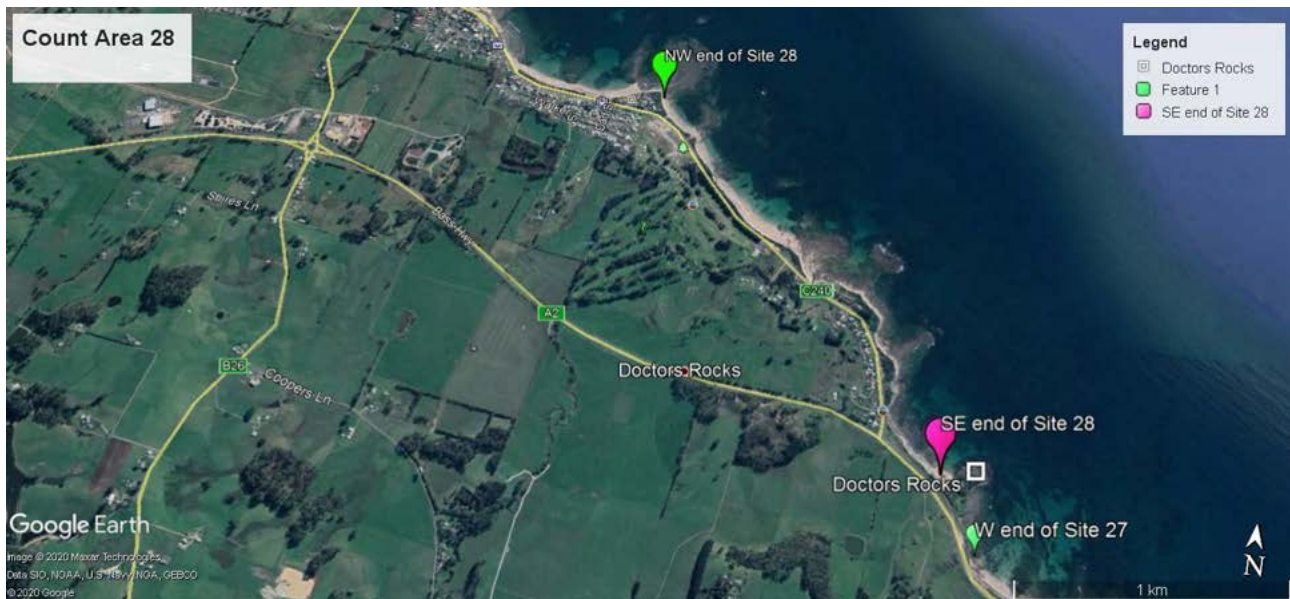
First 10 surveys – 41 on 6/10 counts, last 10 surveys 115 on 9/10 counts. There is also a considerable seasonal difference in count numbers. Total of birds recorded on Mar/Apr surveys totalled 140 and on Oct/Nov surveys (breeding season) only 16. Although it is possible that one or two pairs breed on rocky parts of the shoreline at this site, no evidence or signs of breeding behaviour was noted.

Masked Lapwing

Between 3 and 158 birds recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. All numbers above 36 were recorded on Mar/Apr surveys.

Count Area 28 – Doctors Rocks to Burntwood Point

Lead Volunteer – Col Meyers



Description of Site

The shoreline here runs in a NW direction for over 4 km from Doctor Rocks to Burntwood Point. The old Bass Highway and railway line are close to the shore with no development on the seaward side. Inland is the single line of residential houses at Doctors Rocks and Seabrook Golf Course. A recent residential development at the north end of the Golf Course is in progress. A small sandy bay at the SE end changes to a rocky area with an exposed shelf at low tide and has a thick fringe of mainly native coastal vegetation. Further to the NW the shore becomes more sandy and the vegetation more patchy with areas of grassed dunes. The usual weeds such as sea-spurge are present.

Recreational Use

Close to Burntwood Point is a residential area with a tourist park and other recreational facilities. The area south of the Point to Seabrook Creek is a dog exercise area with no restrictions and between Seabrook Creek and Doctors Creek no dogs are allowed. Beach use is heaviest in summer and is likely to increase with further development. Vehicles sometimes access the northern parts for fishing, canoeing etc. Counters have recorded shorebirds being chased by dogs.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

There is a considerable Little Penguin colony mostly, but not restricted to, south of Seabrook Creek. There appears to be good feeding in the intertidal zone for shorebirds and occasional migratory shorebirds have been recorded such as Double-banded Plovers and a rare record of a

Common Sandpiper on 29/10/11. The usual seabirds regularly occur, such as three species of cormorants, White-faced Heron and Great Egret, Silver and Pacific Gulls and Crested Terns etc. Shy Albatrosses and Gannets are sometimes seen offshore.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on only 3 out of 20 surveys. Single adults on 13/3/10 and 1/11/10 just west of Doctors Rocks and a single adult on 10/11/16 near Burntwood Point.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on all twenty surveys in numbers between two and 18. When the numbers of all adults recorded are divided between the first 10 counts (2010-2014) and the last 10 counts (2015-2019) the result is opposite to those for Site 27: First 10 counts – 104 Last 10 Counts – 40.

Breeding records for this site are: 1/11/10 pair with nest c/2, one ad with 2 juv and 2 ad with 1 juv; 29/10/11 breeding behaviour (BB); 5/11/12 one pair BB, another pair with 1 juv; 29/3/13 a pair with 1 juv; 10/11/16 one ad with 1 imm; 23/10/18 two pairs BB; 9/11/19 nest with c/2.

The available breeding habitat at this and the previous site (as with much of the coastline) varies from year to year with high (and king) tides and strong winds eroding sandy beaches and washing away nests. Rocks are exposed and sand deposited on other beaches, so that some years there is no (or reduced) available breeding habitat on some beaches. In these circumstances it is possible than Red-capped Plovers may move to the next beach if there is vacant breeding habitat. These two Count Areas (27 and 28) are mostly surveyed at the same time to avoid double counting.

If we treat the two sites as one and divide the counts in the same way, we get the following:

	First 10 counts	Last 10 counts
	Site 27 - 31	Site 27 - 74
	<u>Site 28 - 104</u>	<u>Site 28 – 40</u>
Total	<u>141</u>	<u>114</u>

It is worth considering this scenario as a possibility for further investigation. All survey figures show an overall decline for this species.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on eighteen out of twenty surveys in numbers varying from 1 to 21. It is possible that there are several breeding pairs along this stretch of coastline although there are not enough breeding records to estimate the number. This species is more adaptable to changing shorebird habitat, moving higher into the sand dunes, nesting in adjacent paddocks etc. One of the following breeding records was from the new housing estate 100m from the beach and it is interesting to note that when 21 birds were recorded on 5/11/12 no sign of breeding behaviour was noted. 3/11/14 pair BB; 10/11/16 one ad with 1 very young chick; 1/11/17 ad incubating high on shingle beach and ad incubating on housing estate; 23/10/18 pair courting in known territory; 9/11/19 pair with 1 large juv.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys. Numbers for Oct/Nov surveys ranged from 1 to 5, and from 5 to 38 on Mar/Apr counts. There were no reports of breeding activity although there is suitable breeding habitat.

Masked Lapwing

Numbers between 2 and 101 recorded on all surveys. Flocks noted as flying in and landing on the rocks. Inland from the shore there is prime breeding habitat with short grass paddocks and a golf course.

Count Area 29 - Burntwood Point to Inglis River

Lead Volunteer – Col Meyers, Jo Lawrence



Description of Site

This 3 km section of coastline from Seabrook just west of Burntwood Point to the breakwater at the mouth of the Inglis River is the beach area of the small town of Wynyard. A small creek enters the sea about half way along and although the beaches are mostly sandy there is a rocky shelf further out which is partially uncovered at low tide. Part of the foreshore is parkland and there are small areas of other vegetation as well as low dune areas with native and introduced grasses and the ubiquitous sea-spurge.

Recreational Use

East Wynyard Beach is used by residents for many recreational pursuits and is particularly popular with children and families during the summer months when there is an influx of tourists. A Caravan Park at the west end of the foreshore, a Sunday Market, picnic facilities and cafes make this a busy area. Further east, at Seabrook there is more tourist accommodation and there are also areas where vehicles can get onto the beach. There are no restrictions on dogs between Burntwood Point and Port Creek. East of the creek dogs are supposed to be on a leash at all times

and from 1 December to 28 February dogs are not allowed on the beach between 10 am and 6 pm. Dogs are often seen off leash and on one count on 29/10/11 not a single shorebird was seen due to so many dogs on the beach.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Rocks just offshore west of Port Creek support a breeding colony of Black-faced Cormorants, a few Great Cormorants, Silver Gulls and Crested Terns. Our resident shorebirds, and a few migratory shorebirds, feed along the beaches and intertidal zone as do White-faced Herons, Chestnut Teal and the occasional Great Egret. Gannets, albatrosses and pelicans are all seen out to sea. The habitat supports breeding of two species of shorebirds but successful breeding would be limited by disturbance on such busy beaches.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 1 and 16. There is a small high-tide roost on rocks to the east of Port Creek, where there are also small numbers of the migratory Double-banded Plover. On very high tides birds can be pushed up onto a small parking area.

Despite considerable disturbance there are breeding records for all years except the first two (2010 & 2011) with up to 4 pairs on a count. 5/11/12 a pair with 2 chicks; 19/10/13 a pair with 1 juv. and a nest with c/2 which was wiped out by a storm 4 days later; 4/3/14 a pair with 1 chick; 3/11/14 a female on nest c/2 and another pair exhibiting BB; 21/2/15 a pair with a small chick; 26/10/15 female sitting on a nest and a pair with two chicks; 10/11/16 female broken-wing display; 1/11/17 2 pairs with nests, a female with 1 chick and another showing BB; 7/11/18 male showing BB; 6/11/19 a male with juv. And 2 ad with 2 juv.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Two to six birds recorded on 9 out of twenty surveys. The only breeding records are from 2015 when a pair were recorded nesting and another pair copulating on 26 October.

Sooty Oystercatcher

One to twenty birds recorded on 14 out of 20 surveys. The only survey that recorded more than 8 birds was on 14/3/11 when twenty birds were in groups of 2, 2, 9 and 7. No breeding behaviour was recorded.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 1 and 60 birds. No obvious seasonal patterns or change in status.

Count Area 30 - Wynyard Golf Course

Lead Volunteer – Alastair Richardson



Description of Site

This count area starts at the Wynyard Golf Club carpark and follows the Inglis River to the mouth, near Blackboy Rocks, and then onto the open beach that skirts the western edge of the golf course. There is some native vegetation along the river and beach foreshore which is 'coastal reserve'. The rocks form a breakwater and there is a rocky shelf out from the beach which is partially exposed at low tide.

Recreational Use

Obviously the main activity here is golf. Fishermen use the breakwater and local residents walk their dogs along the beach and the edge of the Golf Course. Dogs should be kept on a leash at all times and are restricted during the months of December, January and February to before 10 am and after 6pm between Fossil Bluff and the Inglis River. However, these restrictions are not always adhered to. Boats coming and going along the river cause some disturbance during busy summer months.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

There is some feeding and breeding habitat for shorebirds, mainly near the mouth of the river, either side of the rocks/breakwater and west along the beach. Occasional migrant shorebirds join resident birds feeding along the intertidal zone as do White-faced Herons and Great Egrets. There are often large numbers of Silver Gulls and Crested Terns roosting on the rocks and Silver Gulls breed there in spring/summer. Four species of cormorant, Australian Pelicans, Pacific Gulls and the occasional Caspian Tern feed in the estuary, and gannets and albatrosses just offshore. White-bellied Sea-eagles and Wedge-tailed Eagles have been recorded patrolling the area.

Red-capped Plover

One to eight birds recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. Records and observations would indicate that there are at least three breeding pairs in the area. 10/11/12 a pair showing BB and a pair with 1 juv.; 8/11/14 three pairs with chicks or juv.; 26/10/16 a pair showing distraction display and a pair with 2 chicks on 8/11/16; 16/4/17 2 ad with 1 imm ; 17/11/17 2 pairs with 1 imm ; 10/11/19 an ad showing territorial BB and a pair with 1 imm. Adults with immatures were also seen on the following dates – 7/3/10, 9/3/14 and 7/11/15.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 2 and 11.

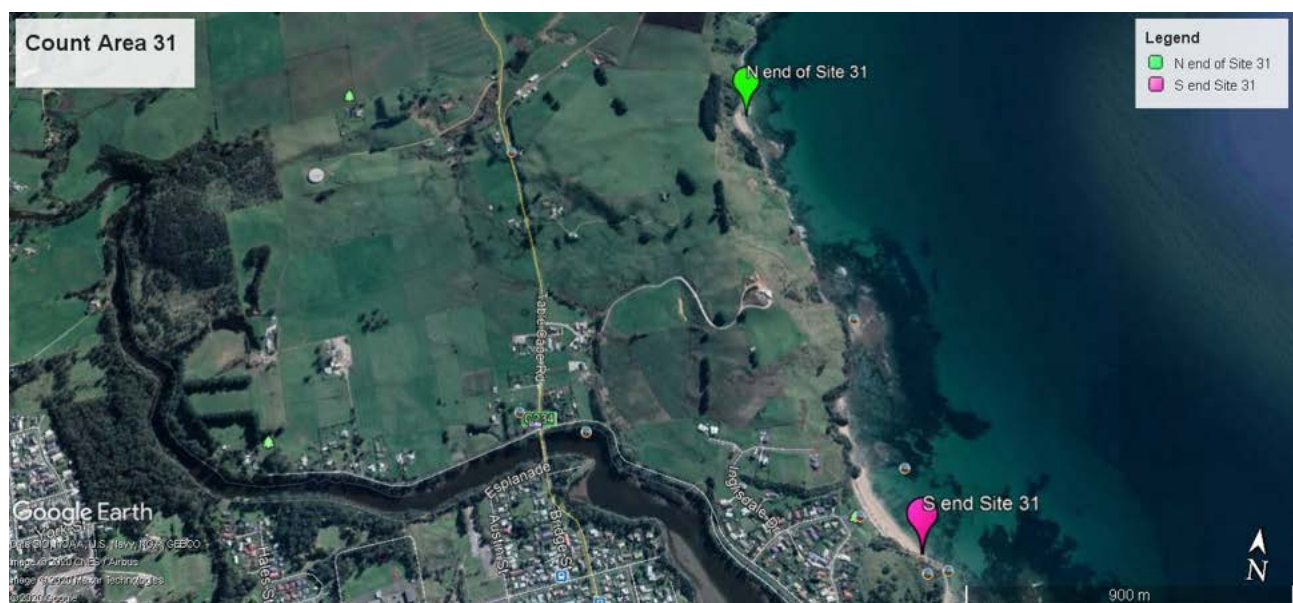
There are the following breeding records: on 31/10/10 a pair exhibiting BB probably had a nest nearby; 26/10/13 adult performing distraction display, later joined by mate; 8/11/14 one pair with 2 chicks; 7/11/15 three pairs noted, one pair BB and another pair copulating; 17/11/17 one pair with 2 chicks and another pair exhibiting BB, nest reported later; 8/11/18 a pair BB and 19/11/19 ad on nest c/2.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on all surveys with numbers between 3 and 63. There appears to be no increase in numbers over the ten year period at this site.

Count Area 31 - Freestone Beach

Lead Volunteers – various leaders



When this project started up in 2010 Count Areas/sites were planned using Tasmaps 1:25 000. Sites were chosen for accessibility, including most sandy beaches and avoiding dangerous rocky areas. I was persuaded to include this area by the late Howard Simco who told me that he had past records of Hooded Plover here. However, this has been our poorest site for our target species.

Description of Site

The foreshore of this site is part of Fossil Bluff Coastal Reserve in the south and Table Cape Coastal Reserve further north. The designated site is about 1.5 km but only about .5 km is easily accessible now and counters scan the northern point from an island on the rock shelf. Fossil Bluff is well-known for its geological history and variety of fossils in the limestone and rock formations. Freestone Cove is a sheltered sandy beach, north of which a rock platform runs close to the shoreline.

Recreational Use

Freestone Cove is a popular beach with families and tourists. There is a large carpark and picnic facilities above the beach. A housing development over two decades ago has made this a residential suburb of Wynyard, and walkers, joggers, fishermen and dog-walkers use the beach throughout the year. Dogs are restricted to before 10am and after 6pm during December, January and February from Fossil Bluff beach east to the Golf Course and beyond to the River and they should be kept on a leash at all times. There are no restrictions to the north-west.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Freestone Cove is too disturbed to support shorebirds other than the occasional bird passing by and the rocky shelf appears to offer poor feeding habitat. Pacific and Silver Gulls are recorded scavenging, White-faced Herons feeding on the rock shelf and cormorants and gannets feeding offshore. White-bellied Sea-Eagles, Peregrine Falcons, Australian Hobby and Swamp Harriers have all been seen in the vicinity of the bluff.

Australian Pied Oystercatchers

Two to five birds recorded on 5 out of 20 surveys. No signs of breeding activity.

Sooty Oystercatchers

Two birds recorded on only 3 out of 20 surveys, all during the breeding season. No breeding behaviour observed but it is possible that a pair breed somewhere in this area.

Masked Lapwing

A maximum of 51 birds recorded on 11 out of 20 surveys. A total number of 137 birds were recorded on 7/10 surveys between 2010 and 2014 as opposed to a total of 13 birds on 4/10 surveys between 2015 and 2019. This decrease may be a result of increased recreational use of the beach here.

Count Area 32 – Boat Harbour Beach

Lead Volunteer – Alastair Richardson



Description of Site

Boat Harbour is a small holiday settlement with a popular safe swimming beach. At the northern end of the beach is a small rocky peninsular with a walking track through mostly native vegetation. The remainder of the shoreline is rocky with foreshore vegetation being mostly native coastal vegetation, dominated by *Melaleuca ericofoila*, with some grassy areas between the sea and a row of houses.

Recreational Use

Originally mostly holiday shacks, there has been an increase in both residential housing and holiday accommodation. For a few years during the summer the population was further increased by the number of RV vehicles and caravans parked to the east of the rocky peninsular. However, this is no longer permitted. There are picnic facilities, cafes and a children's playground. Use of the beach is heavy with swimming, canoeing, family games and even weddings. On the last count 5 to 56 people were noted walking on the beach and rocks.

Dogs are restricted on the beach to before 10 am and after 6pm during December, January and February, and should be on a leash at all times. The rest of the area appears to have no restrictions.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The beach is too disturbed to support feeding and breeding opportunities for shorebirds, however, a variety of seabirds can be found, particularly feeding offshore. Crested Terns feed along the beach and large flocks (of up to 160) sometimes rest on the beach until disturbed. There are often Black-faced, Little Pied and Great Cormorants resting on the rocks and Shy Albatrosses and Gannets can sometimes be seen offshore. The ubiquitous Silver Gull and a few Pacific Gulls forage along the shoreline.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Single birds recorded on only 2 out of 20 counts, both before mid 2011.

Sooty Oystercatcher

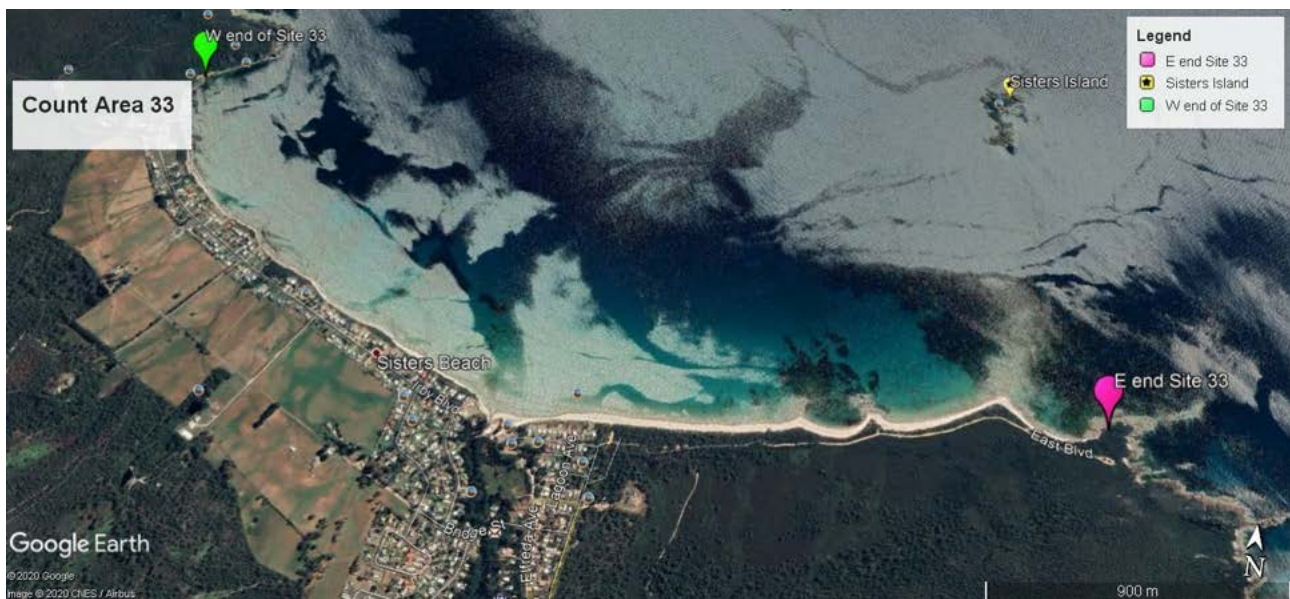
Recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 1 and 4. There was no apparent decrease between the number of birds recorded in the first and second 10 count periods. There was no evidence of breeding behaviour observed, although it is possible that one or two pairs could nest in less accessible rocky areas within the count area.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys with numbers between 2 and 53. Noisy flocks fly onto the beach and are less disturbed outside the holiday season.

Count Area 33 – Sisters Beach

Lead Volunteer – Richard Ashby



Description of Site

This beach stretches for 3.5 km from the end of the vehicle track and rocky headland in the east to just beyond the boat ramp in the west. Halfway along the beach Sisters Creek flows into the sea and the Community of Sisters Beach, a mixture of residential housing and holiday residences, is situated on both sides of the creek and along the western section of the beach. Most of the eastern half is part of Rocky Cape National Park, as is the area to the west of the beach and some of the hinterland. The eastern half of the beach is mostly sandy with small rocky areas and extensive sand banks at the mouth of the creek. West of the creek the beach becomes narrower and more rocky towards Razor Beach. The native vegetation along the sand dunes has been cut down in front of some houses and the high and king tides cause erosion on an irregular basis. The amount of sand on the beach in this western section is constantly changing.

Recreational Use

As the residential population increases and tourism expands the beach becomes very busy, especially during the summer months. The area around Sisters Creek is a popular area for children and there are picnic facilities and a playground. Walking, jogging, windsurfing, and most beach activities occur. Many residents own dogs and the area from the Boat Ramp east to Stockdale Avenue is a Dog Exercise Area year round. Between Stockdale Avenue and Honeysuckle Avenue dogs are restricted in December, January and February to before 10 am and after 6 pm, and the area east of this is a Dog Prohibited beach. Although the majority of dog owners are responsible, the occasional unsupervised dogs can cause considerable disturbance.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The preferred area for feeding shorebirds in the intertidal zone would appear to be the western half of the beach, where the beach is flat with a mixture of sandy areas and shallow rock pools. Small numbers of migratory shorebirds are sometimes seen here, including Double-banded Plovers and the occasional Red-necked Stint. Silver Gulls, Pacific Gulls, Crested Terns and Little Pied Cormorants frequent the creek mouth. A wide variety of other birds use the shoreline, including Shy Albatrosses and Australasian Gannets (off shore) and White-bellied Sea- Eagle and Wedge-tailed Eagle regularly seen overhead. Over the years a variety of pelagic birds have been found washed up on the shore.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied between 1 and 14. There is/was a small breeding population of probably two pairs situated at the western end of the beach. The following breed observations are supplemented by records preceding or following the actual count dates: 13/2/10 pair with 2 small chicks; 16/10/10 female on nest (another nest was washed away by a king tide); 3/11/12 nest with c/2; 7/10/13 distraction display, one egg only. There are no successful breeding records in recent years. The section of the beach where these birds breed is the most disturbed by pedestrians and dogs. Because residents here have noticed a decline, I have split the records up in two different ways.

Total number of birds recorded on the First 10 surveys –	53	Mar/Apr surveys	78
Last 10 “	<u>38</u>	Oct/Nov surveys	<u>13</u>
Total	91		91

The above figures would indicate a general decline in numbers, but even more noticeable is the difference between birds using the beach in the main breeding season/busy summer season and the post breeding season for feeding. It is also worth noting that the total number of birds recorded on the last 5 counts was only 5 on 3/5 counts.

Hooded Plover

One to eight birds recorded on 14 out of 20 surveys. The following breeding records were all of immatures except for a pair with breeding behaviour: 15/3/10 2 ad and 4 imm; 9/9/12 2 ad 1 sub-ad; 15/3/13 6 ad and 1 imm; 17/10/13 a pair showing BB; 20/3/14 3 ad and 4 imm ; 25/3/16 2 ad and 1 imm (later 3 ad and 2 imm); 20/3/18 1 ad and 3 imm; 28/3/19 2 ad and 1 imm. This species would be affected by heavy pedestrian and dog use of the beach in a similar way as the Red-capped Plover so I have split the records in the same way.

Total number of birds recorded on the First 10 surveys-	36 (26 ad and 10 imm)
Last 10 “	<u>19</u> (14 ad and 5 imm)
Total	55

Total number of birds recorded on Mar/Apr surveys	41 (26 ad and 15 imm)
Oct/Nov “	<u>14</u> (all adults)
Total	55

No adults have been recorded on surveys in the breeding season (Oct/Nov) since 2015.
See also the section on Hooded Plover for Count Area 34 which incorporates the nearest sandy beach to the west.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to four birds recorded on 9 out of 20 surveys. No breeding behaviour was noted although birds were seen on several surveys at the cove to the far east of the count area, which may be a breeding territory.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Between 1 and 9 birds recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys. This species feeds on the rocks in the intertidal zone at the east of the beach and on the rocks and rock platform towards the western end. The only indication of breeding was on 7/3/12 when two pairs both had an immature. Numbers appear to be stable. See Count Area 34 for more information on sites for this species.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied from 4 to 37 with no obvious seasonal patterns.



Sooty and Pied Oystercatchers.

Photo by Michael Hyland.

Count Area 34 – Rocky Cape NP (Sisters Island)

Lead Volunteer – Richard Ashby

I have divided this site into two separate areas for reporting. Both sites were surveyed by Richard Ashby in his sea kayak. However, he did land when necessary to check observations. This part refers to Sister Island which is situated off the eastern part of Sisters Beach and forms part of the Rocky Cape National Park.



Description of Site

Sisters Island was not reported on separately until Count 4 (Oct/Nov 2011). It is a rocky islet about 1 km from the nearest shore. It has jagged rocks and vegetation is mainly *Coprosma repens* and clumps of *Poa poiformis*.

Recreational Use

Only accessible by kayak or boat and with rough rocky terrain it is not suitable for any recreational activity.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

This is an ideal habitat for Sooty Oystercatchers to breed and use at high tide. Pacific Gulls breed here regularly, maybe as many as ten pairs. Kelp Gulls are recorded on most visits and a pair are likely to breed.

A few pairs of Little Penguins breed in crevices. Predators recorded include White-bellied Sea-Eagle and Great Skua.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Two birds recorded on only 2 out of 17 surveys. Both these records were on Oct/Nov counts so it is possible that they were attempting to breed in 2011 and 2016.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 12 out of 17 surveys in numbers between 2 and 14. It is believed that birds regularly move between Sisters Island and the intertidal zone of Sisters Beach (particularly the eastern end) to feed.

The five surveys that recorded no Sooty Oystercatchers were all on Mar/Apr surveys, i.e. post breeding time of the year. On 31/10/19 six pairs of Sooty Oystercatchers were spaced around the island. Although no evidence of breeding was recorded, observations were made from a kayak and it is likely that this represents six breeding territories. Earlier observations on Oct/Nov counts would indicate a minimum of 3 pairs 2011-2012; a minimum of 4 pairs in 2013 – 2017 and six pairs in 2018. However, if one of a pair was incubating out of site there could have been six breeding pairs throughout, as a minimum of six adults was recorded on all surveys at this time of year.

Count area 34 (2) – Rocky Cape NP

Lead Volunteer – Richard Ashby

Surveyed from a kayak, but Anniversary Bay surveyed on foot.



Description of Site

The whole of this shoreline falls within Rocky Cape National Park from Wet Cove in the SE to Mary Ann Cove in the NW. Apart from Anniversary Bay at the SE end it is a very rocky shoreline with areas of pebbly beaches. Inland the park consists of native vegetation on heathland.

Recreational Use

The National Park is popular with walkers but there is little disturbance to the coastline and there is no provision for camping. Limited fishing and diving occur in the northern part.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Shorebirds are mostly restricted to the area between Sisters Beach and Anniversary Point in the SE with a few oystercatchers and seabirds along the coast. Pacific and Silver Gull occur throughout and Black-faced Cormorants and Great Cormorants are found on the rocks.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on only 1 of 20 surveys. A pair at Anniversary Bay on 8/10/13 were acting as if they had a nest.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys at Anniversary Bay in numbers between two and six adults.

A pair (with up to 4 more adults) have been recorded at this site in the breeding season since Oct/Nov 2012, but the only breeding records are as follows: 27/10/15 a pair with a nest c/3; 20/3/16 a pair with 1 imm, which may be from the nest in October.

Being highly speculative it is possible that birds could sometimes move to Sisters Beach to feed post breeding, which would account to some extent for the increased numbers there during Mar/Apr surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to five birds recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys. The following breeding records are from a pair at Anniversary Bay: 2/11/12 pair with 1 egg in scrape; 6/11/14 a pair with nest; 27/10/15 a bird showing BB; 28/10/16 a bird showing BB; 31/10/17a pair with nest c/2. No sign of any decrease, in fact numbers over the last 5 years are higher than before 2015.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied between 1 and 9 adults with the exception of 17 on 24/10/10 when no distinction between those seen on SI and this area.

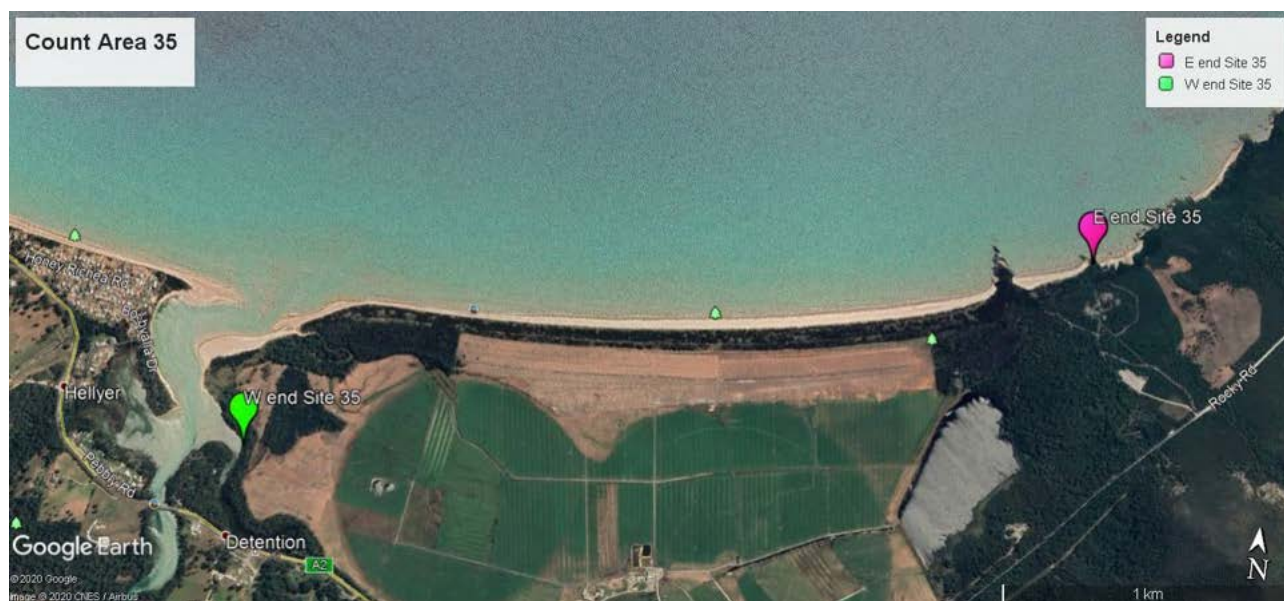
At least 4 pairs seen regularly in certain areas during the breeding season. 1 imm on 2/11/12 and a nest with c/1 at Anniversary Bay Nov 14.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 2 and 28. Although numbers vary from count to count, 114 birds were recorded in the first 5 years and 112 in the last 5 years.

Count Area 35 – Picnic Point to Forwards Beach

Lead Volunteer – Richard Ashby



Description of Site

This site starts east of Picnic Point, west of the Rocky Cape hamlet in Rocky Cape National Park. The rocks at this end are difficult to negotiate, but once past Picnic Point a 3 km sandy beach stretches to the mouth of the Detention River. This area is outside the NP and designated as coastal reserve. There is a band of native vegetation along the foreshore and farmland with a large dam inland.

Recreational Use

There appears to be very few people using this beach. Vehicle access is only possible through private property and tracks were only noted on two occasions. Similarly, dog prints were only seen on one occasion. The only other recreational pursuit observed was a hang-glider overhead.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The long sandy beach offers breeding habitat for two of our resident shorebirds, and small numbers of the migratory Double-banded Plover feed here between February and July. A variety of other seabirds are recorded on these surveys including 3 species of gull, 3 species of cormorants, Shy Albatross and gannets offshore, Australian Pelican and Crested Tern at the mouth of the river and White-bellied Sea-Eagles and Swamp Harriers. Occasional beach-washed Fairy Penguins and 102 Short-tailed Shearwaters were washed up during a wreck in November 2010.

Red-capped Plover

Not recorded at all on the first 10 surveys (2010 – 2014). Small numbers (1 to 4) recorded on 6 out of 10 of the last 10 surveys (2015 -2019). We know of no reason why this species should be so sparse on a beach that appears to offer suitable habitat. The only signs of breeding were 22/10/17 a bird showing BB and on 5/11/19 when a bird was showing breeding behaviour close to the mouth of the Detention River.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys in numbers between 1 and 10. A pair was seen regularly at two sites but breeding records are surprisingly few: 9/3/10 two pairs each with a single imm; 22/3/12 adult with 2 imm; 27/3/18 one imm with 4 ad. The population appears to be stable with the total number of birds recorded on the first 10 surveys being 55 and on the last 10 surveys 52.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied from 2 to 14, the three surveys with 0 birds were all in the non-breeding season. The population appears to be stable with 54 birds recorded on the first 10 surveys (2010 – 2014) and 55 recorded on the last 10 surveys. Total number of birds recorded on Oct/Nov surveys was 85 with only 24 on Mar/Apr surveys.

The following breeding records were probably from six breeding territories scattered along the beach from Picnic Beach to the Detention River estuary. 5/11/11 ad incubating at Picnic Beach; 15/11/12 a pair with c/2 and 2 other pairs very agitated probably had nest or chicks; 10/10/13 one pair showing BB; 27/10/14 two pairs showing breeding behaviour ; 31/10/15 three pairs showing breeding behaviour; 29/10/16 two pairs BB; 22/10/17 two pairs BB; 5/11/19. One pair acting as if chick nearby.

Sooty Oystercatcher

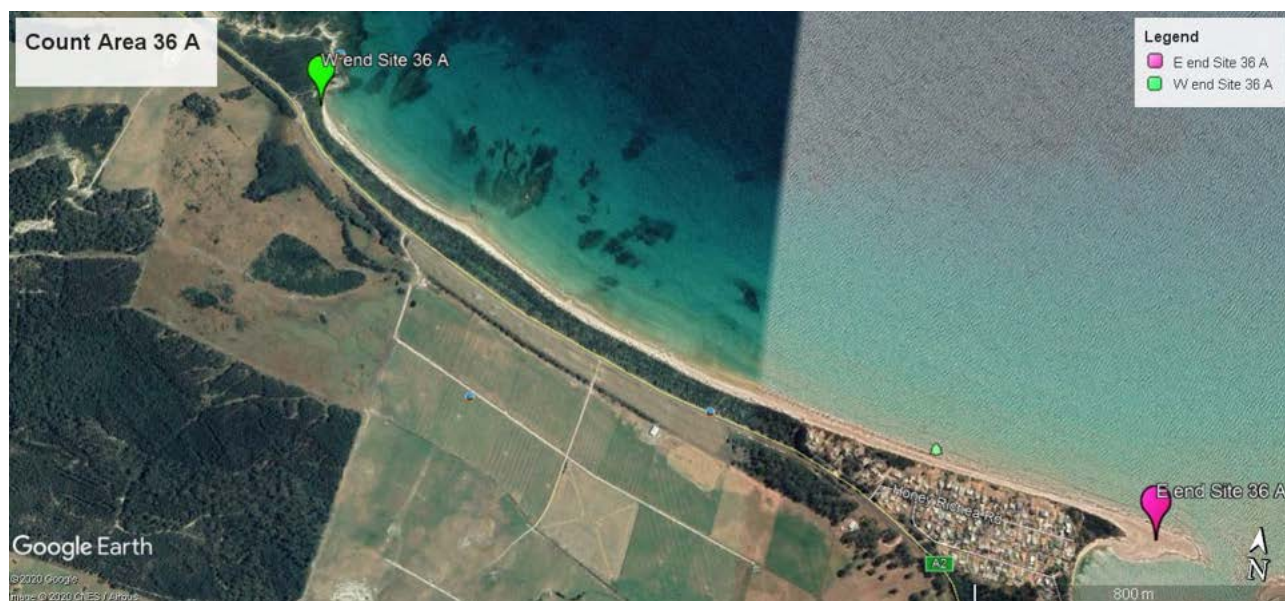
One to four birds recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys. A pair often seen at Picnic Point but no sign of breeding observed.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied between 1 and 208. Flocks are easily put up by birds of prey and are likely to be in post-breeding flocks on the nearby paddocks. Nearby pastures have been improved and irrigated increasing suitable habitat.

Count Area 36 A – Hellyer Beach

Lead Volunteer – Sue Jennings



Description of Site

This is a long sandy beach that stretches for more than 2.5 km between the mouth of Detention River in the east and a rocky headland in the west. The community of Hellyer, a mix of holiday shacks and residential houses, sits between the beach and the highway for about .75 km from the east. The beach is relatively flat and a large area is exposed at low-tide with three main areas of rocks. West of Hellyer a band of native vegetation borders the shoreline to the road.

Recreational Use

Hellyer Beach is well used by residents and holiday makers, particularly during the summer months, with most types of beach activities including walking, kayaking, kite surfing, bikes etc. Vehicles are able to access the beach at the western end and drive to the eastern end and it is a popular venue for teaching young people to drive. Camping (including caravans) occurs along the foreshore on the headland at the western end of the beach and there is no signage relating to restrictions on dogs using the beach.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The beach has been subject to erosion for some years with the high tide coming up to a steep mini cliff edge below the vegetation so that there is little or no shorebird breeding habitat available. There is some feeding habitat available around the rocks in the western half of the beach, and Crested Terns and cormorants rest at the mouth of the river. The eastern point at the mouth of the river has experienced big changes due to erosion, with the vegetation on the point washing away, and the sandy point changing size, height and location. Australian Gannets and the occasional Shy Albatross feed offshore and are sometimes beach-washed.

Red-capped Plover

Two to three birds only recorded on 3 out of 20 surveys. There are no breeding records, but a pair could have had a nest on the sandy point near the river mouth on 8/11/15 and again on 29/10/2017 when one appeared to be sitting. If so, the chances of them successfully rearing young would be very slight.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on five out of twenty surveys. 17/10/10 a pair half way along beach, and single birds at the same site on 14/3/11 and 11/11/12. A sighting of four adults on the tide line on 2/4/16 was very unusual and the following year on 20/10/17 there was a group of six that landed near the rocks and another two near the point. No birds have been recorded here since that date.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One or two birds on 9 out of 20 surveys. Birds were observed twice flying west, twice at the river mouth and 5 times in the rocky areas at the western half of the beach. No evidence of breeding.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 9 out of 20 surveys with a maximum of three birds. No evidence of breeding and birds were seen either feeding amongst the rocks or flying west.

None of the above four species were recorded on the last four counts.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys in numbers from 2 to 47. No obvious seasonal patterns but fewer on recent surveys and all counts of 0 in the last 5 years. This species is more common at Count Area Site 36 B at sites along and at the river mouth.

Count Area 36 B – Pebbly Beach

Lead Volunteer – Sue Jennings



Description of Site

This site follows the west side of Detention River Estuary, continuing south from the east end of Site 36 B along Pebbly Beach and around the rocky spit into Pebbly Bay. From the Mouth of the river there is a small sandy beach and rocky area with the rest of the beach forming a wide sweeping bay with a narrow pebbly beach. Pebbly bay is mostly mud flats at low tide and the surrounding area is designated a coastal reserve.

Recreational Use

This site also receives a lot of recreational activity with walkers, people with dogs, oyster collectors, kayakers etc. There are no signs regarding the presence of dogs using the beach, on or off the leash.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Pebbly Beach suffers continually from erosion and there is now almost no suitable habitat for shorebirds to breed. In 2012 following extensive erosion of the beach there was considerable disturbance from machinery undertaking beach-erosion mitigation works, including erection of a sand-bagged wall along the central area of beach. However, the western bank of the Detention River continues to erode with the river encroaching several metres to the west. Many tall white gums, banksias and coastal wattles have fallen into the river. A few shorebirds feed in the intertidal zone at the north end of the beach and in Pebbly Bay, including the occasional migratory shorebird such as a Common Greenshank on 17/3/17. Other birds using the estuary and Pebbly Bay include White-faced Heron, Great Egret, Little Pied and Great Cormorants, Chestnut Teal and Australasian Pelican.

Red-capped Plover

One to three birds recorded on 5 out of 20 surveys. Mostly feeding near river mouth or rocks. No observations of breeding activity.

Hooded Plover

Recorded only on 2 out of 20 surveys. 4 at the river mouth end on 11/3/12 and 2 at the sand spit in the corner of river mouth on 14/3/18. No breeding activity or immatures seen.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to four birds recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. Most records are of birds feeding in the estuary and Pebbly Bay. There is a pair with a territory on the spit at the southern end of Pebbly Bay and a successful breeding record of a pair with 2 large chicks on 8/11/15; a nest in the same territory had c/1 on 29/10/17. Two other indications of breeding were BB with possible nest on 13/11/16 and a distressed adult who probably had chicks nearby on 10/11/19.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Only recorded on 6 out of 20 surveys with numbers between 1 and 3. One of two birds feeding in Pebbly Bay on 8/11/15 was much browner than the other, possibly an immature.

Masked Lapwings

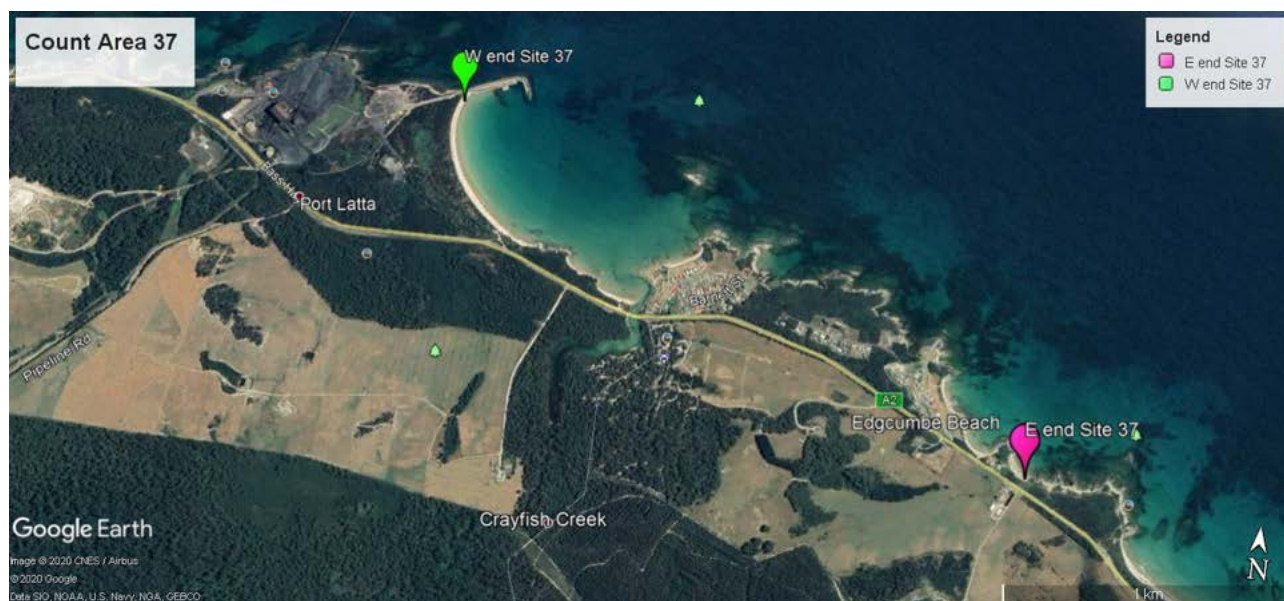
Recorded on all twenty surveys, sometimes in large numbers (up to 239 recorded). Regularly in river and in Pebbly Bay and resting on the rocky spit at the southern end of Pebbly Beach at high tide.



Photo by Michael Hyland.

Count Area 37 – Edgcumbe Beach – Crayfish Creek

Lead volunteer – Bill Walker



Description of Site

This site starts at a rocky point in the east and stretches more than 2.5 km to Port Latta in the west. The small settlement of Edgcumbe Beach lies behind the sandy beach of the same name and there is a rocky area of coastal reserve between this and the other small holiday/residential settlement of Crayfish Creek. The Creek enters the sea about 1 km from Port Latta and the mostly sandy Crayfish Creek Beach arches west to Port Latta.

Recreational Use

This area is popular during the summer months, particularly with locals, and there is a Tourist Park on the Creek, south of the road, to supplement the holiday and fishing shack accommodation. Vehicles, including quad bikes etc., are able to access the beach and there is a boat ramp. Families play on the beach and boating, fishing and surfing all occur. There are no restrictions on dogs using the beach.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

There is limited suitable habitat for shorebirds. When surveys started in 2010 it was noted that west of Crayfish Creek there was significant erosion with high tides reaching the foot of 2.5m dunes with no nesting habitat for shorebirds. In 2012 the beach profile improved and in November it was noted that there was an area of beach above high tide. This situation continued until 2015 when the beach once again was eroding. In 2019 the sand level appeared to be increasing again. Offshore from the creek are small rocky islands which attract gulls and terns; White-faced Herons and Little Pied Cormorants fish in the creek and small numbers of Little Penguins breed in the coastal reserve area.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on seven out of twenty surveys in numbers from 1 to 4. A pair recorded at the western end near Port Latta but no evidence of breeding. No birds have been recorded on the beach since 2015.

Hooded Plover

A single adult on 15/11/14 was the only bird seen on twenty surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys, with numbers between 1 and 4. A pair were recorded near Port Latta on a few occasions but no evidence of breeding.

Sooty Oystercatcher

One to eight birds recorded on 14 out of 20 surveys. Most often seen singly or in pairs, but no evidence of breeding. 4 birds recorded on two occasions on March/April surveys could have been family groups. Only recorded on two of the last seven surveys.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys in numbers from 2 to 20.

Count Area 38 – Brickmakers Bay to Little Peggs Beach

Lead Volunteer – Bill Walker



Description of Site

This area, just west of Port Latta, is part of Little Peggs Beach State Reserve and begins west of the last shack at Brickmans Bay and ends at the point at the western end of Little Peggs Beach. Brickmans Bay is a small, mostly shingle beach and the area between here and Little Peggs Beach is coastal reserve with a rocky shore and native vegetation from shoreline to the highway.

The reserve south of the highway has been burnt in the past and is now subject to fuel reduction burns.

Recreational Use

At the west end of Brickmans Bay is a Car Park and Picnic Area and further west is Little Peggs Beach Campsite. Both areas are busy in the summer months with the camp site often full and the beach well used with families, fishermen walkers and dogs (allowed at campsite on leads). Vehicles are allowed to access the beach to launch boats.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

Brickmaker Bay does not appear to attract any shorebirds and few birds other than gulls are usually seen here. The occasional White-faced Heron and Little Pied Cormorants as well as Crested Terns are recorded further west and there is limited feeding for oystercatchers.

Red-capped Plover

Despite suitable habitat this species was not recorded on any of the 20 surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to three birds recorded on 13 out of 20 surveys. A pair with a territory at the far eastern end of Little Peggs beach. A nest with c/2 was recorded on 18/10/13 and again on 17/11/16. The second nest was 500 m to the east of the 2012 site. Breeding behaviour noted on 13/11/12, 9/11/15 and 10/11/17. On 21/11/19 no birds were recorded in this territory and the area where they last nested had been scoured out.

Sooty Oystercatcher

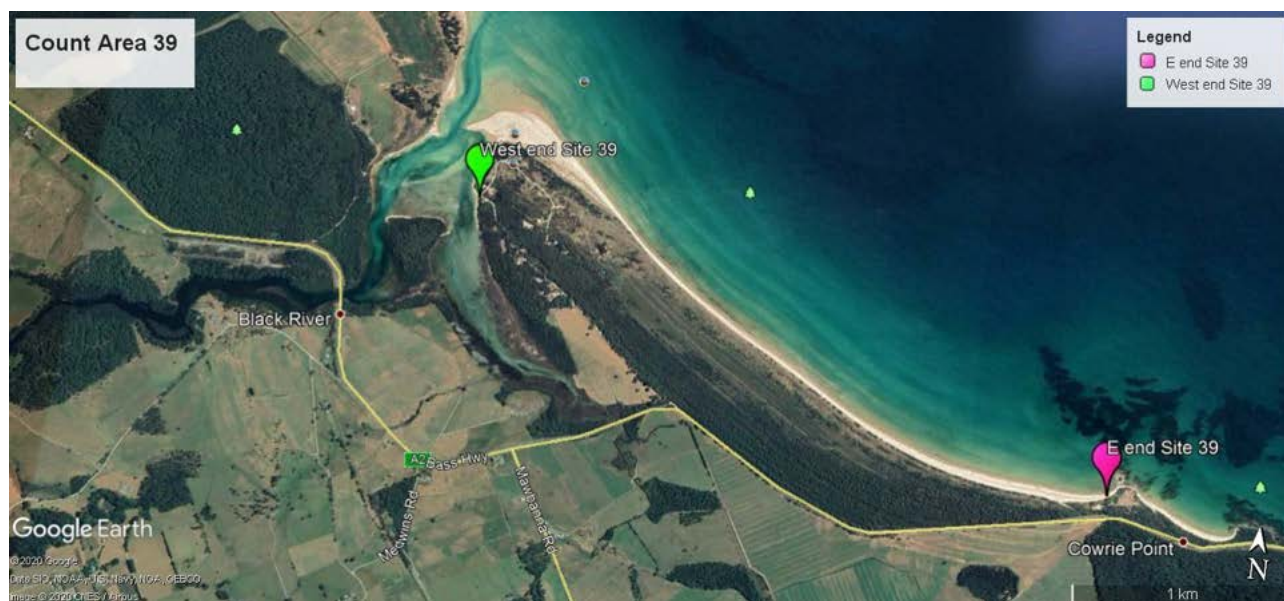
Only recorded on 4 out of 20 surveys. One to three birds with no signs of any breeding behaviour,

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys in small numbers between 2 and 26.

Count Area 39 – Peggs Beach

Lead Volunteer – Toni Ogilvie



Description of Site

Peggs Beach is a long sandy beach stretching for over 4 km west to the mouth of Black River. It is part of Pegs Beach Conservation Area which is administered by NP&W. Sand dunes rise from the beach with coastal heathland vegetation, and changes to more eucalypt woodland on the sheltered side of the dunes. Near the mouth of the River is an extensive sand bank.

Recreational Use

There are two Camp Sites, Peggs Beach Camping Area to the east (Site 38) and Black River Camping Area further west, away from the beach. Both are busy during the summer holidays. Campers are allowed access to the beach for launching boats (licenced vehicles only) and horse riding is allowed below the high-tide mark. Swimming and kayaking are popular activities here. Dogs are allowed under direct control. In 2011 gates were erected, across the track at the west end near the river, to provide environmental protection. However, vehicle tracks suggest that not everyone complies with the rules.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

There has been considerable erosion of sand dunes, first noted by observers at the eastern end in 2012 and more recently over 1.5 km of the central section. Shorebirds, including occasional migratory species such as Double-banded Plover, are mostly recorded along the western third of the beach, on the sandbank and along the north-western bank of Black River. Large numbers of Silver Gulls; Pacific Gulls, Crested and Caspian Tern, White-face Heron, Great Cormorant etc. were recorded on the beach during the surveys.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 11 out of 20 surveys. Numbers were between 1 and 5 on eight of those surveys.

Larger numbers were recorded on three dates in the post breeding season (9 on 17/3/12, 11 on 30/3/14, and 17 on 22/3/15) and may have been close to a high-tide roosts. The only breeding records were of 4 juv with 4 adults on 17/3/12, and 1 juv with 2 ad on 6/4/19.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on every survey except the last one on 24/11/19. Numbers varied from 2 to 10 adults with 7 or 8 immatures with 10 adults on 17/3/12, and an imm with 2 adults on 9/11/14. Numbers would suggest that there are three breeding territories spread on the western third/sandbank area of the beach, however numbers may be declining. 55 birds were recorded on the first 10 counts and 42 on the last ten counts.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Two to eleven birds recorded on 16 out of 20 surveys. The four surveys recording 0 birds were all in the post breeding season. There are at least three breeding pairs along the beach, but no evidence of breeding was recorded. More birds were seen over the last ten years (49 from 2015 to 2019) than were seen during the first 10 years (33 from 2010 to 2014).

Sooty Oystercatcher

Two birds seen on two out of 20 surveys. Two adults on rocks on 20/3/10 and 1 ad and 1 juv on 19/3/11.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on only 8 out of 20 surveys. Numbers were between 2 and 40 with an increase during 2015 – 2017, but only 2 birds were recorded on the beach in the last three years.



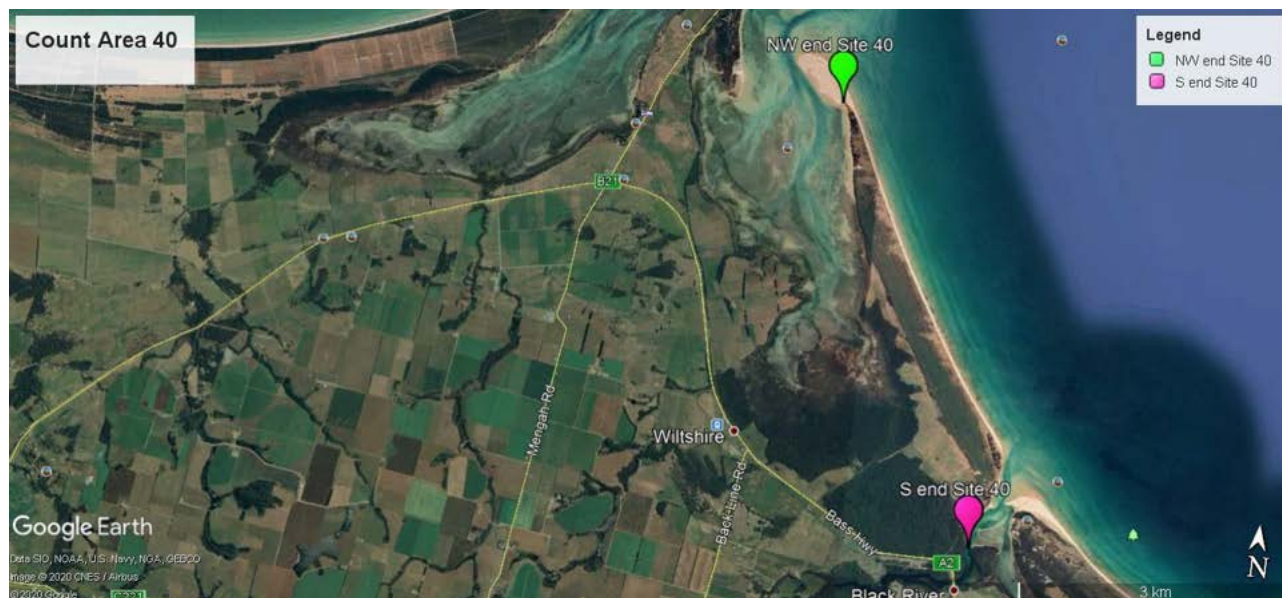
Red-capped Plover

Photo by Michael Hyland.

Count Area 40 – Black River Beach

Lead Volunteers – Anthea Fergusson and Sue Jennings

Access to this site is through private property. We would like to thank Kim and Leanne Marsh for allowing us through their property for these surveys.



Description of Site

This long sandy beach starting at the mouth of Black River in the south runs for over 6 km and ends at a point on the east side of East Inlet. The property to the west of the beach has been implementing environmental improvements, such as removal of Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and native revegetation.

Over the last ten years the profile of the beach at the northern end has changed considerably with reduction of the vegetated point from erosion and a build-up of a large sandbank to the northwest. Considerable erosion was also noticed at the SE end of the beach at the mouth of Black River in March 2019.

Recreational Use

Restricted access has meant that this beach has been one of the least disturbed beaches of our survey area. People sometimes access the beach by kayak from Black River and Peggs Beach Camp Site or from East Inlet to the west.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The beach provides breeding and limited feeding habitat for shorebirds, particularly plovers and oystercatchers. The migratory Double-banded Plover is present during February to July, and other migratory shorebirds have been recorded in small numbers. The Black River Estuary would provide better feeding opportunities than off the beach, which because of erosion has a limited flat intertidal zone.

At the start of these surveys access around the point to the west was very difficult on foot, which decided the NW end of the survey area. In recent years erosion of the last 500m of the northern part of the beach has reduced the amount of breeding habitat available and made access to the sandbank at the end not possible.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 12 out of 20 surveys. Numbers were between one and six on 10 surveys; 21 were recorded on 20/3/10 and 28/4/17 and were likely to have been near a high tide roost.

Disregarding the two large counts 24 birds were seen on the first 10 counts and 10 on the last 10 counts. No birds were recorded on the last 5 surveys.

Two immatures were noted on 20/3/10 but no other breeding activity recorded.

Hooded Plover

Recorded on all counts. Numbers varied from 4 to 17. Observations and numbers would suggest at least 4 breeding territories.

Total number of birds recorded on Oct/Nov counts (breeding season) was 78 ad

Total " " on Mar/Apr counts (post breeding) was 93 ad and 16 imm.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on 19 out of 20 surveys with numbers from 1 to 31. However, splitting up the count figures in two different ways indicate a stable population. I have omitted two counts (1/11/10 and 17/3/11) where birds were recorded in groups feeding, obviously close to high-tide roosts.

Total number of birds recorded on Mar/Apr surveys	23	First 10 counts	53	
	Oct/Nov	<u>98</u>	Last 10 counts	<u>68</u>
		122		122

Birds recorded on Oct/Nov surveys (when birds are usually in their breeding territories) were recorded in either pairs or a single bird indicating a breeding population of 6 to 8 pairs.

Sooty Oystercatchers

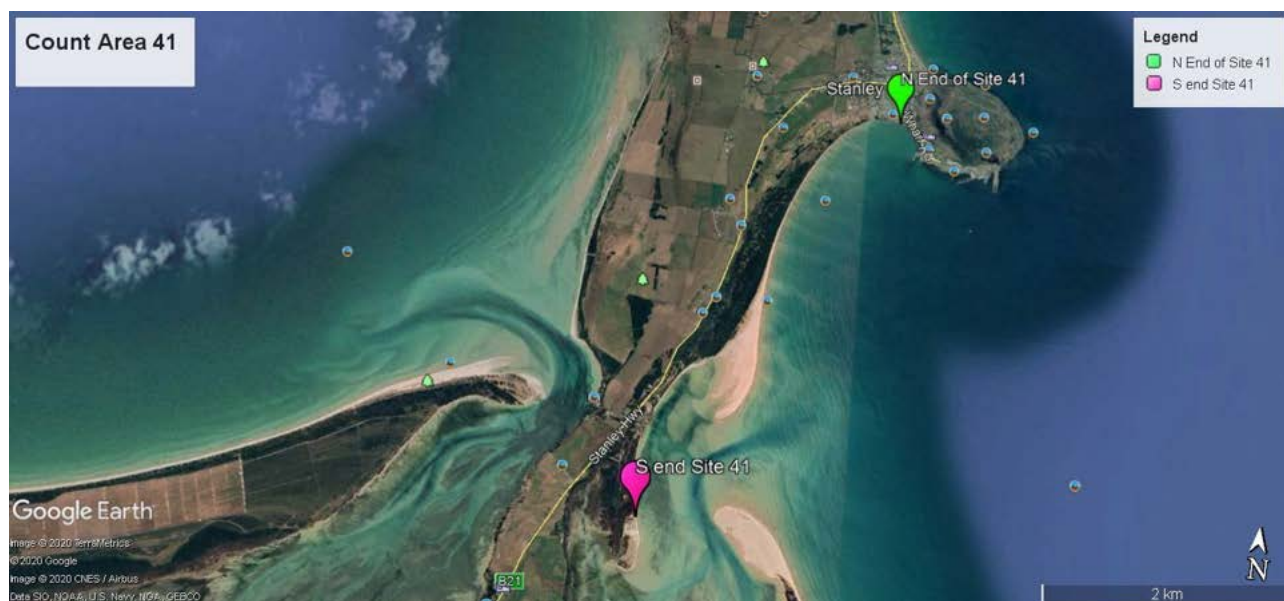
This species was not recorded on any of our surveys. This would be in keeping with the lack of suitable breeding or feeding habitat.

Masked Lapwing

Recorded on all surveys with numbers between 2 and 70. Total number of birds recorded in the first 5 years was similar to that recorded in the last 5 years.

Count Area 41 – Tatlows Beach

Lead Volunteers – various



Description of Site

Access to the Count Site in the north is from a small carpark just north of the caravan park in Stanley. Initially a stone breakwater leads onto a sandy beach which opens out after 3.5 km to a large sand bank. This sandbank is in a constant state of flux with vegetation growing close to the shore but some years growing on banks c.200 m out into Sawyer Bay. The site continues south for about 1 km (past the southern access point at Gulliver's Rest) to where the thick coastal vegetation peters out and a sandy dune area continues to a point. The area inland of the beach is mostly coastal reserve. There is an active Circular Head Landcare Group who have removed Sea-spurge south of the site to improve shorebird breeding habitat.

Recreational Use

Recreational use is quite heavy during the summer, particularly near the access points. Four wheel drive vehicles, trail bikes and motorbikes access the beach from a track adjacent to 23 Marine Terrace at the northern end and Gullivers Rest area towards the south. Horses have been seen on the beach and fishermen drive out onto the sand banks at low tide. Kayaks and windsurfers access the southern part. It is a popular beach for walking dogs with restrictions during daylight saving for dogs to be on a lead between 10 am and 7pm. This refers to a 1.3 km stretch of beach between the vehicle access track at Marine Terrace and the footpath to the Golf Course. For the rest of the year, and outside this section, dogs are allowed 24 hrs a day.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

South of this Count Site is East Inlet which has extensive mudflats and is an important feeding area for resident and migratory shorebirds. These birds traditionally congregate at a high-tide roost at a spit about 200m south of Site 41. However, in recent years since the sandbank at the eastern side of the Inlet has expanded and as the traditional site has become more disturbed, most of the shorebirds are now roosting on the sandbank on the eastern side of the inlet. As the tide falls the

shorebirds move out to feed in the intertidal zone. This means that the number of shorebirds recorded fluctuates considerably, distorting the numbers that are actually resident and breed at this count site.

The whole area is rich with other birds which utilise and feed in this area, from Silver and Pacific Gulls, A. Pelicans, Crested and Caspian Terns, various cormorant sp, several species of ducks, Black Swans, White-faced Herons and Great Egrets, White-bellied Sea-Eagles, Wedge-tailed Eagles etc.

Red-capped Plover

Recorded on 15 out of 20 surveys in numbers from 1 to 78. This is one of the species that uses the high-tide roost. The three counts that recorded 50+ birds were all in the non-breeding season (Mar/Apr). Some of the counts with no sightings reported lots of disturbance, post storm damage etc. The highest number on Oct/Nov counts was 25. A pair showing breeding behaviour on 20/10/13 and 12/11/17. No chicks were seen and observers found difficulty in identifying immatures. However, there is a large area of suitable habitat, particularly around the sandbank and counters would not have disturbed this area.

Hooded Plover

Numbers between 1 and 15 were recorded on 17 out of 20 surveys. Eleven of the 17 counts recorded more than 9 birds, there were 7-8 on 3 counts and 1-4 on 3 counts. Breeding behaviour was noted on 5/11/16, and on 21/10/18 a pair were very territorial around a scrape, although no eggs yet laid. 7 immatures were seen feeding with 8 adults on 12/4/18.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

Recorded on all surveys, with numbers between 8 and 79. This is another species which roosts in East Inlet and spreads out to feed in the rich intertidal zone. Many birds feeding along the edge of the inlet channels are often distant. A few pairs breed along the sandy shoreline at this site: a pair on 5/11/16 appeared to have a "change-over" at nest in the dunes; BB was observed on 12/11/17 and a bird apparently calling to a chick on 18/11/19.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 13 out of 20 surveys. Numbers varied between 1 and 13 on 11 surveys. I have omitted two early surveys on 27/3/11 and 24/3/12, which recorded 62 and 101 respectively, because these numbers are in excess of the number for this species recorded at the high-tide roost counts. These figures include large flocks that were distant and may have been a mixture of Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers difficult to separate without a telescope. Seven birds recorded on 21/3/15 included an immature bird. This site does not really have any suitable habitat for breeding Sooty Oystercatchers, but the area to the north around the 'Nut' and further west does. However, at the south of the count area, especially south of Gullivers Rest, a rocky shelf with sandy pools and seagrass provides ideal feeding habitat.

Masked Lapwing

Between 6 and 29 birds recorded on 18 out of 20 surveys. These numbers are quite small for such a long stretch of shoreline. This could be attributed to the windswept nature of this site and plenty of other habitat available such as inland paddocks, the adjacent Golf Course and the dune area further south.

Fairy/Little Terns

One to five birds recorded on 5 out of the last 10 surveys, fishing along tideline. Both species were involved.

EAST INLET south of Site 41

South of this site is a large sandy low dune area, sparsely grassed. At the end is a high-tide roost area for both resident and migratory shorebirds, already mentioned. At high tide the sea enters another inlet to the west and on very high tides water runs into the sandy spit. The local Landcare group have removed sea-spurge in this area and there are signs declaring it a sensitive shorebird breeding area. The following resident shorebirds all breed in small numbers here: Red-capped Plover, Hooded Plover and A. Pied Oystercatcher. There are past records of Fairy Terns also. Migratory shorebirds feeding in East Inlet include the endangered Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, and large flocks of Red-necked Stints and Double-banded Plover.

The importance of this area requires more protection from disturbance. No vehicles or dogs should be allowed at any time.



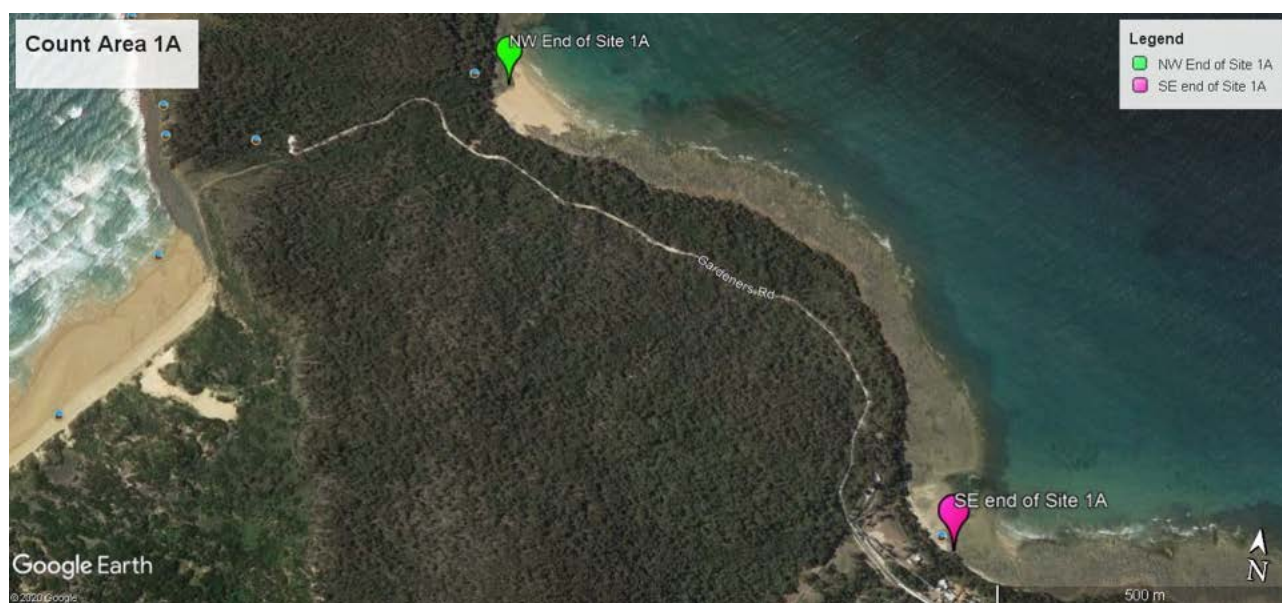
Immature Fairy Tern.

Photo Michael Hyland.

Count Area 1A – West Head Beaches

This site was added on the second count as a family from Devonport wanted to be involved. There were previous records of Hooded Plover from here so I extended the count area even though it comes under the Tamar Region.

Lead Volunteer – Chris Knight, Julie Serafin



Description of Site

This stretch of shoreline borders the eastern limit of Narawntapu National Park, on the other side of West Head from Count Area 1. In the north is the small sandy bay of Pebbly Beach and in the south just outside the NP is Nudist Beach and the holiday village of Greens Beach. In between, the vegetation goes down to the sea with a pebbly foreshore and a rocky shelf at low tide. A path weaves through the vegetation.

Recreational Use

Walkers/explorers in the National Park use the walking tracks and may swim and picnic at Pebbly Bay during the summer. Residents of Greens beach walk their dogs on Nudist Beach and families play on the beach. Rock fishing and surfing in the SE are other recreational activities here.

Shorebird Habitat and Usage

The habitat at Pebbly Beach appears to be unable to support any regular resident shorebirds, although this may be due to recent changes. Hebe Reef to the east supports some resting and feeding shorebirds and other beach birds such as Crested Terns, Pacific and Silver Gulls, White-faced Heron, Little Pied and Great Cormorants. Australian Gannets offshore and White-bellied Sea-Eagles are sometimes seen.

Hooded Plover

A single bird on 23/10/10 was the only record on twenty surveys.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

One to two birds recorded on 8 out of 19 surveys. Although a pair recorded in the breeding season on six occasions, breeding has only been recorded once. On 31/10/18 a pair were breeding high above the beach in a private backyard. 1 bird recorded attacking Forest raven and the other sitting. A single bird seen in the same territory on 27/10/19.

Sooty Oystercatcher

Recorded on 10 out of 19 surveys in numbers between 3 and 19. Most birds were recorded at Hebe Reef or on the rocky platform at low tide. On 26/3/2011 two groups of 4 consisted of 2 adults and two immatures each.

Masked Lapwing

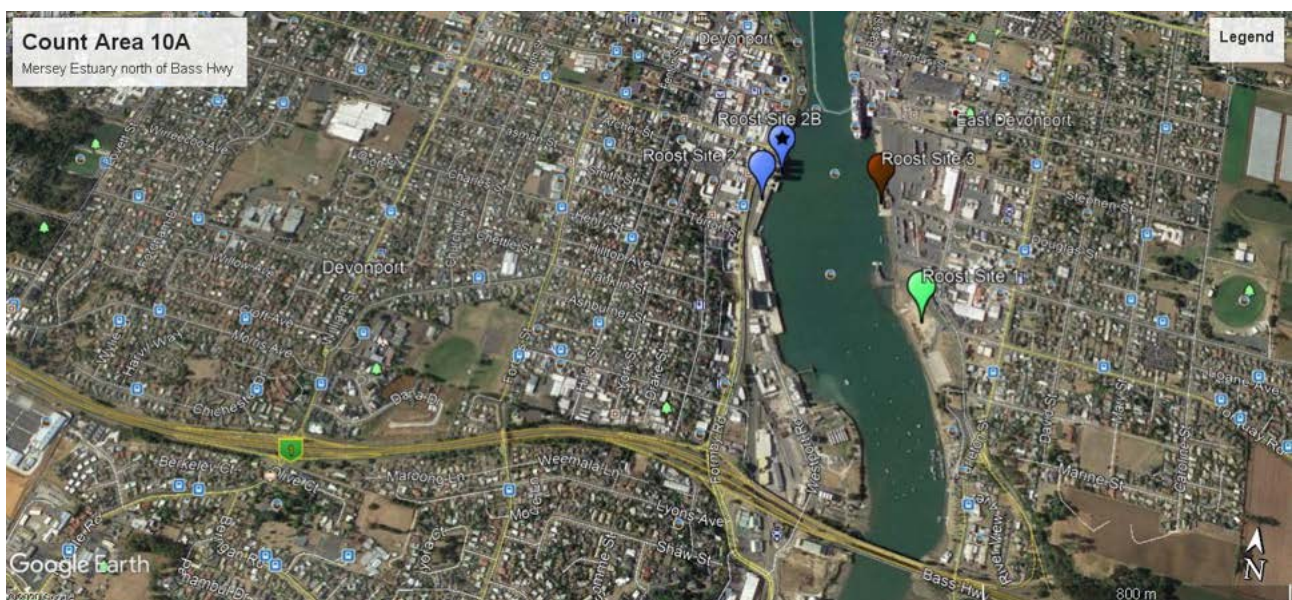
Recorded on 13 out of 19 surveys. Numbers varied from 2 to 62, mostly recorded in the south of the count area, flying in and resting/sheltering on the rocks. Appears to be more common in the last 5 years. Total number of birds on the first 9 counts was 83 and the last 10 counts was 205.

Count Area 10 A – Devonport Australian Pied Oystercatcher High-tide Roost

Lead Volunteer – John Coombes

This count area is different from the other 44 sites, in that it relates to a single species observed at high tide, where it is not in an actual territory, but resting when its intertidal feeding habitat is unavailable. These feeding grounds are the mudflats that extend 4 km from the mouth of Horsehead Creek at Quoiba to the Mersey's delta at Latrobe (see second map below). The area of mudflats is around 2 sq. km. Oysters are common where the bottom is rocky.

I decided to add this site to our project as the site is just over 1 km into the Mersey Estuary from the west end of Count Area 10 at Police Point. It seemed to be an opportunity to learn something about the population of A. Pied Oystercatchers feeding in the estuary.



Key to Sites - Green – Site 1; Blue – Site 2; Blue star – Site 2B; Brown – Site 3

Description of Site

We eventually identified five sites where birds roosted at different times, on both sides of the river along a stretch of 1.8 km, from the cement silos in the north, to Ambleside in the south. North of the Bass Highway Bridge the sites are within the port facilities (see map above). A footpath/cycle track runs along the Port Authority fence allowing observations at the wharf.

Disturbance

Sites 1 to 3 are all behind fences and there is no disturbance from the general public, recreational activity, dogs etc! The disturbance factor is related to activities at the Port when there are ships docked at the various berths. This is less than would be expected as it is only when loading and unloading is in progress. For much of the time these are very safe sites for the POC.

Site 4 is only likely to be disturbed when there are communal activities at the TS Mersey Naval Reserve Cadets venue.

Observations on use of Roost Sites

The first count was done on 30/3/10, where my late husband and I regularly saw birds roosting over several years, on the west side of the river. See map above for position of **Roost Site 1**.

No POC were seen here on the next two counts and a site on the wharf south of the silos had been identified as a roost area see **Roost Site 2**.

However, no POC were seen on the next count either, as a very large ship was berthed at the roost site. On the 5th count on 26/3/12 only 2 POC were seen at Roost Site 2 and 18 POC were seen on the east side of the river at **Roost Site 3**. Extra counts were done in May and August 2012 where birds were roosting at **Roost Site 2**.

Twelve further counts were done in 2013; between 12th January and 28th May and another on 19th October. On 10 of these counts the POC were at **Roost Site 2** and on two counts at **Roost Site 3**.

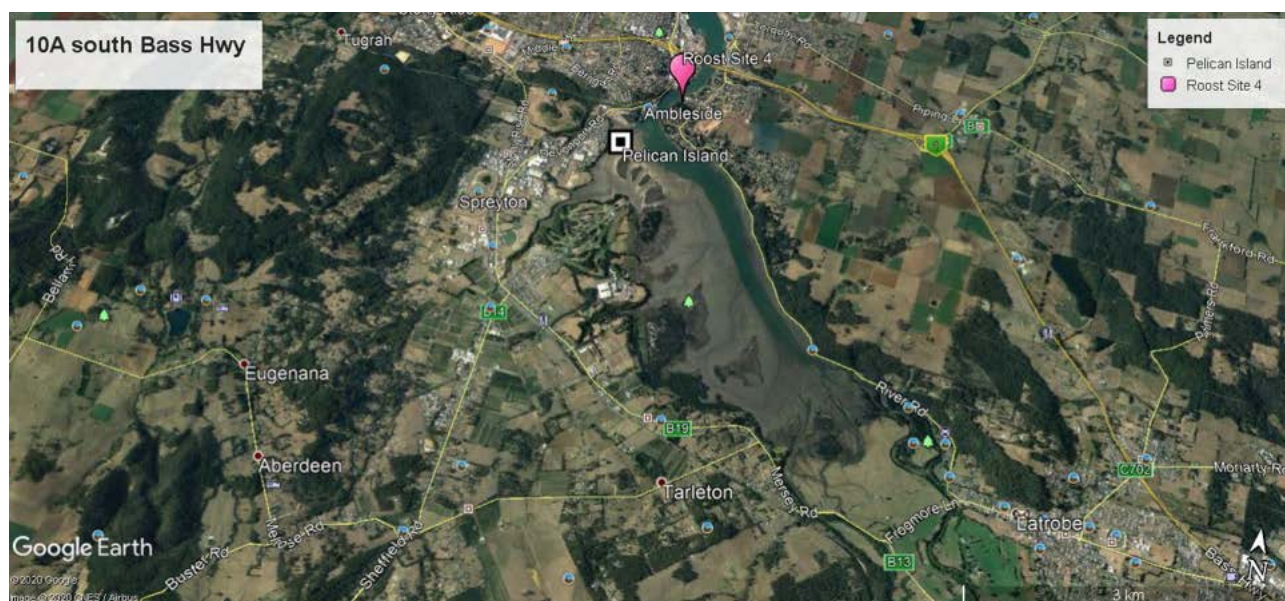
In 2014 counts in March, October and November (3 dates) the POC were at **Roost Site 2**.

In 2015 counts in February, March and November were all at **Roost Site 2**.

In 2016 on the March count at **Roost Site 2** we had a good count but after the severe June floods and further flooding in October few oystercatchers were seen at the roosts.

In 2017 there was a good count again in March at **Roost Site 2**, but fewer birds in April.

On 6/4/2018 a large group of POC were seen before high tide on a spit close to one of the marshy island about 1.5 km south of the Bass Hwy (E 446 500 N 5438 200). The group contained at least 70 birds who flew off towards Victoria Bridge. At high tide these birds could not be located, although there were 10+ on the wharf at **Roost Site 2B**. In November when no birds were seen at the known roost sites, birds were located upstream from the Victoria Bridge at TS Mersey Naval Cadets site (**Roost Site 4**).



In March 2019 birds were again roosting on the east side of the river in a vacant fenced area just south of **Roost Site 1**. It was decided to drive south along the river, cross the Mersey at Latrobe and return north along the west side of the river to see if there were any POC remaining on the banks – we found none.

In November 2019 we initially found no POC at any of the roost sites. We did the same round trip as we did in March and found 3 POC on the east side of the river and 1 on the west side. Eventually we found the roosting birds on the lawn of the Naval Cadets property at **Roost Site 4**.

This site was only just visible from a private driveway on the opposite side of the river. Another count two weeks later, following the same route, confirmed that this method would give us the best results for assessing the number of POC utilizing the Mersey Estuary.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher

The number of birds recorded on the biannual counts (and extra counts undertaken by John Coombes) varied considerably as our knowledge of where they were roosting increased. Depending on disturbance, the height of the tide and the splitting up of pre-roosting flocks, low numbers did not represent a depletion of birds using the Mersey Estuary for feeding, except maybe after the floods in June 2016.

Some interesting numbers:

1. There are records of 38 counts. A third of these counts recorded between **50 and 80 birds**.
2. On 6/4/16 the roosting birds were close to the path at Roost Site 2. A total count of 66 was comprised of **60 adults and 6 immatures**. A similar number at the same site was recorded in April 2017. A few immatures were noticed on some of the other counts but viewing conditions did not allow a proper count of immatures in the flocks.
3. In 2019. Following the route around the Mersey Estuary mentioned previously, the number of POC recorded was **54 on 20th March at Roost Site 1**.
The same route followed on **1st November recorded 54 at Roost Site 4** (4 birds were actually along the edge of the river).
The same route followed on **17th November recorded 54 at Roost Site 4** (included 2 juveniles).

The route which circumnavigates the intertidal mudflats and all known roost sites takes about 1.5 hours to check properly. However, it is believed that further regular counts undertaken in the same way as those in 2019 will give the best possible assessment of the population of POC in the Mersey Estuary.

Other birds recorded at roost sites included: one or two Sooty Oystercatchers, Little Pied Cormorant, Rock Pigeons (feral) at roost site 2, Masked Lapwing, Pacific and Silver Gulls.

SUMMARY

Sites

Our 45 Counts Areas (sites) span a stretch of coastline of more than 120 kms, much of which is built up and includes the population centres of Burnie and Devonport. There are several smaller towns, such as Wynyard, Somerset, Penguin and Ulverstone and smaller residential areas which include Port Sorell, Turners Beach, Sisters Beach etc. All of these centres have buildings almost on the shoreline. Connecting roads, and in some instances the railway, also run close to the beach. It is only to be expected, therefore, that the numbers of shorebirds are low. Some beaches have almost no, or very few species or individuals. Some of these sites would have been predicted because of being in densely populated areas or designated dog exercise beaches. However, some more remote areas such as Copper Cove and Brickmakers Bay seem to have beaches which provide poor feeding habitat.

The most important sites for shorebirds were at the far-east and far-west ends of the area surveyed. Both areas fall into BirdLife Australias 'Key Biodiversity Areas' which are recognised internationally.

In the east, these sites are located in Narawntapu National Park, which affords some protection. However, despite the best efforts of the rangers (for which they should be highly commended), they do not have the staff to patrol the beaches during the busy holiday period which coincides with the peak shorebird breeding season.

In the west the very important southern end of Tatlows beach needs more protection. Perhaps Cradle Coast NRM, Circular Head Council and NP&W personnel could come up with a viable plan. Fortunately, the access to the east side of East Inlet and Black River Beach are through private land and the owners, Kim and Leanne Marsh, are sympathetic towards shorebird protection. However, this does not stop access to a very sensitive area by boat, kayak etc.

Some of the beaches close to population centres do support breeding populations of some of our shorebirds. Many of these beaches appear to provide good feeding opportunities in the intertidal zone. Another factor is the strong attachment of shorebirds to traditional breeding territories, with birds continuing to attempt breeding on very disturbed beaches despite the odds. Sometimes they manage to produce young, but often they are unsuccessful.

Another factor affecting breeding success is the occurrence of high king tides, particularly in November, and beach erosion. Some beaches can have no available habitat between the high-tide Mark and the fringing thick coastal vegetation.

Target Species

Hooded Plover *Thinornis rubricollis*

Only regularly occurring in our survey area between Narawntapu NP and Pardoe Point in the east and Sisters Beach and Stanley in the west. Numbers on March/April counts are consistently higher than October/November Counts. All counts in March/April include immature birds showing

successful breeding in all years, with the number of immatures between 3 in Apr 2017 and 15 in April 2018. In 2016 there were very bad floods in the NW with much destruction of shorebird breeding habitat, which would account for a lack of breeding success reflected in the low number of immatures in the following April. The greatest numbers of immatures were recorded in 2011(14), 2012(13) and 2018(15).

The highest number of individuals was 80 recorded in April 2013 and the lowest number (33) in November 2016 after the previously mentioned floods.

Over the 10 years of this project this species appears to no longer breed at Sisters Beach, but turns up after the breeding season with immatures, suggesting it may have moved to a quieter area nearby to breed. At Moorland Beach/Pardoe Point, a pair has been present over the years and despite all the disturbance has attempted to breed recently with a pair and an immature seen in April 2017.

It is my personal belief that the low numbers recorded in October/November are due to the extremely secretive behaviour of this species when breeding, and its uncanny ability to disappear out of sight.

The total number of birds recorded on 10 x Apr counts = 601 giving an average of 60 per count. The last two April counts recorded 58 in 2017 and 59 in 2019. This gives us reason to hope that numbers are quite stable.

Red-Capped Plover *Charadrius ruficapillus*

It has been the opinion of counters that this species has been declining across the region we have been surveying over the last 10 years. Looking at all the 20 summaries I decided to remove the figures for two of the Sites which include known high tide roosts close to feeding areas (Count Areas 4 and 41). Sometimes these sites had no birds at all, but at other times up to 78, so by removing them from the following basic statistics I have eliminated one source of bias. The total numbers I have used for each site includes immatures but not chicks. I have divided the summaries into 3 groups:- (1) the first 6 counts Mar/Apr 2010 to Oct 2012; (2) the next 7 counts prior to the 2016 June floods ie. Mar/Apr 2013 to Mar/Apr 2016; and (3) Oct/Nov 2016 to Oct/Nov 2019.

	Total No.of individuals	Average per count
Group 1	853	142
Group 2	965	138
Group 3	629	89

Although not subjected to rigorous statistical analysis it is easy to see that the decline is not just an impression but very real.

Some recent breeding successes on our busy beaches is testimony to the persistence and ability of Red-capped Plovers. They continue to attempt breeding in traditional territories on dog beaches when the likelihood of success is minimal. They can be very furtive, perform elaborate distraction

displays and can hide behind clumps of seaweed and logs etc. Their small size is also an advantage as many people have no idea that they exist until shown by counters or friends.

On beaches where these birds still breed it would be preferable for dogs to be kept on a leash from September to April and for walkers to keep to the wet sand whenever possible during these months.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher *Haematopus longirostris*

Our survey area includes an important feeding and roosting area for this species. The Rubicon Estuary was designated a **Key Biodiversity Area** by BirdLife Australia because it regularly has more than 1% (110) of the world population of this species. In fact regular counts over the last several years have found around 400 birds using this estuary during the winter. However, these numbers can only be maintained if they are able to breed successfully. This species breeds along the length of our survey area wherever the habitat is suitable.

Australian Pied Oystercatchers are subject to the same disturbance as the Red-capped Plover above. There are some differences however, with regard to how they cope with these pressures. They are a large and obvious species that attract attention, but are more adaptable when selecting a nest site. They are faithful to their traditional territories but will move to higher elevations if their sites have been eroded away. One counter watched a pair nest in a commercial vegetable garden on hard rough mud and they have also been known to breed in paddocks, building sites and sand quarries within our region. Like the two previous species they are adept at distracting predators. They are however, having difficulty to breed successfully, with so much disturbance.

To give some idea of how this species is faring on our beaches I have added the number of birds counted on the first 10 surveys and compared them with those on the last 10 surveys. I have not removed the count numbers for any of the sites, although numbers near high-tide roosts will cause some bias. Count Areas 4, 5, 10A and 41 all had some counts with higher numbers due to proximity to roosts.

Total number of individuals recorded on the first 10 counts (174 to 287) was 3352 average 335
on the last 10 counts (151 to 257) was 3297 average 328

This at least will give a baseline to compare future surveys.

Sooty Oystercatcher *Haematopus fuliginosus*

According to HANZAB most Sooty Oystercatchers in Tasmania breed on offshore islands close to rocky shores, moving to wintering sites between March and September. Our survey counts show that this is likely to be the case for much of the population in our region. The ten Oct/Nov counts ranged between 70 and 104 birds, with the ten Mar/Apr counts ranging between 110 and 156. Because Sooty Oystercatchers prefer to breed on offshore islets, rocky spits and less accessible rocky sections of our coastline they do not suffer as much disturbance as the previous three species.

The total number of individuals recorded on the first ten counts between Mar 2010 and Oct/Nov 2014 amounted to 1057 (with an average of 106 per count). Individuals recorded on the last ten

counts between Mar/Apr 2015 and Oct/Nov 2019 was 1185 (with an average of 118). The lowest count was of 70 in Oct/Nov 2014 and the highest count was 156 in Mar/Apr 2019. It is reasonable to assume that their numbers are stable.

Masked Lapwing *Vanellus miles*

The reason that this species was recorded has been mentioned under 'Aims'. It is a very common species that occurs on almost all of our beaches, but is primarily a bird of paddocks, parks, marshes and around human habitation, seldom breeding close to the shoreline. Prior to European settlement it was not common, but as the land was cleared and pasture flourished so did the Masked Lapwing. It continues to expand its range, only appearing on Lord Howe Island in the 1980's. It has been extensively studied but as it is so common, most birdwatchers do not bother to count it. I thought that our counts over ten years may be of interest to researchers in the future.

Birds do not usually breed before July (although there are records from April onwards) so it would be expected that numbers in Mar/Apr would be higher than in Oct/Nov when there are many pairs still with chicks in their breeding territories.

Ten counts from Mar/Apr surveys ranged from 842 to 1422 with a total of 11,415 individuals. Ten counts from Oct/Nov surveys ranged from 230 to 893 with a total of 4,782 individuals.

It is worth noting that the lowest count was in Oct/Nov 2016 after the severe flooding in June and another lesser flood event in August. The beaches at this time were covered in debris brought down from inland by the many rivers in our region.

The total number of individuals recorded on the first ten counts was 8,316.

The total number of individuals recorded on the last ten counts was 7,881.

This would suggest that the numbers for this species are also stable.

Fairy Tern *Sternula nereis* and Little Tern *Sternula albifrons*

Both species were recorded on a few surveys in the west of the survey area between Peggs Beach and the southern end of Tatlow's Beach. The Fairy Tern is classified as Vulnerable and the Little Tern as Endangered by the EBPC Act in Tasmania. They are known to breed sporadically in the area at a few sites east and west of Stanley. However, they are easily disturbed and their nest sites are vulnerable to wash outs from high tides and inclement weather.

It is extremely important that they receive as much protection as possible.

Forest Raven and Predation

We started asking counters to record Forest Ravens on the survey form at the end of 2014. There were reports by the Beach Nesting Birds group in Victoria that they were finding ravens to be a serious predator. At this time our Tasmanian Devils were suffering from the Facial Tumour disease and in decline, particularly in the eastern part of our survey area. There was a possibility that Forest Raven numbers would increase significantly with an abundance of food from road kill normally disposed of by Tasmanian Devils.

Throughout the subsequent 11 surveys we found no evidence that Forest Ravens were a significant predator. Five out of the eleven surveys recorded between only 1 and 7 birds at any single site. Count totals were higher in Mar/Apr with 59 to 84 birds along the area surveyed and 10 to 47 from Oct/Nov Counts. There was one report of 100 Forest Ravens behind the beach at Northdown (Count Area 7). Upon investigation the lead volunteer found many dead wallaby carcasses from a recent cull. The only other numbers above 7 were recorded in Mar/Apr from the following sites; C Area 1 (18), C Area 8 (14, 14 and 39), C Area 14 (37), C Area 35(16). Until after the Easter school holidays, there are often campers along many of our beaches with the subsequent increase in rubbish. Other attractions for ravens maybe the presence of horses and cows, washed up seals and waste left by fishermen etc.

The only direct predation reported on our shorebirds by counters during this 10 year period was of chicks being taken by Silver Gulls. Richard and Erica Ashby witnessed a Silver Gull snatch a small Hooded Plover chick at Sisters Beach. "The H Plover chick (downy runner stage) Silver Gull was seen by us from our sand dune and was precipitated by a couple of older birders trying to get a closer look at the parents and chick. Somehow the chick got separated from its parents and a very opportunistic Silver Gull swooped down and grabbed the chick. The observers were quite distressed at having been the cause of this and chased after the gull for a brief while but of course pointlessly, it's a cruel world out there!" On another occasion a pair of Red-capped Plovers had two tiny chicks on the beach at East Devonport. A Silver Gull was seen to swoop down and take one of the chicks. Some of our counters are worried about the recent increase in numbers of Silver Gulls on many of our beaches. They have been recorded nesting in areas not previously used for many years (if ever) and taking over areas previously used by Crested Terns (for example Penguin Island in the Rubicon Estuary).

There are also many feral cats hiding in the coastal bush, and although not seen, it is likely that they are a significant predator of shorebird chicks along most of our coastline.

CONCLUSION

I believe that the aims of this project as stated at the beginning of this report have been fulfilled. We have definitely 'filled the gap' in the knowledge of what shorebirds remain on our beaches, and in the process we have all learned much about their lives and the perils they face.

With the help of Cradle Coast NRM we have done everything possible to promote awareness of these birds, whose only home is our local beaches and who were certainly resident well before we took up residence.

As with all volunteering there are hidden rewards for the participants, but this should not take away from the recognition of the time and perseverance that they have given to this project. The large number of participants, and their efforts over the last decade, show that our community does care about the natural fauna that have a right to share our beaches.

Hazel Britton,
Project Co-ordinator.
31st May 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was a collaboration between Cradle Coast NRM (part of the Cradle Coast Authority), myself and Community Volunteers. Dionna Newton from Cradle Coast NRM was an enthusiastic and very supportive Facilitator. All members of the Cradle Coast NRM were very helpful and completely supported this project. In particular Anna Wind has been involved throughout the 10 year duration and Mark Wisniewski helped with mapping.

All the lead volunteers put in extra time and effort and proof read the reports on 'their' count areas. In particular I would like to mention Julie Serafin for her excellent work with education and Richard Ashby and John Bowden for doing extra surveys when someone was unavailable. I would also like to thank Alison Dugand for proof reading a draft of this report.



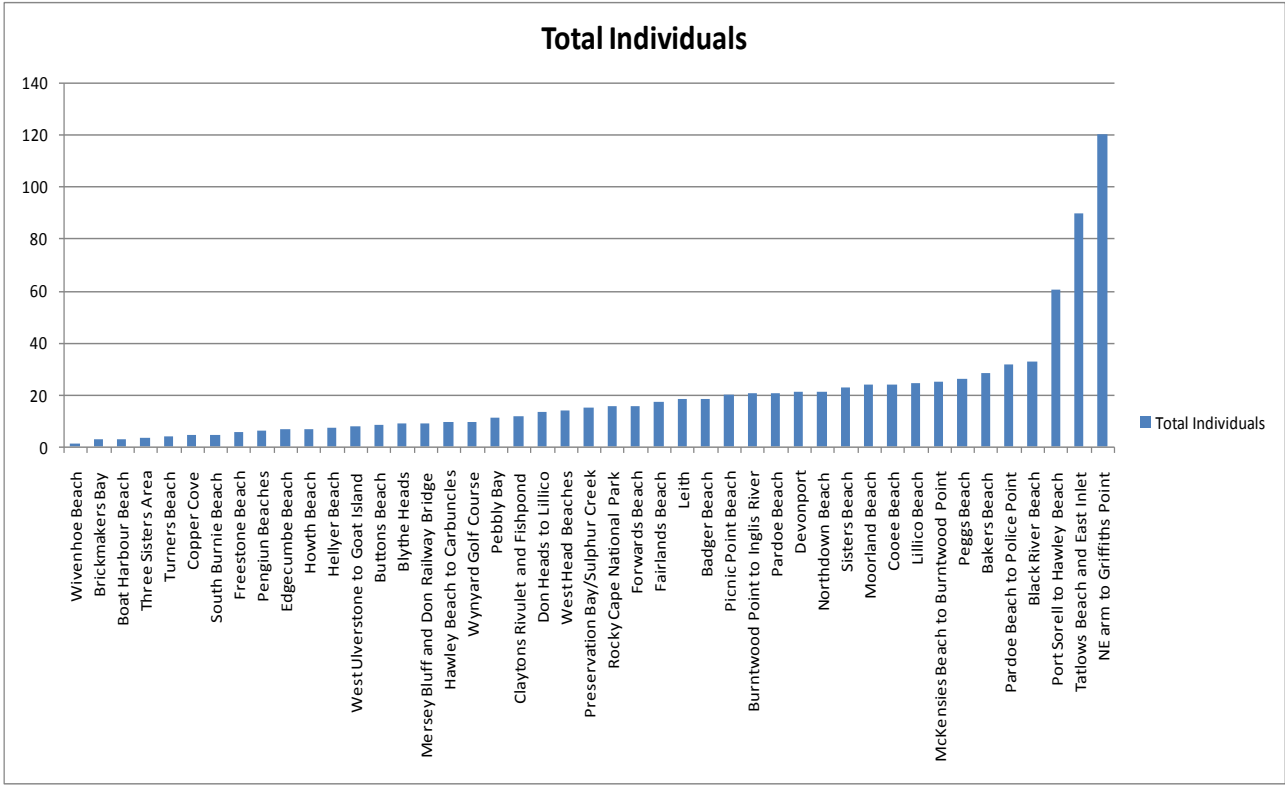
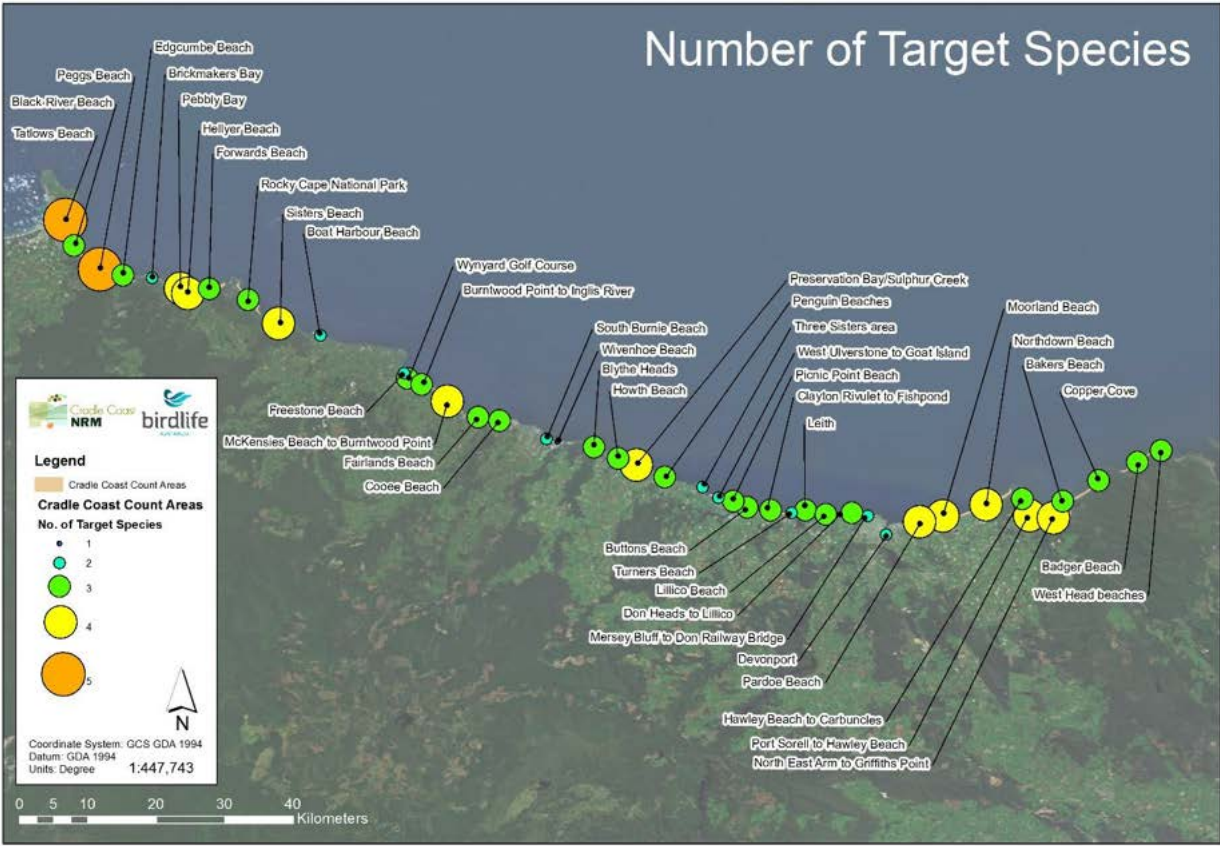
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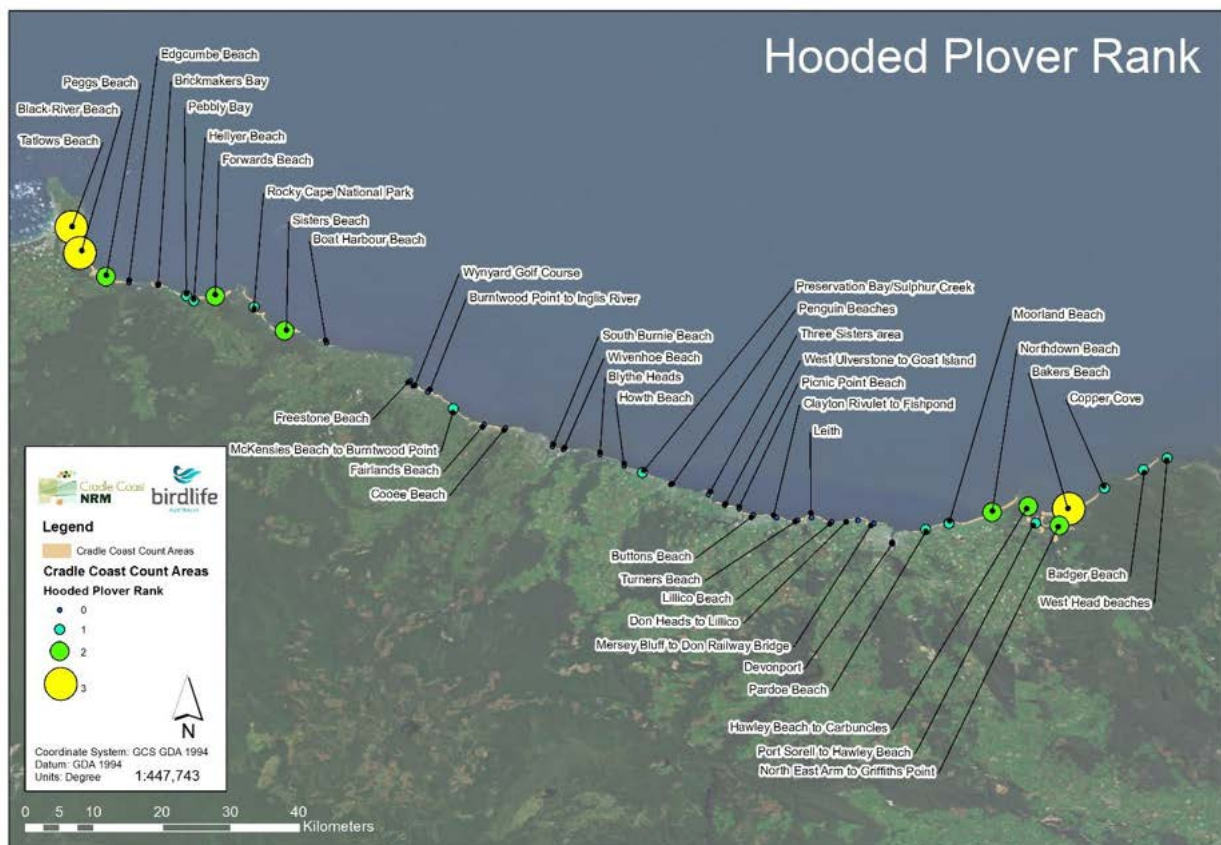
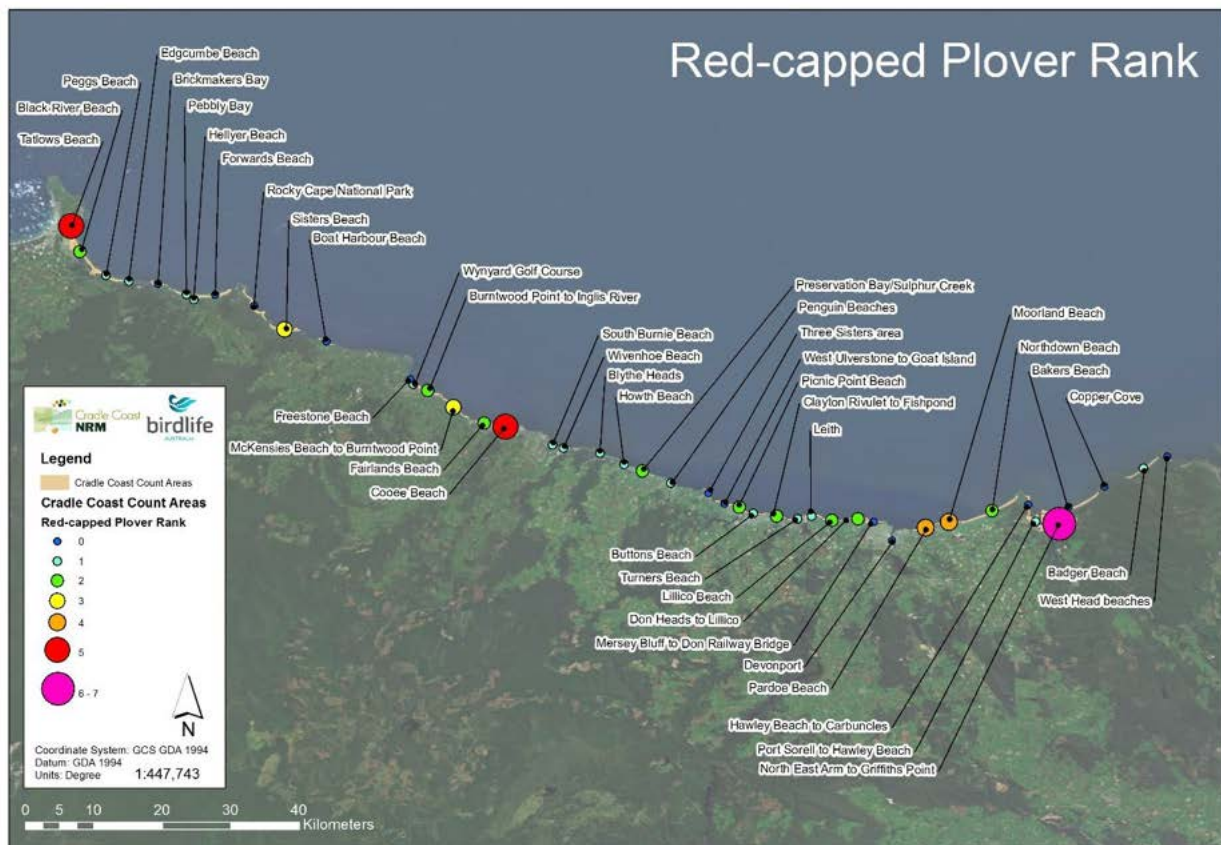
This project is supported by the Cradle Coast Authority, through funding from Australian Government grant programs.

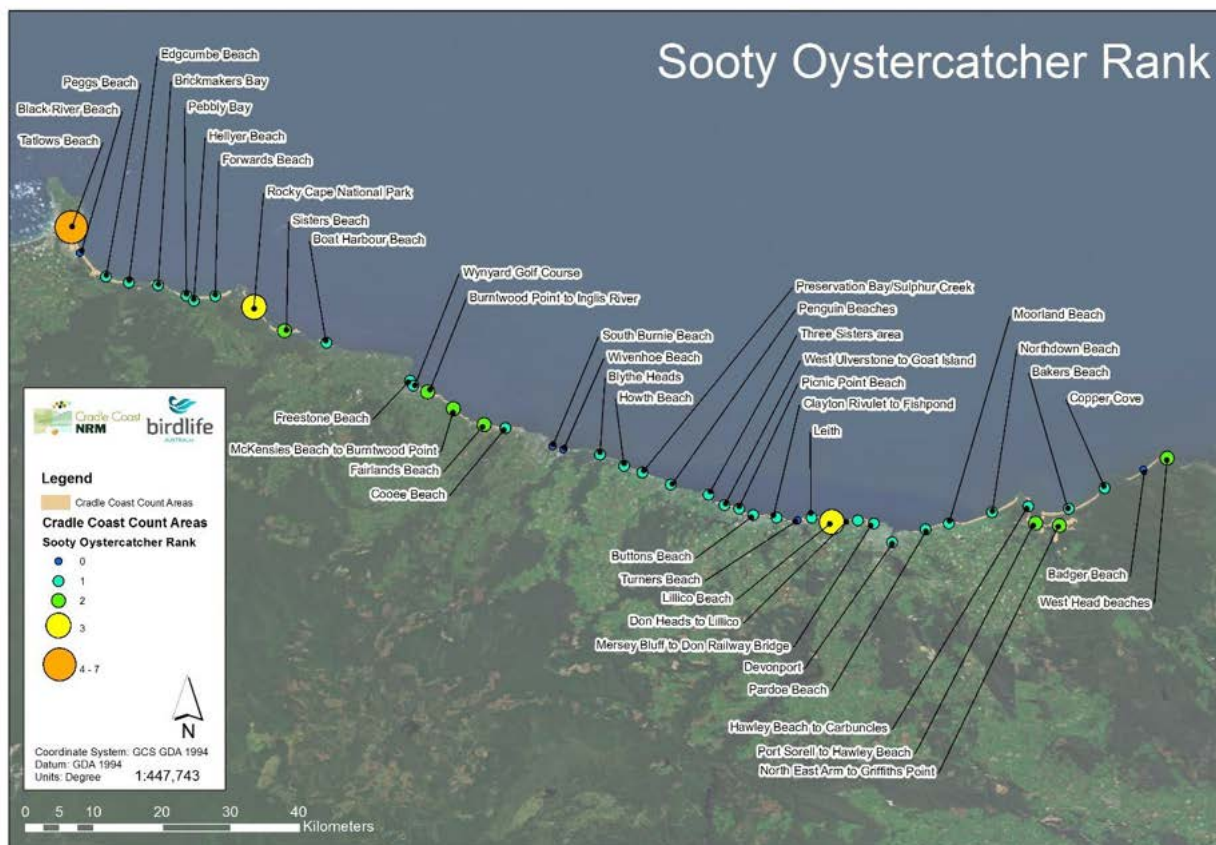
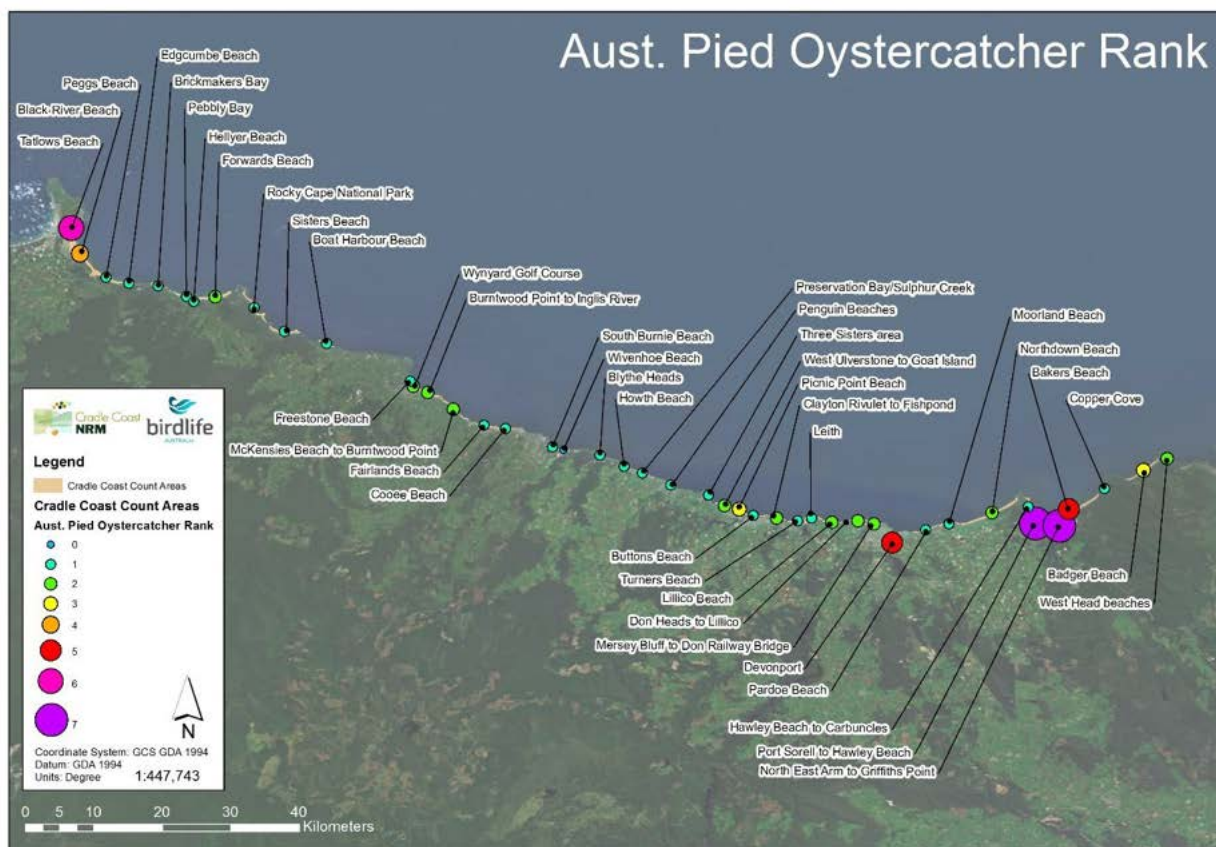
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APPENDIX 1







APPENDIX 2

Resident Shorebird Monitoring Program Stanley to Narawntapu NP 2010 to 2019 - Site Locations							
Count Area							
1A	West Head Beaches	NW end	41°4'12.43" S, 146°43'10.28" E	SE end	41°4'37.76" S, 146°43'49.21"E		
1	Badger Beach	East end	41 04'28.22"S, 146 42'46.93"E	West end	41 06'00.43"S, 146 40'23.20"E		
2	Copper Cove	East end	41 06'36.33"S, 146 38'51.78"E	West end	41 06'50.82"S, 146 38' 31.47"E		
3	Bakers Beach	East end	41 07'12.87"S, 146 38'05.67"E	West end	41 08'50.68"S, 146 33'55.70"E		
4	NE Arm to Griffiths Point	North end	41 08'49.43"S, 146 33'49.45"E	SE end	41 08'57.63"S, 146 36'01.45"E		
5	Port Sorell to Hawley Bch.	North end	41 09'31.73"S, 146 32'36.02"E	S end	41 10'00.31"S, 146 33'37.92"E		
6	Hawley Bch to Carbuncles	North end	41 07'34.04"S, 146 32'42.60"E	S end	41 09'01.61"S, 146 32'41.21"S		
7	Northdown Beach	East end	41 07'33.16"S, 146 32'25.65"E	West end	41 09'38.09"S, 146 27'25.82"E		
8	Moorland Beach	East end	41 09'38.53"S, 146 27'21.82"E	West end	41 09'44.88"S, 146 25'29.38"E		
9	Pardoe Beach	East end	41 09'44.23"S, 146 25'27.88"E	West end	41 10'22.18"S, 146 23'28.27"E		
10	Pardoe Bch to Police Point	East end	41 10'22.16"S, 146 23'27.22"E	West end	41 10'27.88"S, 146 21'59.22"E		
11	Mersey Bluff to Don Railway Br.	East end	41 09'38.68"S, 146 21'08.02"E	West end	41 09'49.97"S, 146 19'54.04"E		
12	Don Heads to Lillico	East end	41 09'35.34"S, 146 19'56.98"E	West end	41 09'35.52"S, 146 18'09.48"E		
13	Lillico Beach	East end	41 09'35.52"S, 146 18'08.56"E	West end	41 09'30.19"S, 146 16'28.96"E		
14	Leith	East end	41 09'28.34"S, 146 16'24.42"E	West end	41 09'43.32"S, 146 15'06.67"E		
15	Turners Beach	East end	41 09'31.96"S, 146 15'01.07"E	West end	41 09'30.68"S, 146 13'28.07"E		
16	Clayton Rivulet to Fishpond	East end	41 09'28.65"S, 146 13'25.28"E	West end	41 09'08.37"S, 146 12'04.36"E		
17	Buttons Beach	East end	41 09'05.88"S, 146 12'03.66"E	West end	41 09'09.84"S, 146 10'09.12"E		
18	Picnic Point Beach	East end	41 08'50.80"S, 146 09'58.49"E	West end	41 08'28.89"S, 146 09'36.03"E		
19	W.Ulverstone to Goat Island	East end	41 08'29.14"S, 146 09'35.91"E	West end	41 08'12.48"S, 146 08'02.70"E		
20	Three Sisters	SE end	41 08'11.72"S, 146 08'01.36"E	NW end	41 07'11.49"S, 146 07'11.76"E		
21	Penguin Beaches	East end	41 06'54.57"S, 146 04'53.31"E	West end	41 06'24.98"S, 146 04'01.89"E		
22	Preservation Bay to Sulphur Ck.	East end	41 06'12.06"S, 146 03'47.35"E	West end	41 05'29.05"S, 146 01'12.72"E		
22A	Howth Beach	East end	41 05'21.09"S, 146 00'53.43"E	West end	41 05'06.56"S, 146 00'30.88"E		
23	Blythe Heads	East end	41 04'32.63"S, 145 59'04.55"E	West end	41 04'16.92"S, 145 58'32.46"E		
24	Wivenhoe Beach	East end	41 04'00.97"S, 145 56'22.87"E	West end	41 03'57.05"S, 145 55'27.68"E		
25	South Burnie Beach	East end	41 03'58.78"S, 145 55'26.45"E	West end	41 03'36.29"S, 145 54'48.01"E		
26	Coee Beach	East end	41 02'20.98"S, 145 52'23'61"E	West end	41 02'21.30"S, 145 50'26.00"E		
27	Somerset to Doctors Rocks	East end	41 02'21'23"S, 145 50'21.31"E	West end	41 00'52.87"S, 145 47'06.23"E		
28	Doctors Rocks to Burntwood Pt.	SE end	41 00'42.27"S, 145 47'01.50"E	NW end	40 59'49.04"S, 145 46'06.49"E		
29	Burntwood Pt. to Inglis River	East end	40 59'47.81"S, 145 46'02.71"E	West end	40 59'14.55"S, 145 44'19.92"E		
30	Wynyard Golf Course	SW end	40 59'08.47"S, 145 43'54.73"E	NE end	40 58'54.13"S, 145 43'59.04"E		
31	Freestone Beach	South end	40 58'50.54"S, 145 43'56.03"E	North end	40 58'09.73"S, 145 43'30.54"E		
32	Boat Harbour Beach	East end	40 55'53.67"S, 145 37'15.46"E	West end	40 55'34.66"S, 145 36'38.34"E		
33	Sisters Beach	East end	40 54'50.17"S, 145 34'59.74"E	West end	40 54'20.06"S, 145 32'43.31"E		
34	Rocky cape National Park	SE end	40 54'11.13"S, 145 32'52.80"E	NW end	40 51'32.03"S, 145 29'58.55"E		
35	Picnic Point-Forwards Beach	East end	40 51'53.31"S, 145 29'11.73"E	West end	40 52'32.75"S, 145 26'54.65"E		
36A	Hellyer Beach	East end	40 52'16.12"S, 145 26'49.48"E	West end	40 51'47.82"S, 145 25'09.85"E		
36B	Pebbly Beach	South end	40 52'38.07"S, 145 26'44.35"E	North end	40 52'17.36"S, 145 26'44.25"E		
37	Edgcumbe Bch -Crayfish Creek	East end	40 51'41.67"S, 145 24'55.22"E	West end	40 51'02.01"S, 145 23'21.73"E		
38	Brickmakers Bay-Little Peggs Bch	East end	40 51'01.80"S, 145 22'04.58"E	West end	40 51'01.72"S, 145 21'08.43"E		
39	Peggs Beach	East end	40 51'02.62"S, 145 21'06.60"E	West end	40 50'28.57"S, 145 18'51.18"E		
40	Black River Beach	SE end	40 50'29.36"S, 145 18'29.48"E	NW end	40 47'56.41"S, 145 17'07.42"E		
41	Tatlows Beach	South end	40 47'52.51"S, 145 16'20.13"E	North end	40 45'50.21"S, 145 17'43.62"E		