



# FOUR WHEEL DRIVE SOUTH AUSTRALIA NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY UNIT

## Access Guide and Newsletter



South Australian Association of Four Wheel Drive Clubs Incorporated  
ABN 24 036 898 953 trading as Four Wheel Drive South Australia

2006

Summer Edition

### Coorong and Lower Lakes Migrations

Along with the hundreds of 4 Wheel Drives which migrate to the south-east over the spring to autumn period there is another very impressive migration - that of migratory waders (or Shorebirds). From September to March the opportunity exists to view these remarkable birds of many species which have flown from as far away as Siberia and Alaska.

They can be seen feeding around the edges of coastal or inland wetlands, including beaches, estuaries and mudflats. While the Coorong is a major site, few travellers would take much notice of the series of lakes and beach sites between Robe and Pt. MacDonnell - the Lower Lakes - where birdlife is a large part of the rich fabric of natural life in this area.

#### Types of Waders:

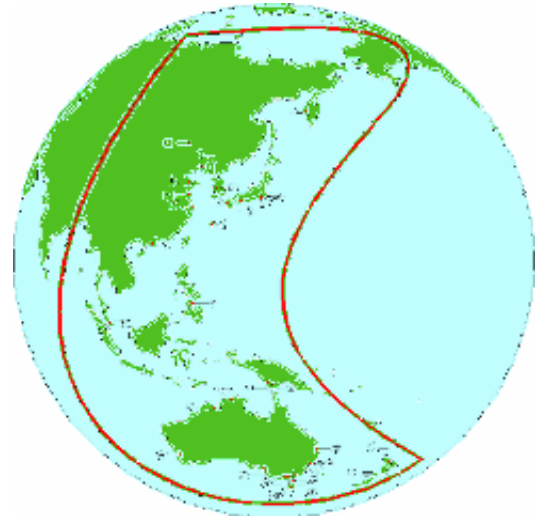
- **Resident Waders:** 18 species that breed in Australia, nesting on beaches (eg. Beach Stone Curlew and Pied Oystercatcher), rocky coasts (eg. Sooty Oystercatcher), fresh water wetlands (eg. Painted Snipe) or hypersaline inland lakes (eg. Banded Stilt) according to species.
- **Local Migrant:** One species, the Double Banded Plover, breeds in New Zealand and migrates to Australia from February to September.
- **Migratory Waders:** More than 35 arctic species undertake a complete migration each year to spend their non-breeding season in Australia or New Zealand waiting out the northern winter, then returning to their breeding grounds for the spring.



Bar-tailed Godwit:  
Photographer: Marion Wilson

### East Asian-Australasian Flyway

Migratory waders use the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. This comprises Siberia and Alaska southwards through east and south-east Asia to Australia and New Zealand. Overall it encompasses 22 countries and is used by 55 migratory species and by over 5 million birds.



Map courtesy [www.environment.sa.gov.au](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au)

### The East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network

This links sites of international importance for migratory waders, and provides a cooperative framework to help conserve all stages of a migration path across international boundaries - waders use three or four wetlands along the way as stopover points for feeding. The Coorong is South Australia's sole inclusion in the Shorebird Site Network. A second nomination, Lake George (near Beachport), is under review.

### Wetland and Waders Festival: (& the Wattle Rangers 4WD Club)

The Wetland and Waders Festival is held each year from September to November. On Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 2006 there was a waders display and lecture at the Beachport Visitor Information Centre. The Wattle Rangers 4WD Club co-operated in ferrying people to view the waders around Lake George and along Rivoli Bay.

**Disclaimer:** This publication was prepared by Four Wheel Drive South Australia. Every endeavour has been made to ensure the accuracy in compiling this publication however inaccuracies may still occur which could result in the user being misinformed. While regretting such occurrences Four Wheel Drive South Australia cannot accept responsibility for any consequences whatsoever which may result therefrom.

## The Migratory Lifestyle

Migratory waders devote three to four months a year to migration, often returning to the same non-breeding area during their twenty-year lifespan.

**Breeding:** Waders moult into breeding plumage prior to arrival at the arctic breeding areas - this offers camouflage and warmth in the subzero temperatures on the tundra. By time the chicks hatch, the arctic has bloomed with plenty of food for the birds. Though the chicks are capable of walking and feeding themselves within minutes of hatching, they are still reliant on their parents for frequent brooding (or raising of body temperature).

**Parental Migration:** When the chicks can fly and survive without brooding (juvenile stage), the adults abandon them and set off on southwards migration. The urgency is that unless they migrate to their non-breeding areas and complete their annual flight feather moult on time, they will not be able to attempt the return to the breeding grounds.

**Navigation:** Migratory waders use a range of navigational clues - the stars, the sun and the Earth's magnetic field. Research has shown that adult birds of some species can make the ~11000km southwards journey in 5-6 days!

**Juvenile Migration South:** The juveniles remain to fatten up for about two months, and before the arctic freezes over, they migrate south. Their arrival at the non-breeding areas is further delayed due to their lack of experience in finding food on the staging areas along the way.

**Juvenile Migration North:** The juveniles take a long time to mature and many remain in the non-breeding areas during their first year learning to feed in coastal habitats. After two to four years, they join the adults migrating north.

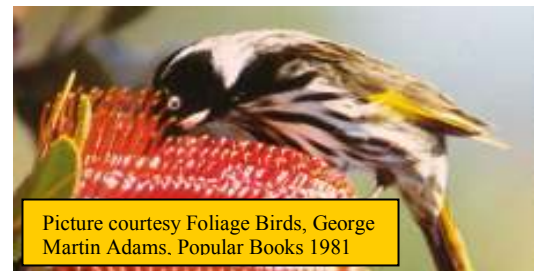
**Wader Feeding:** There is more to migration than extraordinarily long direct flights. Each flight is preceded by a long period of preparatory feeding (many species doubling their weight), as birds accumulate the fuel they will need for a non-stop flight of several days between staging areas. It is at these times they are susceptible to disturbance by humans.

### A Personal Close-Up (Ed.)

We are often reminded of threatened bird species and of the tenuous nature of their life, and how our activities might affect them out in the bush or amongst the sandhills. For me a fleeting view through binoculars at 50 metres is as close as I generally get, so it is hard to get a proper appreciation.

It was refreshing to have seen nature in action close up in my suburban garden. It began when some normally shy, hyperactive, New Holland Honeyeaters would perch as close as 30cm away or flit around my legs.

Right under my nose - a little nest packed with 3 grey balls of fluff with open yellow beaks calling for food. Their presence lifted the spirits of the entire household. Mum and Dad honeyeaters were involved in the feeding and it seemed others were concerned with security (not that they were going to do anything about me but stare in disapproval).



Picture courtesy Foliage Birds, George Martin Adams, Popular Books 1981

I have seldom seen nests with nestlings in residence, so belatedly, some days later, I returned armed with a camera only to find an empty nest. Perhaps a cat had got to them. That would be a sad end after all the parental effort.

The answer was out into the yard where there was a repeat performance by the honeyeaters. Two fledgelings darted around the yard at blinding speed (bumping into various objects) closely watched by their security entourage - and one or two House Sparrows and larger birds. I never saw the third fledgeling, but I can only hope that it survived too

## Wader Watching

- Do not advertise the existence of nests - too many curious onlookers can kill birds with kindness (or even attract vandals who may destroy nests).
- Disturbance of birds is a problem - observe from a distance and don't interfere with nests (use binoculars to get a close up view - approach by car to get closer rather than on foot - this doesn't disturb the birds).
- Pick your viewing times: Waders feed at low tides on mud flats - when the tide is high the waders roost on beaches and spits, often choosing to flock together to improve their safety.
- Be careful in the periods before return migration when birds are building up strength to undertake the long flights.
- Remember that not all wader species will be at all sites, and the abundance of birds will also vary.

## Protecting A Vulnerable Resident Wader Species - Hooded Plover (*Thinornis rubricollis*).

The Hooded Plover is listed as a vulnerable bird species under the National Parks and Wildlife Act, 1972. One protective activity in the Coorong National Park during breeding from 24 October to 24 December each year is the closure of the ocean beach track north of Tea Tree Crossing to the Murray Mouth to vehicles.

The Hooded Plover is a territorial beach resident that forages in the tidal environment and uses the fore-dunes and sandy beach flats to roost and nest. Typical of Resident Waders, they breed between September and March, with many nesting in the open on beaches and along bays, laying their eggs in simple scrapes on the sand or shell grit.

Threats are from introduced predators such as foxes, rats, dogs and cats, and increased numbers of native predators such as gulls and ravens. In addition, inadvertent crushing of nests and chicks and disturbing of the parent birds occurs by human activity on horses, walking dogs, beachcombing, stock and vehicles.



Hooded Plover  
Photographer: Sharon Gillam 2006



Hooded Plover Nest  
Photographer: David Armstrong 2005

## More Aerial Surveillance Helps Protect Park - from DEH News Release 7<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006

In a second blitz for 2006, assisted by a fixed wing aircraft, the DEH and SA Police were kept busy over the Nov.5-6 weekend tracking down reckless drivers in Canunda National Park - a coastal reserve in the state's South East. The park is a hot spot for hoon drivers over holiday weekends. Nine motor bike riders and 3 4WD drivers were given on the spot fines by DEH Rangers and SA Police.

The SA Department for Environment and Heritage is considering fencing off parts of Canunda National Park near Millicent to stop drivers going off paths into sand dunes. Spokesman Shane Childs says "if you go out and see the damage that is being done you would realise it cannot continue".

## Chick killed in 'malicious act'

- The Advertiser Saturday December 23 2006

A SOUTHERN suburbs community is angered over the news a rare hooded plover chick may have been intentionally killed at Aldinga Beach this week.

The chick hatched at the weekend after bird enthusiasts earlier fenced off the nest in a vehicle free zone 50m north of Aldinga Bay Surf Lifesaving Club.

Aldinga Bay Coast Care spokeswoman Bridget Gardiner said she discovered on Tuesday morning the fencing had been torn down and the bird trodden on in 'a malicious act of environmental vandalism'. There are only about 540 hooded plovers in SA.

### Wader/Shorebird Acknowledgement

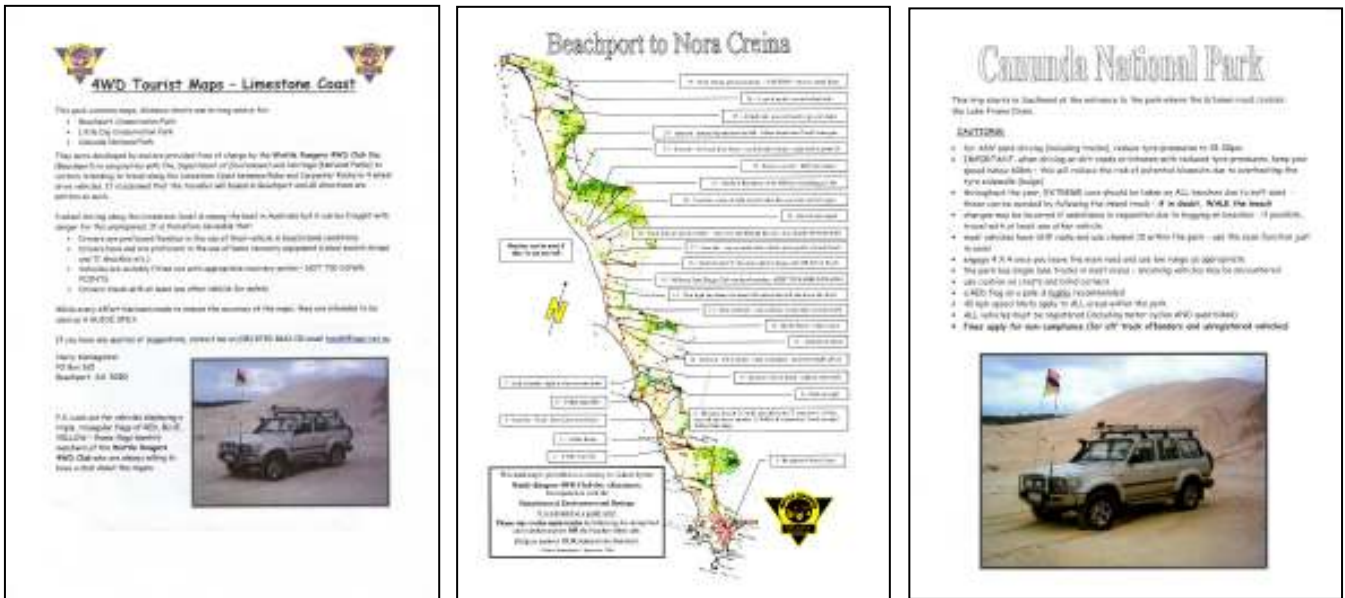
- Shorebird Conservation In Australia - supplement to Birds Australia, Wingspan magazine vol.12, no.4, December 2002
- Bird Migration Map - National Geographic Magazine, April 2004
- Friends of Shorebirds South East - Sec. Maureen Christie, Carpenter Rocks, 5291 Email: twinpeppers@icisp.net.au
- Beachport Bulletin Issue 13 Volume 2 Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2006 - Marcia Lorenz
- Wattle Rangers 4WD Club - Harry & Hilde Kannegieter
- Wetlands - Migratory Waterbirds and their Habitats - Dept for Environment and Heritage SA
  - [www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/shorebirds.html](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/shorebirds.html)
  - [www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/pdfs/wetlands/flyway\\_sites.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/pdfs/wetlands/flyway_sites.pdf)
- Waders of the Coorong and Lower Lakes - pamphlet by Dept for Environment and Heritage SA
- Photographs and consultation - Paul Wainwright Scientific Officer, Wetlands, Dept for Environment and Heritage, SA
- The Tattler Edition 12 - Dept for Environment and Heritage, SA
- Chick killed in 'malicious act' - The Advertiser Saturday December 23 2006

## Invaluable Guides To Driving The Southern Beaches and Parks

Enthusiastically supplied free from Information Centres at Mt.Gambier, Millicent, Beachport, and Robe are the 4WD Tourist Maps - Limestone Coast covering Beachport - Nora Creina; Little Dip Conservation Park (Nora Creina - Robe); Canunda National Park (Southend - Carpenter Rocks).

It is a credit to the Wattle Rangers 4WD Club Inc. (Beachport) developing these maps in conjunction with the Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH). Intended as a guide, they fill a much needed gap in trip information for the many visitors to the area.

Advisory Notes and Distance Charts accompany the maps which relate to numbered orange/red poles found on the authorised tracks - any deviation from these tracks, or the use of unregistered vehicles, will invite fines by DEH or the police.



## Ngarkat Conservation Park

Ngarkat Border Track Interclub Working Bee : 28-29<sup>th</sup> April 2007

**Meeting Point:** Saturday 9:00-9:30am at Pine Hut Soak Camp Site (just inside the park entrance and is suitable for camper trailers and has a toilet - you can set up camp on Friday evening). Bring strong gloves, handsaw, secateurs, shovel, rake, etc. (and a trailer would be useful)

**Directions:** 5kms west of Pinnaroo on Mallee Highway, right turn south for approximately 17 km along Rosy Pine Lane (Ngarkat sign at this point, RAA map 'Upper South East ref:J2).

**Tasks:** These include delineation of new and existing campsites, closing/fencing off minor detours on the Border Track, implementing changes to Hensley's Trig (including fencing off diversions and revegetation), trialling the "chain attachment" to reduce track corrugations. Other options open include searching for the old well site behind Dogger's Hut, clean up of the old Piggery site, collecting seed and re-opening certain sections of the original Border Track.

**Registration:** Please let organisers know in advance - (1) When you plan to arrive (2) The number of people and vehicles in your party (3) Will you be bringing a trailer?

**Ngarkat Tracks Maintenance Committee** - (a sub-committee of the NRAU of Four Wheel Drive SA.)  
 Kevin (08) 8264 1656 [keltiekj@senet.com.au](mailto:keltiekj@senet.com.au) : Sue (08) 8269 2883 [suzu@internode.on.net](mailto:suzu@internode.on.net) : Bob (08) 8278 5979 [bolto\\_r@picknowl.com.au](mailto:bolto_r@picknowl.com.au)



Border Track Re-opening : 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007

According to the recorded message from the DEH Mallee District Office, it is expected that the Ngarkat Border Track one way section is due to re-open on 1<sup>st</sup> April. For more information check on (08) 8576 3690



## Nissan Patrol Club Survey

A big "thank you" from the NRAU goes to a team from the Nissan Patrol Club for the Stage 2 Surveys of the Border Track in the Ngarkat Conservation Park in August 2006.

The excellent result of the Six-Section Survey was presented to the Ngarkat Conservation Park Advisory Committee (NCPAC) meeting at Murray Bridge on 11/12/3006. It will enable progress to the next stage of producing plans and tasks

*It is the thoroughness and application by members of such a club that enables FWDSA to achieve some of its important objectives.*



### Clean Up Australia 2007

The Clean Up Australia weekend is 3-4<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Can clubs please finalise their planning and register with **John Caldecott** at [johncald@chariot.net.au](mailto:johncald@chariot.net.au) or 83966817.

### New Clean Up Australia Co-ordinator Wanted

A person or persons or a club is wanted to take over the FWDSA annual Clean Up Australia event as a documented going concern with assistance in the transition. For more information, contact **John Caldecott** at [johncald@chariot.net.au](mailto:johncald@chariot.net.au) or 83966817.

## Stay Off The Railway Corridor

The Australian Rail Track Corporation Ltd has stated that no access is allowed onto ARTC land anywhere east of Haig in WA and west of Malbooma in SA, without a signed licence. The question arose due to road access shown on two maps

1. The RAA Outback Map shows two accesses for the length of this route. ARTC comment is that in both cases they are public roads that run parallel to the railway.
  - (a) Access to a section of 4WD track from Ooldea to Watson Railway Stations which is part of the road to Maralinga.
  - (b) Access to a section of 4WD track from Lyons to Kingoonya Railway Stations.
2. A map entitled "The Nullarbor Adelaide-Perth Australia's Great Road Journey - The Nullarbor" (published by Tourism Eyre Peninsula PO Box 1145, or 89 Liverpool Street, Port Lincoln SA 5606.) This map shows a 4WD track all the way from the WA border to Kingoonya running adjacent to the East-West railway line.

The publisher responded that there was to be a revised version of the map that will have the disclaimer attached that access along the rail corridor is not permitted. He added that he commended the SA Four Wheel Drive Association for publishing this corrected information.

## South Australian unsealed Outback road network

**Warning:** most States now have large fines for driving on closed tracks.

The South Australian unsealed Outback road network is one of the State's greatest assets. They can be dusty when dry, or prone to flood damage after rain. The roads are often closed after rain to prevent further damage and to ensure the safety of road users. Severe penalties apply for motorists travelling on closed roads. **Road Conditions Hotline** - 1300 361 033.

**NB - Just because a track is shown on a map does NOT mean the public can access that track** - tracks shown on the RAA Map No 13 "Outback" are open to the public (latest edition is March 2005).

**End**