



Please help us raise a family

If you walk your dog at the beach, you can play a huge part in helping these birds escape extinction. Many of the volunteers who take part in BirdLife Australia's Beach-nesting Birds program are dog owners and love their pets but want to make sure they aren't loving them at the expense of wildlife.

There are ways to co-exist!



- ✓ Choose an off-leash area that is bird free.
- ✓ Respect protected natural areas. National and Coastal Parks are pet free areas because they act as a refuge for vulnerable wildlife.
- ✓ Please use a leash on beaches where leashes are compulsory. Even if your dog is well behaved and stays by your side, please set a good example for others whose dog(s) may not be as well behaved as yours.



- ✓ Please walk along the water's edge where you are unlikely to step on a nest or chick.
- ✓ If you see little birds running swiftly along the beach or hear the larger oystercatchers calling out, please give these birds space. If it is spring or summer, the chances are they will have a nest or chicks nearby.
- ✓ Look out for temporary signs that alert you to the presence of nesting birds or chicks.



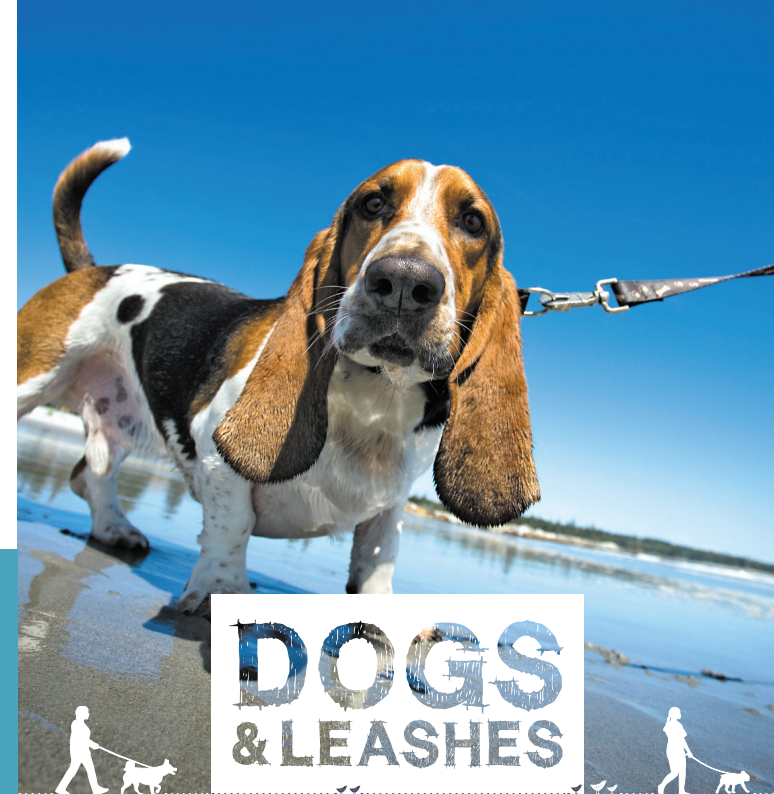
Birds on the nest... On lead is best

BirdLife Australia can provide you with information about whether there are beach-nesting birds in your area. There are still some coastal areas where these birds breed that are off-leash areas and so the birds are not receiving the protection they need to raise their chicks. Contact us: hoodedplover@birdlife.org.au or 03 9347 0757. Visit us online at: www.birdlife.org.au/beach

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CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY



A guide to sharing the beach



Beach-nesting birds are some of the most threatened birds in the world.

Their numbers are in decline as they struggle to find undisturbed space on beaches to raise a family. If too many birds fail to produce young, they will soon become extinct...

What are the threats facing beach-nesting birds?

During spring and summer, Australian native shorebirds such as Hooded Plovers and Pied Oystercatchers, nest on the beach or dunes. The beach, after all, is 'habitat', as is a forest or grassland. These birds make simple nest-scrapes in the sand and lay well-camouflaged eggs that are very difficult to spot. This is a clever idea for hiding from predators but gives people no warning they are about to step on eggs!



Chicks are incredibly vulnerable – they are tiny, camouflaged and must wander along the beach in search of food. It takes five weeks for them to be old enough to fly out of harm's way. This makes it a great challenge for these birds to raise a family on beaches visited by people and their pets!



They are in desperate need of a helping hand.



Small changes in your behaviour can have a huge positive impact on their survival.



"My dog wouldn't harm the birds!"

No matter how well trained your dog is, when it runs around on the beach it can accidentally crush the fragile eggs or harm the chicks.



Disturbance can be lethal

When adult birds see a person or dog approaching, they will leave their nest to keep its location hidden and won't return until the 'threat' is well out of sight. They are more cautious when a dog is off lead, spending 2-3 times longer off the nest. In summer, this can be enough for the eggs to bake on the hot sand.

"My dog is only having a bit of fun chasing the birds"



It is critical that nesting birds are left to sit on their eggs and that their chicks are able to feed on the beach. Each disturbance can add up to a lethal level where eggs fail to hatch, or chicks starve or are predated in the absence of their parents.

The adults warn their chicks into hiding sooner and for longer periods when they spot an unleashed dog approaching.

This is because the birds perceive dogs as predators, like they would a fox or cat. Acting as good parents, they warn their chicks into hiding. Some breeds of dog are naturally curious and drawn to the movement of chicks on the beach. The birds cannot tell the difference between a dog that might chase and hurt their chicks from one that is completely disinterested!