



Red-capped Plover with chicks

## 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

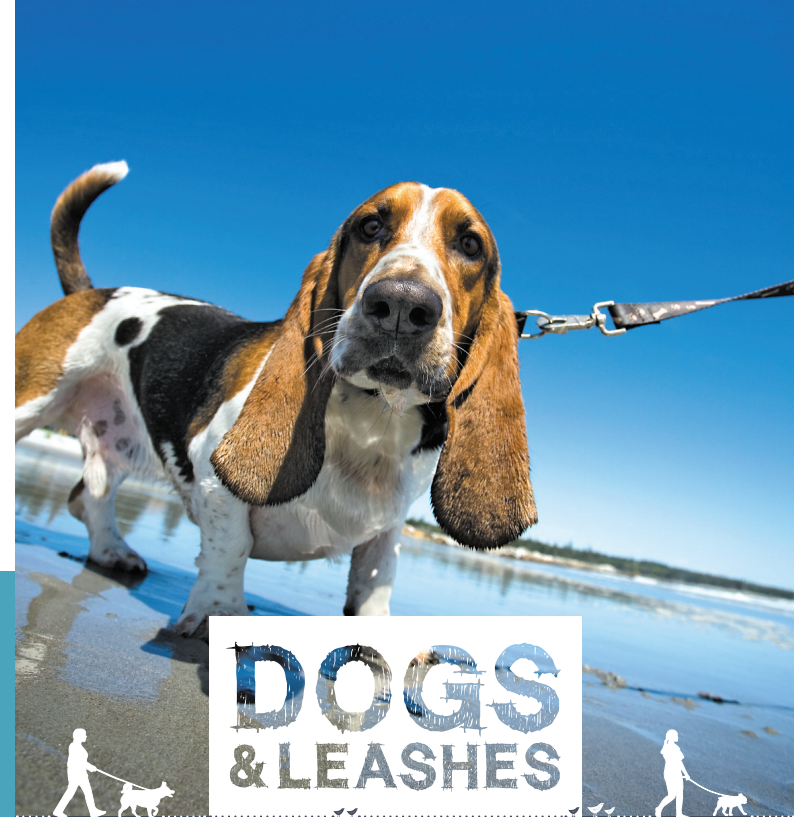
Contact BirdLife Australia to find out whether there are beach-nesting birds in your area. Not all breeding sites will have appropriate regulations in place to protect the birds.

Email: [beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au](mailto:beachnestingbirds@birdlife.org.au)

Website: [www.birdlife.org.au/beach](http://www.birdlife.org.au/beach)

Photos © Glenn Ehmke, Deb Furbank, David Gallan, John Hargreaves, Dean Ingwersen, Dan Weller. Illustrations © Chrissie Cloete and Kate Gorrings-Smith.

BirdLife Australia acknowledges the support of the Australian Government's National Landcare Program and the Victorian Government through a Community Action Grant for printing of this brochure.



**DOGS  
& LEASHES**

**BIRDS  
& BEACHES**

*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 reproduce, they will soon become extinct...

## What are the threats facing beach-nesting birds?

During spring and summer, Australian shorebirds such as Hooded Plovers, and seabirds such as terns, nest on beaches, dunes and islands. 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! Shorebirds usually nest as pairs and terns can nest in large colonies.



Chicks are vulnerable and camouflaged. Tern chicks wait on the shore for their parents to bring back fish, while shorebird chicks need to search along the beach for food. It takes many weeks for them to be old enough to fly out of harm's way. This presents a great challenge for their survival.



*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 for shorebirds, 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. Some terns can even abandon the nesting colony after severe disturbance.

The adult shorebirds 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. The birds cannot tell the difference between a dog that might chase and hurt their chicks from one that is completely disinterested!