

Title Monitoring threatened species takes on many forms – not only keeping an eye on populations or nesting attempts, but also looking after the individual birds themselves. Recently, at Point Roadknight, Anglesea, on Victoria’s Surf Coast, Geoff Gates, one of BirdLife Australia’s (BirdLife Partner) volunteers assisting the Beach-nesting Birds Project, noticed a Hooded Plover – marked with ‘KM’ on its leg-flag – in a bad way. It was hopping on one foot and having trouble keeping up with a small flock of six other Hoodies foraging on a nearby rock platform. Although Geoff watched the bird for 15 minutes, he could not see what was troubling it, but photographs subsequently revealed that something tight was caught around its ankle, cutting into the bird’s flesh and restricting its movement. Geoff immediately contacted Grainne Maguire, the Beach-nesting Birds Project Manager, and together they hatched a plan to rescue KM. While Grainne hastily travelled down to the coast from Melbourne (with family in tow and a special plover-catching trap in the boot), Geoff contacted Liz Brown, a local vet from nearby Aireys Inlet (the next town along the coast) who was keen to help. Within minutes of arriving at the beach, Grainne had quickly and skilfully separated KM from the rest of the flock, which made it easier to trap the injured bird.



With KM in the

hand, the nylon fibre tangled around its leg was easy to see, and Dr Liz quickly removed the offending strand, applied antiseptic ointment to the wound and administered an antibiotic injection. The bird’s metal identification band was then removed from the injured and swollen leg, and a new band was fitted onto the bird’s healthy leg. With the ordeal over, KM was released – accompanied by an indignant squawk – and flew straight back to the flock. Watching through binoculars, Grainne and Geoff were both glad to see that although KM was limping a little, it was, nevertheless, using its injured leg. Thank you to all who assisted. This tale serves to remind us that by keeping a close watch over our threatened birds, BirdLife Australia’s band of volunteers and staff are making a real difference – making a brighter future for Australia’s birds. There is no doubt that if KM had remained untreated, it would have lost its foot and probably died as a result. The loss of a single Hooded Plover may not seem too drastic, but when the population is so small, the effects of the loss of even one bird can be magnified greatly. Anyone visiting Point Roadknight over the next few weeks should keep an eye out for KM and let us know how it is faring.