

Plover Patrol 2019 Season Update

In 2019 we continue to see increases in nesting activity across the Oregon Coast for the *federally threatened Western Snowy Plover*. Trained by Oregon Parks Department and Portland Audubon, a team of volunteers known as Plover Patrol assisted in monitoring Oregon's North Coast Snowy Plover Management Areas. Recovery of plovers on Oregon's North Coast has been slow but is vital to provide connectivity between the Southern Oregon and Washington plover populations. This season we documented successful nesting in new areas and increased nesting activity at all previously occupied sites - a good sign for recovery efforts!



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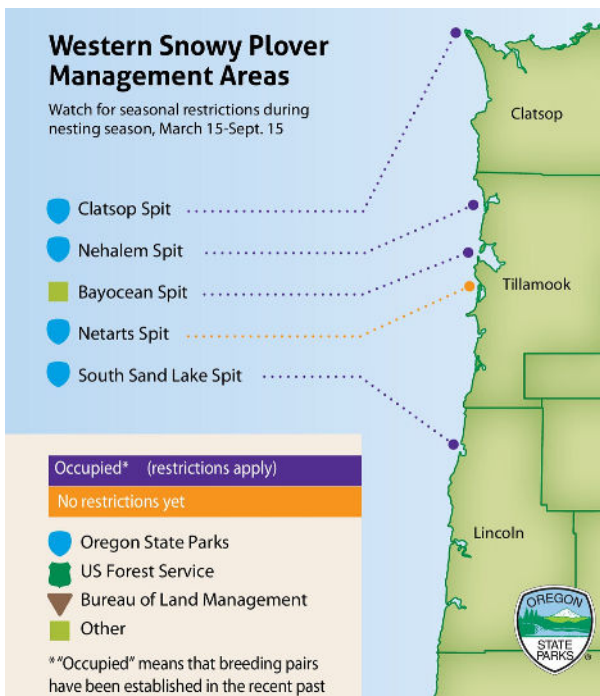
WHY MONITOR PLOVERS?

The Western Snowy Plover is a small shorebird that lives and nests on beaches from Washington to southern California. It was federally listed in 1993 as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Plover populations declined due to a combination of threats including loss of coastal dunes habitat from invasive grasses, human and pet disturbance from ever increasing beach use, and predation from ravens, crows and other beach scavengers.

With the help of designated management areas plover populations have been increasing. In Oregon, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department designated 15 Snowy Plover Management Areas, four of which are on the North Coast.

WHAT IS PLOVER PATROL?

Plover patrol is a team of trained community scientists that assist Oregon Parks and Recreation staff monitoring plovers in Oregon's northern Snowy Plover Management Areas (SPMAs). In 2019, Portland Audubon expanded Plover Patrol to 28 trained volunteers who monitored four SPMAs from Astoria to Pacific City. Over 85 surveys were conducted between March and September. These intensive surveys last 3-6 hours and involve covering miles of sandy beach looking for tiny tracks and very camouflaged birds.



2019 SEASONS FINDINGS

Plovers were present at 3 of 4 North Coast SPMAs. We saw an increased number of individuals (over 40 breeding adults) and nesting attempts (~20 nests discovered) at three sites (Clatsop spit, Nehalem Spit, and South Sand Lake Spit) compared to 2018. At all three sites we documented 2 or more successfully hatched and fledged chicks (chicks that can fly). Of particular note, this was the first time in over 3 decades a successful nest was documented at Clatsop Spit! These findings indicate an increase in usage of Oregon's North Coast that may help better connect adjacent plover populations. Next year a primary goal will be to determine why nests are failing at some sites.

PLOVER WALKS

Portland Audubon led six educational plover walks to Clatsop, Netarts, and South Sand Lake. Walks provided the public with natural history and a rare glimpse of these amazing birds. We reached out to more than 40 local community members, Portland visitors, students and out of state tourists.

Get involved! If you would like to join the Plover Patrol team or sign up for a plover walk contact Joe Liebezeit (jliebezeit@audubonportland.org)