

SNOWY PLOVER PATROL

PORTLAND
AUDUBON



2021 SEASON UPDATE

2021 saw a record number of federally threatened Western Snowy Plovers and plover nests throughout all four of the monitored sites on Oregon's North Coast! This continued growth speaks to the success of dedicated recovery efforts.

WHAT IS PLOVER PATROL?

- **Snowy plover research and monitoring surveys completed by community scientists.**
- **Classroom and Field Training**
- **Online Presentations**
- **Snowy Plover Interpretive Walks & other educational events**

Snowy Plover Patrol is a team of trained community scientists organized by Portland Audubon that assist Oregon Parks and Recreation Staff in monitoring plovers in four of Oregon's North Coast Snowy Plover Management Areas (SPMAs). These intensive surveys last 3-6 hours and involve covering miles of sandy beach looking for tiny tracks leading to camouflaged birds and nests.



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. Snowy Plover populations declined due to a combination of threats including loss of coastal dunes habitat from invasive grasses, as well as human and pet disturbance from ever-increasing beach use. In addition, predation from ravens, crows, and other beach scavengers who are attracted to litter and leftover food from recreational visitation to these sites.

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



Learn more about this project:

Look up Snowy Plover Patrol at www.audubonportland.org

2021 Season Findings



In 2021, Snowy Plover Patrol conducted 119 surveys at 4 SPMAs and three other North Coast sites between March and September. In total, surveys were conducted from Pacific City to the north tip of Clatsop Spit in Astoria. Snowy Plovers were present at all four SPMAs. High counts of plovers were 25 at Clatsop Spit, 14 at Nehalem Bay State Park, 5 at Sitka Sedge State Natural Area, and even one at Netarts Spit at Cape Lookout State Park! This represents the first time a plover has been seen at this site, and the highest recorded counts at both Clatsop Spit and Nehalem Bay State Park.

Nest counts were also the highest ever recorded at both Clatsop Spit and Nehalem Bay, with Clatsop Spit recording 18 nesting attempts and Nehalem Bay recording 19 nesting attempts. Sitka Sedge this year lost enormous amounts of sand across the inlet to the north, fortunately also a Snowy Plover protected site managed by US Forest Service. Despite that, Sitka Sedge still recorded five nests attempts. In total, four nests hatched across all sites, and no chicks were confirmed to fledge. While poor nesting success was recorded this year across the Oregon Coast, it is clear that plovers are continuing to increase in number across the North Coast.

2021 truly was a record-breaking year: a record 35 volunteers participated in the highest ever number of surveys: 119 nesting and abundance surveys. This robust and careful data collection has led to increased knowledge about plover movements and colonization of the North Coast, and increased understanding of the issues plovers face in achieving nest success.

We couldn't have done it without our dedicated volunteers who enthusiastically stepped up to achieve these milestones throughout a time of global crisis. We want to thank these volunteers on the ground as well as those who continued to support the program from afar. Your support matters to these special birds!

Western Snowy Plover Management Areas

Watch for seasonal restrictions during nesting season, March 15-Sept. 15



Oregon State Parks



INTERPRETIVE WALKS

Portland Audubon led four educational interpretive walks for the public at Nehalem Bay State Park, Sitka Sedge State Natural Area, and Fort Stevens State Park, with over 40 walk attendees from Portland as well as from nearby communities. 18 Tillamook Elementary School fourth-graders also got the opportunity to learn about plovers and important beach habitat at an educational walk in a collaboration between Portland Audubon and the U.S. Forest Service. These walks provided natural history information, as well as a rare glimpse at these amazing birds.



Get involved!

Join the Snowy Plover Patrol team or sign up for a snowy plover walk
Contact Joe Liebezeit: jliebezeit@audubonportland.org

Banded Plovers

In 2021, volunteers recorded 268 banded bird observations of over 90 individual plovers across our monitored sites on the North Coast. Banding programs occur in Washington, California, and southern Oregon in order to understand plover movement across breeding sites and during migration, reproductive success, and age. All banded plovers on the North Coast were banded elsewhere, providing a fascinating look into the lives of plovers and the decisions they make in choosing to make the North Coast their breeding grounds. Here are four stories of plovers Plover Patrol volunteers spotted in the 2021 breeding season.

Nehalem Bay State Park

WLW:K (Female), R:O (Male)

This pair was together for the entire season at the same site. Each nest site was less than 1 mile from the last. They nested 3 times together in 2021 before they finally succeeded in hatching and raising one chick. At least one member of this pair was recorded on every single survey between March 30 and August 28.

ROR:B (Red/Orange/Red:Blue)

- Recorded in Nehalem Bay State Park on 5/21
- Recorded for the first time in Fort Clatsop State Park 8/25

BY:G (Blue/Yellow:Green)

- Recorded in a brand-new nesting site- South Necanicum on 6/18
- Recorded for the first time in Fort Clatsop State Park 8/24

BA:V- Male

- Started out in Nehalem (4/9/21)
- Nested in early April at Nehalem
- Nested in May at Sand Lake (USFS)
- Nested in June at Sitka Sedge
- Returned to Sand Lake in July
- Returned to Nehalem one week later
- Total distance: 50 miles traveled

AR:V (Aqua/Red:Violet- Male)

- Recorded 3/30 at Nehalem Bay State Park
- Nested in April at NBSP
- Last recorded in NBSP: 5/21
- Found in San Marine State Park in Yachats 6/28
- Began to hatch on 7/23- one chick and 2 eggs recorded.
- 7/24: Monitors reported a new firepit dug 35 feet from hatching nest- no chicks seen, AR:V in distress.
- AR:V nor chicks seen again.
- Distance: 92 miles

Photos: Terri Neal