
Plover Patrol

Helping shorebirds nest in peace



SPMA Detection Survey Protocol

Duties

- Complete assigned survey during a two-week window
- Accurately record data
- Coordinate survey dates with survey partner(s) and Volunteer Coordinator
- Notify survey partner and Volunteer Coordinator ASAP if unable to make survey
- Report results promptly via the Google Form here: <http://bit.ly/WSPPatrolSurveys>

Survey Conditions

- Sunny day or overcast sky
- High tide, ONLY if safe passage available
- Calm (slight breeze up to 15 mph)
- Dry (no more than slight drizzle)

Methods

- Walk survey area
- Survey all potential habitat
- If surveying with a team, one person should walk along the wrack line and the other near the foredune. Try and stay abreast of one another.
- Focus on plovers, and note their behaviors
- *Take a picture if you see a bird*
- Check for color bands
- Document other interesting information if you can; humans present, potential predators, etc.
- If you do see a plover, OPRD will initiate follow-up surveys to double check for pair behaviors

Equipment

Required

- Binoculars; some may be available to borrow at each park
- Map and data sheet
- Pen/Pencil
- Timepiece
- Access to internet for reporting

Recommended

- Cell phone/radio
- Camera (strongly recommended!)
- Spotting scope/tripod
- Emergency contacts
- Protective attire: Hat with bill or visor, layered clothing for hot or cold or rain
- Drinking water and snacks

Paperwork

Volunteer Paperwork

- OPRD Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct
- We encourage volunteers to become official Portland Audubon volunteers. To start this process fill out this form: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdzEZeLoKH-8LyvopD8n6ersBvlXVi4J7p0FTXldfYuo_OMZA/viewform

Turning in Data

Go to <http://bit.ly/WSPPatrolSurveys> to report your survey. The paper survey data form is yours to help you track the information; all that information then gets entered into the online form. If you are monitoring nests, be sure to enter individual nest checks into this form: <http://bit.ly/WSPNestCheck>

Tracking Hours

- Please enter your time effort volunteer hours at this link:
<https://docs.google.com/a/audubonportland.org/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe12hIOIXFYXdkRX3eLUyBxXyrJNEgljqI5lQSTMvmUXy0SAg/viewform?c=0&w=1>
 - Under volunteer position use the following code: WSPL
 - Please include your travel time as part of your estimate

Interactions with Park Visitors and Beach Users

Everyone loves the beach, but not always for the same reasons. As a volunteer, the way you interact with the public reflects on OPRD, the Audubon Society of Portland, and the snowy plovers themselves!

- If beach users inquire about your activities, feel free to tell them you are surveying the coast for shorebirds, information about snowy plovers specifically, and the other programs Audubon is hosting to further north coast conservation. If the public expresses interest in learning more please collect contact info and provide to Audubon Volunteer Coordinator.
- If you see someone violating Ocean Shore regulations that are not plover-related, please do not engage the individual(s) yourself. Contact a District Ranger or the Park Office.
- Many people are very sensitive about beach use, and may be unaware of recreational restrictions for plover conservation. Contact with beach visitors should be educational, informative, and positive. If a contact is not received well, abort the conversation and withdraw. If the visitor is violating plover recreation restrictions after your conversation, contact a District Ranger or the Park Office.

Beach Safety

- Know the tides and the weather
- Work with a partner
- Ensure the Volunteer Coordinator knows you will be out on the beach

Cheat Sheet for the Beach

Plover Physical Keys

- Short bill
- Incomplete neck collar just above wings
- Dark patch behind eye, similar to sanderling
- Dark bar on forehead
- Note! Adults tend to have black forehead, eye patch, and collar. Juveniles are muted and look more like sanderlings.

Plover Behavior

- Flocks in summer = family groups of 2-6
- Hunkered down behind items or in divets in sand, such as footprints or tire tracks.
- Adults often try to run away without being seen... “ghost of the dunes”
- Adults will feign injury to draw you away from a nest. If you see a bird flopping around in front of you, dragging a wing, STOP, look at the sand, and back away to the wet sand!
- **Do not approach plover nests! Notify OPRD wildlife biologist or Audubon Volunteer Coordinator immediately if you locate one or observe a plover performing a broken wing display**

Tracks and Sign

- Inward-pointed toe prints at a near 45-degree angle
- Tracks are often little highways running from the wrack line to the dry sand and back. Following a line of tracks may lead you to a nest.
- Nest scrapes are sure signs of breeding; shallow depressions lined with shell or other debris

Similar species

- Sanderling – long bill, no black forehead bar, dark marks on shoulders/wings
- Killdeer – two black bands across chest
- Black-bellied plover – no black shoulder marks
- Semipalmated plover – yellow legs
- Western sandpiper – long bill, scalloped feathers on back

Reading Color Bands

- Read top to bottom
- Read left leg, then right leg (plover’s left!)
- Some color bands are wrapped with a narrow stripe of a second color

**Band Colors Used On Snowy Plovers
in California and Oregon
(Underlined letter is code for that color)**

	<u>A</u> qua
	<u>B</u> lue
	<u>G</u> reen
	<u>B</u> lack
	<u>L</u> ime
	<u>O</u> range
	<u>P</u> ink
	<u>R</u> ed
	<u>S</u> ilver
	<u>V</u> iolet
	<u>W</u> hite
	<u>Y</u> ellow



Adult male plover, breeding season



Juvenile plover, note scalloped feathers



Plover tracks



Nest scrape and plover tracks

SPMA Site Details

Cape Lookout State Park/Netarts Spit

Location: Off US 101, 12 miles SW of Tillamook

Tips: This survey is very long! Park at the Park Office; other parking areas will require a park pass. The walk to the SPMA is about 3 miles, plus the survey area itself. Expect a 11-12 mile round trip and 4-5 hours of survey time. Go at or before LOW TIDE. The tide comes up high on the beach along the middle of the spit, and can trap you against the shelf.

Fort Stevens State Park/Clatsop Spit

Location: Off US 101, 10 miles W of Astoria

Tips: Park at “Fisherman’s Lot” and begin survey. SPMA boundaries are marked with a wooden post with a shorebird sign posted on them (see map). Once complete, head back to “Fisherman’s Lot”. If the water is low enough you could also park at Parking Lot C (near the observation tower) and walk from this direction. Be sure to check the tides to make sure crossing into the SPMA is possible!

Gearhart/Necanicum Spit

Location: Off US 101, turn west onto Pacific Way

Tips: Park at the small curb-side area at Pacific Way. Walk south along the beach. The open area on the spit is very large and may require multiple passes depending on how many people are available to survey. Winds tend to pick up in the afternoon, so morning surveys may be your more pleasant option.

Alternatively, you could park at Wellington and H street and walk the estuary side. Be aware of tides and water levels!

OCCUPIED SITES

Nehalem Bay State Park

Location: Off US 101, 3 miles S of Manzanita Junction

Tips: *Plovers nest here!!* Park at southernmost parking area/day use and walk a loop. You will need a park pass, and can obtain a temporary pass at the Park Office if you do not have an annual pass. Survey the ocean side of the spit; you could walk this first and take the jetty trail back, or vice versa, depending on wind. Stay on the wet sand at all times! Survey in the morning to avoid wind.

Sitka Sedge State Natural Area

Location: Off Sand Lake Road. This park doesn’t show up in Google yet, search for “Clay Meyers State Natural Area” instead. Sitka Sedge is off Sand Lake Road 0.75 mile south of the bridge to Clay Meyers/Whalen Island Road.

Tips: *Plovers nest here!!* There are two parking options: in the neighborhood of Tierra del Mar and at the gravel drive on Sand Lake Road. Tierra del Mar will be the shortest walking distance, which will be 3 miles round trip. Sand Lake Road entails walking along Sand Lake Road to Tierra del Mar, then walking the beach, and coming back, for something closer to 5 miles.

Contact Information

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