

Snowy Plover Patrol: 2020 Season Update



In 2020 we continue to see increases in activity across the Oregon Coast for the federally threatened Western Snowy Plover. 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 at 3 of the 4 sites we monitor - a good sign for recovery efforts!

WHAT IS PLOVER PATROL?

- Snowy Plover Surveys many done by community scientists
- Classroom Training & 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 4 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 and camouflaged birds.



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, human and pet disturbance from ever increasing beach use. As well as predation from ravens, crows and other beach scavengers, who are attracted to litter and leftover food from recreational visitation to the 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 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

2020 Season Findings



Western Snowy Plover Management Areas

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

Clatsop Spit

Nehalem Spit

Bayocean Spit

Netarts Spit

South Sand Lake Spit

Occupied* (restrictions apply)

No restrictions yet

Oregon State Parks

US Forest Service

Bureau of Land Management

Other

*"Occupied" means that breeding pairs have been established in the recent past

Oregon State Parks

INTERPRETIVE WALKS

Portland Audubon led 5 educational walks at Nehalem Bay and Sitka Sedge State Parks with members of nearby communities who are interested in supporting these efforts. These walks provided natural history and a rare glimpse of these amazing birds.

In 2020, Plover Patrol completed surveys at four SPMAs from Astoria to Pacific City. Over 50 surveys were conducted between June and September. Snowy plovers were present at 3 of the 4 North Coast SPMAs. With high counts of 24 snowy plovers at South Sand Lake Spit, 21 at Nehalem, and 17 at Clatsop Spit, many of which were juveniles. Once again, no snowy plovers were spotted at Netarts although sightings of the semipalmated plover keep us hopeful that snowies will adopt this stretch of beach as a nesting area.

Clatsop Spit at Fort Stevens holds the highest count for nests. With 11 nests total, 5 of which failed and 6 were successful. The first nest attempt documented by Snowy Plover Patrol at Clatsop Spit was in 2018, and the first successful nest documented in over 3 decades was in 2019, so this is good news! The volunteers here once again sighted streaked horned larks. Ten other plover nests were documented at Nehalem (7) and Sitka (3).

These findings indicate an increase in usage of Oregon's North Coast that may help better connect adjacent plover populations. Next year, we hope to continue surveying. A primary goal will be to determine why nests are failing at some sites.

We want to send a big thank you to the volunteers who dedicated their time through a global, national, and regional crises. We also want to thank those of you who were unable to make it but supported us from afar. Your support is what makes a difference for this species. We couldn't do it without all of you.



Get involved!

Join the Snowy Plover Patrol team or

Sign up for a snowy plover walk

Contact Joe Liebezeit: jliebezeit@audubonportland.org