
Sharing the beach with Western Snowy Plovers

November 28, 2022



Breeding season for federally threatened Western snowy plovers has officially come to an end. This doesn't mean that plovers get to relax and enjoy the fall and winter seasons with pumpkin spice lattes or eggnog, however. Instead, plovers must continue to forage for food and work to stay warm and protected from the elements.

As fellow beach goers, our actions matter to Western snowy plovers, even when they are not breeding. Research shows that day-to-day stress can impact the outcome of their next breeding season. The actions of people can affect the well-being, health and reproductive fitness of snowy plovers, and so their overall survival.

The good news is that you can help minimize impacts to plovers through some simple practices.

Dogs - Know beach-specific dog rules before you go. If dogs are permitted, follow the leash rules. Do not allow your dog(s) to chase birds.

Space - Leave space for wildlife and enjoy birds from afar; don't approach or chase them. Doing so may decrease their stored energy reserves and prevent them from foraging.

- Walk on the wet, hard-packed sand below the wrack line (i.e., the line of debris left by the high tide) where plovers forage.
- Respect all posted signs and/or roped-off areas for the protection of wildlife.

Trash - Pack out trash, don't leave or bury it. Garbage attracts predators such as ravens, crows, gulls, and skunks. Please dispose of all trash properly and do not inadvertently or intentionally feed wildlife.

Vehicles - If you're on a beach that allows vehicles, drive 'low and slow,' staying on the hard-packed sand below the wrack line that plovers forage near.

- Avoid driving over old vehicle or foot tracks as plovers like to rest or "loaf" in these and are extremely hard to see.

Camping - Camp or build fires only in designated areas.