



Point Blue
Conservation
Science

Birds on West Coast Beaches

How You Can Help



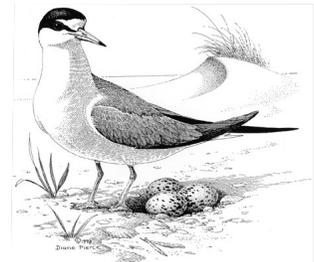
Beaches and dunes of the Pacific United States are sandy habitats found along coastlines, lagoons, estuaries, and sand spits. Beaches are popular recreation destinations for people, and provide year-round habitat for many types of birds.

This document highlights the importance of beach habitat to the life-cycles of birds, and provides bird-friendly beach recreation tips for beach visitors and habitat managers.



Bird-Friendly Beach Recreation Tips

- ✎ Walk on the wet sand to avoid disturbing nesting Western Snowy Plovers and California Least Terns
- ✎ Avoid creating perches for predatory birds. Leave driftwood flat on the sand and dismantle forts.
- ✎ Walk around flocks of roosting and feeding birds to avoid disturbance.
- ✎ Respect signs designating restrictions in sensitive habitat.
- ✎ Use off-highway vehicles only where permitted.
- ✎ Pack-out trash and do not feed wildlife.
- ✎ Keep pets on leashes.
- ✎ Do not chase birds.



Artwork Diane Pierce

California Least Tern

Beaches are Habitat for Nesting



Artwork Carleton Eyster

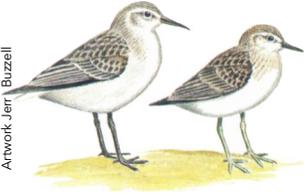
Western Snowy Plover

On U.S. Pacific coast beaches, nesting season occurs March through September. During this sensitive period, birds must find a mate, establish a nesting site, incubate eggs, and raise young.

Birds that nest on beaches are highly adapted to the shifting sands and sparsely vegetated environment. Once able to move to different beaches for nesting when old ones eroded away, birds today have few alternatives due to loss of beach habitat caused by development, recreational activities, increased predator pressures, and invasive plants.

Flightless chicks of federally threatened Western Snowy Plovers and endangered California Least Terns are particularly vulnerable to disturbances from off-highway vehicles, off-leash dogs, and other recreational activities.

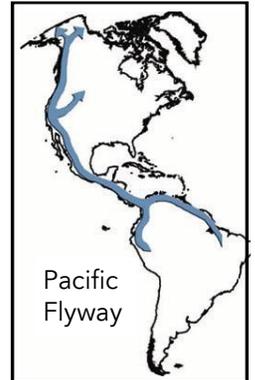
Beaches are Habitat for Resting



Western Sandpiper (left) & Least Sandpiper (right)

Migrating between northern breeding grounds and southern wintering homes, millions of birds follow the Pacific Flyway - one of four flyways that span the Americas. Like truck stops to truckers on a long highway, beaches and dunes are places where weary and hungry migrating birds can rest and refuel before continuing their migration along the Pacific Flyway.

With many bird populations in decline and human recreation increasing, human disturbance to resting and feeding birds on beaches is a growing concern. Birds that are frequently disturbed by human activities may have reduced opportunities to forage and rest, which could have negative impacts on their health and survival. By recreating safely on beaches, you can help reduce human disturbance to birds.



What is Being Done to Help?

Fortunately, beach managers, with the help of hundreds of volunteers, are actively protecting beach-nesting birds in the following ways:

- Nesting habitat above the surf zone is often roped off from public use.
- Protective fencing, called exclosures, surround eggs to prevent disturbance and predation.
- Biologists monitor nests and young in many areas to determine breeding success.
- Educational programs are conducted to increase public awareness of beach habitat and wildlife.
- Habitat restoration projects are being employed to increase the amount of beach and dune habitat and protect native wildlife and plants.
- Management of predators of beach-nesting birds, nests, and chicks.

Beach Birds of the Pacific United States (* use beaches for nesting and raising young)

Shorebirds

American Golden-Plover
Black-bellied Plover
Dunlin
Greater Yellowlegs
Killdeer*
Least Sandpiper
Lesser Yellowlegs
Long-billed Dowitcher
Marbled Godwit
Pacific Golden-Plover
Pectoral Sandpiper
Red Knot
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Semipalmated Plover
Short-billed Dowitcher
Snowy Plover*
Western Sandpiper
Whimbrel
Willet

Gulls & Terns

California Gull
California Least Tern*
Caspian Tern
Common Tern
Elegant Tern
Forster's Tern
Glaucous-winged Gull
Heermann's Gull
Herring Gull
Mew Gull
Ring-billed Gull
Royal Tern
Thayer's Gull
Western Gull

Pelicans

American White Pelican
Brown Pelican

Get Involved!

- Join Point Blue Conservation Science to support our beach bird monitoring, research, and education projects. Visit www.pointblue.org, email us at pointblue@pointblue.org, or call (707) 781-2555.
- Get to know a beach near you by attending nature walks and learning about beach wildlife and plants.
- Be a 'citizen scientist' with your local National Marine Sanctuary (<http://www.sanctuaries.nos.noaa.gov/>).
- Support government legislation that protects coastal habitats.
- Help protect and restore beach and dune habitat. Contact your local state park, Audubon Society chapter, US Fish & Wildlife Service, or National Park Service for volunteer opportunities.