

BEACH RULES

Year-round

- NO FEEDING WILDLIFE
- NO LITTERING
- NO CAMPING
- NO FIREWORKS
- NO OFF-ROAD VEHICLES
- NO WINDSURFING
- NO PARASAILING
- NO KITE FLYING
- NO DRONES

Breeding Season (Mar 1-Sept 30)

- DO NOT ENTER POSTED CLOSED AREAS
- NO BEACH FIRES
- NO PETS
- NO HORSES

Non-Breeding Season (Oct 1- Feb 28)

- PETS MUST BE ON A LEASH AT ALL TIMES

**VIOLATORS WILL BE
PROSECUTED!**

◇ BEACH ACCESS DEPENDS ON YOU
FOLLOWING THE RULES

◇ VIOLATORS MAY BE FINED UP TO
\$5,000 IN FEDERAL MAGISTRATES
COURT

◇ ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT
VIOLATIONS:

- CIVIL VIOLATORS MAY BE
FINED UP TO \$25,000
- CRIMINAL VIOLATORS MAY BE
FINED UP TO \$50,000 AND
IMPRISONED UP TO ONE YEAR

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL:
805-605-0392



Western Snowy Plover

Sharing the Beach



WHAT IS A SNOWY PLOVER?

The western snowy plover (*Charadrius nivosus nivosus*) is a sparrow-sized, light colored shorebird with dark patches on either side of the neck, behind the eye, and on the forehead. The Pacific coast population of the snowy plover is a Federally Listed Threatened Species (ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?sld=8035).

WHERE ARE THESE PLOVERS?

Plovers can be found on flat, open coastal beaches, in dunes, and near stream mouths. They are well-camouflaged and extremely hard to see, often crouching in small depressions taking shelter from the wind. Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB) beaches provide much of the suitable habitat remaining in California for this small shorebird.



During the winter months, snowy plovers eat and rest, building up fat reserves. In the spring and summer, plovers nest in loose colonies, often coming back to the same beaches every year. The breeding season lasts from early spring to mid-fall, and during that time one female may hatch more than one brood with different males.

The nests are simple scrapes in the sand with 1-3 eggs that the male warms at night, while the female

does day duty. Eggs hatch in about 27 days, and within hours the chicks are searching for their food of insects and other beach invertebrates. The chicks are on their own in 30 days. But surviving those two months is the challenge.

HOW ARE THEY THREATENED?

Snowy plovers are threatened due to disturbance, predation, and habitat loss. Birds and eggs are well camouflaged, making it easy for beach visitors to disturb resting birds or wander through a nesting area, never knowing the damage they caused.

When visitors use the beach close to nests, it causes adult birds to stay off the nest which exposes eggs to predators and the elements. Beach fires and fireworks disturb the nesting birds, and kites flown above look like predators. During the winter, continual disturbance uses up their stored reserves and may lower their breeding success.

Predators on the beach are also threats. Dogs chase and may catch birds or destroy nests, cats prey on birds and chicks, and even leashed dogs may appear as a danger. Native predators such as coyotes, crows, ravens, and raptors are joined by exotic predators such as the non-native red fox to further pressure the birds.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

The snowy plover is an important part of the interconnected web of life on the shore. Plovers have lived on California and other Pacific coast beaches for thousands of years, but today human use of their remaining beach habitat seriously

threatens their survival. Once numbered in the thousands, fewer than 2,300 breeding plovers remain in California.

Prior to 1970 they nested at 53 locations in the state, while today they nest in only half as many sites. Since snowy plovers are listed as a threatened species and protected by the federal Endangered Species Act, beach visitors who harm or disturb plovers or their habitat may be cited and fined. Plovers need our help if they are to survive alongside human beach recreation.

WHAT IS VAFB DOING TO PROTECT PLOVERS?

VAFB is doing a wide variety of things to help this bird in need. Plovers are monitored to determine the number of birds using VAFB and the success of their breeding attempts, banding the chicks' tiny legs so that they can be identified throughout their lives. Exotic plants that affect plover nesting habitat are removed, and if predators pose a problem, control programs are initiated.



VAFB is working closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other coastal land managers to cooperatively manage the plover on VAFB beaches.