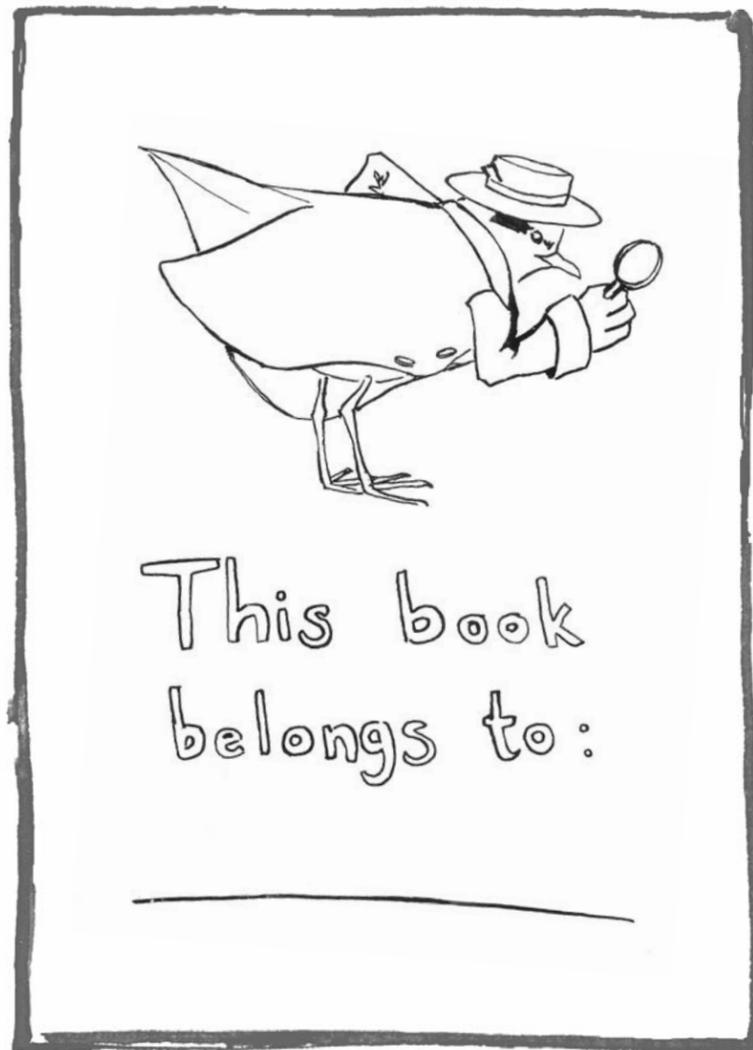




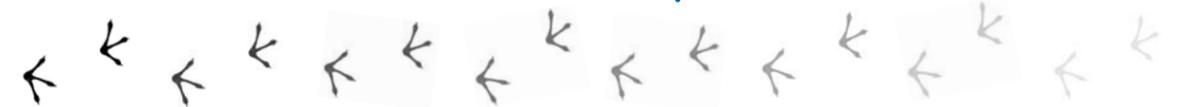
THE CASE OF THE VANISHING PLOVER

Joe Plo Investigates
the Decline of the Western Snowy Plover

THE CASE OF THE VANISHING PLOVER



Joe Plo, Undercover Plover,
Investigates the Decline of the
Western Snowy Plover



Developed by the staff of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Newport Field Office.
Written and illustrated by Ram Papish. Illustrations used with permission.



Joe Plo wants you to be in the know, so... before you start to solve this mystery here is a little natural history.

Western Snowy Plovers (scientific name: *Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) are shorebirds. Shorebirds are a group of birds that live where land and water meet. Adult plovers are smaller in size than a robin, and are the color of pale sand. They have long, thin, black bills and blackish legs. There are dark patches on the forehead, behind the eye, and on both sides of the neck. A snow-white breast gives them their name. Plover chicks have tiny bodies with long legs. They look like fluffballs on toothpicks.

WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

For thousands of years Snowy Plovers have lived along the beaches of Washington, Oregon, and California. In the 1970s and 1980s, biologists noticed that the number of Snowy Plovers was going down.

WHEN DO THEY NEST?

March to September is the Plovers' breeding season. It takes one month for the eggs to hatch, and then another month for the chicks to begin to fly. Plovers may nest two or three times in one season.

HOW DO THEY NEST?

The male "builds" the nest by scratching a shallow hole, called a *scrape*, in the sand. Then he lines the nest with small pebbles, bits of shell, or plant parts. At first, both parents care for the eggs and the chicks after they hatch. Often, the female will leave the nest and then the male takes over raising the chicks.

HOW ARE THEY DOING?

The number of Snowy Plovers has gone down so low that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has had to give them special protection by putting them on the Endangered Species List.

WHY?

This is where Joe Plo comes in. Turn the page and follow Joe Plo as he uncovers what happened to Snowy Plovers.



Hello, name's Joe Plo, the Undercover Plover of the toughest cases I am a lover. I am here at the beach to try and find why I'm nearly the last of my kind. Perhaps you will join me as I try to uncover The puzzling "Case of The Vanishing Plover."



Plōver

Plöver

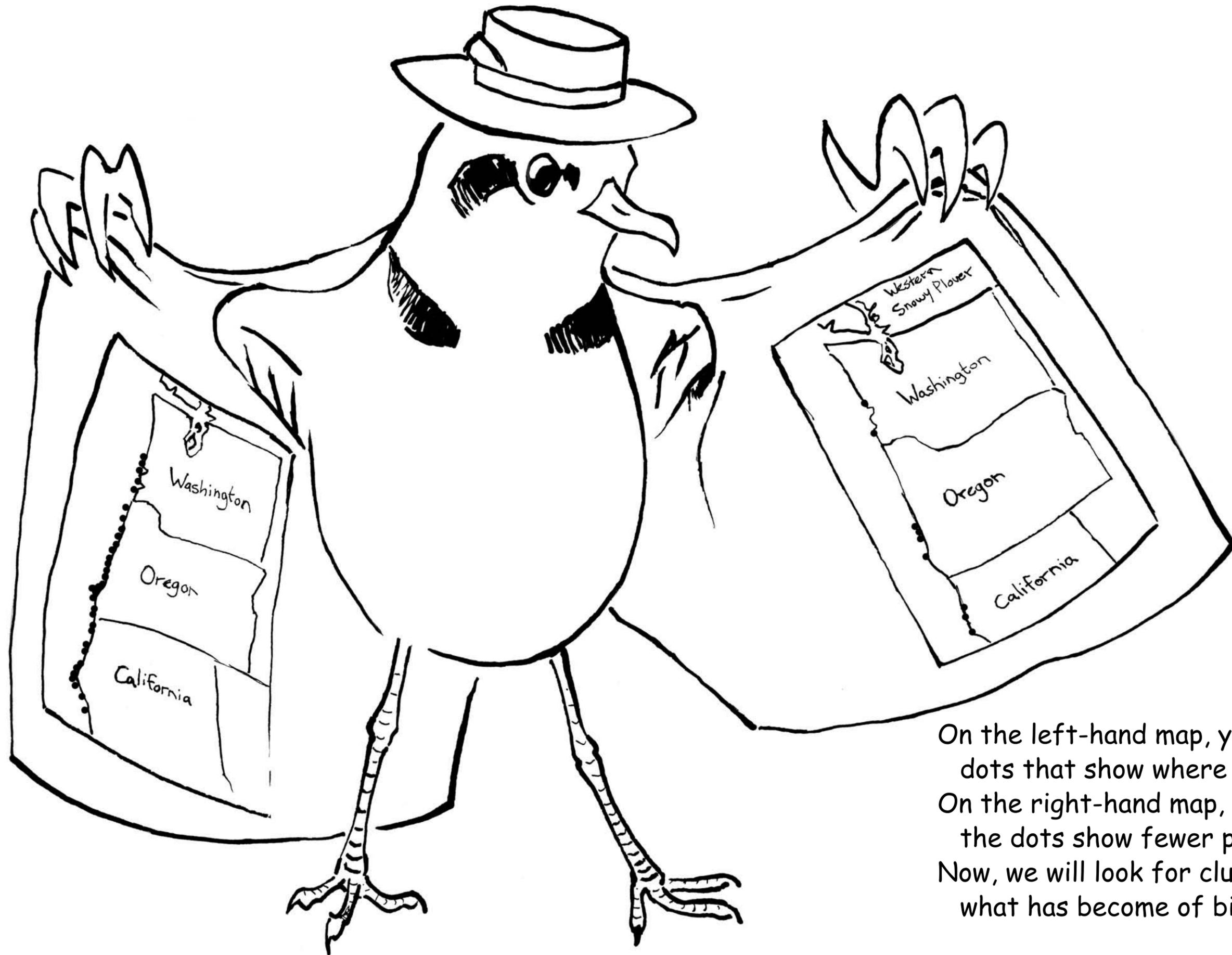
Before we get started, let us get one thing straight.

There are two ways to say plover and both work great.

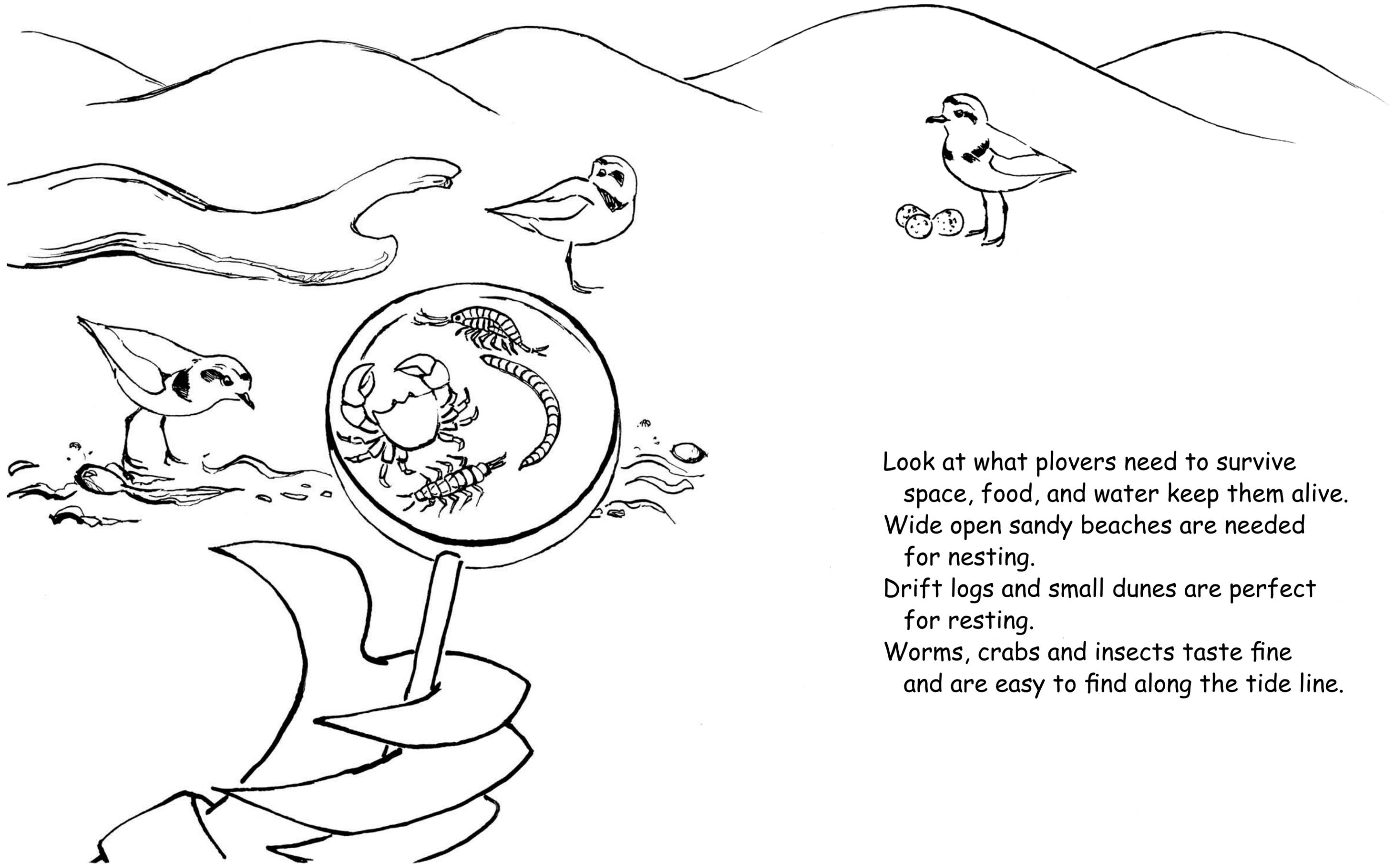
The "o" can make the sound as in "over" making plover rhyme with clover or rover.

Or "o" can make the sound as in "cover" making plover rhyme with lover or recover.

Pick whichever ending you like best either way you will pass the test.



On the left-hand map, you will see dots that show where plovers *used* to be. On the right-hand map, I am sad to say the dots show fewer plovers around today. Now, we will look for clues and see what has become of birds like me.



Look at what plovers need to survive
space, food, and water keep them alive.
Wide open sandy beaches are needed
for nesting.
Drift logs and small dunes are perfect
for resting.
Worms, crabs and insects taste fine
and are easy to find along the tide line.



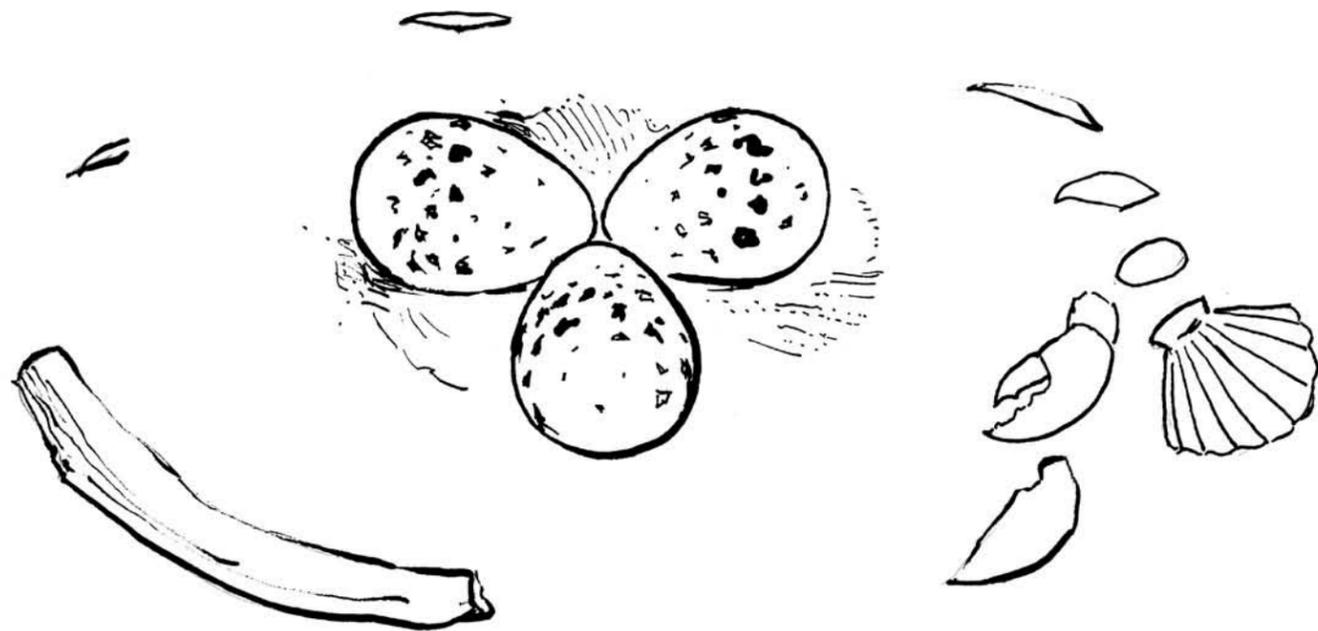
Bare dry sand is where plovers go
but that is where beach grass likes to grow.
The more space the grass takes over
the less room there is for the plover.



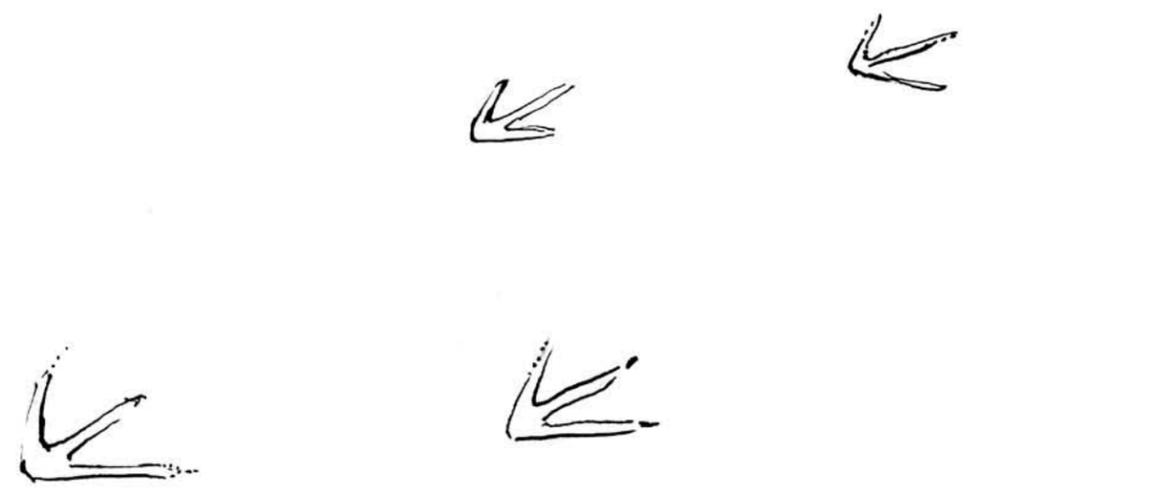
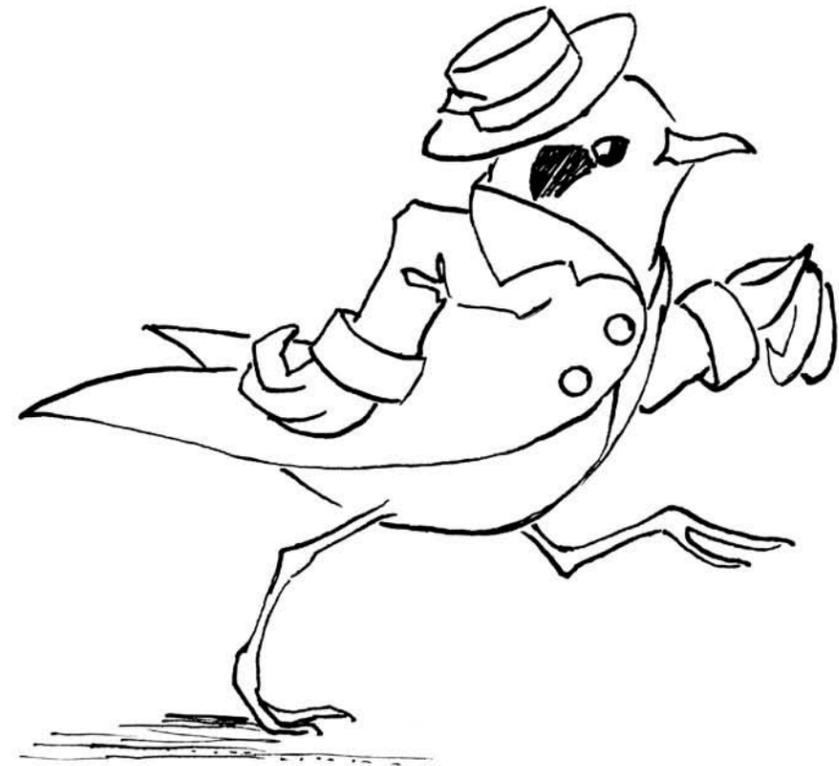
The beach grass does more than take up space
it gives predators a hiding place.
For getting close to a plover nest
sneaking through grass is what they do best.
After that it takes no special trick
to eat a delicate egg or a downy chick.



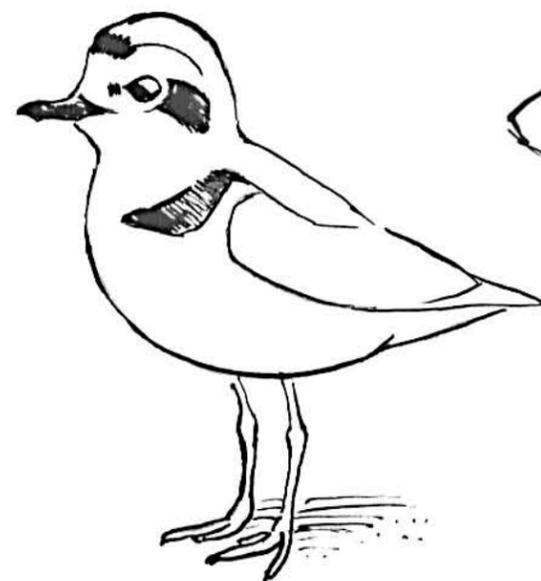
A beach covered with paper cups and plastic spoons also attracts the skunks and raccoons. So leaving your garbage is not just fine it is like putting up a sign:
"COME HERE TO DINE!"
After eating a wrapper filled with goo they may wash it down with a plover or two.



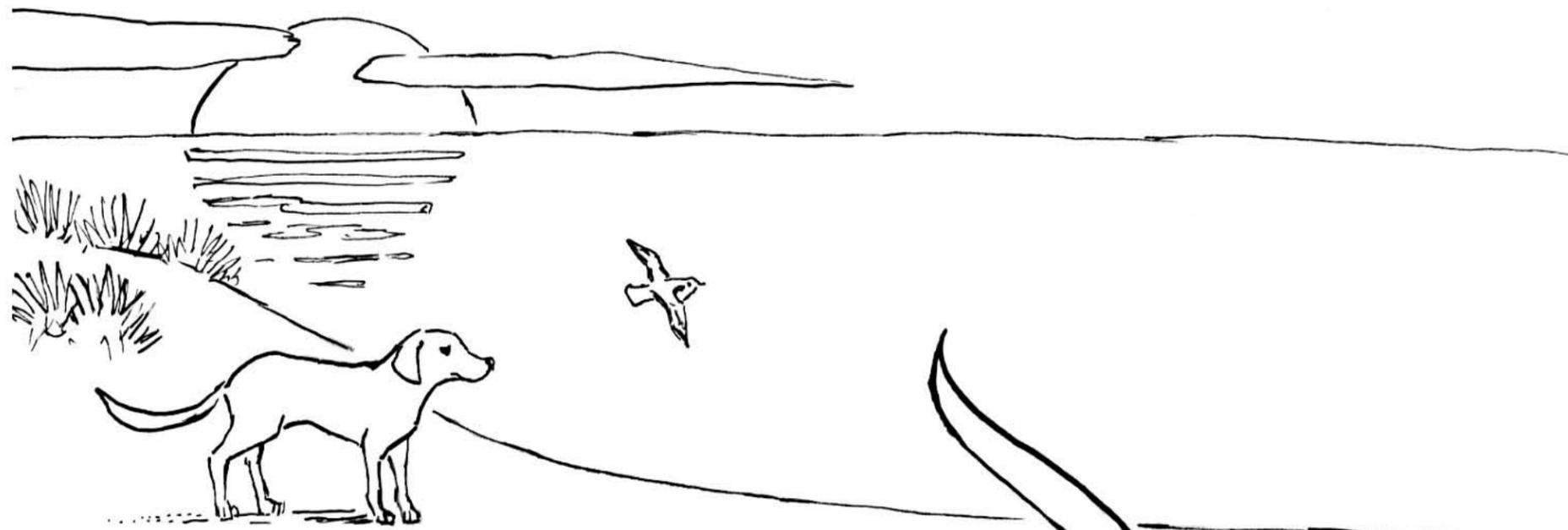
People should take their garbage away but it also matters where they choose to play. If people get too close to a plover nest they are really being quite a pest. It is so easy to make plover parents run or fly leaving abandoned eggs or chicks to die.



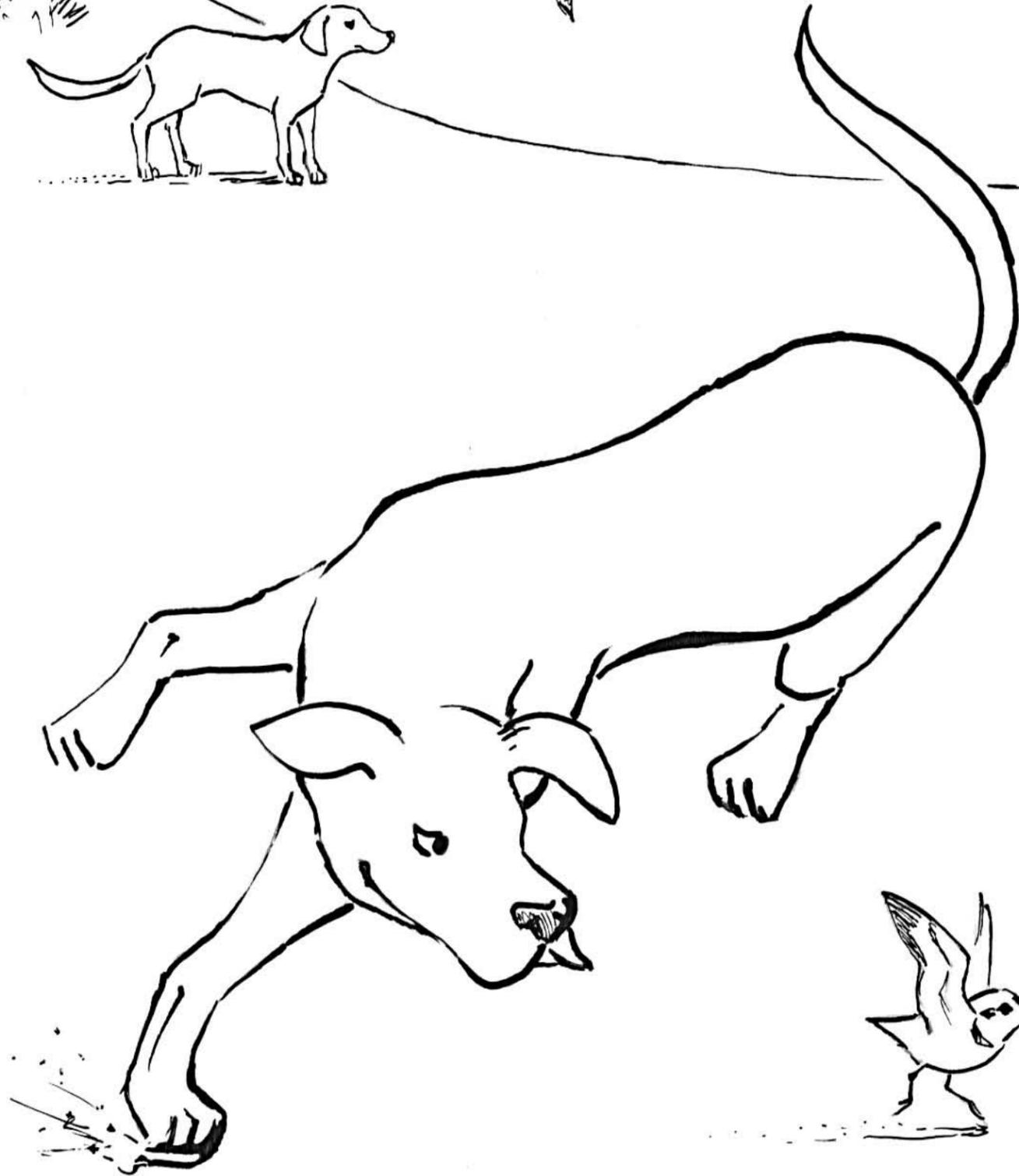
Whoa, hey, you almost stepped on my tail!
You wonder why I am so pale?
Even a little person's foot is big to me.
Ah, once there were so many more places to be.
The stomp, stomp, stomp of people's feet
does not give us plovers time to rest and to eat.

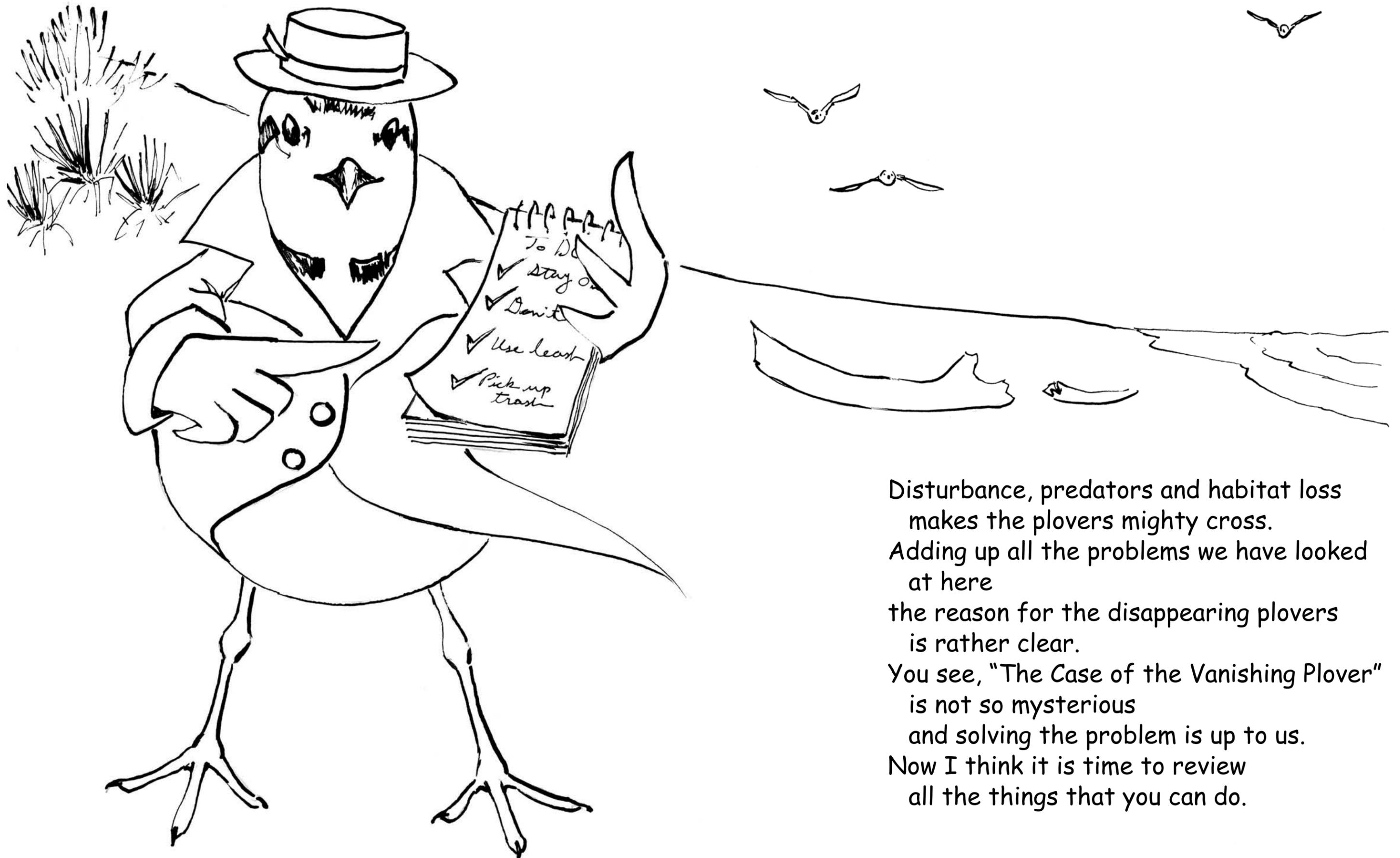


Most people just are not aware
that the little plovers are even there.
Because they are the color of sand
all they have to do is stop and stand.
Plovers are camouflaged so well
they blend in with driftwood and bits of shell.



Not all creatures have to see
to discover where a plover might be.
Curious canines sniff, sniff, sniff
always looking for something new to whiff.
But dogs without leashes
can scare wildlife on beaches.
Pooches may just want to play
but they make plovers fly away.





Disturbance, predators and habitat loss makes the plovers mighty cross. Adding up all the problems we have looked at here the reason for the disappearing plovers is rather clear. You see, "The Case of the Vanishing Plover" is not so mysterious and solving the problem is up to us. Now I think it is time to review all the things that you can do.

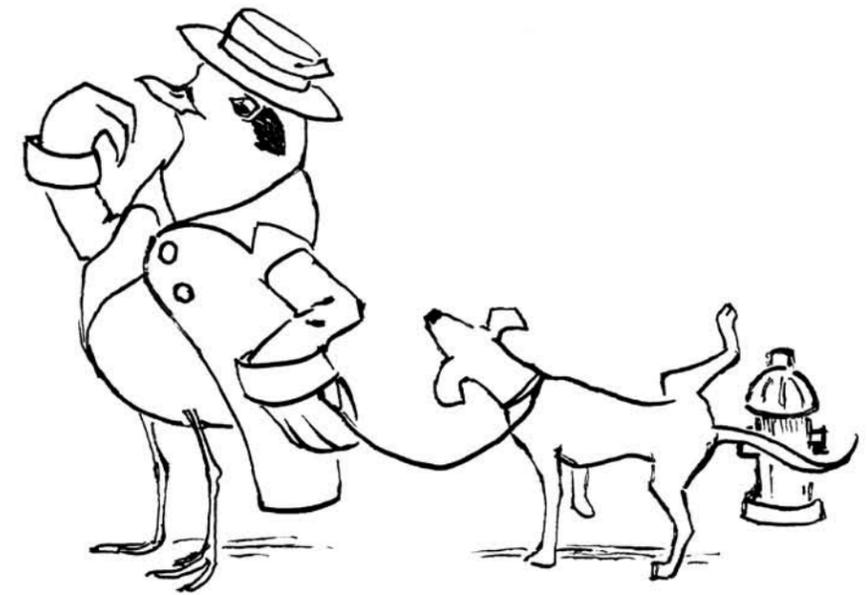
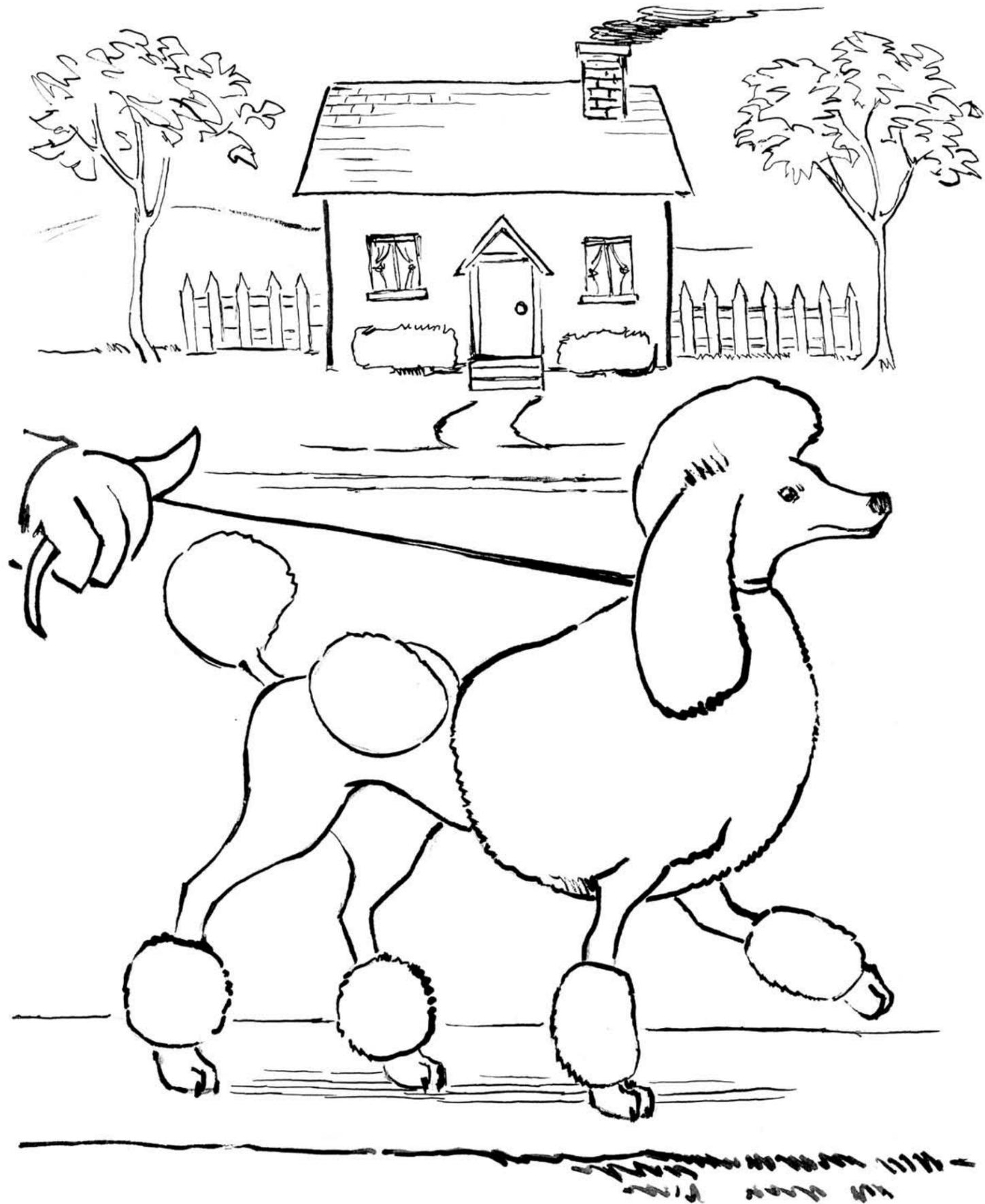


An important thing to remember is stay out of nesting areas from the 15th of March to the 15th of September. Careful not to cross the line when you see a "Snowy Plover Nesting Area" sign. "Share the beach" by staying on the sand that is wet. Scaring a plover only takes one person or their pet.

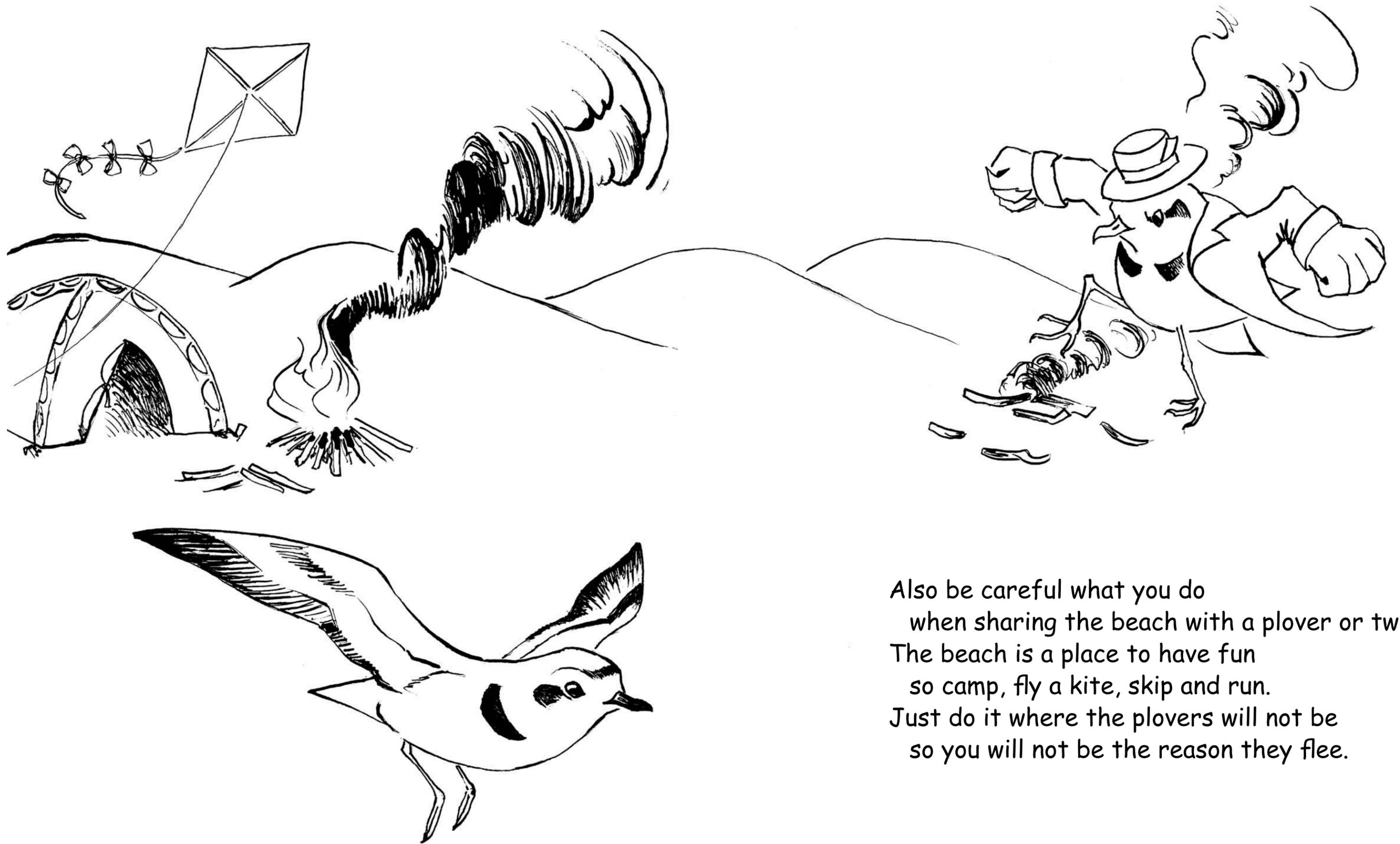


Pick up your leftover lunch and afternoon snack thinking of all the predators it could attract. While you are at it do not turn away from the hamburger wrapper someone left there today.

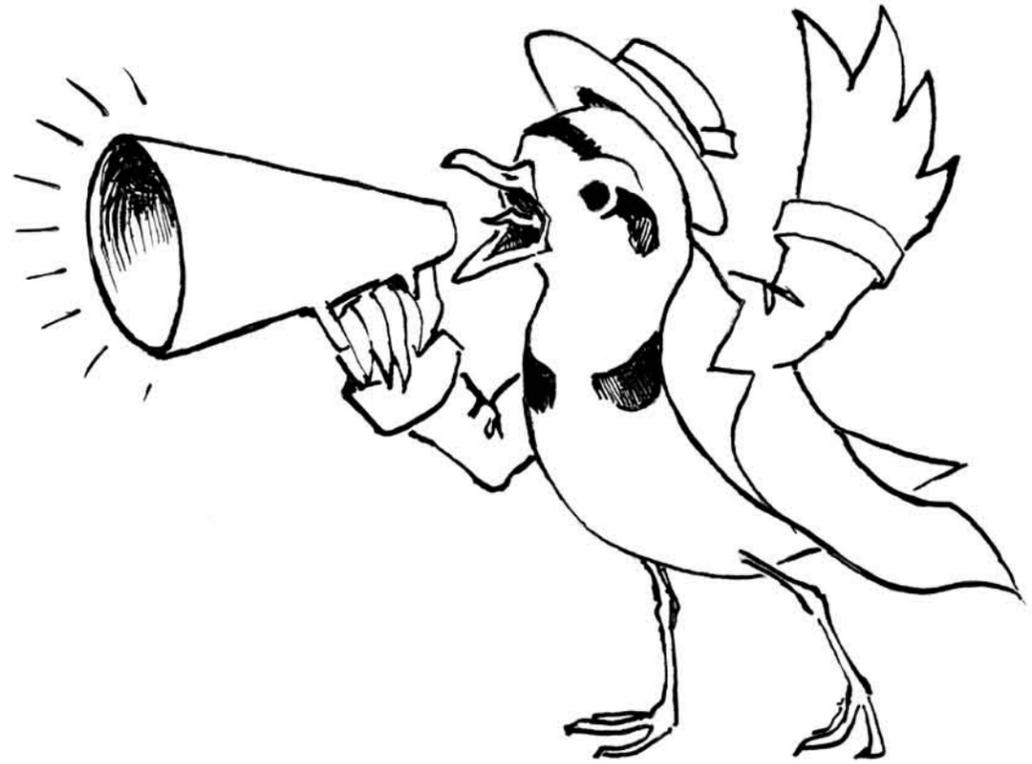
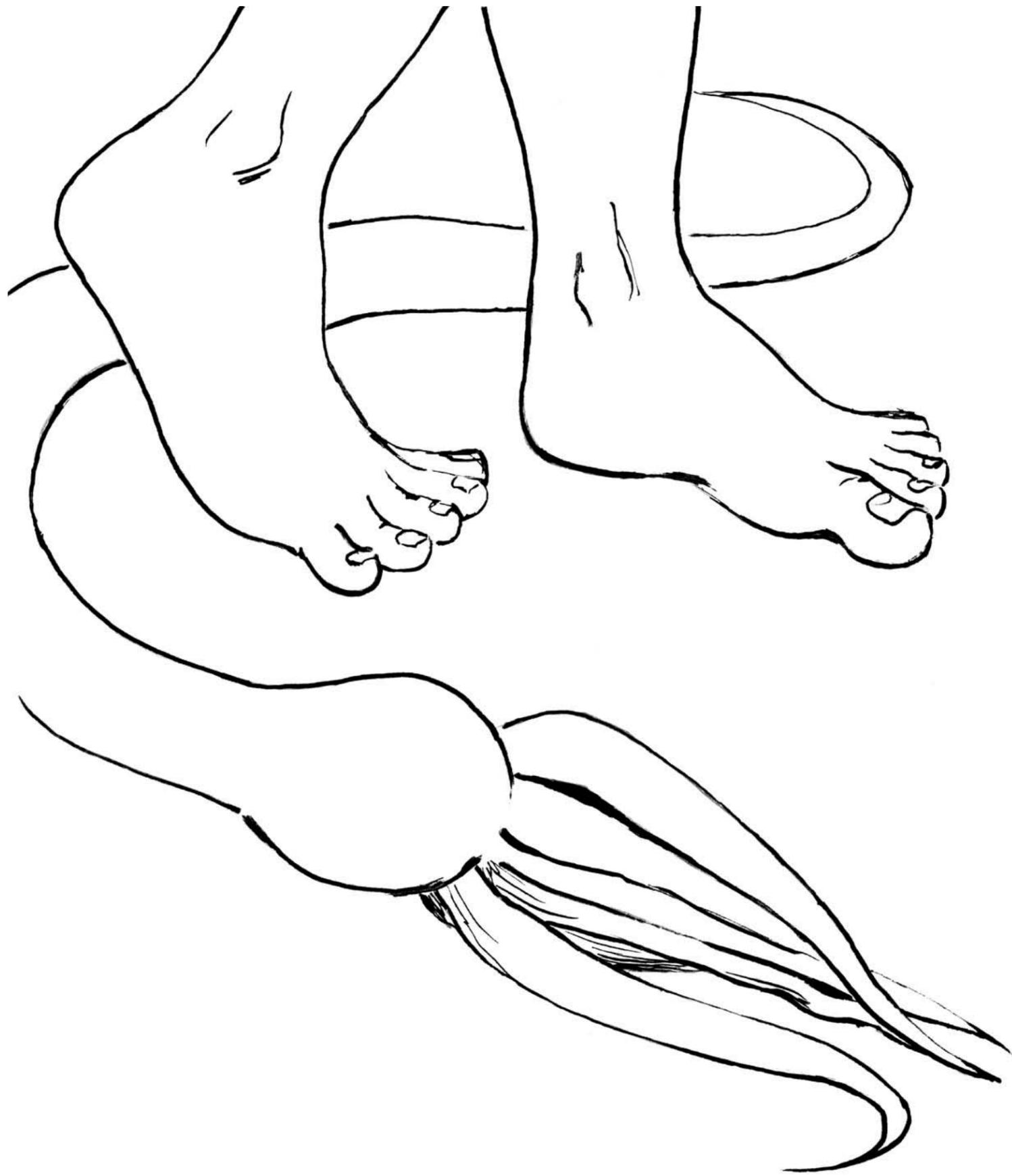
Just because you did not make the mess does not mean you should pick up less.



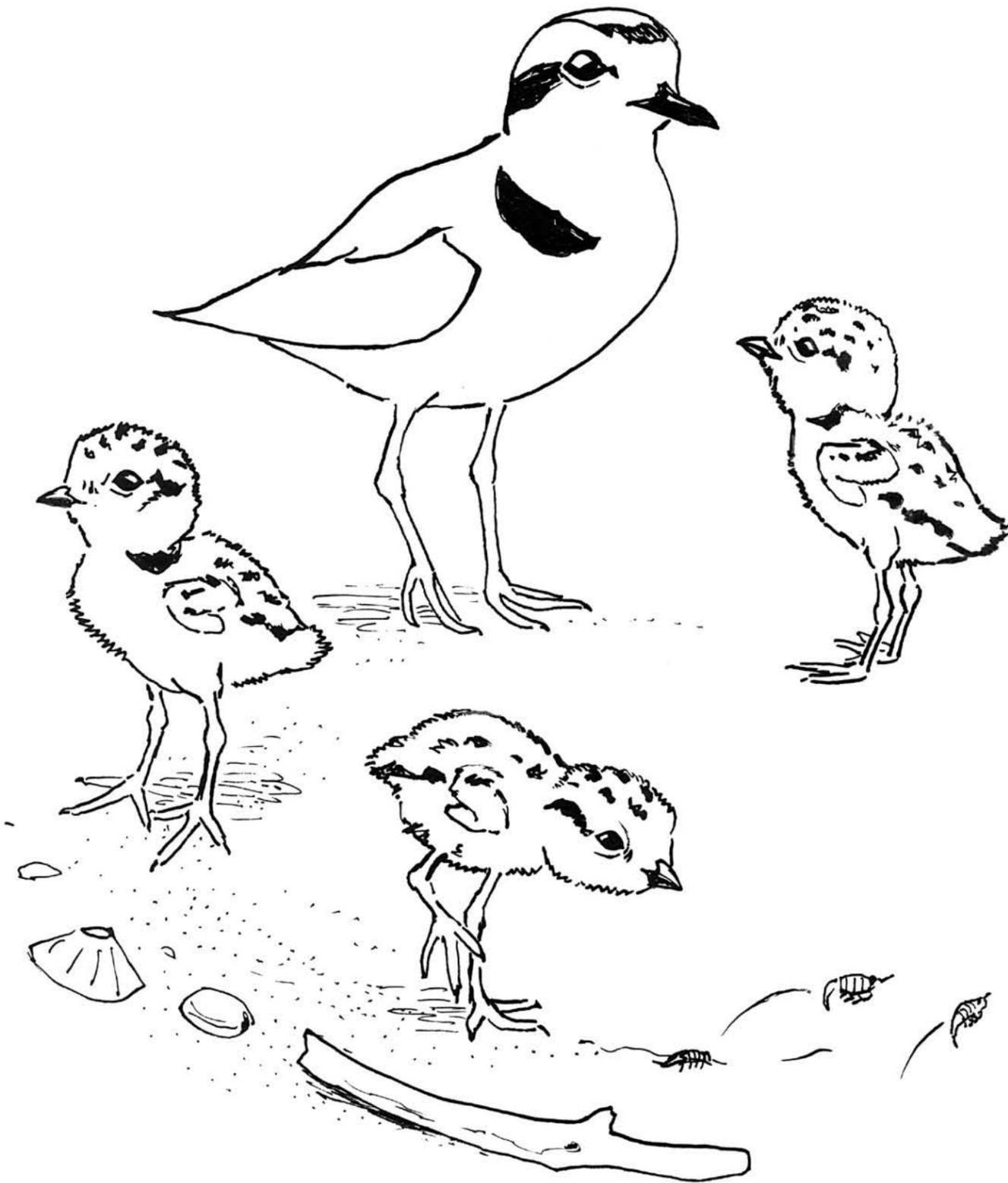
Always keep a leash on Rover
to keep him from scaring a plover.
Or to make sure your dog does not roam
consider leaving him at home.
Find another place to walk your dog today
let him chase sticks — that is harmless play.



Also be careful what you do
when sharing the beach with a plover or two.
The beach is a place to have fun
so camp, fly a kite, skip and run.
Just do it where the plovers will not be
so you will not be the reason they flee.



Since you know how to protect a threatened bird
please do not act like one of the herd.
Tell all those you see walking on sand and help
all the ways that they can help.



Now if you are a plover lover
this beautiful bird may someday recover.

VOCABULARY



Here are some words, maybe new to you,
but each of them contains a clue.

abandon (a-BAN-duhn): to leave someone or something alone, even when they need help.

beach grass: a coarse grass, growing on the sandy shores of the ocean, which, by its interlaced roots, holds the sand in place.

camouflage (cam-uh-FLAJ or cam-uh-FLAZH): to hide by blending in with the natural surroundings.

canine (CAY-nine): of the dog family.

decline (dee-CLINE): moving downward, to become less in amount.

disturbance (dih-STUR-bance): an interruption of peace and quiet, an undesirable change in the regular course of things.

drift logs: tree trunks and tree branches carried by waves and moved along the beach from one place to another.

dune (doon): a hill or a ridge made of sand. Dunes are shaped by the wind, and change all the time.

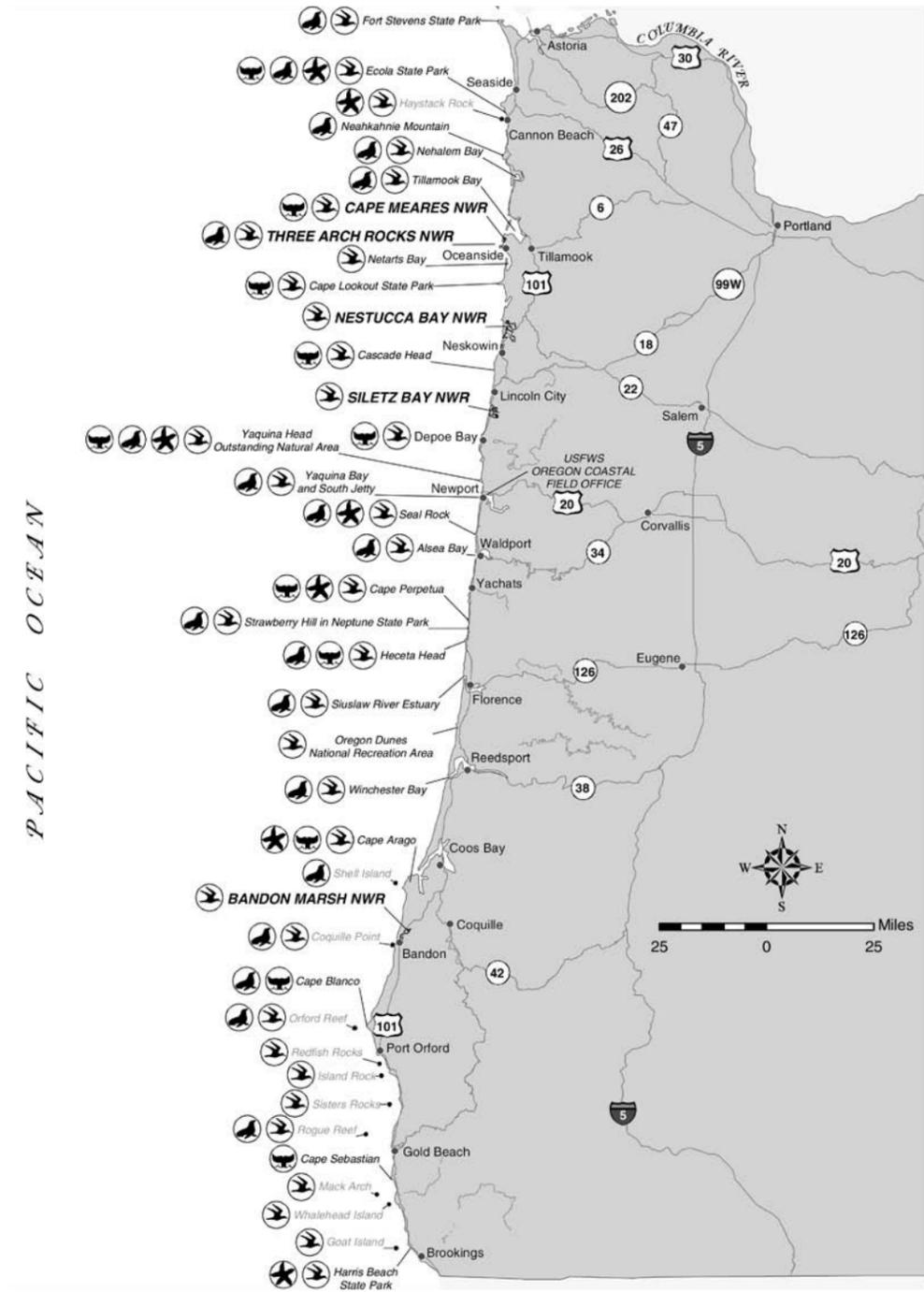
investigate (in-VEST-uh-gate): to examine step-by-step, to observe (watch) closely.

predator (PRED-a-ter): an animal that attacks and eats another animal.

threatened (THRET-tend): at risk of becoming endangered.

tide line: the line of dried seaweed, marine vegetation and other debris left on the beach by the incoming tides, sometimes called the "wrack line."

Use this page for drawings and photos of your adventures at the beach with snowy plovers.



Key to Viewing: Whales Seals / Sea Lions Birds Tidepools

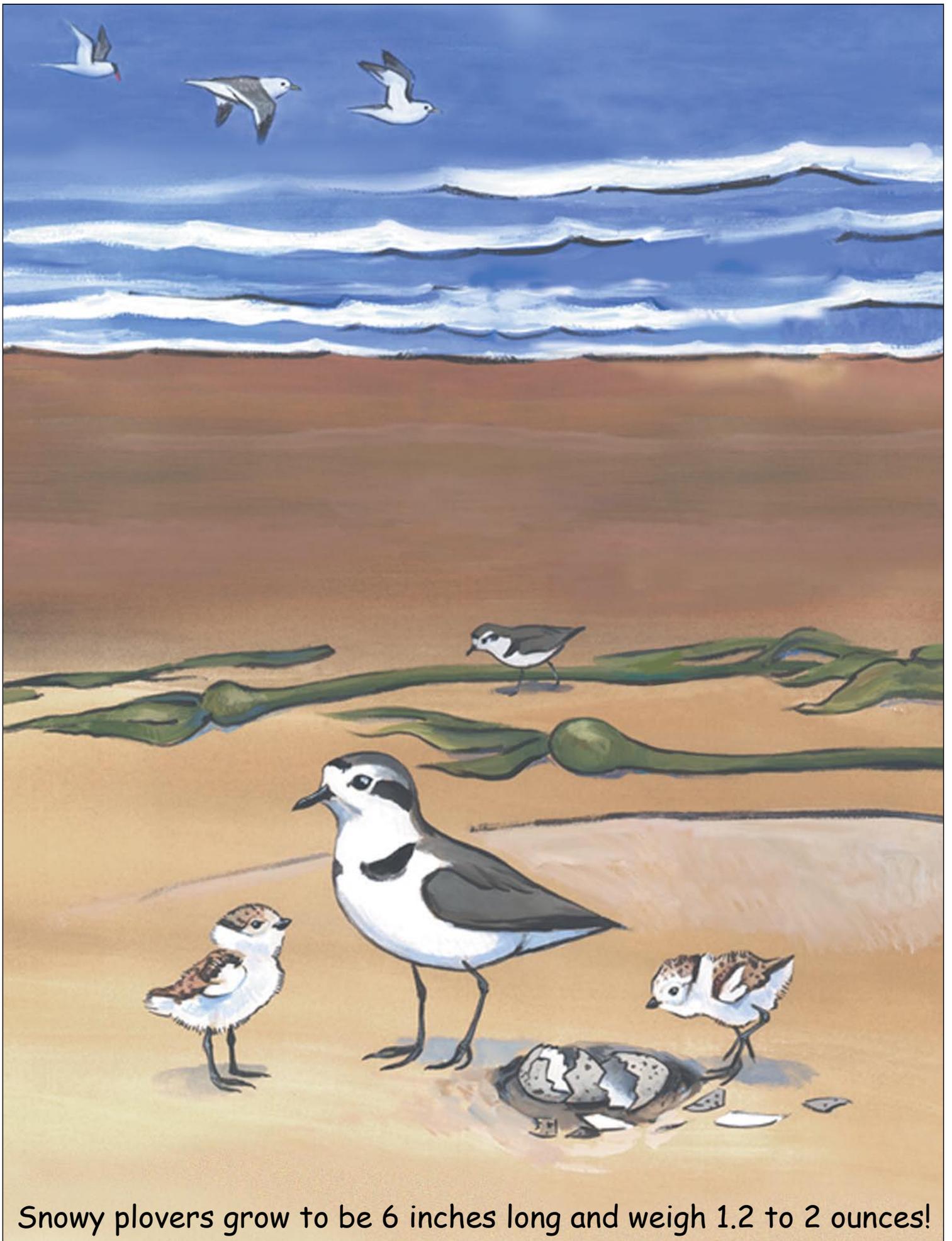


WILDLIFE WATCHING on the Oregon Coast



All coastal islands, reefs, and offshore rocks are part of Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge and are closed to visitors at all times.
Please Note: Wildlife viewing opportunities vary by season and tidal phase.

For more information about the Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuges please visit our website at <http://oregoncoast.fws.gov> or contact us at (541) 867-4550.
 Oregon Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex 2127 SE OSU Drive Newport, OR 97365



Snowy plovers grow to be 6 inches long and weigh 1.2 to 2 ounces!