Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosis*)

Rules Visitors Must Follow

Since snowy plovers are present on our beaches year-round, there are rules that visitors must follow to avoid or minimize impacts to the birds.

1. No motor vehicles of any kind are permitted off pavement on the Leadbetter Point Unit of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR).
2. Dogs are prohibited on Willapa NWR unless specifically used for waterfowl hunting or as an approved guide dog. Where authorized on Washington State Park coastal beaches, dogs must be leashed and under control at all times.
3. Camping and fires are not allowed.
4. Stay out of fenced or posted habitat areas.
5. Do not remove shells, kelp, or driftwood from the beach; they provide nesting and feeding habitat for snowy plovers.
6. Fireworks are prohibited.
7. Do not feed any wildlife.

Failure to follow these rules may result in citations and fines.

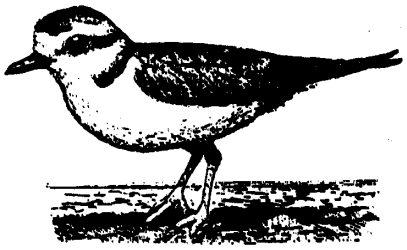
Guidelines Visitors Should Follow

• Do not approach birds, nests, or fencing. Plovers seasonally nest on dry portions of sandy beaches and river bars. Feeding primarily occurs near the wrack or high tide line. During winter months and stormy weather, plovers seek shelter near dunes, behind driftwood and other objects, and in depressions in the sand.

• Avoid picnicking or sunbathing near plover nesting habitat.

• Do not fly kites, hang glide, or toss Frisbees or balls near snowy plover habitat. Other activities causing disturbance may also be restricted.

• Dispose of garbage properly to avoid attracting plover predators.



Western snowy plovers inhabit beaches and sparsely vegetated coastal dunes on the Leadbetter Point Unit of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. They are part of the Pacific coast population found breeding from Washington State to Baja Mexico. Western snowy plovers are classified as a threatened species because their numbers have declined due to habitat loss, human disturbance, and increasing threats from predators.

The western snowy plover is a small shorebird about 6 inches long, with a thin dark bill, and a light-colored body with dark patches on either side of the neck, behind the eye, and on the forehead. Plovers blend in with their surroundings so well that they are extremely hard to see, making it easy for unsuspecting visitors to disturb the birds or even crush the eggs and chicks, never realizing the damage they've caused. For these reasons plover nesting areas are closed to public access during the nesting season from March 15 to September 15 each year.

Enhancing productivity is key to population growth and necessary for reaching the recovery goal of one chick fledged per adult male. In an effort to increase reproductive success, active habitat restoration is an on-going part of management on the refuge. To improve habitat quality and quantity, invasive beachgrass is being cleared at Leadbetter Point. Removing the non-native beachgrass provides more open sand for nesting plovers and reduces cover for predators that depredate plover nests, chicks, and adults. To date over 125 acres of beach habitat have been restored on the refuge.