



Oregon Sea Grant Extension
Sustainable Tourism &
Outdoor Recreation Program

Interpretative Fact Sheet Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*)

 tourism.oregonstate.edu/western-snowy-plover-charadrius-alexandrinus-nivosus/

By colliiek2

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If you see a small shorebird scurrying over the sand, it is probably a Western Snowy Plover. There are many different types of shorebirds that are easily identified by their small to medium sized bodies, with relatively long legs and thin bills.

Western Snowy Plovers have sand-colored back feathers and black markings on their faces and sides of their necks. They are about seven inches long and have a wingspan of about 19 inches. They are found on the Pacific coastal areas, across both North and South America, Eurasia, and Africa.



Western Snowy Plover
(Photo courtesy of ODFW)

Oregon Coast breeder

This is the only shorebird that regularly breeds on Oregon's beaches and resides year-round between Heceta Head, near Florence, Oregon south to Cape Blanco, near Port Orford. The Snowy Plover will frequently raise two broods (or more) each year.

Young birds are very independent and leave the nest within three hours of hatching. They have an acute sense of sight and are intelligent and will forage unassisted by parents. Like their parents they are fully mobile walking, running, wading, and swimming well.

Upon parental signals indicating the approach of people or potential predators, they will flatten themselves on the ground.

Diet

Snowy Plovers will consume many types of small crustaceans, worms, and insects. When they spy a potential morsel, they will pick it up or attempt to startle the creature into moving. Thus, if it moves, they are assured that what they caught is edible.

Human Interaction

Human activities on the beach often disturbs the Western Snowy Plover's natural habitat and nesting attempts. Activities that frequently disturb the birds include dog walking, kite flying, off-road vehicles, and any nest disturbances.

These disturbances pushed the bird into a Threatened category under the Endangered Species Act several years ago. The bird has gradually been making a comeback, but often faces a number of human challenges.

The Audubon Society developed four recommendations to make beaches safer for birds that, in summary, include:

- Give nests and nesting birds plenty of space
- Keep pets on a leash (or use a different beach)
- Clean up trash or food scraps that might attract predators, and
- Avoid driving vehicles in nesting areas.

REFERENCES:

–Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, Western Snowy Plover (<https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing/species/western-snowy-plover>)
–All About Birds, Snowy Plover (https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Snowy_Plover/)
–Wikipedia, Snowy Plover (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snowy_plover)
–Audubon Society, Snowy Plover (<https://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/snowy-plover> and
...news/audubon-urges-beachgoers-give-birds-their-space-too)