

# Beach Nesting Bird Surveys at Little Estero Critical Wildlife Area

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# Beach Nesting Birds

- Black Skimmer
- Snowy Plover
- Least Tern
- Wilson's Plover



# Colonial Seabirds

- Colonies range in size from just a few nests to 100s of nests
- Nest is a scrape in the sand
- Eggs camouflaged to match sand (2-3)
- Just over 1 inch long
- Easily missed by pedestrians, beach drivers



Photo by Jack Rodgers



# Solitary Nesting Shorebirds

- More Secretive
- Nests Hidden
- Nest closer to dune vegetation
- Chicks very mobile



All photos by Jack Rodgers

# Beach Nesting Bird Diet

- Dive into the water or skim across the water to catch small fish
- Forage along beaches, mud flats eating mole crabs, fiddler crabs, flies, beetles, marine worms



# When and Where do They Nest?



Photo by Alexander Kropp



Photo by Jack Rodgers

- Nest on Florida beaches, barrier islands, spoil islands and oyster rakes, March–August.
- All species dig a “scrape” in the sand and lay 2-3 eggs in the scrape.



# Why is Disturbance a Problem?



Photo by Alexander Kropp



Photo by Jack Rodgers

- For eggs to hatch, parents must consistently incubate/shade eggs from the sun.
- Disturbance causes adults to flush and exposes eggs to the hot sun and predators.



# Why is disturbance a problem?



- Chicks can also overheat in the midday sun without consistent shade from parents.
- Disturbance exposes young to the hot sun and to predators.





# Nests Invisible from a distance



Photo by Alex Kropp

- Eggs camouflaged/invisible to predators.
- Susceptible to being crushed by beach vehicles and pedestrians.



# Chicks hard to see from a Distance



- Young, downy chicks also susceptible to being crushed by pedestrians/vehicles.



# Beach Recreation



# Beach Raking



# Pets and other Predators



# Posting Nesting Areas is Essential



- Minimizes disturbance that can directly or indirectly destroy eggs/flightless young.





The End

