

THE THREATS FACING SHOREBIRDS

Coastal areas have unique importance for many species of birds, offering critical breeding sites as well as rich sources of food for migratory stopovers. Booming coastal development and recreational use of beaches are eroding vital habitat and greatly reducing the areas where birds can feed and nest. You can help birds, and other wildlife, by ensuring that use of the remaining areas is compatible with wildlife use.

About Audubon

The National Audubon Society saves birds and their habitats throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education, and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon is committed to protecting the vital habitat along America's coasts where people and birds intersect. Audubon works with friends and partners to promote responsible coastal management practices and stewardship at key breeding, migration, and non-breeding coastal sites and habitats that shore-dependent birds require at critical points in their annual lifecycle. Beach stewardship programs empower local communities to steer beachgoers away from the most important nesting sites.

Visit Audubon online for more information and tips on protecting coastal habitats.

www.audubon.org



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Inside: Western Sandpipers. Photo: Walker Golder

PRESERVING COASTS

Audubon Guide to Sharing the Beach With Shorebirds



How to be a bird-friendly beachgoer

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM SHOREBIRD HABITAT

Nesting and feeding areas are often posted with signs during breeding season. Even if these areas are not posted, be aware of the restrictions at your local beach and of activities that may not be appropriate for sensitive habitats.

Scaring a flock of feeding or roosting shorebirds—accidentally or on purpose—puts the birds in jeopardy, as shorebirds can feed only under certain tidal conditions. Disturbance prevents rest and feeding and can lead to reduced survival rates and reproduction. Never walk through an area where you see birds feeding, resting, or nesting. Instead, walk around, and you'll help wild birds thrive by not disturbing them.

As tempting as it might be to get a close look at the cute chicks, this should be avoided. Even a single disturbance can cause adult birds to leave their nests and abandon their chicks, which can make the chicks and eggs vulnerable to predators and overheating. You will know if you are too close to a nest or chicks, as the parents will defend their nest by dive-bombing you, calling loudly, or feigning a broken wing nearby. Be a responsible beachgoer and bring your binoculars or a zoom lens camera and admire the shorebirds from a distance.

KEEP PETS LEASHED

Playful pooches want everyone involved in the fun, but their playfulness can wreak havoc on shorebird colonies in a matter of seconds. Birds perceive dogs as predators, even if the dogs aren't chasing them. Respect the signs, and keep your pet leashed when near nesting, overwintering, resting, and feeding birds. There are some areas, such as wildlife preserves, that don't allow pets at all—even on a leash.

TAKE YOUR TRASH WITH YOU

A mountain of trash is no fun for birds. Leftover food attracts predators that can attack nests and young birds. Litter also sometimes contains materials that are hazardous or toxic to birds. If you do not see covered or wildlife-proof recycling and trash containers at the beach, take your trash with you and dispose of it properly. Don't ever bury your trash on the beach.

DISPOSE OF FISHING LINE

Be sure to dispose of your fishing line properly in a monofilament recycling container. Birds can easily become entangled in loose line, which can trap, injure, or even kill them. Also remove bait and scraps from cleaned fish, which can attract predators.

AVOID FEEDING THE WILDLIFE

This seemingly harmless activity can draw predators, such as rodents, raccoons, gulls, and crows, to nesting areas, where they will prey on the eggs and chicks of beach-nesting birds.

AVOID NOISY ACTIVITIES NEAR NESTING AREAS

Beach activities like flying kites and drones, throwing balls, building bonfires, exploding fireworks, or riding horses, bikes, and ATVs can be good fun—but they can cause birds to leave their nest or chicks unprotected. Put yourself in the feathers of a shorebird chick. How would you feel if you were the size of a tennis ball, weighed two ounces, and couldn't fly away from danger? Help nesting shorebirds by avoiding these activities.

VOLUNTEER TO BE A BEACH STEWARD

Nesting birds are a vital part of the ecosystem and a sign of a healthy beach. Teach others to appreciate beach-nesting birds. Contact your local Audubon chapter or nature center for more.

