



ARTICLE

2021 Western Snowy Plover Breeding Season Winding Down

Point Reyes National Seashore (<https://www.nps.gov/pore/>)



Male plover tending to chicks on a Point Reyes beach in late July. As of July 31st, 32 chicks have hatched from 12 nests. Ten of those have fledged, and six are currently alive and being raised by tending males.

NPS / Matt Lau

July 2021 - The western snowy plover breeding season in Point Reyes National Seashore is nearing its end. As of July 31st, biologists have observed 32 total nests throughout the seashore: 10 on Kehoe Beach, three in the Abbots Lagoon restoration area, 13 on the ocean-fronting beach between Abbots Lagoon and North Beach parking lot, three between North Beach and South Beach parking lots, and three on Limantour Beach.

How do 32 nests stack up to previous nest counts for these federally threatened shorebirds? Okay, but not great. Thirty-two is above average since 1996 (~28 nests), but also the lowest number seen since 2013. Last year, biologists found 39 nests.

Of the 32 nests, 12 have hatched (37.5%), 16 have failed (50%), and four nests are still active. Thus far, this nest failure rate is better than it was last year—56% of nests failed in 2020. Chick survival is also looking up this year. The 12 nests that hatched so far have produced 32 chicks. Of those, biologists have confirmed that 10 have fledged and approximately six are currently alive and being raised by tending male plovers. Only 11 of 48 chicks (22.9%) fledged during the whole 2020 season. The last of the four active nests are projected to hatch by the second week of August, meaning biologists will be monitoring these late-season broods into September!

Meanwhile, biologists have seen snowy plovers coalescing into "winter" flocks along Point Reyes beaches, another indication that the breeding season is nearing its end. These winter flocks consist of plovers that breed in Point Reyes, plus migrants from other breeding areas along the Pacific Coast and migrants from inland breeding populations. As summer progresses into the fall season, these flocks will grow in number until the following spring.

For more information

- San Francisco Bay Area Network [Western Snowy Plover Monitoring webpage](https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/snowy-plovers.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/im/sfan/snowy-plovers.htm>)
- Pacific Coast Science & Learning Center [Western Snowy Plovers webpage](https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/western-snowy-plovers.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/western-snowy-plovers.htm>)
 - [Western Snowy Plover Blog](https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/western-snowy-plover-blog.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/western-snowy-plover-blog.htm>)
- Contact Snowy Plover Ecologist [Matt Lau](https://www.nps.gov/common/utilities/sendmail/sendemail.cfm?o=4684CFAFA2DFAEA9B4B503BCB710A4BB&r=/articles/000/2021-western-snowy-plover-breeding-season-winding-down.htm) (<https://www.nps.gov/common/utilities/sendmail/sendemail.cfm?o=4684CFAFA2DFAEA9B4B503BCB710A4BB&r=/articles/000/2021-western-snowy-plover-breeding-season-winding-down.htm>)

See more from the Bay Area Nature & Science Blog (<https://www.nps.gov/rlc/pacificcoast/blog.htm>)



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Last updated: August 4, 2021

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