



Seabirds

Nest in colonies varying in size from a few individuals to several hundred pairs. Colonies are typically conspicuous since seabirds nest on more open beach, and adults are very defensive around the nest. Nests are shallow scrapes in the sand, and eggs/nestlings are sand-colored with dark speckling. Colonies are very sensitive to disturbance.

LEAST TERN. *Sterna antillarum*

21-23 cm

State Listed- Threatened. Smallest tern and only tern with a yellow, black-tipped bill. Common- most likely species of seabird to be encountered. Nests April-August. Photos: (left) adult on nest, (right) adult in breeding plumage (loses cap towards the end of the breeding season).



BLACK SKIMMER. *Rynchops niger*

40-50 cm

State Listed- Species of Special Concern. Distinctive, boldly patterned with lower bill much longer than upper bill. Fairly common- more so on the Gulf coast. Nests May-August. Photos: (left) adult in breeding plumage, (right) adult close-up.



ROYAL TERN. *Thalasseus maxima*

45-50 cm

Large tern with orange bill. Fairly common- however, nests in large colonies that are few and very localized. Nests April-August. Photos: (left) adult with chick, (right) adult close-up (acquires full black cap early in the breeding season).



SANDWICH TERN. *Thalasseus sandvicensis*

34-45 cm

Medium-sized tern and only tern with a black yellow-tipped bill. Uncommon- often nests with Royal Terns in large colonies that are few and very localized. Nests April-August. Photos: (left) adult with chick, (right) adult close-up (note: adults have a full black cap early in the breeding season).



Shorebirds

Non-colonial species, occasionally nesting in loose groups. Shorebirds nest on open beach and within dune vegetation. Nests are typically shallow scrapes lined with shell fragments and other debris, and are difficult to find since shorebirds rely on concealment as a primary defense. Birds/eggs are well-camouflaged and remain still when approached.

AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER. *Haematopus palliatus*

40-44 cm

State Listed- Species of Special Concern. Large shorebird with distinctive color pattern and stout red bill. Fairly common- nests in wrack line and dune vegetation. Nests April-August. Photos: (left) adult close-up, (right) adult.



SNOWY PLOVER. *Charadrius alexandrinus*

15-17 cm

State listed- Threatened. Small shorebird with thin bill and grayish legs (compare with Wilson's Plover). Uncommon- found only along Gulf coast, nests on open beach. Nests February-August. Photos: (left) adult on nest, (right) nest with eggs.



WILSON'S PLOVER. *Charadrius wilsonia*

16-20 cm

Similar to Snowy Plover with larger bill and pinkish legs. Common- nests within dune vegetation. Nests March-August. Photos: (left) adult close-up in non-breeding plumage, (right) adult in non-breeding plumage (note: forehead and neck black in breeding plumage).



WILLET. *Tringa semipalmata*

33-41 cm

Large shorebird with long bill and grayish legs. Fairly common- nests within marsh and dune vegetation. Nests April-August. Photos: (left) adult close-up in breeding plumage, (right) adult in breeding plumage.





Species in Trouble

Many of Florida's beach-nesting shorebirds and seabirds have experienced declines as a result of habitat loss and excessive disturbance at nests and colonies. In response, FWC and a growing network of partners are working to improve protection and management of important nesting locations throughout Florida, and the following are ways you can help our effort.

1 MINIMIZE NEST DISTURBANCE



- ▶ Please respect posted areas for beach-nesting birds and set an example for beachgoers around you. *Contact your respective FWC Regional Biologist if access into a posted area is necessary.*
 - ▶ Many nests are not posted. When surveying, please pay careful attention where you step in order to avoid stepping on a nest. Agitated adults are an indication a nest may be near.
 - ▶ Operate vehicles as close to the water as safely possible. Nests can be located anywhere on the upper beach, and the hard-to-see eggs and chicks can easily get run over.
- Report acts of vandalism at posted sites to the Wildlife Alert Hotline (1-888-404-3922) and notify your respective FWC Regional Biologist.**

2 WATCH OUT FOR CHICKS



- ▶ Operate vehicles at a low rate of speed, slow enough for the driver to recognize and avoid chicks in the vehicle's path. Young birds often feed near the water's edge, and will hunker down or seek shelter in ruts or depressions when approached.
- ▶ Avoid walking or driving in or near the wrack line or areas with dense seaweed and debris since these areas are frequently used by chicks as foraging habitat and shelter.
- ▶ Chicks are very mobile soon after hatching and can be found well outside posted areas. As with nests, agitated adults (e.g. dive-bombing, broken-wing display) may signify a chick is nearby, proceed carefully.
- ▶ If you find a chick without an adult nearby, do not assume it has been abandoned and try to pick it up- chicks are fairly independent.

3 REPORT YOUR OBSERVATIONS



- ▶ Contribute to our expanding knowledge of shorebirds and seabirds. Similar to the data collected on sea turtle nests, we are trying to gain a better understanding of where, when, and how well shorebirds and seabirds are nesting in Florida. Report your observations of nests and/or chicks to the following email: shorebird@myfwc.com
- ▶ When submitting an observation please include the following information: 1) Date and time; 2) Species; 3) Number of nests; 4) Location (GPS coordinates preferred, if not possible, please provide a description of the site with map names and distances); 5) Is the site posted?
- ▶ In addition to nest/chick observations, please notify us at the same email if a posted site needs maintenance (symbolic fencing on the ground, posts and signs falling down, etc.)

We appreciate your assistance, if you have any questions, contact us at shorebird@myfwc.com

FWC Regional Phone Numbers

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|---------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Northwest | 850-265-3676 | Southwest | 863-648-3200 |
| North Central | 386-758-0525 | South | 561-625-5122 |
| Northeast | 352-732-1225 | | |



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