

11:00 -12:30 Concurrent Session I Preble 107 - Session Notes

Birds and Other Wildlife on the Beach: Why it matters for the beach, why it matters for you

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Introducing the Piping Plover

- "The chicks are quite amazing. They come from tiny eggs and look like cotton balls on toothpicks."
- The public's first introduction to plovers is often a restricted area sign; they do need space to raise their young.
- They are a state listed endangered species and a federally threatened species.

Things you should know about the Plover

- They usually nest in the fordune, the toe of the dune. Nests are called scrapes and are simple indentations in the sand, maybe lined with shells.
- Nesting starts at the end of April, although they will arrive in March. Will continue through early July.
- Nesting occurs from Newfoundland, Canada to North Carolina, USA.
- They do show nesting site fidelity. Other states will tag plovers, and we are able to see that unlike other migratory birds that make straight migrations, plovers tend to "putter" around before reaching nesting grounds.
- Typically 4 eggs per clutch, 25 days until they hatch.
- Chicks will leave the nest within a couple hours of hatching and will begin to look for food immediately after.
- 26 days or longer to fully fledge.
- The general recovery benchmark is 1.5 successful chicks per parent. Northern research suggests 1.8; southern research suggests 1.2 chicks per parent.
- Plover chicks are tasty and many things will eat them including cats and dogs, foxes, skunks and sea gulls.
- Parents will peep or drag wings if you are too close and try to distract you from the nest.
- Life span of the plover is typically 5 years.
- In 1986 the Maine Audubon Society began experimenting with nesting exclosures. Cages were placed around nests in the early 90's, pretty effective, but not perfect.
- Populations improved, from 10 breeding pairs in 1986 to 66 pairs today. Productivity is now 1.8 chicks per parent.

Introducing the Least Tern

- Few nesting pairs in Maine. Only two sites recorded. There are 240 recorded pairs elsewhere.
- State endangered, listed on the west coast and interior.
- Nest from Maine to Florida.

- Nest in colonies, in scrapes on flat sandy beaches May through August.
- They are resilient in that they are able to switch nesting sites in case of storm events.
- They typically lay 2 to 3 eggs, which will hatch in 20 days.
- The chicks will leave the nest within a couple days.
- Will fledge in 18 to 20 days.
- Chicks are slow and clumsy.
- Parents are protective and will swoop and poop on you.
- Can live up to 15 years.

Who Manages the Beaches?

- We all do, it is important to have a beach respect ethic.
- "We all love the beaches, sometimes to death."
- How do we alter the beach?
 - Buildings and other Development
 - Offers habitat for predators like weasels, raccoons, foxes, skunks who would normally seek out our trash.
 - Sea Walls
 - Impede the exchange of sediment between the land and sea. Wave energy scours sand eroding dune.
 - Can become a barrier to chicks attempting to flee from predators into the safety of the dunes.
 - Visitation Use
 - How much trash people bring, people feeding gulls. Creates challenges for chicks moving from grass to water.
 - Pets
 - Cats, dogs, horse, ferrets all are a danger to either eat or trample plover chicks or eggs.
 - Clearing Wrack
 - Wrack is essential for beaches.
 - Traps sand, adds moisture and nutrients and feeds critical dune grass. Provides good habitat for plover food.
 - Driving
 - Packs sand, damages vegetation, increases erosion.
 - Illegal in Maine and most places.

Park Service, What we do to help

- 3 pronged approach between the public, the game wardens and the law enforcement.
- There have been public outreach efforts for 7 years. This year things seem different, people are getting excited.
- Landowners are a huge part of this project, we work closely with them, and without them there would be no success.
- Work closely with municipalities. The public workers seem to care most about the beaches they work near and the birds that use them.
- Law enforcement volunteers. Warden services working together.

What you can do!

- Enjoy from a distance. Give birds plenty of room. It doesn't take them much to abandon nests.
- Volunteer for local monitoring programs, like water quality or beach monitoring. Talk to local coordinators.
- Keep pets inside, or at least on a close leash and away from nesting areas. Clean up after them.
- Remember to get permits before doing any work on the beaches. Check with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW). Work outside of the breeding season. Outside of April through August.
- Encourage your community to embrace the wrack. This can be tough, as people don't want to walk all over seaweed.
- Help support dune growth, stake out and minimize paths and trails.
- Discourage predators by not sharing your lunch with the seagulls.
- This is not just about plovers and terns, there are other migratory species like the red knots which also use our beaches.

Maine Wildlife Action Plan

- A collaborative approach for the next 10 years of wildlife and habitat conservation.
- Represents state as a whole.
- State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP)
 - First plan came out in 2005, non regulatory.
 - Not meant to replace any existing programs, meant to enhance.
 - Identifies Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN). Including their habitats, stressors and conservation actions.
 - A qualification for State Wildlife Grants (SWG). Must be updated every 10 years in order to qualify.
 - 213 species in 2005, about 370 now.
- Where does beach wildlife fit in?
 - Plovers and Turn Priority 1 status. Will receive a lot of focus.
 - Conservation actions focused at beaches themselves.
- Example conservation actions:
 - Continue efforts to recruit and provide training for volunteer monitors and provide outreach to recreationalists.

QUESTIONS:

Why "about 370" species in this years action plan?

- Answer: Still some pending conservation status.

Do plovers nest several times per year?

- Answer: If unsuccessful they will. The more we can do early on for successful fledging; they will have no need to re-nest.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE: What's good for the birds is good for the beach and beach lovers. We must work together to protect and to protect us from ourselves.

Considering Beach Ecology in a southern California Coastal Vulnerability Assessment – a model for Maine
Monique Myers, California Sea Grant
Pages 4-5

Looking at vulnerability of beaches and climate change

- Focusing on ecosystems.
- Federally protected animals
 - Snowy plovers and least turns, marine mammals and Grunions, an egg laying fish in Santa Barbara.
 - The wrack community and sand dwellers.

Santa Barbara Area Coastal Ecosystem Vulnerability Assessment (SBA CEVA)
Fundors: NOAA Climate Program Office, Sea Grant. Provides a vulnerability assessment focused on coastal ecosystems for the SB area. Non-regulatory, hopefully it will influence partners and planners

Process

- Climate Downscaling: Methodology will downscale global climate models.
- CoSMoS hazard modeling: Storm modeling
- Vulnerability of Beaches: Focused on beach erosion.
- Current elevations are a range of habitat bands. Lower, Mid and Upper + sea level rise and shoreline change = position of future habitat. Upper beach zones lost mean biodiversity lost.
- Geographic Scope about six miles near SB.

Coordination

- Review of Draft LCP policies.
- Review of city of Santa Barbara habitat maps.
- Identifying specific focus area of report.

Providing models and suggestions

- Beaches commonly raked, more vulnerable to climate change if raked.

To support project they made a website to address topics about beaches Explore Beach Ecosystems Website: <https://caseagrant.ucsd.edu/project/explore-sandy-beach-ecosystems-of-southern-california>

QUESTIONS:

At what point will you begin making recommendations, are you currently making recommendations, or will you at the end in one large packet?

- Answer: Our end date was pretty soon, closer to middle of project, no results yet, comments provided as we go. And then document and report and policies will be informed by results.

We are struggling with development in Ogunquit, how do you get town people to listen to studies and plans?

- Answer: We are working with the planners and not the public at this point to prevent this issue. Education efforts are important. People will understand animals more than sand, one species management vs. holistic.