These protected birds are among those that nest on Florida's beaches

Nesting from March to August

Black skimmers nest in colonies. They have large orange and black beaks which they use to skim the water's surface for prey.

Least terns are small yellow-billed birds with white "foreheads." They nest in colonies on beaches and frequently nest on rooftops as well.

American oystercatchers have long red beaks which they use to dig for prey. They often return to the same nesting area each year.

Wilson's plovers have thicker beaks than other plovers. They may pretend to be injured in an effort to lead you away from their nest.

Nesting from February to August along the Gulf Coast

Snowy plovers are small, pale birds with short beaks. Snowy plover chicks begin to forage on their own just hours after hatching.

Least tern

Are you too close? Yes, if beach-nesting birds become agitated or take flight when you approach.

For more information, visit:
MyFWC.com

The Florida Shorebird Alliance
FLShorebirdAlliance.org

Report violations against wildlife:
888-404-FWCC (3922)

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FLShorebirdAlliance.org

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Share the Beach *with* Beach-Nesting Birds

Their survival depends on you!

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com

Disturbance threatens survival

Many Florida shorebirds and seabirds nest on the open beach, where they lay eggs in shallow scrapes in the sand or sea shells. The nests are so well camouflaged that they can be accidentally trampled by unsuspecting beachgoers. When beach-nesting birds are forced to fly or run from their nests, their eggs and chicks are left vulnerable to the elements and to predators. Disturbances that cause birds to take flight or leave their young may threaten their survival.

Each nest is critical

Populations of beach-nesting birds are declining due to significant modification and disturbance of beaches due to human activities. The fate of each delicate nest is truly critical to the survival of these birds. By being a responsible beach-user, you can help beach-nesting birds and their young survive.

Eggs of beach-nesting birds blend in perfectly on the beach.

You can help! While enjoying the beach, take these simple steps:

- **Keep your distance.**
If birds become agitated or leave their nests, you are too close! A general rule is to stay at least 300 feet from a nest.

- **Respect posted areas.**
Avoid posted nesting and resting areas and use designated walkways.

- **Never intentionally force birds to fly.**
When birds are chased or disturbed, they use energy they need to reserve for nesting and migration.

- **Keep pets away from nesting areas.**
Even well-behaved pets can be perceived as a threat to birds and will disturb them. If you take pets to the beach, keep them leashed and away from nesting areas.

- **Keep the beach clean and do not feed wildlife.** Food scraps attract predators such as raccoons and crows to the beaches. Litter on beaches can entangle birds, sea turtles, and other wildlife.

- **Spread the word!**
If you see people disturbing nesting birds, gently remind them how their actions may hurt birds' survival. If they continue to disturb nesting birds, please call and report their activities to FWC's Wildlife Alert hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).

Avoid getting too close to beach-nesting birds

Beach-nesting birds view people and pets as a threat to their nests and young, and will react defensively when you get too close. You will know you are too close if adult birds react to your approach by standing up, running or flying from their nest.

If you remain too close to beach-nesting birds, they may try driving you away by calling out loudly and dive-bombing you. Some species may pretend to have a broken wing to lure your attention away from a nest.

When adult birds are actively defending in these ways, they can't protect eggs and chicks from the hot sun. Those defensive actions may also attract the attention of predators such as herons or crows.

If beach-nesting birds alert you that you are too close, immediately leave the area! As you leave, please keep a close eye on the ground for eggs or chicks that may be hidden in your path.

Volunteer with your local shorebird partnership! Visit FIShorebirdAlliance.org to get involved.

Least terns with chick.