

Pacifica tries to aid threatened snowy plover

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A little shorebird is making big waves in Pacifica these days.

The western snowy plover received recent accolades in the coastal community, including being designated the city's Earth Day honoree by the City Council.

In addition, the Pacifica Beach Coalition's 10th annual Earth Day of Action & EcoFest, in partnership with Pacifica, honored the threatened western snowy plover with the theme "Little Things Matter."

"We're excited to highlight that little things matter when taking care of our environment," said Lynn Adams, president of the Pacifica Beach Coalition, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving the ocean and coastal habitat and wildlife. "Litter is a global problem impacting our community and finding its way into the ocean greatly impacts shorebirds

like the snowy plover."

Snowy plovers, listed as threatened by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service under the federal Endangered Species Act, take up residency on Pacifica State Beach primarily during the non-breeding season from mid-August to May, but the population has been in decline due to a loss of habitat and disturbances from development and recreation, Adams said.

Within the last few years, snowy plovers began to return to Pacifica State Beach for the nonbreeding season from April through July.

Still, the plight of the species remains an issue. This year, only seven snowy plovers returned to Linda Mar State Beach compared to 36 last year, according to the Pacifica Beach Coalition.

"This is a time when protective measures are needed to make a difference to a little creature in peril," Adams said.

The Pacifica City Council took steps

in early 2013 to protect the snowy plover on Pacifica State Beach by approving plans for education, enforcement of regulations and establishing a buffer area where beach activities such as picnicking, dog walking and kite flying will be restricted from an area near the snowy plovers.

Protecting and preserving the snowy plovers' sandy beach dune habitat is essential to the snowy plover's survival and recovery, said Adams.

"The Pacifica Beach Coalition and Pacifica's Environmental Family have led groups in the past that have restored Linda Mar State Beach habitat by planting native plants," Adams said. "The Shorebird Alliance team has really pushed the city of Pacifica for snowy plover protections, and we feel the connection to our efforts is underscored by this progress. Habitat is everything for these tiny beings, who nest next to sand dunes better secured by native plants than ice plant."

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