

Western Snowy Plovers return to Pacifica State Beach

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Visitors to Pacifica State Beach on Christmas day had the holiday treat of seeing 12 Western Snowy Plovers. As many as 60 visitors from all over the world got a close-up look through binoculars shared by two enthusiastic volunteers. On New Year's Day, 17 plovers were sighted on the beach.

This winter season there has been an encouraging up-tick in the number of plovers on Linda Mar Beach. Although Western Snowy Plovers have roosted at Linda Mar for thousands of years, their numbers have declined by 75 percent over the past decade.

Over the years many generous volunteers have contributed to the protection of the snowy plovers as well as other shorebirds on our beach. Volunteers are delighted to learn that the snowy plovers have been seen inside the protected symbolic fencing area, north of Crespi Drive, as well as foraging for kelp flies and beach hoppers out on the flat beach and at the wrack line.

At least five banded plovers were identified, and band patterns have been sent to scientists at Point Blue Conservation Science to learn the origin of the birds. One is known to be from Oregon by its distinctive blue and purple band. The origin of the other plovers will be posted on PSA's website as soon as that information is available.

Western Snowy Plovers are a small, rare, threatened shorebird that makes its home on certain beaches on the Pacific Coast. Listed as threatened, they are a species of special concern in California. As recently as 1960s they used to thrive on Pacifica State Beach year round; recent years have seen an influx of people and pets on the beach, closing up otherwise open spaces traditionally used by plovers.

To help keep the beach safe for shorebirds including Western Snowy Plovers, throw away any trash in the garbage cans so as not to attract predators like ravens and crows. To avoid stressing the birds and other wildlife, please follow leash laws when you bring your pet to the beach. Walk or jog along the wet sand when possible.

To earn more about Western Snowy Plovers, watch the movie: <http://www.westernsnowyplover.org/>