

## California Least Tern Aging Classification for Chicks and Fledglings

**Downy chick:** No pin feather present, and less than a week old. For our working purposes, those chicks still in the nest or associated with a nest are considered “downy chicks”.



**Feathered chick:** This age class starts when the first pin feathers erupt from the skin. This first occurs on the wings, and will not be visible in most field observations. For our working purposes, if the chick is a “runner” and no longer associated with a nest, it will be classified as a “feathered chick”.



**Pre-fledge:** Facial mask is beginning to show. Mostly feathered, may still have some down (especially around the head, giving it the appearance of having “old man hair”), but is not yet able to fly. Flight feathers are equal in length to the tail feathers. Less than one week to fledging.



**Younger fledge:** Just starting to be able to fly. Has a full facial mask. Still has a very brownish appearance (especially on head and back). Flight feathers are longer than the tail feathers.



**Older fledge:** Flying well and is starting to or has left the colony. May still be fed by adults, but is learning to forage. More gray coloration, though may still retain some brown. Flight feathers are longer than the tail feathers.

