

**Los Angeles & Orange County
Western Snowy Plover
Monthly Report for August 2020
Roost Surveys**

Prepared for
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Introduction

This report covers monthly roost surveys of historic roosting and nesting areas by permitted biologists and agency staff during August 2020. While COVID-19 remains present, no surveys were cancelled due to access or health concerns. Biologists surveyed beaches where a) access was not restricted and b) social distancing from members of the general public could be maintained safely.

Task 1.c. July Roost Survey: Los Angeles County

Table 1. Number of Snowy Plovers Observed in Los Angeles County

Location	July 2020	August 2017	August 2018	August 2019	August 2020	Notes
Zuma	2	ns	ns	0	2	
Malibu	6	ns	ns	18	24	Color band: g:yg
Santa Monica	0	ns	ns	0	0	
DSB 47	55	ns	ns	67	74	
DSB 58	0	ns	ns	0	0	
Hermosa	21	ns	ns	46	36	
Total	84	ns	ns	131	136¹	

¹ an additional 5 plovers were detected at Venice Beach and 2 at the Port of Los Angeles, Terminal 400.

Roosting Summary:

On August 25, 27, and 28, 2020 biologists Thomas Ryan and Stacey Vigallon detected 136 snowy plovers at the main roosts, at least 143 were counted including other sites¹. The average for the month of August is 147.4 plovers (N = 10, SD = 46.2). This is similar to the average, and within a standard deviation of the average. It is higher than the previous month and the prior year (Table 1). Within the Snowy Plover's annual cycle, August is a month when most nesting is completed and the plovers are migrating and re-occupying their non-breeding roosting sites.

The numbers of plovers at Zuma remain well below historic ranges for August (23-54), but similar to numbers in recent years since the decline of the roost. This roost continues to see high levels of disturbance with vehicles driving through the historic roosting area and Special Protection Zone (SPZ) multiple times per hour and the area groomed daily. The volleyball courts remain at their historic roost location. At Malibu Lagoon, numbers are similar to those in the past. The lagoon has breached at its west/north end and the sand bar is narrow. Off-leash dogs remain a concern, one was observed, and numerous tracks were observed. At Santa Monica the surf camp was located only 60 ft north of the enclosure, whereas last month it was at least 100 ft north. The City was contacted and they indicated that they would contact the camp organizers. We recommend that these camps move north out of the SPZ or at least 150 ft from the enclosed area. The largest roost was at Dockweiler State Beach but observed outside the enclosed area. This site has had an issue with illegal fires near the enclosure over the past couple months, including people removing slats from the wood fence for fires. We documented intrusions into the enclosure area by people and dogs as well as use of the area by a raven pair.

Snowy Plovers were observed at Venice Beach at the Tern Enclosure (5) (S.Vigallon), Torrance Beach CB (3) (eBird 2020) Cabrillo Beach (1) (eBird 2020), the Port of Los Angeles (2) (T. Ryan), West Cove Beach San Clemente Island (1-7) (eBird 2020)

Volunteers submitted observations during this period as well:

Zuma: 0 (27 Aug 2020)

Malibu Lagoon: 21, bands g:y/g (27 Aug 2020); 26 (31 Aug 2020)

Events observed in August 2020:

Zuma SPZ: Grooming, volleyball nets present, beach driving vehicles.

Malibu SPZ: Off leash dogs, beach narrow.

Santa Monica State Beach SPZ: Grooming, off leash dogs, surf camp within 60 ft, human tracks within the enclosure.

Dockweiler LT 47 Enclosure SPZ: Groomed, beach fires near enclosure using wood from enclosure, off-leash dogs, dog and human tracks within the enclosure, raven pair foraging at the site.

Dockweiler LT 58 SPZ: Groomed and vehicle tracks adjacent.

Hermosa SPZ: Groomed, vehicle tracks.

Nesting Summary:

All nests were complete and young fledged in June (See June Report), this will be the last month of 2020 that nesting is included.

Task 1.c. Roost and Nest Surveys: Orange County

Table 2. Number of Snowy Plovers Observed in Orange County during Roost and Nest Surveys.

Location	July 2020	August 2017	August 2018	August 2019	August 2020	Notes
Surfside	3	10	0	10	9	
Bolsa Chica SB	6	30	0	25	101	Color Band: ya:br, yn:ag, O:Fg(BA)
Huntington SB	22	0	0	17	28	
Balboa	3	98	78	78	65	
Crystal Cove	0	8	1	0	0	
Salt Creek	1	2	0	0	2	
Trestles/San Onofre SB	0	12	0	0	2	
Total	35	160	79	130	207	

Roosting Summary:

On August 19 and 25, 2020 biologists Ross Griswold and Thomas Ryan detected 207 snowy plovers. The average for the month of August is 138.1 plovers (N = 7, SD = 30.6). This is the highest number of plovers

we have recorded in Orange County in the month of August and is greater than the standard deviation for the month (Table 1). This follows the highest number of nests on record for Orange County beaches during the 2020 breeding season.

At Trestles/San Onofre State Beach all of the signage has been removed from the fence and the fence needs some repair. Because the signage is gone, the fence is being ignored. We recommend also extending the fence onto the sandy beach where the plovers often sit. The Falconer was present at Salt Creek within 150 ft of the foraging plovers.

Events observed in August 2020:

Surfside SPZ. 1 on leash dog.

Bolsa Chica SPZ. Surf camp (125+ people) and Junior Lifeguards camp near roost.

Huntington Beach SPZ. 1 on leash dog, Surf camp (35 people).

Balboa SPZ. 2 off-leash, 1 on-leash dogs.

Crystal Cove SPZ. Vehicle tracks.

Salt Creek SPZ. Falconer, Beach groomed, dog tracks.

San Clemente State Beach/Trestles SPZ. 1 off-leash dog, Vehicle tracks, dog tracks.

Nesting Summary:

Bolsa Chica State Beach:

Nest F: This nest was detected as a 1-egg nest by Lana Nguyen on 24 June 2020 within the vegetated area at Center Signal of Bolsa Chica State Beach. An ME was installed and a nearby rope and wood stake fence was extended to protect it. On July 7, 3 eggs were confirmed and were being incubated. On 22 July the nest was continuing to be incubated. Three eggs from the nest hatched on 24 July. On 28 July, one chick was picked up and brought to lifeguards at Bolsa Chica SB HQ. Lana Nguyen was notified and attempted to locate the brood and male to return chick. The brood was unable to be relocated, so chick was brought to Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center. On 29 July, Lana Nguyen with Sea and Sage Audubon volunteers located the male and brood and successfully reintroduced the chick from Wetlands and Wildlife Care Center to the male parent on the beach. One chick fledged as of 29 August.

Nest G: Detected at a 3-egg nest by Ross Griswold on 22 July. An ME was installed, and it was within an existing fenced area for Nest E. Three eggs from the nest hatched on 1 August. One chick was discovered dead on 8/2 because of a vehicle strike. Regulatory agencies were notified, and the area closed off to further vehicle traffic. One chick successfully fledged as of 29 August.

Task 1.a. Volunteer Training and Coordination.

Due to Covid-19 and beach access issues, we did not formally coordinate volunteers for monitoring, but we did accept anecdotal observations and respond to individual queries. New volunteers continue to express interest in joining the monitoring program, and we completed a training session digitally through Zoom on 29 August in order to maintain volunteer interest and get people ready for future surveys. This training was a collaborative joint training session for both Sea & Sage Audubon and Los Angeles Audubon volunteers. We plan to host another joint training session online prior to the September survey.

Task 1.b. Beach-wide Surveys and Volunteer Assistance

The next beach-wide survey is scheduled for September 20th-26th.

Task 2. Seasonal Enclosure Coordination and Maintenance

Los Angeles Audubon staff continues to maintain the wooden drift fencing enclosure at Dockweiler Beach.

Task 3.a. Los Angeles County Community Outreach/Education

Due to school closures as a response to Covid-19, all field trips for the coming fall semester have been cancelled, and it is unclear if field trips can resume in the spring of 2021. We will be working with teachers to offer distance learning options for the coming school year, and this month we initiated contact with educators within our network to begin scheduling in-class Zoom activities.

Task 3.b. Orange County Community Outreach/Education

We are exploring alternatives to in-person adult and youth outreach activities for the fall and winter. We are preparing for the September survey and hosted one joint training session in August with LAAS. We have scheduled a second joint training session with LAAS for September prior to the September survey.

Task 4. Project Administration and Meetings

No updates at this time.

Task 5. Reporting Monthly & Annual Reports

No updates at this time.