

## TIP SHEET: Sharing Our Shores with Birds

### *Holiday Weekend Beach Tips for Reporters and Beach Lovers*

**NEW YORK (June 30, 2014)** – Summer is in full swing and with the approach of Independence Day, many people celebrate the holiday at the coast. Birds are already there—terns, skimmers, oystercatchers, plovers-- nesting on the beach and trying to raise their chicks. It's a critical time for coastal birds and there's no better time to help protect our Atlantic coast and the birds that depend it every year. The National Audubon Society has compiled the following guide on how to share the beach with nesting birds.

#### **Atlantic Coast Birds Need Beaches**

- Birds nest on beaches throughout the Atlantic coast, often on the same beaches that are popular with visitors for the Independence Day holiday.
- The greatest threats to beach-nesting birds are human disturbance and habitat loss.
- It only takes a few minutes in the hot summer sun for little chicks to die from temperature stress.
- The most endangered shorebird along the Atlantic Coast in the continental U.S. today include the [Piping Plover](#) (federally threatened).
- [Least Terns](#), [Common Terns](#), [Black Skimmers](#) and [American Oystercatchers](#) are listed in many Atlantic Coast states as threatened or special concern species.

#### **Chicks on the Beach:**

Breeding season for most beach-nesting birds is April through the end of August. Here are nesting shorebirds to keep an eye out for on the beach.

- [American Oystercatcher](#)



- [Black Skimmer](#)



- [Common Tern](#)



- [Least Tern](#)



- [Piping Plover](#)



- [Wilson's Plover](#)



## Simple Ways You Can Help

When people help shorebirds by sharing the beach, they are rewarded with the spectacle of wild birds including the opportunity to observe the excitement that unfolds with every nesting season. These are some simple steps you can take to help coastal birds.

- **Enjoy the sanctioned and approved firework celebrations.** Impromptu fireworks in the vicinity of nesting areas can be devastating for birds.
- **Respect protected areas and signs.** Birds, eggs, nests and chicks are well-camouflaged and disturbance by people and their pets can cause birds to abandon their eggs and chicks, leaving them vulnerable to predators and extreme temperatures.
- **Avoid disturbing groups of birds that are nesting or feeding.** If birds take flight, call loudly or act agitated it means you are too close.
- **Keep your dog on a leash and away from the birds.** Coastal birds perceive people and pets as predators and leave their nest or chicks.
- **Please don't leave trash or fishing line on the beach.** Take your trash with you and place in an appropriate trash container. Trash attracts real predators such as gulls, crows, raccoons and foxes. Fishing line entangles and kills birds.
- **Please do not fly kites near nesting and feeding areas.** This will cause birds to leave their nests or chicks leaving them vulnerable to predators and extreme temperatures, which can kill them.

## Quotes

“By early July, many beach nesting birds have made it through incubation and have chicks,” says Walker Golder, Audubon’s North Carolina deputy state director. “The Independence Day holiday is usually a huge hurdle they face because of the amount of people and activities it attracts around sensitive nesting sites. Disturbance during this time is a big threat, but if the birds make it through the holiday they have a chance to thrive.”

## Birding Is Big Business

Nearly **85 million** people in the United States observe or photograph birds, up from 21 million in 1983, according to data from the National Survey on Recreation and the Environment. ([Birding Trends](#))

Not only do birds add the quality of life and aesthetics along the coast, their presence supports local economies through tourism. **47 million** people have traveled at least a mile from home to observe wild birds or have “closely observed or tried to identify” birds at home. They spend **\$107 billion** on trips, equipment, wild bird food and related expenditures. ([Birding in the United States: A Demographic and Economic Analysis](#))

## Other Resources

- Audubon’s Be A Good Egg program in NY/NJ: <http://www.goodeggnjny.org/beach-nesting-birds/>
- Holiday Weekend Beach Tips from Audubon Florida: <http://fl.audubon.org/newsroom/press-releases/2012/audubon-asks-public-s-help-florida-beaches-memorial-day-weekend>
- Audubon’s efforts in Connecticut: <http://rtpi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/PIPL-brochure.pdf>

- Sharing the shore with North Carolina's nesting birds: <http://nc.audubon.org/sharing-our-seas-shores-1>
- Audubon South Carolina's Shorebird Project: <http://sc.audubon.org/>
- How to report the shorebirds you see: <http://ebird.org/content/ebird/about/>

## **Contact**

To speak with an Audubon expert on birds and birding and to find out what Audubon is doing locally, contact Agatha Szczepaniak, [aszczepaniak@audubon.org](mailto:aszczepaniak@audubon.org), 212-979-3197. Shorebird photos are available upon request.

## **About Audubon**

The National Audubon Society saves birds and their habitats throughout the Americas using science, advocacy, education and on-the-ground conservation. Audubon's state programs, nature centers, chapters and partners have an unparalleled wingspan that reaches millions of people each year to inform, inspire and unite diverse communities in conservation action. Since 1905, Audubon's vision has been a world in which people and wildlife thrive. Audubon is a nonprofit conservation organization. Learn more at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org) and [@audubonsociety](https://www.audubon.org/social-media).

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