



NATIONAL  
**WILDLIFE**  
REFUGE SYSTEM

# Module 2d

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*Why Shorebirds Need Stewards*

# Why Shorebirds Need Stewardship

Birds can't communicate their needs so we need people to speak out for them.

Signs aren't always obeyed, seen or understood by visitors.



PHOTO: BRI RUDINSKYUSFWS  
TERN AT RACHEL CARSON NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

# Populations Are Declining

Shorebird populations have been declining at alarming rates from an array of reasons:

- **Habitat Loss**
  - Human Development
  - Climate Change: Sea-Level Rise & Powerful Storms
- **Disturbance**
  - Beachgoers
  - Dogs
  - Predators
- **Loss of Food**



# Biological Priorities

Many migratory birds rely on coastal habitats.

These birds need to constantly **forage** and **rest** to help replenish the energy lost from

- Migration
- Breeding
- Nesting / Raising Young

**ANY disturbance can be detrimental.**



*PHOTO: ATLANTIC FLYWAY SHOREBIRD INITIATIVE  
FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION*

# Disturbance

People and especially off-leashed dogs cause birds to waste energy, fleeing or defending nests.

Birds suffer **deadly consequences**:

- Death from exhaustion or starvation
- Abandoned chicks or eggs are susceptible to predators, starvation, or being crushed by people or vehicles

In 2021, thousands of Elegant Tern eggs were abandoned in California after an illegal drone crashed, scaring the parents to flee.



PHOTO: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE

# Types of Disturbed Behavior



This video displays plovers demonstrating the "broken-wing" behavior and terns demonstrating "vocalizing" and "dive bombing" behaviors.

## Broken Wing Display

- This distraction tries to lure the threat away from the nest
- Behavior common to all plover species

## Dive Bombing

- Get too close and they will dive bomb (and poop on you) to protect nests

## Vocalizing

- Starts with warning calls to alert chicks
- Adults circling noisily or attempting to lead the threat away on foot

# Share the Shore



Check out [Share the Shore Campaign Videos](#) from the Atlantic Flyway Shorebird Initiative to see the major reasons why birds are disturbed by beachgoers and their pets.

# How Can Folks Help?

Protect coastal birds in the few natural areas that remain by:

Respect Closures

Let birds nest, rest, forage, and raise young in peace.

Clean up Trash

Use receptables or practice carry-in carry-out.

Keep Pets at Home

Keep pets away from birds and nesting areas.

Drive Vehicles in Permitted Areas

Follow speed limits and always brake for birds and their babies.

