

PART 4: PUBLIC INTERACTION



THIS SECTION COVERS

- A. Engaging with Casual Visitors
- B. Interacting with Trespassers
- C. Interacting with Local Authorities
- D. Disengaging from Hostile Interactions
- E. Reporting an Incident

Part 4a: Engaging with Casual Visitors

Who are Casual Visitors?

Casual visitors are typically opportunists! Often, casual visitors have an interest in outdoor recreation, but aren't visiting with a strong, driving purpose. Perhaps they've heard through word of mouth that your refuge has nice beaches and interesting birds. So, they decide to swing through the refuge one afternoon on a whim. This is an excellent opportunity for staff or shorebird stewards to turn a casual visitor into a repeat one - or even better, a future volunteer!

How can you connect?

Keep it friendly and brief! Approach with a smile and ask if they are new to the refuge or if they have any questions. Identify yourself and your role, and learn more about why they're visiting. Build off their reasons for visiting to share relevant management goals and biological information. Then, share programming or volunteering info to incentivize future visits!

DO: Be prepared

Make sure you are up to date on any management priorities and program opportunities. Keep copies of useful materials on hand, like brochures or shorebird ID cards. Bonus: carry junior ranger materials or other interactive resources available.

DO: Step out of your comfort zone

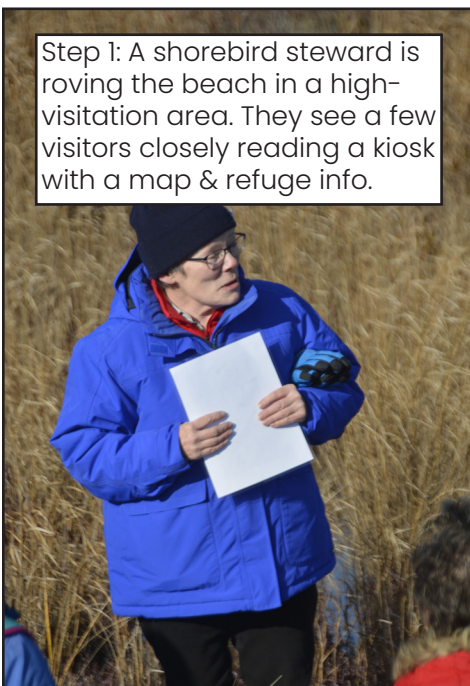
Don't wait for visitors to come to you. Look for opportunities to make a connection. Ask about their trip in - did they see anything interesting? Mention a neat bird you saw on the beach, then transition to current shorebird regulations and opportunities.

DON'T: Force it!

Not every casual visitor wants to engage further, and that's ok! Share necessary info, like beach closures to protect shorebirds, and let them move on. Watch for body language like pulling away from you, or verbal cues like short answers and no follow-up questions.

ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLE

Step 1: A shorebird steward is roving the beach in a high-visitation area. They see a few visitors closely reading a kiosk with a map & refuge info.



Step 2: The steward approaches and learns they're just getting into birding and heard the beach has distinctive shorebirds.



Step 3: The steward shares info about beach closures for plover protection, and informs them of an upcoming shorebird ID program.



Brainstorming Worksheet: Casual Engagement

What locations at your refuge attract new or infrequent visitors?

What is the most critical information you want to share?

What type of opening question(s) could you ask to create an initial connection?

What signals indicate they're interested in more information? Which indicate they'd prefer to get on their way?

What opportunities could you offer if they're interested in engaging further?

