

News Release

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Snowy Plover Recovery Trends Upward *Initial Numbers Indicate Record Year*

CORVALLIS, ORE. – Early population survey results of the Pacific coast western snowy plover indicate another highly successful year towards recovery of the species listed as threatened under both federal and state Endangered Species Acts.

Numbers from this year's field count indicate there were a total of 315 nests, the highest number of nests found in a given year. Roughly 173 chicks fledged from those nests, one more than last year's total, and the highest number since monitoring began in 1990.

"This is really fantastic news," said Dave Lauten, a wildlife biologist with the Oregon Biodiversity Information Center, Portland State University. "Overall, despite a pretty wet spring through most of June, the plovers did very well," he added.

Snowy plover habitat ranges from Baja, Mexico north to the southern beaches of Washington. Numbers surveyed include only plovers nesting in Oregon.

While many variables figure into improved numbers, predator management and public support play a large part in ongoing recovery of the species.

A lot of thanks go to beach visitors who help out by observing signs and leashing their dogs to give plovers space to successfully nest and rear their young. One of the biggest challenges to ongoing recovery of the species is keeping plover nests intact through the breeding season—safe from walkers, dogs, and vehicles.

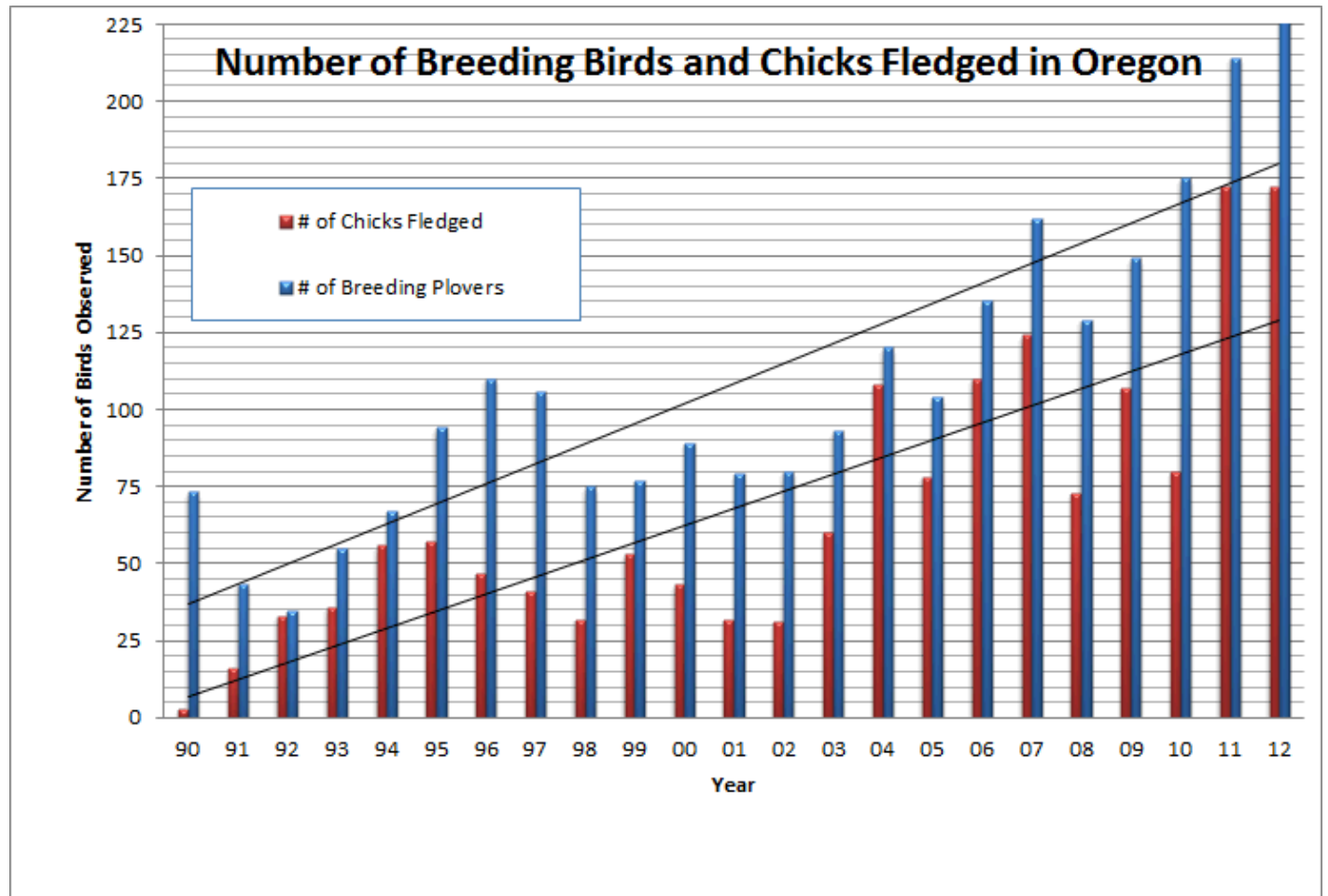
While there is much to be pleased about, there still remain some individual breeding sites that were not very productive, so there is room for improvement. Luckily, the number of adult plovers – 290 for 2012, the highest estimate since intense monitoring began in 1990 - is gradually increasing and they can produce enough young birds to keep heading towards recovery of the species.

"Volunteerism is invaluable to plover management on the Central Oregon Coast," according Cindy Burns, wildlife biologist for the Central Coast Ranger District and Oregon Dunes National Recreation

Area. “We have help cleaning the nesting sites of winter storm litter, roping off nesting areas, and having people staged to make contact to help explain the importance of plover recovery,” Burns said.

In 2012 seven volunteers staged at nesting sites on the Oregon Dunes to alert visitors of dry sand closures and answer questions about the plover.

Graph Trend



Nesting Season

The nesting season for the western snowy plover ended mid-September and access restrictions put into place on Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Service and state lands last spring was lifted, granting visitors access to the dry sand portions of area beaches.

Dry sand closures ended for habitat sites at Sutton Beach, Siltcoos Estuary, Oregon Dunes Day Use, Tahkenitch Estuary, Tenmile Estuary (northern Coos County), the North Spit of Coos Bay, Bandon Beach State Natural Area, and New River area beaches. The access restrictions affected 18 miles of beach in Oregon.

Even though the official nesting season is over, biologists caution plovers are still active and ask people to pay attention when they are on the beach.

About eighty percent of plovers that nest in Oregon stay here year around, according to Burns.

“Wintering birds trying to maintain fat reserves to survive the winter can still be affected by human activities,” she added. “Birds that maintain energy reserves during the winter will be healthier when spring nesting resumes”.

The Snowy Plover

The western snowy plover is a small shorebird, about 6 inches long, that lays its eggs and raises it young in the open dry sand. The Pacific coast population of the western snowy plover was listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened in 1993.

Number of Breeding Snowy Plovers in Oregon

