

# How Can You Help Beach Nesting Birds This Summer?

If you plan to visit Reserve sites with sandy beach habitats this summer, such as the Masonboro Island Reserve near Wilmington and the Rachel Carson Reserve near Beaufort, you will likely be near important nursery areas for beach nesting shorebirds such as American oystercatchers, least terns, and Wilson's plovers. These birds, which are recognized as species of special concern in North Carolina, all make their nests and raise their young in sandy areas of the beach during the spring and summer months. As you enjoy recreational opportunities at the Reserve during this busy time, please follow these [guidelines](#) from our partners at the Audubon North Carolina to ensure a safe and productive nesting season for our feathered friends:



- Be attentive to birds. If you see birds rising off the beach, they may be flying off of nests. Please move away from the area.
- Respect all signs at the beach. The signs are there to help reduce disturbance to birds. When birds are disturbed off their nests, their eggs and chicks are exposed to danger from extreme temperatures and predators lessening their chance of survival.
- Watch for "posted areas." These are areas where a rope is strung between posts. Birds are sitting on nests in these areas, so please stay back. When parents fly off the nest, babies are exposed to the extreme heat and predators lessening their chance of survival.
- Birds need to rest and feed all year, and allowing them to do so undisturbed can make a big difference during a harsh winter or long migration. Avoid getting so close to birds that they use energy to fly away from you.
- Keep dogs on leashes. Please keep dogs away from nesting areas, and feeding or resting flocks. Dogs look like birds' natural predators and cause stress and disturbance, even if they aren't actively chasing them.
- Avoid flying kites, throwing balls and exploding fireworks near nesting and feeding areas. These activities can cause birds to leave their nest, leaving chicks unprotected.
- Do not feed gulls. This seemingly harmless activity can attract gulls to nesting areas. Gulls do prey on eggs and baby birds.
- Take trash with you when you leave the beach. Garbage, including bait and scraps from cleaned fish, attracts predators to nesting areas. Discarded fishing line can entangle and kill birds.



*Wilson's plover chick. Photo credit: Stan Rule.*

By following these simple guidelines, and being a responsible visitor to the Reserve, you can help ensure healthy populations of shorebirds! Please contact Central Sites Manager Paula Gillikin at 252-220-0776 with questions about nesting birds at the Rachel Carson Reserve, and Southern Sites Manager Hope Sutton at 910-962-2998 with questions about nesting birds at the Masonboro Island Reserve.