

Western snowy plover chick hatches at Nehalem Bay

First in more than three decades

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

The first western snowy plover chick to hatch on a beach at Nehalem Bay State Park in more than 30 years could be a sign of better times to come for the threatened species.

Oregon Parks and Recreation Department wildlife biologists recently learned about the hatchling, a press release announced today, and the event follows three years of increased sightings and evidence of nesting attempts by snowy plovers at this particular beach. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says older records suggest there may have been nesting activity in Nehalem back in the 1950s and '60s, "but you have to go back to 1921 to find a reference that's solid," said Chris Havel, associate director



Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
The western snowy plover is a threatened species.

with the Parks and Recreation Department.

"But you never can tell what will happen next," said Havel, "and this could be the start of a more wild, more natural Nehalem Spit, or something could interrupt the process and we'll need to reset our sights on next year."

Still, it's an encouraging sign. State biologist Vanessa Blackstone says plovers have "high site fidelity." The presence of this chick mean the parents are very likely to come back to Nehalem again next year, she says.

The department monitors

portions of beach in and around Clatsop County where the habitat plovers prefer for nesting exists: Necanicum Spit, Clatsop Spit near Fort Stevens and Nehalem Spit. In Tillamook County, the department monitors Sitka Sedge Natural Area and Netarts Spit at Cape Lookout.

"The Nehalem Spit used to have nesting plovers, so we picked this area knowing it had potential," Havel said.

The birds are a threatened species, listed under the federal Endangered Species Act. They are protected in all West Coast states. In Long Beach,

Washington, biologists with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service require vehicles, dogs and people to stay on the wet sand, away from the dunes during the plover's nesting period. California also closes portions of its beaches during this period.

Plovers can be hard to spot — they are small, about the size of a sparrow, and their light brown and white plumage is a perfect camouflage against the sand. Their nests are even easier to miss: shallow scrapes in the dry sand that are almost invisible.

The Parks and Recreation Department asks beachgoers to keep a "cautious eye out" for nesting birds, saying plovers will abandon their eggs if they are repeatedly disturbed from their nests. Chicks are mobile soon after they hatch. If they perceive danger, they will freeze in place or hide in small depressions such as footprints.

The nesting area at Nehalem Spit is marked with signs and remains off-limits until the nesting season ends.



Oregon Air National Guard

The Oregon Air National Guard is proposing an expanded training area for F-15 Eagles along the Oregon Coast.

Review proposed for coastal air training sites

The Daily Astorian

The Oregon Air National Guard has released the final version of the environmental impact statement on the Oregon Airspace Initiative, which includes expanded training areas above the North Coast.

The proposed initiative expands and creates new training areas for the Air National Guard's F-15s. One of those expanded training sites would be the Eel Military Operations Area from 11,000 to 18,000 feet along the Oregon Coast from Astoria to Lincoln City.

The National Guard argues that the expanded training

areas are necessary because of frequent foul weather hampering training. The coastal training area would be for the 142nd Fighter Wing based in Portland, which is responsible for missions from the Canadian border to Northern California.

Two Port of Astoria commissioners raised concerns in 2015 about potential conflicts with private aircraft.

The final environmental impact statement is available for public viewing over the next month at www.142fw.af.mil or at the Astoria Library and Astoria Masonic Temple.

Jobless rates for April*

Area	April 2017	March 2017	1-yr. ago
Clatsop	3.7	3.8	4.9
Columbia	4.7	4.9	6.3
Tillamook	3.8	3.9	5
Oregon	3.7	3.8	5
U.S.	4.4	4.5	5

*Preliminary, seasonally adjusted rates. Source: Oregon Employment Department

Daily Astorian graphic

County jobless rate at 3.7 percent in April

The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in April was 3.7 percent, down slightly from March and more than 1 percent from a year ago.

Clatsop and Wasco counties are tied for the ninth-lowest unemployment rates in the state. The counties matched the state's unemployment, and were significantly lower than the 4.4 percent national average.

State economists had expected a gain of 530 jobs in April, but Clatsop County only added 290. Over April, the leisure and hospitality industry gained 280 jobs; and professional and business services added 80.

"The lack of employment growth for the month may have been related to the wet weather, and it suggests a slow start to the summer travel season," a release from the state Employment Department said.

The lackluster change left nonfarm payroll employment at 18,160, 30 less than the year prior for a -0.2 percent growth rate.

Regional Economist Erik Knoder said it was the first negative yearly growth rate recorded since September 2014. He said the lackluster growth can be attributed to the economy reaching full employment, with little room for upward movement.

Over the past year, leisure and hospitality has added 120 positions, and construction 80. Retail trade is down 120 positions over the past year, manufacturing 90 and local government education 110.

Bill to expand self-service gas heads to governor's desk

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A bill to expand the hours of self-serve gas stations in rural counties in Eastern Oregon is headed to Gov. Kate Brown's desk, after the state Senate passed it Tuesday with a 26-1 vote.

Oregon is one of only two states that prohibits customers from pumping their own fuel at gas stations. New Jersey is the other state.

State Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick, D-Portland, voted against the proposal.

"She is a strong believer in the Oregon way when it comes to gasoline service," said Rick Osborn, a spokesman in the Senate Democrats' Office.

Two years ago, the Leg-

islature passed a bill to allow self-fueling between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. in certain rural counties to prevent travelers from being stranded overnight.

"In many of these smaller communities, people would get stuck without a full tank of gas" because no gas stations were open, said Sen. Rod Monroe, D-Portland, who carried the bill to the floor.

The bill passed Tuesday expands that period to 24 hours in 15 counties with populations of less than 40,000. Stations would still be required to have at least one attendant between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., but customers could pump their own gas if the attendant is busy and a card-lock machine is available.

In Eastern Oregon, some

locally owned gas stations have been at risk of closure due to the expense of hiring fueling attendants to pump customers' gas, said Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, the bill's chief sponsor.

"We are trying to preserve these stations out in the middle of nowhere so that we have fuel available," Bentz said during a hearing on the bill in March.

The proposed change affects 15 counties in Eastern Oregon: Malheur, Union, Wasco, Hood River, Jefferson, Crook, Baker, Morrow, Lake, Grant, Harney, Wallowa, Gilliam, Sherman and Wheeler.

The original proposal included Clatsop, Curry and Tillamook counties. However, opposition to expanding self-service hours prompted

proponents to carve out those coastal counties. Opponents feared the change would threaten the jobs of those who pump fuel for a living in those

coastal areas.

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Q: Muscle spasms can be a thing of the past.
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Q: What's a good guideline for BTUs?
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