

Birds: Snowy plovers nest in shallow sandy scrapes

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nesting at Fort Stevens is a huge step for species recovery and people who support a healthy environment. We can all be proud of this moment.”

So far, the state reports seeing one nesting pair with three eggs on the river side of Clatsop Spit. Such sightings prompt special precautions within the management area. Several activities are restricted, including dogs (even on a leash), vehicles, kites, drones, camping and fires. People walking along the beach are required to stay on wet sand areas and keep to official trails.

Signs on dry sand identify plover nesting areas. Snowy plovers nest in shallow sandy scrapes. Eggs and chicks are well-camouflaged and can be accidentally crushed by people or pets. Repeated disturbances that cause parent birds to flee the nest — permanently or temporarily — can also be lethal for eggs.

Last year, the sighting of snowy plover nests and one successful hatching marked a major success at Nehalem Bay State Park south of Manzanita in Tillamook County. That same year, three chicks also hatched at the Sitka Sedge Natural Area near Pacific City. The nests in



Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
A snowy plover (not the nest on Clatsop Spit).

2017 were an important turning point for Oregon’s conservation efforts in the northern part of the state. In 2015, the

first nest since conservation began in earnest at Nehalem Bay failed.

There is a chance that the

male snowy plover nesting in the Clatsop Spit area now is the same one that successfully nested in Nehalem Bay last year. The bird carries a similar colored band.

If it is the same bird, he likely bypassed Nehalem Bay this year because winter storms kicked up piles of driftwood onto the beach, eliminating good nesting habitat, Blackstone said.

This year, there is evidence that a chick may have hatched at Sitka Sedge. There are no confirmed nests at all at Nehalem Bay yet.

The habitat at Clatsop Spit isn’t always guaranteed. “The river moves things around so

much,” Blackstone said. But down by the South Jetty, habitat happened to accumulate.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which owns the land and leases it to State Parks for recreational use, plans to further develop that habitat as the agency goes about jetty repair work in the future.

Western snowy plovers were listed as a threatened species in 1993. Sitka Sedge, Clatsop Spit and Nehalem Bay are just some of the snowy plover management areas the state oversees through a legal agreement between the parks department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Warnings: ‘We feel low on the priority list’

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medical response, search and rescue, HAM radio operations and mass casualty triage.

While out of the tsunami inundation zone, inland communities have concerns of their own: flooding, power outages, landslides. But the most pressing is an earthquake, which could take out two bridges, isolating the rural community and anyone else who may be there.

The team feels most emergency efforts are geared toward coastal cities, leaving communities inland along Highway 26 “way behind the curve,” Mulder said.

“All those supplies, they are going to fly it over us to the coast, to the popular centers,” Mulder said. “We feel low on the priority list.”

While the fire station is prepared with about 100 cots and blankets as a Red Cross shelter, unlike other towns along Highway 101, the area has limited access to food and water. There are only a couple of restaurants and one general store that would be pillaged quickly by 100 evacuees.

“If a tsunami really happened, who is going to feed them for two or three days? We can’t afford that much food — it’s just not in the budget,” Mulder said.

The volunteer fire department operates on about \$65,000 each year.

Proper education

Some issues could be addressed by continuing to educate more people about where the inundation zone actually ends, and how to find other safe assembly areas already located in coastal cities, emergency trainer George Jette said.

Jette remembers responding to a vehicle



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
An emergency kit is displayed at the Elsie-Vinemapple Fire Department.

rollover in 2011 where the driver abandoned his car, his credit cards and other personal items on the road.

“He just kept going on foot. He was just so scared of drowning,” he said. “I think sometimes people think they need to get to Portland.”

Because of their relative isolation, both George and Diane Jette said more cross-training with other emergency teams in the county could help them prepare more effectively. Donations of nonperishable food and water

would also make a difference.

Overall, Elsie is happy to act as an emergency safe haven the next time either a disaster or disaster warning inevitably happens. But before heading up to the hills, the team has a few requests.

“Remember that we are here, if you need to come up,” Diane Jette said. “But also, when people come up, remember we need aid to help take care of them. Don’t fly over the top of us and drop packages just in Hillsboro and Seaside.”

Taylor: ‘These are my people’

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people who would settle in such a landscape and persist there. She imagined they would create resilient, forgiving, fluid communities capable of adapting to and weathering changes.

Taylor is descended from Swedish immigrants on her father’s side, and all the men were carpenters. As she learned about Astoria’s Scandinavian roots, there was that connection as well.

“I just thought to myself, these are my people,” she said.

That feeling has not gone away. She ran into a stranger recently who encouraged her to smile. “Every day is a great day in Astoria!” he said.

First, she thought “OK” ... then “true.” “I don’t look at the weather report because I don’t care,” she said. “Bring on the wind, the rain — it doesn’t matter.”

Astoria suits her, Taylor said, and she is beginning to find her place in the community. Her first job was at Costco — a whirlwind introduction to Clatsop County. But before moving here, she worked for business involved in historic restoration and historic structures. She filled a number of roles, including that of a tour guide.

She has a passion for preserving history; it was what drew her to the job with the city. As administrative assistant she will assist the city planner and other department staff in fielding questions from the public and developing plans for old and new buildings alike.

“I came with an idea of what I wanted my life to be like,” Taylor said.

Now, she feels like she has always lived here.

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