

# AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER



*Haematopus palliatus*



**Conservation Status** Florida: Threatened  
**Age at First Breeding** 3 years

**Where Do They Breed?** Sand/shell rakes, natural islands, spoil islands, beaches, and occasionally rooftops

## CONSERVATION

Habitat enhancement and restoration is an important conservation strategy to increase reproductive success.

## Nesting Season

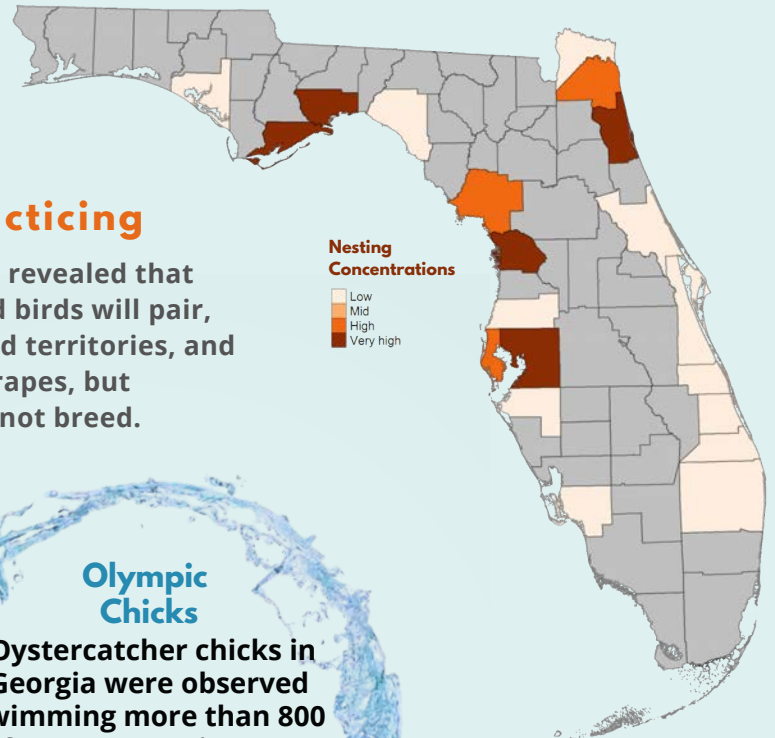
Breeding oystercatchers will spend over 150 days at a single nesting location...or longer if they have failed attempts.

## Rooftops

Some oystercatchers have taken to nesting on rooftops in Pinellas County. They have high hatch success, but surviving to fledging in an urban environment is difficult and poses a unique conservation challenge.



## WHERE OYSTERCATCHERS BREED



## Just Practicing

Banding has revealed that two-year-old birds will pair, court, defend territories, and excavate scrapes, but typically do not breed.

## Olympic Chicks

Oystercatcher chicks in Georgia were observed swimming more than 800 feet across a river to access foraging areas with each tidal change!

## When They Breed

- March - September
- Days to hatch: 27-29
- Flight capable: 35-45 days

## Clutch Size

- Average: 3 eggs
- Range: 1-3 eggs

## Living with Shorebirds

If you see one or two oystercatcher adults sticking to an area during nesting season, they are probably nesting. Give them space!



# BLACK SKIMMER

*Rynchops niger*



**Conservation Status** Florida: Threatened  
**Nesting Behavior** High nest site fidelity

**Abundance** 3,006 pairs in 2019  
**Life Span** 23 years



## CONSERVATION

Banding and re-sighting efforts revealed expansive movements between the Atlantic and Gulf coasts as well as interior lakes during the non-breeding season.

### Selective Nesters

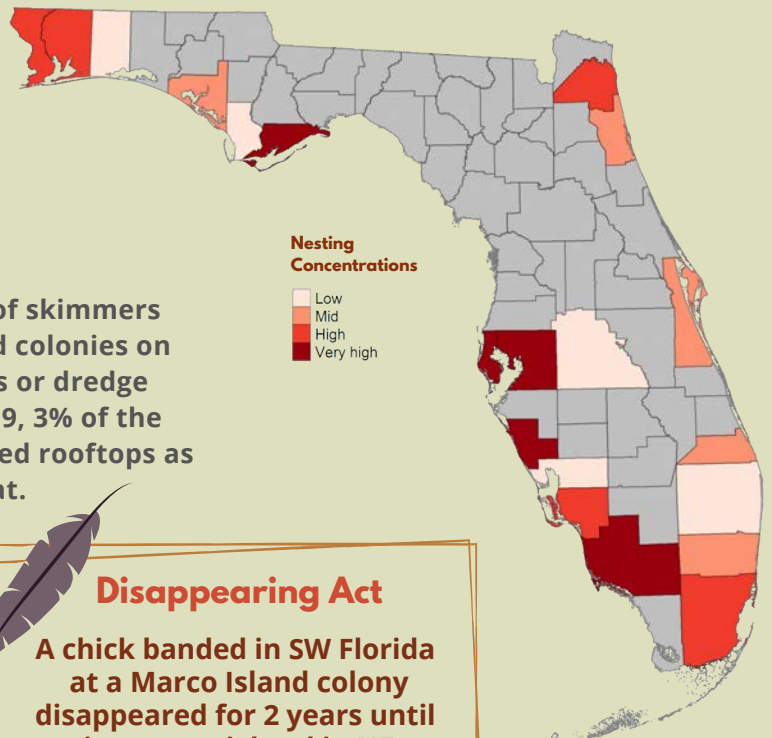
Skimmers often explore potential nesting sites for years before they decide to nest. Be sure to give them space - they may establish a new colony!

### Resting

Resting skimmers often put their entire bodies on the sand to give their busy neck muscles a break after foraging.



## WHERE BLACK SKIMMERS BREED



### Breeding

The majority of skimmers nest in ground colonies on sandy beaches or dredge islands. In 2019, 3% of the population used rooftops as nesting habitat.

### Disappearing Act

A chick banded in SW Florida at a Marco Island colony disappeared for 2 years until it was re-sighted in NE Florida...then it returned back to where it was banded.

## When They Breed

- May - September
- Days to hatch: 21-25
- Flight capable: 23-26 days

## Clutch Size

- Average: 4 eggs
- Range: 2-5 eggs

## Monitoring

Non-nesting skimmers often loaf in and near nesting colonies, making it difficult to determine which adults are nesting. The [Black Skimmer Nesting Behavior Guide](#) can help distinguish between the two.



# LEAST TERN

*Sternula antillarum*



**Conservation Status** Florida: Threatened  
**Species Range in Florida** Most Coastal Counties

**Abundance** 7,206 pairs in 2019  
**Life Span** 24 years

## CONSERVATION

Up to a third of the North American population breeds in Florida. Conservation efforts locally are vital to the overall population.

### Colonies

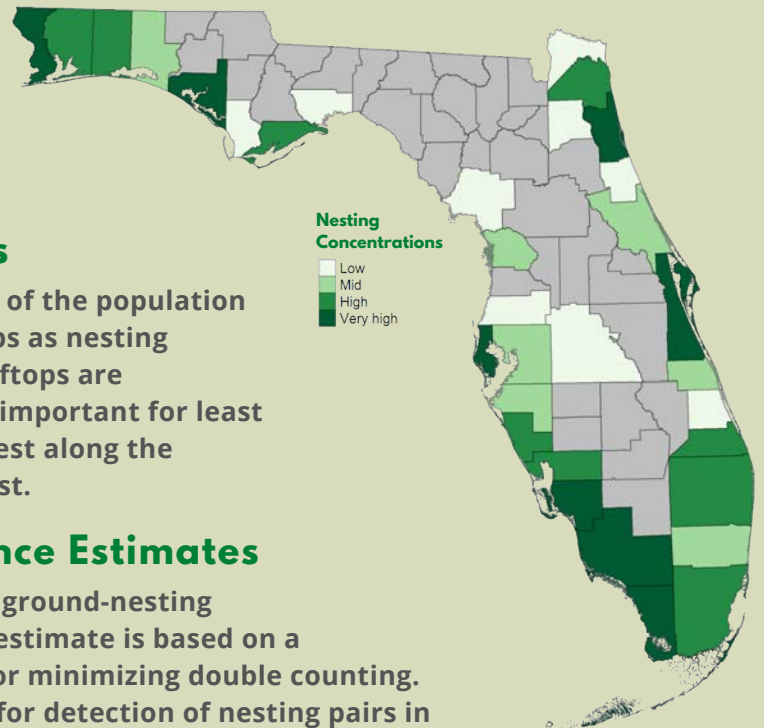
The average size of a ground-nesting colony is 28 pairs (range: 1-350). They can be nesting in any area, even if you only see a few birds.

### Intruders beware!

Least terns will actively defend nesting areas by dive bombing and defecating on the intruder.



## WHERE LEAST TERNS BREED



### Rooftops

In 2019, 55% of the population used rooftops as nesting habitat. Rooftops are particularly important for least terns who nest along the Atlantic Coast.

### Abundance Estimates

The current ground-nesting abundance estimate is based on a technique for minimizing double counting. Accounting for detection of nesting pairs in a colony will further refine the estimates.

## When They Breed

- April - September
- Days to hatch: 19-25
- Flight capable: 19-20 days

## Clutch Size

- Average: 3 eggs
- Range: 1-3 eggs

## Survey Tips

Least tern chicks are adept at hiding! Maximize your chances of detecting and counting chicks by surveying early or late in the day when adults are actively feeding.



# SNOWY PLOVER

*Charadrius nivosus*



**Conservation Status** Florida: Threatened  
**Species Range in Florida** Gulf Coast

**Life Span** Up to 17 Years  
**Nesting** Beaches with Sparse Vegetation



## CONSERVATION

Access to brood-rearing habitat is critical for chick survival. When chicks have access to posted and protected habitat, they are twice as likely to fledge.

### Key Breeding Areas

St. Joseph State Park is one of the most important sites in Florida for the snowy plover. It has more than 10% of the state's population.

The park also produces the most fledglings. These fledglings are now breeders broadly dispersed throughout Florida's Gulf Coast.

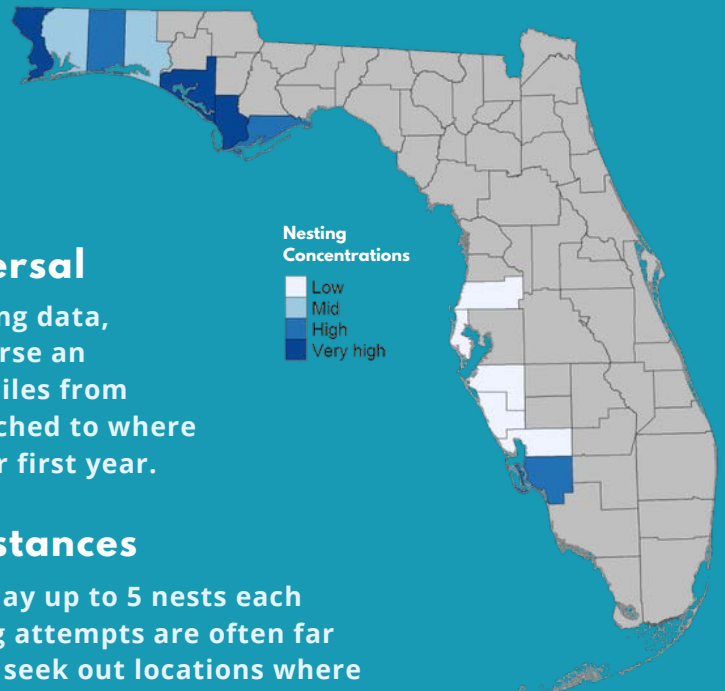
### Natal Dispersal

Based on banding data, fledglings disperse an average of 22 miles from where they hatched to where they breed their first year.

### Re-Nest Distances

Snowy plovers lay up to 5 nests each season. Nesting attempts are often far apart as adults seek out locations where others have had success. In 2019, average re-nesting attempts were roughly 1 mile apart.

## WHERE PLOVERS BREED



### When They Breed

- February - August
- Days to hatch: 24-32
- Flight capable: 28-42 days

### Clutch Size

- Average: 3 eggs
- Range: 1-3 eggs

### Breeding Behavior

Females often re-nest after eggs hatch and leave the male to raise the young. Females have been known to nest with up to 3 males in a breeding season. Males will also re-nest but usually have fewer opportunities.

# WILSON'S PLOVER



*Charadrius wilsonia*



**Conservation Status** Species of Greatest Conservation Need

**Primary Food Source** Crustaceans  
**Annual Survival** 80%

## CONSERVATION



Wilson's plovers are one of the least numerous shorebirds in North America. Florida holds 12% of their population with 34% of that in the northeast part of the state. Conservation strategies implemented in Florida are important for the entire population.

### Nesting

Wilson's plovers nest in a variety of habitats along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts including salt flats, sandy beaches, shell rakes, lagoons, and marsh edges.

### Protection

New breeding locations are discovered every season as partners search new habitats, providing opportunities for increased protection efforts.

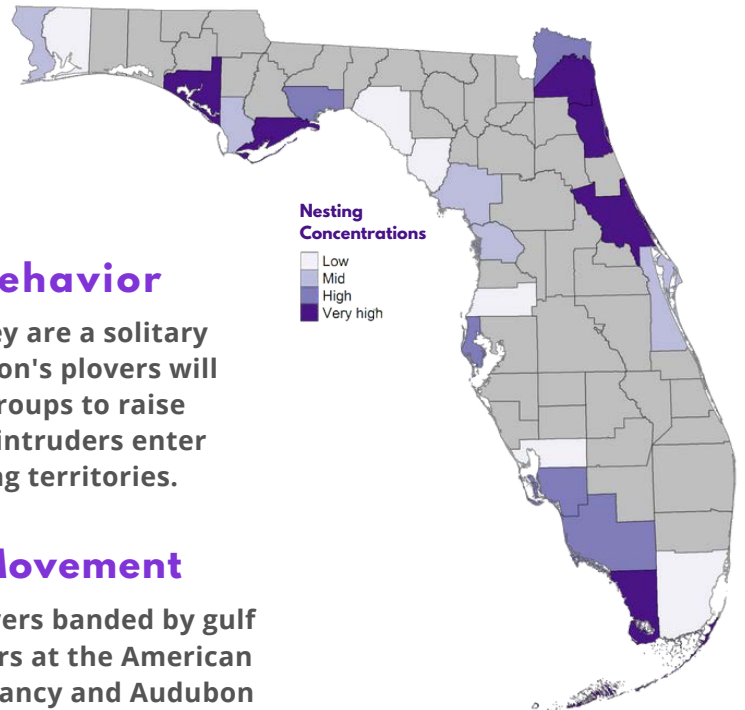
### Group Behavior

Although they are a solitary species, Wilson's plovers will form small groups to raise alarm when intruders enter their breeding territories.

### Winter Movement

Wilson's plovers banded by gulf coast partners at the American Bird Conservancy and Audubon Louisiana revealed they winter in Central America.

## WHERE THEY BREED



### When They Breed

- The first spring after hatching
- March - August
- Days to hatch: 23-29
- Flight capable: 21-35 days

### Clutch Size

- Average: 3 eggs
- Range: 1-3 eggs

### Survey Tip!

Chicks will often hide in vegetation until they are flight-capable. Pay close attention to adult behavior to determine if chicks are present. If adults are excessively vocal and conducting aerial displays, they likely have hidden chicks!