

FAQs: Snowy Plover



- Q: How many eggs do they lay?
A: Three, with an egg laid a day. Incubation begins when the last egg is laid.
- Q: How long do the eggs take to hatch?
A: About 4 weeks.
- Q: How long until the chicks can fly?
A: A little over 4 weeks – these chicks can forage for insects on their own once they hatch!
- Q: What is the difference between males and females?
A: Males have darker markings on the forehead, by the eyes, and on the neck. Females also have these markings, but they will not be as distinct or as dark as the males.
- Q: What do Snowy Plovers eat?
A: Little invertebrates on the beach and in the wrack, such as gnats and sand fleas.
- Q: Why is this area roped off?
A: The Snowy Plover is designated as Threatened by the state due to human disturbance, predation from human-subsidized predators (such as crows, gulls, and raccoons), and habitat loss from coastal development. Since they nest on the sand, it's difficult to see the nests, eggs, and chicks. We roped off the area to make sure the nest or chicks aren't disturbed.
- Q: What are some predators?
A: Crows, gulls, raccoons, and ghost crabs can eat eggs and chicks. Dogs and feral cats are also threats and can disturb the birds enough to cause abandonment of nests.

Snowy Plover Facts

- Snowy Plovers are solitary nesters – this means that each pair has their own territory with one nest.
- Males and females share responsibility of the chicks after they hatch.
- Snowy Plover chicks are “precocial” and hatch already covered in down feathers. They can leave the nest and catch their own food just hours after they hatch! Adults will watch over their chicks and lead them to safe foraging grounds.
- Snowy Plover in Florida are found only on the Gulf Coast. They may migrate to other beaches in Florida during the winter (non-breeding) season. For example, we had two Snowy Plovers wintering on Siesta Key from the Panhandle.
- Some Snowy Plovers are banded. These plastic bands are brightly colored and fit on the birds’ legs like bracelets. Each bird has an individual combination of colors. We can track their movements, breeding success, and learn other important facts to aid in their conservation.
- There are about 440 Snowy plovers in Florida.
- Plovers eat tiny insects that live inside the seaweed that washes up onshore. This is why beach raking is so bad for the birds.
- Anytime the chicks are in danger, the parents will give a call that tells them to stay put, and the chicks will sit down and stay perfectly still. The parents will also do a broken wing display in order to draw predators away from the chicks.
- During the winter, plovers stay in this area, though they will disperse a bit.