

Pre-Oil Arrival Beach Cleanup Guidelines and Checklist

Volunteers are mobilizing to prepare for the arrival of oil on Florida's shores. Clearing man-made debris from beaches before the oil arrives lessens the amount of contaminated material. Listed below are general guidelines for planning beach cleanups.

Pre-planning Activities

- ✓ Consult with local beach manager (Federal, State or local public agency; private property owners or other local management authority). Confirm need for cleanup and include all planning activities.
- ✓ Develop a plan that includes:
 - ✓ Specific locations, date and duration of cleanup
 - ✓ Determine special needs for safety
 - ✓ Determine protection of beach resources including nesting shorebirds
 - ✓ Determine needed supplies (garbage bags, water, gloves, etc.)
 - ✓ Develop an outreach strategy to recruit volunteers (media, fliers, social networking, etc.)
 - ✓ Develop volunteer management strategy using team leaders
 - ✓ Establish procedure for debris handling (pile or bag debris in one centralized location versus multiple locations) and disposal of post-cleanup debris, including any hazardous materials (paint cans, batteries, etc)
- ✓ Develop Volunteer Orientation Information that includes the following guidelines:
 - **Use approved access points.**
 - **Stay below the tidal line.**
 - **Natural debris should be left in place as it often provides valuable nesting benefits to shorebirds and other wildlife.**
 - **Do not place debris in the dunes or above the high water line.**
 - **Do not use equipment such as rakes, shovels or tractors.**
 - **Do not bring dogs onto the beach**
- ✓ Contact Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission for direction on appropriate measures to protect wildlife while preparing for potential oil landfall: Jessica Ireland, (850) 921-1047, Jessica.Ireland@MyFWC.com. *Note: It is shorebird and seabird nesting season. Beach clean-up efforts, although well-intentioned, can pose a serious threat to nesting shorebirds and seabirds if extreme caution is not exercised; it is of utmost importance to follow the best management practices. See http://www.myfwc.com/OilSpill/OilSpill_Shorebirds_BestPractices.htm*
- ✓ Provide Volunteer Florida, info@volunteerflorida.org, with notification of cleanup for posting on www.volunteerflorida.org.

Day of the Cleanup

- ✓ Arrive at site early and review plan with key leaders and local beach management authority.
- ✓ Setup registration location for volunteers to sign-in.
- ✓ Conduct safety and wildlife protection briefing.
- ✓ Provide volunteers with specific project assignments.
- ✓ Conduct cleanup activities.

After the Cleanup

- ✓ Properly dispose of collected debris.
- ✓ Compile documentation of activity and email to info@volunteerflorida.org. Form is located at www.volunteerfloridadisaster.org/deepwater/docs/voluntary_agency_report.doc.
- ✓ Conduct a post-cleanup review with key partners and participants for successes and areas for improvement.

Keep a lookout for...



black skimmer



American oystercatcher



laughing gull



least tern



snowy plover



gull-billed tern



royal tern



Wilson's plover

Photography: Black skimmer by Barry Mansell; American oystercatchers and Wilson's plover by Patrick Leary; laughing gull, least tern, gull-billed tern, royal tern by Jeff Gore; snowy plover by Jeff Gore and Nancy Douglass.

While enjoying the beach, remember to be respectful of wildlife. Their survival depends on you!



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Wildlife Alert hotline: 1-888-404-3922



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com

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A matter of survival

Co-existing with Florida's beach-nesting birds



snowy plover by Jeff Gore and Nancy Douglass



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com



Disturbance can threaten survival

Frequent disturbances of birds on the beach, especially disturbances that cause birds to take flight, may threaten their survival.

Many species of Florida's water birds, including gulls, terns, skimmers, plovers, willets and oystercatchers, nest on the beach. When these beach-nesting birds are disturbed and flushed off their nests by people or dogs, eggs and chicks in the nests are exposed to temperature extremes and predators like crows, raccoons and dogs.

Several beach-nesting bird species are declining because of habitat loss and disruption of nesting activities. Beaches and islands that were once isolated are now teeming with boats, beach goers and their pets. It is easy for unknowing beach goers to crush the eggs or kill young chicks accidentally. Eggs and chicks of beach-nesting birds blend in with their surroundings and are nearly invisible on the ground.

If birds appear agitated or take flight, you are too close!

What can you do to help?

■ **Keep your distance.** If birds appear agitated or take flight, you are too close! Some birds (such as terns and skimmers) require a 600-foot comfort zone during the breeding season, while other species are more tolerant of disturbances. A general rule is to stay at least 300 feet (the length of a football field) away from groups of shorebirds. Observe birds from a distance using binoculars to get a closer look.

■ **Keep out of posted areas.** During the spring and summer nesting season, signs may be posted in areas that are important for beach-nesting birds. Avoid posted areas and encourage others to do the same.

■ **Never intentionally force birds to fly.** If you see birds on a beach, island or sandbar, walk or steer around the birds to avoid disturbing them.

■ **Avoid running your watercraft close to shore.** Many mangrove islands, beaches, mud flats and other shallow water and shoreline habitats can be important feeding, resting and nesting areas for birds. Loud noises and vessel wakes can disturb birds.



■ **Keep dogs leashed.** An unleashed dog can destroy a colony of beach-nesting birds in minutes. Keep dogs away from all bird colonies and beach-nesting birds.

■ **Spread the word.** Many people do not realize their actions may be harmful to wildlife. If you see people intentionally disturbing a bird colony, let them know how their actions may threaten survival of birds.



Protecting the young

Adult beach-nesting birds are protective of their eggs and young. When you disturb a nesting area, worried adult birds see you as a danger and try to keep you away from their eggs and chicks. Sometimes an adult bird will pretend to have a broken wing to lure you and dangerous predators away from their young. Adult birds also may attempt to drive you away by calling out in protest, dive-bombing and even defecating on you!

If any of these things happen, you are too close to the birds! Please calmly and quietly leave the area. As you walk away, keep your eyes on the beach and watch carefully so you do not step on eggs or chicks.

Photography: oystercatcher eggs and royal terns by Jeff Gore. Beach sign photo by Ricardo Zambran.