

# How to Help *Beach-nesting Birds*

Many species of birds nest on beaches, and many have experienced declines due to habitat loss and excessive disturbance. They face many challenges as they raise their young and **require the cooperation and help of the humans that use the beach in order to succeed.**

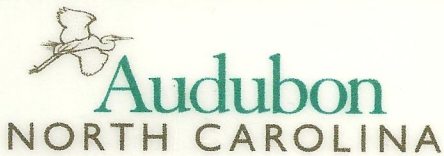
## Minimize Disturbance

Disturbance to beach-nesting birds puts eggs and chicks at risk and can even cause adults to abandon their nests. Posted areas guide beachgoers away from nesting areas and provide buffers that help the birds to nest successfully. But birds sometimes nest outside of postings or where there are no postings. **If birds are agitated, fly up, dive bomb you, or are calling loudly, you are too close to their nests or chicks.** Move back and let them take care of their young! Take the actions below to prevent disturbance:

- **Respect posted areas.** *Entering posted areas causes parent birds to flush (fly up), exposing their eggs and chicks to many dangers. Even if you are outside a posting, if the birds fly up or are agitated you are too close.*
- **Report nesting.** *If you see evidence of nesting outside a posted area or a problem within a posted area, contact the Wildlife Resources Commission at 252-639-8435.*
- **Don't bring your dog to the beach.** *Dogs look like the birds' natural predators and cause them to flush, even if they don't enter the posting. If you do bring your dog to the beach, keep it leashed and avoid nesting areas.*
- **Don't leave food or trash on the beach.** *Food attracts excessive numbers of predators, which eat nesting birds' eggs. Take your food off the beach and dispose of it elsewhere.*

## Why Disturbance Can Be Deadly

- **Heat** *In the heat of the day, temperatures on the surface of the sand exceed 120 F. Eggs left uncovered for as little as 10 minutes can cook on the beach, killing the embryo developing inside. Chicks, too, can overheat and die.*
- **Dogs** *Even leashed dogs can cause birds to flush (fly up), exposing eggs and young to extreme temperatures and predators. Unleashed dogs can injure or kill chicks.*
- **Predators** *Predators like crows, raccoons, foxes, and cats that are attracted to human food trash also prey on adults, chicks, and eggs. Too many predators overwhelm the parent birds and can cause them to abandon the colony.*
- **Excessive disturbance** *Too much disturbance (like people repeatedly walking through a nesting area), or too great a disturbance (such as fireworks), can cause birds to abandon their eggs and chicks.*
- **Trampling** *Camouflaged eggs and chicks are hard to see and easy to step on when a beachgoer enters a posting. Older chicks can be chased out of a safe posted area.*



## Beach-nesting Birds of Brunswick County

adults	nests	chicks
 Least Tern		
 Black Skimmer		
 Common Tern		
 A. Oystercatcher		
 Wilson's Plover		
 Willet		