

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Memorial Day Weekend

Protection of Snowy Plover at Oceano Dunes Remains A Top Priority for State Parks

OCEANO -- The protection of endangered and threatened birds remains a top priority at the Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area (SVRA) this busy Memorial Day weekend, California State Parks officials reminded visitors today.

This marks the first major holiday of the 2003 tourist season for the off-road vehicle park that draws 1.3 million visitors annually. Traditionally, the Memorial Day weekend marks the start of the busy summer season. All 1,000 campsites at Oceano Dunes SVRA have been reserved through the long weekend that begins Friday and ends Monday. Day use attendance is expected to be busy.

The summer season, including the Memorial Day weekend, coincides with the nesting seasons for the threatened western snowy plover and the endangered California least tern. These small birds nest on the bare sands within the recreation area. Although their nests are protected within fenced areas, they can still be disturbed by inappropriate visitor activities.

Park Superintendent Steve Yamaichi said State Parks is committed to increased ranger and ecologist staffing levels for the weekend to both monitor these species and to ensure visitor compliance with the protection measures that are in place for the plover and terns.

Ranger staffing will be increased and the number of field biologists has been increased. That will enable extended hours of nest site monitoring. Rangers will be rigorously enforcing the 15 MPH vehicle speed limits on the beach, dog leash laws and are encouraging all park visitors not to enter or disturb the fenced seasonal nesting enclosures. In addition, Rangers will be strictly enforcing the ban on all glass containers.

Each visitor to Oceano Dunes SVRA is reminded that their future access to the park is dependent on their responsible behavior and strict adherence to these laws and park policies:

- Obey posted 15 mph speed limit; give all birds right of way

- Do not enter posted nest exclosures, hang clothes, towels or other items on fences, or drive next to protective exclosures
- Camping or parking is prohibited within 100 feet of posted exclosures
- Drive with care to avoid small chicks, especially at night
- Dogs must be kept on leashes and under control at all times
- Dispose of trash properly to avoid attracting predators to nesting area
- Do not pick up sick or injured birds; notify a Ranger immediately
- To avoid frightening nesting birds, kite flying is prohibited

All park staff is available to answer questions and will provide information about these species to the public and actions that visitors can take to avoid disturbing or harming the birds.

Oceano Dunes SVRA is one of California's most popular State Parks and represents the last 5 ½ miles of beach along California's 1,100 miles of coastline where motorized recreation is still allowed.

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