



Black Skimmers incubating nests on a rooftop.

Why Are These Birds Nesting on Rooftops?

Least Terns, American Oystercatchers, and Black Skimmers are threatened species that breed on Florida's beaches. Least Terns migrate from South America and the Caribbean to raise their young in Florida, while American Oystercatchers and Black Skimmers are year-round residents.

Loss of beach habitat due to human development and disturbance has forced these birds to nest on gravel rooftops instead. These species are protected by both state and federal laws, so it is important to recognize their presence and spread awareness about rooftop nesting.

The nesting season runs March 1 to Sept. 1. Eggs are incubated by the parents for three to four weeks, and the chicks will fledge (learn to fly) three to four weeks later. During this time, it is important that disturbance to nesting colonies is limited.

About Audubon Florida and the Rooftop Nesting Bird Program

Audubon Florida protects birds and the places they need, today and in the future.

In 2014, Audubon Florida created its Rooftop Nesting Bird Program to assist building owners and managers with monitoring and management of protected seabirds on gravel rooftops.

Audubon Florida staff monitor the nesting birds throughout the breeding season and guide business owners through daily life with rooftop-nesting birds.



American Oystercatcher pair with chick.



Learn more about rooftop-nesting birds
at audubon.org/florida
Contact us: Fl.Conservation@audubon.org

COASTAL

Protect Florida's Rooftop-Nesting Birds



Least Tern on rooftop with chick.



Identifying Nests, Eggs, and Chicks

Nests, eggs, and chicks are well camouflaged and difficult to see.



Least Tern nest bowl with eggs.



Least Tern chicks are well camouflaged.



American Oystercatcher chick.

Avoid Accessing Rooftops With Nesting Birds

Least Terns, American Oystercatchers, and Black Skimmers do not lay their eggs in an obvious nest structure. Instead, eggs are laid in a shallow depression in the gravel (see photo on left).

Within a few days of hatching, chicks are mobile and no longer remain in the nest bowl. This puts them at risk for falling off the rooftop or down drain spouts, especially when disturbed.

Fallen chicks must be returned to the rooftop as soon as possible!

When parent birds are disturbed during nesting, they will leave their nests. Chicks and eggs can quickly succumb to overheating in the Florida sun.

Recommendations for Working Around Threatened Birds

- Contact Audubon Florida if Least Terns, Black Skimmers, or American Oystercatchers are present on a rooftop.
- Under Florida law, it is illegal to take, harass, or harm a nest, egg, chick, or adult.
- During the breeding season, the birds should not be disturbed. Routine maintenance or non-emergency repairs should be made prior to the breeding season (March 1) or after nesting has completed (Sept. 1).
- Emergencies happen. If emergency repairs need to be conducted on a rooftop with nesting birds, please contact Audubon Florida for assistance.
- Emergency repairs should be scheduled during cool, early morning hours, and a few steps can be taken to minimize disturbance while completing roof work.

