

Coastal Stewardship Report

2025

 Audubon | SOUTH CAROLINA



WILSON'S PLOVER. AUDUBON SOUTH CAROLINA STAFF PHOTO

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MATHEW MALWITZ/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

Introduction

The National Audubon Society's mission is to reverse the rapid decline of bird species throughout the hemisphere by protecting birds and the habitats they need. Audubon has focused its recovery mission by following its strategic Flight Plan, and plan that is hemispheric in scale, is grounded in science, and provides measurable outcomes in habitat conservation, climate action, policy, and community building. As part of the Flight Plan, Audubon has developed its Coastal and Resilience Marine Initiative to address coast-specific challenges for both birds and people.

Under this Initiative, Audubon is dedicated to helping shorebirds; according to the 2025 State of the Birds Report, shorebird populations have declined 33% since 1980. This is largely due to the triple threat of habitat loss, climate change, and human disturbance. One of the most effective ways to reduce human disturbance and benefit shorebirds is through shorebird stewardship; research has shown that stewardship can positively affect shorebird abundance and productivity. Audubon is committed to using stewardship as a key strategy to help shorebirds by conserving habitat and building community, and currently has over 500 stewardship sites throughout the entire western hemisphere.

Here in the southeast, Audubon South Carolina's Coastal Bird Stewardship Program is dedicated to protecting our state's most vulnerable coastal birds through education, engagement, advocacy, and direct intervention. Since establishing the Coastal Stewardship Program in 2016, Audubon has trained and deployed hundreds of these volunteer stewards along the South Carolina coast, where they educate beachgoers about coastal birds and how to protect them. Join us in celebrating all the wins we have achieved together in 2025 with staff, volunteers, and partners!

HABITAT
CONSERVATION



BUILDING
COMMUNITY



PHOTO: JEAN HALL/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

AUDUBON'S COASTAL TEAM



Erin Rogers
Coastal Program
Manager



Abigail Burke
Coastal Stewardship
Coordinator

Soaring to New Heights in 2025!

2025 was the first full year for Audubon's new coastal stewardship staff team, who both started mid-nesting season 2024. They are working to bolster stewardship at existing sites by increasing education and support for stewards.

WELCOMING NEW SITE LEADERS!

In 2025, Audubon welcomed dynamic new site leaders at 7 sites who are building upon an excellent foundation to support stewardship at their sites:

- Morris Island: Scott Glass
- Kiawah Island: Cyndy McKiney
- Seabrook Island: Deanna Forsythe, Doug Boudinot, Jen Jerome, Melanie Jerome
- Botany Bay: Brianna Goodwin
- Edisto Access 37: Bess Kellett
- Hunting Island: Terese Dick



SCOTT GLASS AND AUDUBON STAFF ON MORRIS ISLAND.
PHOTO: JULIE GLASS



TABLING AT EDISTO WITH JAN RASMUSSEN. AUDUBON STAFF PHOTO

NEW STEWARDSHIP SITES

In 2025, Audubon was able to begin or restart stewardship at 5 new sites across the state thanks to the help of volunteers and partners:

- South Litchfield: A new shorebird nesting area
- Morris Island: A boat access only site previously only stewarded by Audubon staff
- Botany Bay: Returned after staff changeover in 2024
- Edisto Access 37: Gained local permission to begin stewardship
- Bull Point: A boat access only site now stewarded by a Prichard's Island turtle crew team member

CONTRIBUTING TO SCIENCE

- Audubon staff piloted a shorebird nest monitoring project at Folly Lighthouse Inlet.
- Audubon staff and stewards continued participation in Manomet's International Shorebird Survey (ISS). ISS is a volunteer-based bird census run during spring and fall migration. This data becomes part of a large database on shorebird migration that details stopover hot spots and populations of focal species. This year staff and stewards gathered data at four sites:
 - Folly Lighthouse Inlet
 - Morris Island
 - Botany Bay
 - Edisto Beach Access 37



ERIN ROGERS CONDUCTING ISS SURVEY AT BOTANY BAY. AUDUBON STAFF PHOTO



WILSON'S PLOVER BANDING ON FOLLY. PHOTO: KIAWAH BIOLOGY TEAM



AUDUBON STAFF PHOTO OF MEDAL OF HONOR STUDENTS AT FOLLY BEACH CLEANUP

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Audubon teamed up with stewards and partners for outreach tabling events at Kiawah, Seabrook, Isle of Palms, and Edisto throughout the year.
- In March, Audubon hosted a shorebird trivia event as part of The South Carolina Shorebird Project's Shorebird Week Festival.
- In July, Audubon led a beach cleanup at Folly for the National Medal of Honor Center for Leadership Program students.
- In August, Audubon led a group of students from Bishop England High School to help SCDNR take down fencing at Folly Lighthouse Inlet at the end of the nesting season.

The Birds

Audubon's Coastal Bird Stewardship Program exists to protect coastal bird species whose populations are threatened by human use of the beach and marsh. Humans, dogs, drones, and boats are all perceived as predators by birds, especially when they get too close. If people recognize these behaviors are detrimental to shorebirds and alter their activities on the beach, birds can have the space they need to rest and nest while people are able to responsibly enjoy the coast.

Below are the focal species of the Coastal Bird Stewardship Program, the time of year we see them on our coast, and their conservation status. Please note all bird data presented in this report are estimates based on numbers gathered by stewards and Audubon biologists. The species listed on each site page are focal species that have significant nesting populations at that site. We recognize more bird species use each site than what is listed.



WILSON'S PLOVER

Nests

April–August
State Threatened



LEAST TERN

Nests

April–August
State Threatened



AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER

Nests & Overwinters

Year round
Highest Conservation Priority in SC



RED KNOT

Migratory

March–May & Aug.–Oct.
Federally Threatened



PIPING PLOVER

Migratory & Overwinters

August–April
Federally Threatened/Endangered

PHOTOS FROM LEFT:
CHARLIE STRICKLIN,
ALICE BELANGER,
ALICE BELANGER, MICKI
COLES, PEGGY LUCAS



WILLET



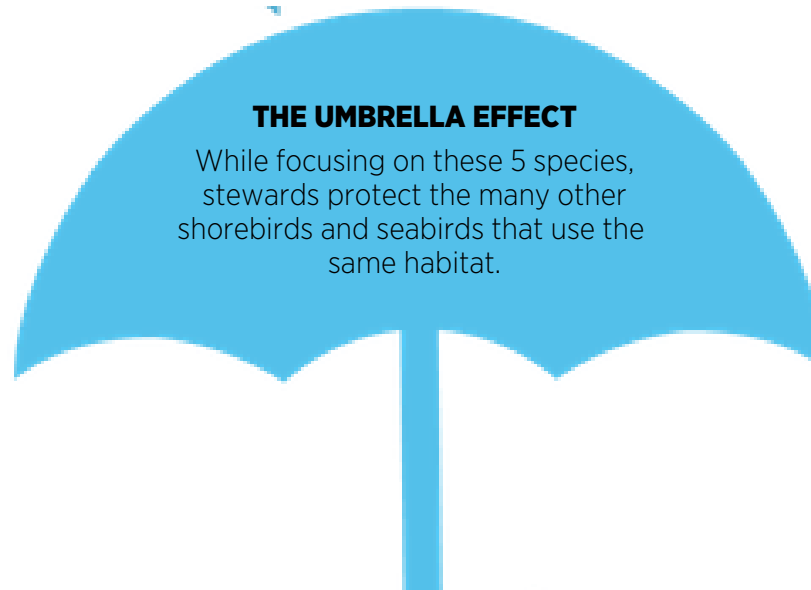
BROWN PELICAN



SANDERLING



RUDDY TURNSTONE



WHIMBREL



BLACK SKIMMER



SEMIPALMATED PLOVER



ROYAL TERN

The People

Audubon works with a variety of conservation partners, site leaders, and volunteers to protect shorebirds, reduce human disturbance, and provide stewardship throughout the 3,000 miles of South Carolina's coastline.

SITE LEADERS

Stewards at each site are led by a local expert-either a state park ranger or an experienced steward-naturalist. Site Leaders play an important role in recruiting, coordinating, transporting, and orienting Shorebird Stewards to their beach site.

VOLUNTEERS

Our trained Shorebird Stewards are the boots on the ground that help prevent human disturbance. Stewards work 2 to 4 hour shifts at critical times of the year to provide education to beachgoers about coastal birds and their conservation. Shorebird Stewards gather data about the human disturbances they observe during their shifts as well as bird species present in the area and conversations they have with beachgoers. This data will help inform future habitat management and ensure that Audubon staff, volunteers, and conservation partners are doing the best we can to protect the birds.



FENCING FOLLY INLET WITH SCDNR, VOLUNTEERS, AND AUDUBON STAFF. SCDNR PHOTO

CONSERVATION PARTNERS

Audubon works with many state and local organizations that directly protect shorebirds across the coast. These partners provide education and support to both volunteers and the public:

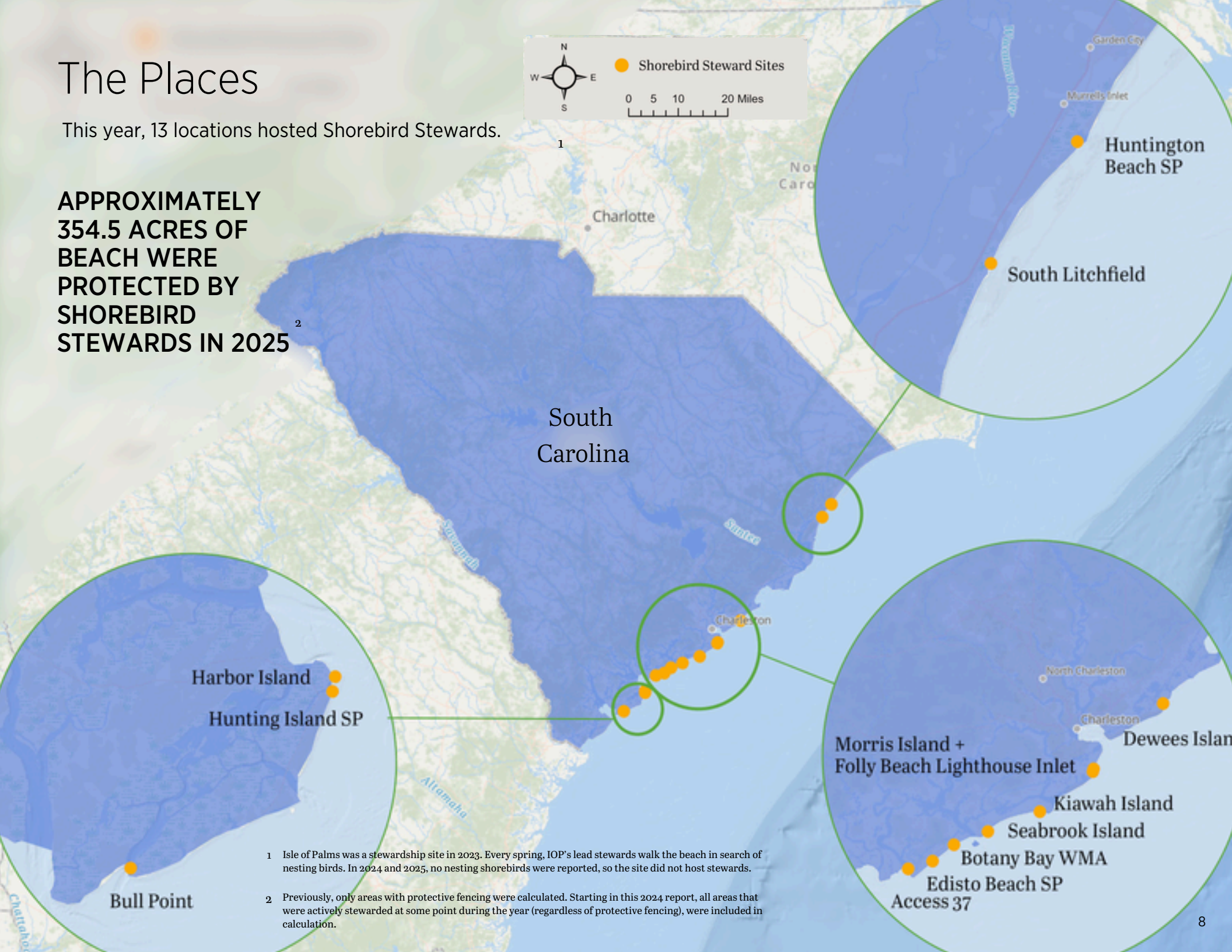
- **South Carolina State Parks**
- **Friends of Hunting Island**
- **Seabrook Island Birders**
- **Conservancy of the Sea Islands**
- **Town of Kiawah Island**
- **Dewees Island Conservancy**
- **Harbor Island HOA**

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) enacts shorebird conservation measures statewide by monitoring populations and protecting and enhancing critical habitat. The SCDNR team erects protective fencing at shorebird nesting sites along the coast with the assistance of Audubon staff and volunteers.

The Places

This year, 13 locations hosted Shorebird Stewards.

**APPROXIMATELY
354.5 ACRES OF
BEACH WERE
PROTECTED BY
SHOREBIRD
STEWARDS IN 2025**



1 Isle of Palms was a stewardship site in 2023. Every spring, IOP's lead stewards walk the beach in search of nesting birds. In 2024 and 2025, no nesting shorebirds were reported, so the site did not host stewards.

2 Previously, only areas with protective fencing were calculated. Starting in this 2024 report, all areas that were actively stewarded at some point during the year (regardless of protective fencing), were included in calculation.

Stewardship Overview

South Carolina beaches are ideal habitat for shorebirds during each phase of their lives: breeding, migrating, and wintering. As a result, shorebird stewards are active at beaches all year round to protect these birds. Stewardship numbers are reported here from October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025. The graph shows how the Coastal Bird Stewardship Program has evolved over time.



420 people trained



150 active volunteers



2,841 total volunteer hours



5368 interactions with beachgoers

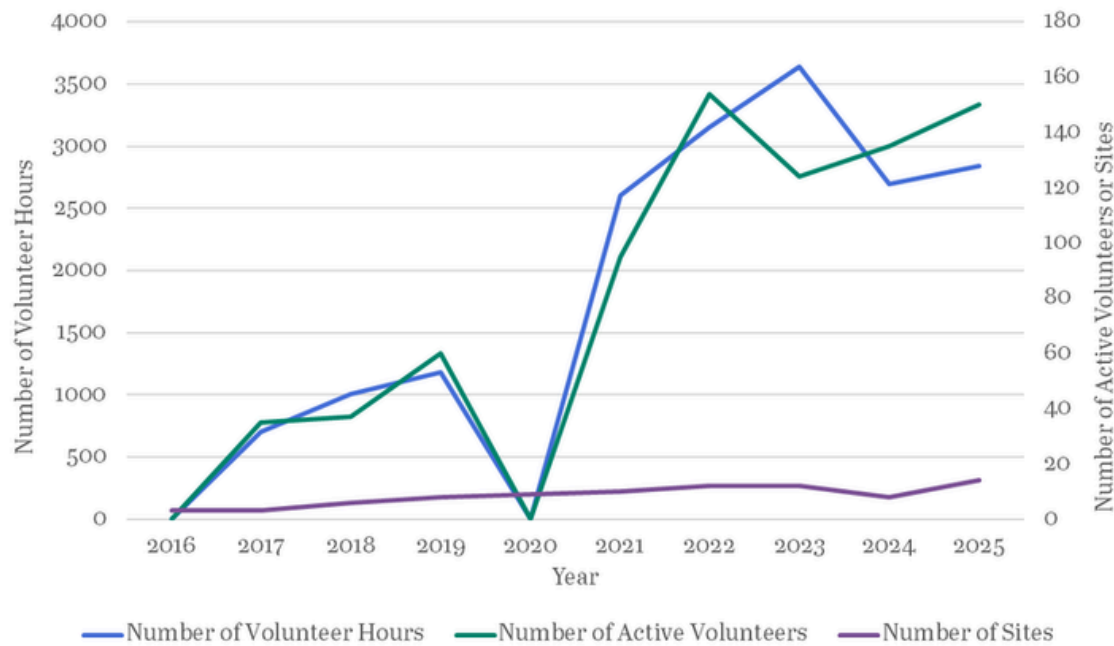


291 shift reports submitted



Economic value of volunteer time is \$88,525.56³

STEWARDSHIP PARTICIPATION OVER TIME



SCOTT GLASS STEWARDING AT FOLLY. PHOTO: JULIE GLASS

³ Economic value of volunteer time calculated through the Independent Sector's "Value of Volunteer Time"

Huntington Beach

Huntington Beach State Park (HBSP) is located in Murrells Inlet, SC, and has been a Shorebird Steward site since 2018. Much of the nesting habitat was lost during hurricane Ian in September 2022, but during the winter of 2023, the nesting habitat was built up with beneficial use of dredged material. Nesting birds immediately took to the improved habitat and both Least Terns and Wilson’s Plovers hatched chicks. Now, the nesting area is roped off with signs and an electric fence to exclude predators each nesting season by Park staff, SCDNR, and volunteers.

SITE LEADER: MIKE WALKER

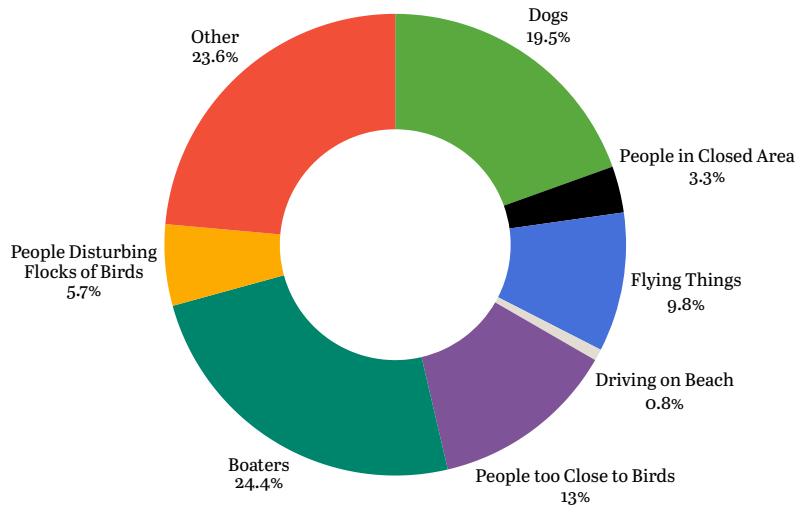
Mike, along with his duties as a Park Ranger, is a leader and educator for HBSP’s Stewards. Two of his fellow Interpreters, Amber MacLeod and Hanna Mariskanish, transported volunteers to the nesting site in 2025.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



DISTURBANCES REPORTED



STEWARD ALICE BELANGER AT HUNTINGTON BEACH. PHOTO BY HANNA MARISKANISH

NESTING BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson’s Plover

There were 3 nesting pairs and 3 total nests. Three chicks hatched, but it was unknown if any fledged.



American Oystercatcher

One pair had one nest and hatched one chick. It is unknown if the chick fledged.



Least Tern

There were approximately 130 nesting individuals. Multiple chicks hatched, but it is unknown how many fledged.

South Litchfield

Over the past few seasons an increase in sand deposits on the southern end of Pawley's Island has created great nesting habitat for shorebirds. Master Naturalists noticed nesting Least Terns and notified SCDNR, who were able to erect protective fencing around the nesting area. Since this was a new partial closure to the area, residents and beachgoers were unfamiliar with why the area was closed and why these shorebirds needed protection. Robert Puckerson and a group of Huntington Beach stewards were able to provide shorebird education to beachgoers at this site throughout the breeding season.

MAIN STEWARD: ROBERT PUCKERSON

Robert alerted SCDNR and Audubon to the existence of the colony. He spearheaded the first stewardship efforts and the site and assisted SCDNR with fencing installation. He continues to work to improve public education and perception of shorebirds and seabirds at the site.

STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



4 active
volunteers



40 total
volunteer hours



1 shift report
submitted

DISTURBANCES REPORTED

Anecdotally, the most frequent disturbances were people disturbing flocks of birds, people walking through the nesting area, the presence of dogs, and people getting too close to the nesting area.



LEAST TERN FAMILY AT SOUTH LITCHFIELD.
PHOTO BY LORRAINE HOLCOMBE

NESTING BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson's Plover

There was at least one nesting pair that had at least one nest. Two or more chicks hatched, but it is unknown if any fledged.



Least Tern

Approximately 110 nests and at least 55 chicks fledged.

Dewees Island

Dewees Island is only accessible by ferry and has hosted Shorebird Stewards since 2016. Island interns have played a key role helping to transport Stewards and educating beachgoers as part of their internship responsibilities. No off-island stewards volunteered at Dewees this year. All stewardship hours were completed by interns, site leaders, and locals.

SITE LEADERS: LORI SHERIDAN-WILSON AND JUDY DREW FAIRCHILD

Lori and Judy have worked together as Site Leaders since the initiation of stewardship on the island. Lori is the island's Environmental Program Director, while Judy produces nature-related educational content for a variety of audiences.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



5 active volunteers



30 total volunteer hours

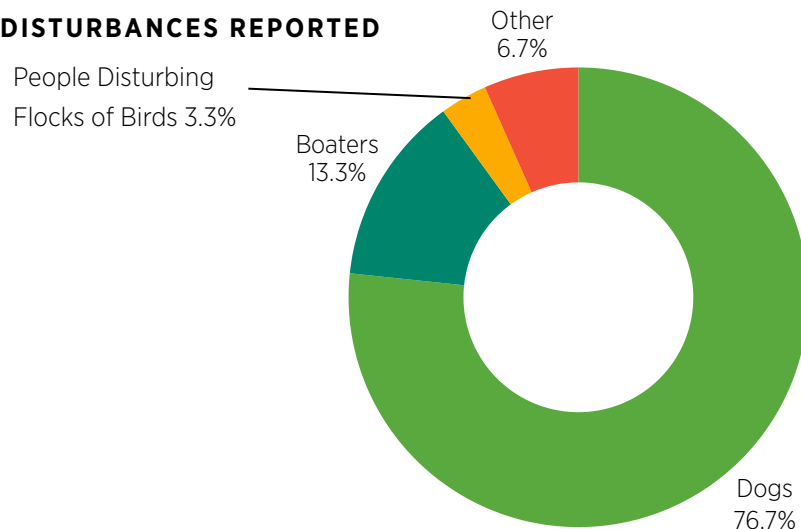


10 interactions with beachgoers



13 shift reports submitted

DISTURBANCES REPORTED



BANDED WINTERING AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS ON DEWEES ISLAND. PHOTO BY JUDY FAIRCHILD

SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson's Plover

There were 3 nesting pairs with 3 total nests. It is unknown how many chicks hatched and fledged.



American Oystercatcher

While there are a couple of nesting pairs on Dewees, the real magic begins in the winter. Site leader Judy Fairchild goes out to roosting spots to photograph and report banded oystercatchers. Reporting banded birds helps biologists better understand where birds travel throughout their lifetime. Judy has reported an impressive 700 bands over the years totaling 179 individual American Oystercatchers.

Morris Island

Morris Island is only accessible by boat. In 2024, its southern beach was home to a large Least Tern colony. Over the winter, much of the southern spit was lost to erosion. Despite this, Wilson’s Plovers, Willets, and American Oystercatchers continued to nest in the area in 2025. Least Terns returned towards the end of the breeding season and set up a small colony slightly north of their previous location. Unfortunately, it remains a popular spot for boaters who set up close to the nesting habitat and let their dogs and children run free, many of which continuously run into the nesting area and through flocks of resting birds.

SITE LEADER: SCOTT GLASS

Scott was brand new to stewardship and birding this year. He quickly learned the ropes and was able to make an impressive 15 stewarding trips to the island to educate beachgoers.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



7 active volunteers



120 total volunteer hours

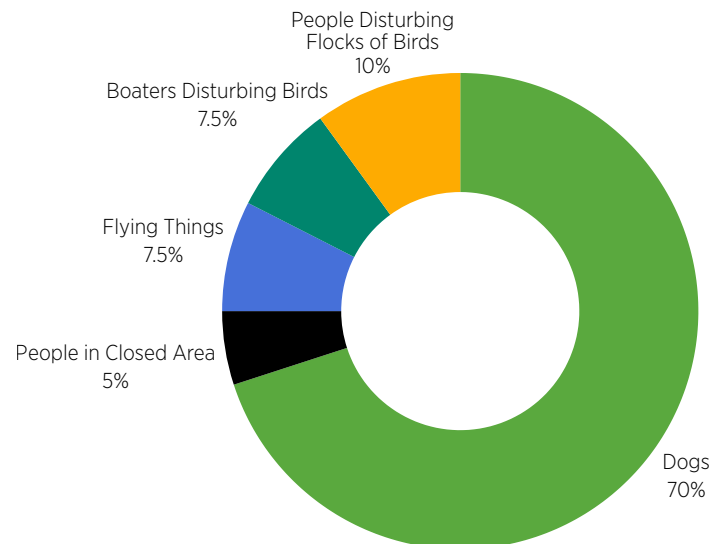


494 interactions with beachgoers



15 shift reports submitted

DISTURBANCES REPORTED



STEWARDS SCOTT GLASS AND CHARLIE STRICKLIN AT MORRIS ISLAND. PHOTO BY RUFUS JONES

NESTING BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson’s Plover

There were 6 nesting pairs with 6 total pairs. At least 3 chicks hatched, but it is unknown if any of them fledged.



American Oystercatcher

One pair had one nesting attempt. It is unknown if any chicks hatched or fledged.



Least Tern

There was approximately 125 nesting individuals. At least one chick hatched, but it is unknown if any chicks fledged.

Folly Beach: Lighthouse Inlet

Folly Beach's Lighthouse Inlet Heritage Preserve is located at the north end of Folly Island. It has been an active stewardship site since 2017. The nesting area is a long, thin strip of beach above the high tide line.

MAIN STEWARD: CHARLIE STRICKLIN

While Audubon coordinates volunteers at this site, veteran steward Charlie Stricklin graciously helps new stewards on their first few shifts to learn the finer points of beachgoer interaction.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



10 active volunteers



114 total volunteer hours

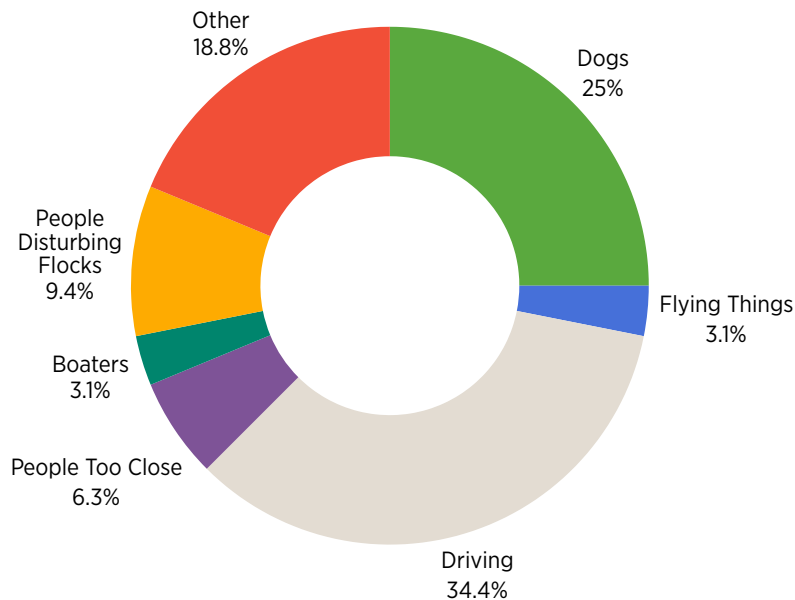


274 interactions with beachgoers



47 shift reports submitted

DISTURBANCES REPORTED



STEWARD CHARLIE STRICKLIN EDUCATING BEACHGOERS AT FOLLY INLET. PHOTO BY RUFUS JONES

SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS

Wilson's Plover



There were 14 pairs with 25 total nesting attempts. There were 17 chicks that hatched, and 8 that fledged.



American Oystercatcher

One pair had three nesting attempts. They did not hatch or fledge any chicks.



Piping Plover

Approximately 6 Piping Plovers spend the winter on Folly.

Audubon conducted a nest monitoring project at Folly Lighthouse Inlet. An in-depth breakdown follows on page 15.



WILSON'S PLOVER NEST AND INCUBATING ADULT. AUDUBON STAFF PHOTOS

Audubon's Shorebird Nest Monitoring Project at Folly Lighthouse Inlet

A critical component of protecting shorebirds is knowing specifically where the birds are nesting, what is causing nest loss, and the outcome of their nests. This helps inform how to improve protection and stewardship measures to more effectively protect the nesting shorebirds.

successfully fledged. Unfortunately, no American Oystercatcher eggs hatched chicks. Importantly, none of the nests failed directly due to human disturbance in 2025, highlighting the combined effectiveness of stewardship and protective fencing at this site. Most nest failures that occurred were because of predators and flooding.



WILSON'S PLOVER ADULT AND CHICK. CINDY BARBANERA-WEDEL/AUDUBON PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS

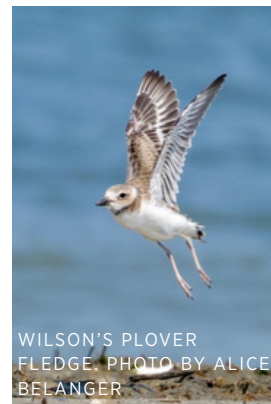
In 2025, Audubon piloted nest monitoring at Folly Lighthouse Inlet. Staff kept track of every nest and brood of every pair of Wilson's Plovers (14 pairs) and American Oystercatchers (1 pair).

In May 2025, Town of Kiawah Island biologists came to Folly and banded 5 of the breeding adults. The presence of these bands greatly helped identify individual pairs. We look forward to seeing which of these banded birds will return to nest at Folly again in 2026.

At the end of the breeding season, they determined that 8 Wilson's Plover chicks

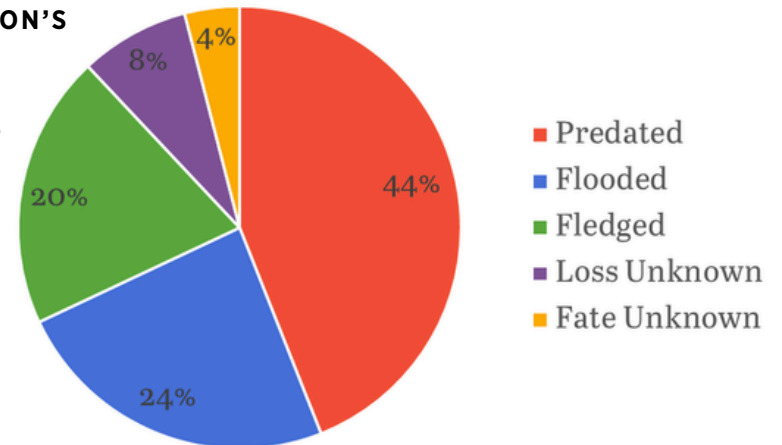


KIAWAH BIOLOGISTS BANDING A WILSON'S PLOVER. AUDUBON STAFF PHOTO



WILSON'S PLOVER FLEDGE. PHOTO BY ALICE BELANGER

2025 WILSON'S PLOVER NEST OUTCOMES



Kiawah Island

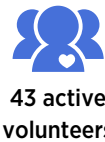
Kiawah Island is a private island that has run their autonomous Shorebird Stewardship Program through the Town of Kiawah since 2018. Audubon and Kiawah's Shorebird Steward Program Coordinator work closely together throughout the year to ensure that Stewards have plenty of resources. In 2025, Stewards and Audubon staff also participated in local education and outreach events including the Kiawah Earth Day Festival, where they educated 400 visitors about shorebirds. Kiawah is a critical stopover site for migratory Red Knots, where flocks consume enough food to fuel their 20,000 mile migration. Kiawah's Flock Watch Program helps strategically place stewards near the flocks so they are able to effectively engage and educate beachgoers who may be disturbing the birds.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS: BETTE POPILLO & CYNDY MCKINEY

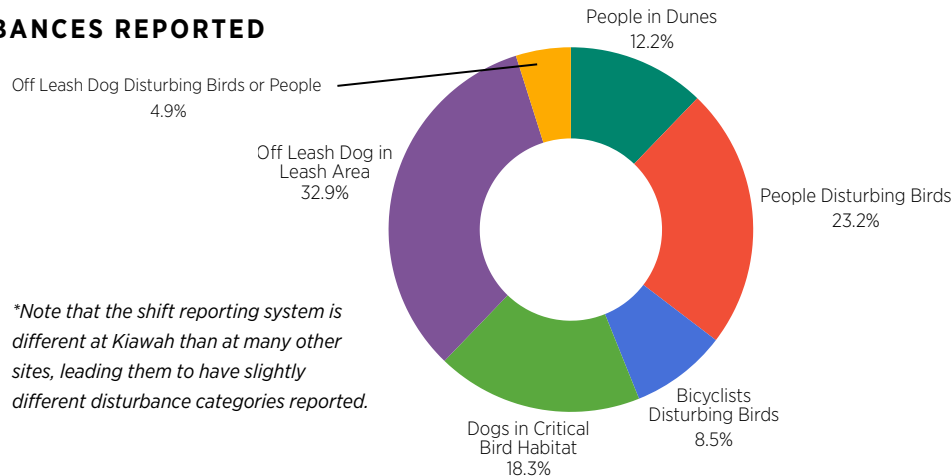
2025 was Bette Popillo's last year as coordinator. Bette served an impressive 7 years and looks forward to a well-earned retirement, where she still plans to still be involved as a steward. In the fall of 2025, long time steward Cyndy McKinney stepped up as lead coordinator. Program coordinators work closely with Audubon, the town's biologist, Aaron Given, and SCDNR staff to train stewards and assist with SCDNR's research efforts of Red Knots.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



DISTURBANCES REPORTED



**Note that the shift reporting system is different at Kiawah than at many other sites, leading them to have slightly different disturbance categories reported.*



SHOREBIRD STEWARD EDUCATING BEACHGOERS. PHOTO BY CYNDY MCKINEY

SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson's Plover

Multiple Wilson's Plover pairs nested and hatched chicks. It is unknown if any fledged.



Red Knot

During spring migration, biologists recorded flocks containing over 3000 Red Knots.

Seabrook Island

Seabrook Island is a private island that began their autonomous Shorebird Stewardship program in 2020 through the Seabrook Island Birders Club, associated with the Town of Seabrook Island. Audubon assists with Shorebird Steward training to new and returning Seabrook Stewards. This program mainly focuses on protecting the thousands of Red Knot that use the shores of Seabrook, Captain Sam's Spit, and Kiawah to rest. When the large flocks of Red Knots migrate north, Stewards switch their focus to the nearby nesting area, where a nesting pair of American Oystercatchers returns to nest each year.

PROGRAM COORDINATORS:

Until fall of 2025, Seabrook's program was run by three volunteers from the Seabrook Island Birders: Mark Andrews, Bob Mercer, and Leslie Gore. In the fall of 2025, Seabrook Island Birders and Audubon welcomed a new team with Deanna Forsythe, Doug Boudinot, Jen Jerome, Melanie Jerome, and Bob Mercer remained on the team.

STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



35 active
volunteers



140 total
volunteer hours



622 interactions with
beachgoers

INTERACTIONS REPORTED

Out of the 622 beachgoers interacted with, most (90%) were adults. Full-time Seabrook Island residents were 25% of those contacts, part-time residents 15%, and 60% were visitors.

**Note that the shift reporting system is different at Seabrook than at many other sites, leading them to collect interaction data rather than disturbance data.*



SEABROOK ISLAND STEWARDS. PHOTO BY DEANNA FORSYTHE

SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS



American Oystercatcher

There was one pair with 3 nesting attempts. It is unknown if they hatched or fledged any chicks.



Piping Plover

Approximately 12 Piping Plovers spend the winter on Seabrook Island.



Red Knot

Approximately 1500 Red Knots use the beach during migration.

Botany Bay WMA

Botany Bay Plantation Wildlife Management Area (WMA) is located next to Edisto Island. The beach is accessed by walking a quarter mile across the adjacent marsh, which becomes impassable at high tide. Botany Bay became a stewardship site in 2018. 2024 was a transitional year for site leadership and saw no active stewardship. 2025 welcomed new volunteer coordinator Brianna Goodwin. Together with Audubon and SCDNR, stewardship once again became active during breeding season. Typically, volunteers are stationed at a kiosk at the beach entrance where they can educate visitors on beach rules and wildlife information before they head out to the beach.

SITE LEADER: BRIANNA GOODWIN

Brianna is the ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve Volunteer Coordinator with SCDNR. She organizes hundreds of volunteers and events across Botany Bay. She has partnered with Audubon to enable her volunteers to provide shorebird education to beachgoers.

STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



DISTURBANCE BREAKDOWN

Anecdotally, the largest forms of disturbance are people walking through flocks of birds and getting too close to the nesting area.



VOLUNTEER AT BOTANY BAY KIOSK. AUDUBON STAFF PHOTO

NESTING BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson's Plover

Multiple Wilson's Plover pairs nested. It is unknown if they were successful.



Least Tern

A medium sized Least tern colony nested. It is unknown if they were successful.



American Oystercatcher

One American Oystercatcher pair nested. It is unknown if they were successful.

Edisto Beach State Park

Edisto Beach State Park is located on the north end of Edisto Island. The park began welcoming stewards in 2023 in conjunction with their already robust sea turtle nesting program. In 2025, Audubon also trained the sea turtle technician crew in identifying shorebirds and nests. This crew patrolled the beach daily and were able to educate beachgoers to limit human disturbance to both birds and turtles.

SITE LEADERS: LEAH SCHWARTZENTRUBER AND SAMANTHA FORMAN

Leah Swartzentuber is the Park's Lead Sea Turtle Biologist and Samantha Forman is the Park's Lead Interpreter. Both are committed to protecting all wildlife at the park. They built in the time to assist stewards during their shifts and gives their technicians the opportunity to provide shorebird stewardship for the public.

STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



6 active volunteers



40 total volunteer hours

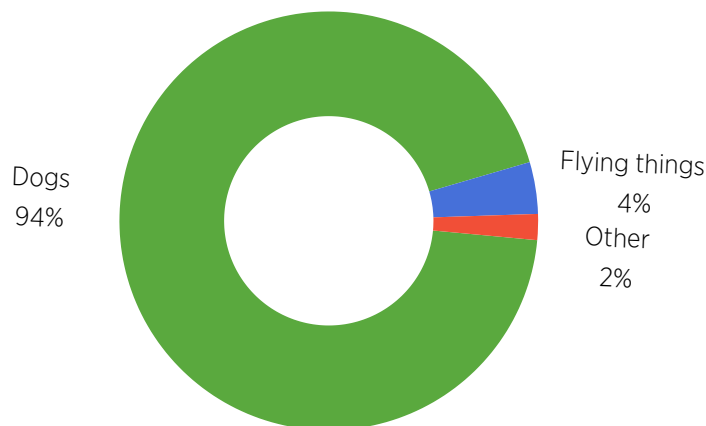


20 interactions with beachgoers



4 shift reports submitted

DISTURBANCES REPORTED



SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson's Plover

There were 4 pairs of Wilson's Plovers with an unknown number of nests, chicks hatched, and chicks fledged.



Red Knot

Approximately 20 Red Knots use the beach during migration.

Edisto Beach Access 37

Access 37 is located at the southern end of Edisto Island. In 2024, a small group of locals noticed the area's significance as a shorebird nesting and foraging location. They began informally educating beachgoers to give the birds space. Ken Tingman began working with the mayor to garner town support of shorebird protections. In 2025, with the support of the town, Access 37 began official shorebird stewardship efforts. Mid-way through breeding season, volunteers noticed a Wilson's Plover brood fighting for life amongst the busy summer beach crowd. SCDNR was able to erect a small section of protective fencing for the brood and other shorebirds in the area. As a result of everyone's hard work, the chick officially fledged at the end of the season!

SITE LEADER: BESS KELLET

Ken Tingman did much of the groundwork to garner town support and gather and educate stewards and locals, and Bess Kellet has stepped up to lead the volunteers starting in 2026.

STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



DISTURBANCES REPORTED

Anecdotally, the most common forms of disturbance in 2025 were people getting too close to nesting shorebirds and the presence of dogs both on and off leash.



SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson's Plover

There was one pair of Wilson's Plovers with an unknown number of nesting attempts. The pair hatched at least one chick and fledged one chick.



Piping Plover

Approximately 3 Piping Plovers spend the winter at Access 37.

Harbor Island

Harbor Island is a private island located in Beaufort County. It began as a pilot site in 2016 and has had an active program ever since. Higher-than-normal tides and strong storms significantly changed the beach at the south end of the island, where nesting habitat is present.

During the summer, Peggy and other stewards run an educational shorebird children's program for visitors and locals. This program began as part of the Virginia Tech Human Disturbance Project and has continued even after the project was completed. This program is instrumental in guiding beachgoers' perceptions of shorebirds and their actions on the beach.

SITE LEADER: PEGGY LUCAS

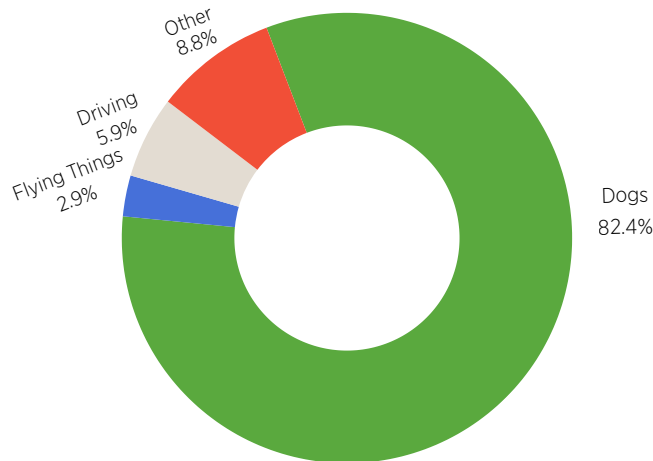
Peggy is a Harbor Island resident and Master Naturalist. Even before becoming a Steward, she loved birding and photographing the many different species that migrate through or call the island home. Now, she works hard to build a community among her fellow stewards.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



DISTURBANCES REPORTED



STEWARD HAL CARTER AT HARBOR ISLAND. PHOTO BY PEGGY LUCAS

SHOREBIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson's Plover

There were at least 3 pairs with 3 or more nests. There were 5 chicks that hatched, and at least one fledged.



Piping Plover

Approximately 10 Piping Plovers spend the winter on Harbor and Hunting.



Red Knot

Over 500 red knots used the beach at Harbor and Hunting during migration.

Hunting Island State Park

Hunting Island State Park has been an active stewardship site year-round since 2019. The critical nesting habitat that was stewarded was located at the north end of the island. Over the past winter, the nesting habitat built up and was able to accommodate even more nesting Wilson’s Plovers, American Oystercatchers, Least Terns, and Black Skimmers. Because Harbor and Hunting Islands are separated by Johnson Creek, many migratory and wintering birds spend time on both beaches, including Piping Plovers and Red Knots. The stewardship program at Hunting Island is a partnership between Audubon, the Friends of Hunting Island, Hunting Island State Park, and SCDNR.

SITE LEADER: TERESE DICK

Becky McCollam, our intrepid lead steward, retired at the end of 2024 after 6 years of building the program from the ground up. In 2025, Audubon welcomed Terese Dick, who has already started outreach and volunteer coordination.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



13 active volunteers



236 total volunteer hours

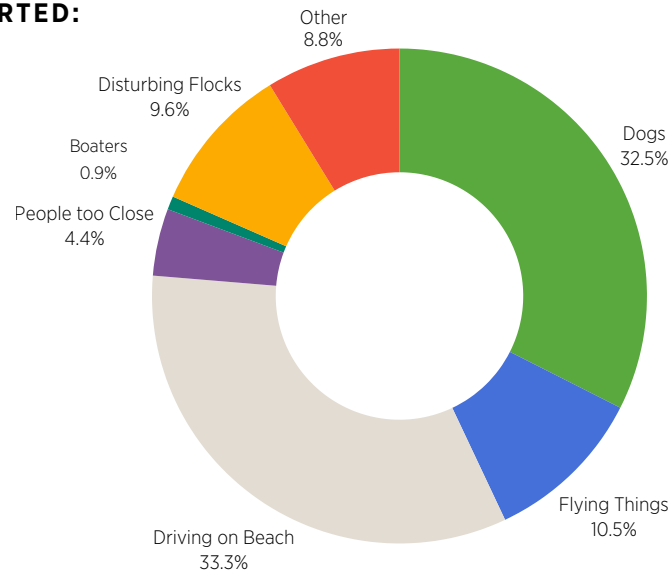


408 interactions with beachgoers



75 shift reports submitted

DISTURBANCES REPORTED:



FENCING HUNTING ISLAND WITH SCDNR, VOLUNTEERS, AND AUDUBON STAFF. SCDNR PHOTO

NESTING BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson’s Plover

There were 10 pairs with at least 10 nesting attempts. At least 2 chicks hatched, but it is unknown if any fledged.



Least Tern

Approximately 100 nested, but it was unknown if any chicks hatched or fledged.



American Oystercatcher

There were 3 pairs with at least 3 nesting attempts. It is unknown if any chicks hatched or fledged.



Black Skimmer

There were approximately 15 nesting birds. It is unknown if any chicks hatched or fledged.

Bull Point

Bull Point, located on Little Capers Island, to the south of Pritchard’s Island, became a stewarding site in May 2021. The site is home to an abundance of nesting Wilson’s Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and Least Terns while also being a popular weekend party spot. Unfortunately, stewardship is limited because the area is accessible only by boat. In 2024, Bull Point’s one regular volunteer took a break from stewarding. Audubon has continued to work with local partners to eventually facilitate a way for stewards to get out to the island.

MAIN STEWARD: JIM PRINCE

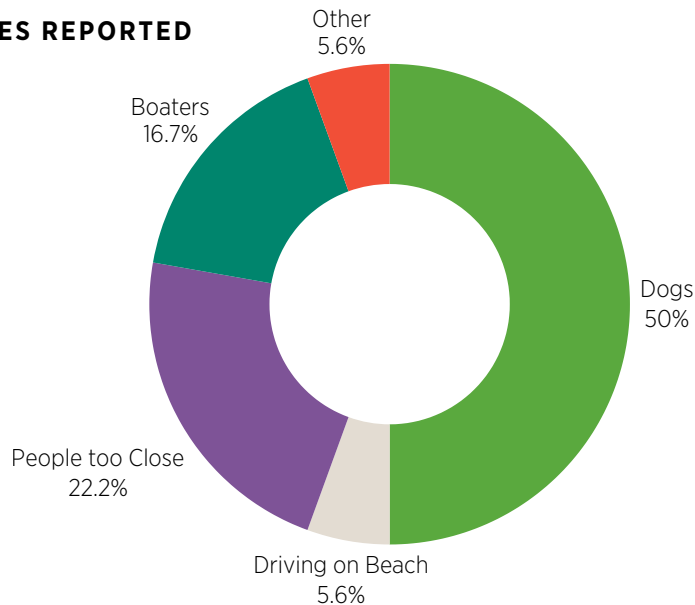
Jim Prince is a member of the Friends of Hunting Island as well as the Pritchard’s Island Turtle Patrol. When he’s on Bull Point for Turtle Patrol, he is able to have informative conversations with beachgoers about shorebird protection.



STEWARD DATA SUMMARY:



DISTURBANCES REPORTED



FENCING BULL POINT WITH SCDNR, VOLUNTEERS, AND AUDUBON STAFF. PHOTO BY JIM PRINCE

NESTING BIRD OBSERVATIONS



Wilson’s Plover

There were 10 nesting pairs with at least 3 confirmed nests. It is unknown if any chicks hatched or fledged.



American Oystercatcher

There were 4 nesting pairs, but it was unknown how many nests there were and how many chicks hatched or fledged.



Least Tern

There were approximately 26 nesting individuals. It is unknown how many chicks hatched or fledged.

How You Can Help

- Leash your dog on the beach and pick up after it
- Follow all dog regulations and be aware that many beaches may prohibit dogs in certain seasons. For a complete list visit our website:
<https://www.audubon.org/south-carolina/projects/coastal-stewardship-south-carolina>
- Avoid beach recreation that will disturb birds like drones, kites, and bikes
- Stay out of closed areas
- Report banded birds to bandedbirds.org
- Educate others

Become a steward!

For more information and to sign up for shifts visit our website at:

<https://www.audubon.org/south-carolina/projects/coastal-stewardship-south-carolina>

1. Choose a site
1. Attend training - in person or virtual
1. Sign the liability waiver
1. Sign up for shifts



Acknowledgements

As a conclusion to this Coastal Stewardship Report, it is with extreme gratitude that ASC acknowledges its partners, volunteers, and funders, without whom this program would not be successful. This report was compiled by ASC's Coastal Stewardship Coordinator, Abby Burke.

The greatest acknowledgment of all goes to our dedicated volunteers!

- ACE Basin National Estuarine Research Reserve
- Bosch Community Fund
- Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission
- City of Folly Beach
- Conservancy of the Sea Islands
- Dewees Island Conservancy
- Friends of Hunting Island
- Generous individual donors
- Harbor Island HOA and Environmental Committee
- IOP Wild Dune's POA
- Post & Courier Foundation
- Seabrook Island Birders
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- South Carolina Shorebird Project
- South Carolina State Parks
- Seabrook Island Birders and the Town of Seabrook Island
- Town of Edisto Beach
- Town of Kiawah Island


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