

## Ormond Beach Summary 2020 Nesting Season

By Cynthia Hartley

We had 53 snowy plover nests this year, which is close to last year's number (55). Overall nest numbers have been steadily increasing over the past 5 years, with the past two years having record breaking nest numbers. Before that, our average nest numbers were in the mid-20's. All of this is exciting news, but we must temper this with the understanding that nest numbers alone do not tell us the whole story. These nests must survive 4 weeks of incubation, and then the chicks have another 4 weeks before they can fly. This year 19 of our 52 nests failed (representing a 61.5% success rate). Most of the failures were due to predators eating the eggs, although we did lose at least one nest to a human vandal and we suspect human activity caused abandonment of other nests.

Least tern numbers were down compared to past years, although this was true state-wide. It will take many months to sort out exactly what happened, as all nesting sites will be submitting their data to CDFW for analysis over the fall months. At this point the speculation for the decrease in least tern nesting numbers is changes to food sources and a spring red tide. At Ormond we had 23 nests this year, compared with over 90 nests last year. A total of 15 nests hatched, so we had a success rate of 65%. The interesting thing about this year's tern colony is that it was split evenly between the north and south habitats. We have not had tern nesting in the south habitat for many years. We hope this continues, since two colonies would represent more resilience for our nesting terns.

The biggest threat to nesting birds this year was predation by ravens, people trespassing into the nesting habitat, off roaders cutting down the nesting habitat fences and joy riding in the nesting area and homeless tampering with nests and our equipment. We also had a field camera stolen, several predator exclosures stolen and vandalized and almost all our fencing that fronts the lagoon nearest the power plant. We estimate the losses at over \$1000 to our program. Probably the most frustrating was the repeated violation of the Ormond Beach ordinance by the people with ATVs, trespassing into the nesting habitat by homeless and regular beach goers (our cameras caught a lot of this!) and people who bring their dogs on the beach. We will be spending this fall and winter producing new signage for the beach, repairing, and replacing fencing, and meeting with stakeholders, landowners, and the authorities to make improvements on the problems we had this year.











