



Beach-nesting Birds of Sarasota County

**KYLIE WILSON, SARASOTA SHOREBIRD
STEWARDSHIP & MONITORING COORDINATOR**

Shorebird Nesting Season

- March – August
- Snowy Plovers begin in March.
- Least Terns begin in April.
- Black Skimmers begin near May.
- Nesting is not synchronous, ongoing throughout season.
- Season can be shorter or longer depending on storms.

January

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

February

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						



October

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Black Skimmer



Black Skimmers

Location: Lido Key

Black Skimmers can nest in colonies with hundreds of pairs.

- Males and females raise chicks together.
- Chicks hatch covered in down feathers.
- Adults and chicks congregate by the shoreline to cool off.



Least Tern



Least Terns

Location: Lido Key

Least Terns will mob predators to protect eggs and chicks.

- Males and females raise chicks together.
- Chicks hatch covered in down feathers.
- This species may nest on gravel rooftops as an alternative habitat.



Snowy Plover



Snowy Plovers

Location: Siesta Key, Lido Key

Snowy Plovers are losing vital habitat in the county.

- They are solitary nesters, with a male and female defending a territory.
- Females may leave the male to raise their chicks.
- Camouflage is their best defense against predators.





Snowy Plovers

Masters of camouflage!

Snowy Plovers rely on blending into the lightly-colored sand and low-lying vegetation.

- Feathers are light gray-white.
- Chicks are slightly speckled for additional camouflage.
- Adults and chicks will lay low and flatten against the ground when a predator approaches.



Challenge: Find the Snowy Plover















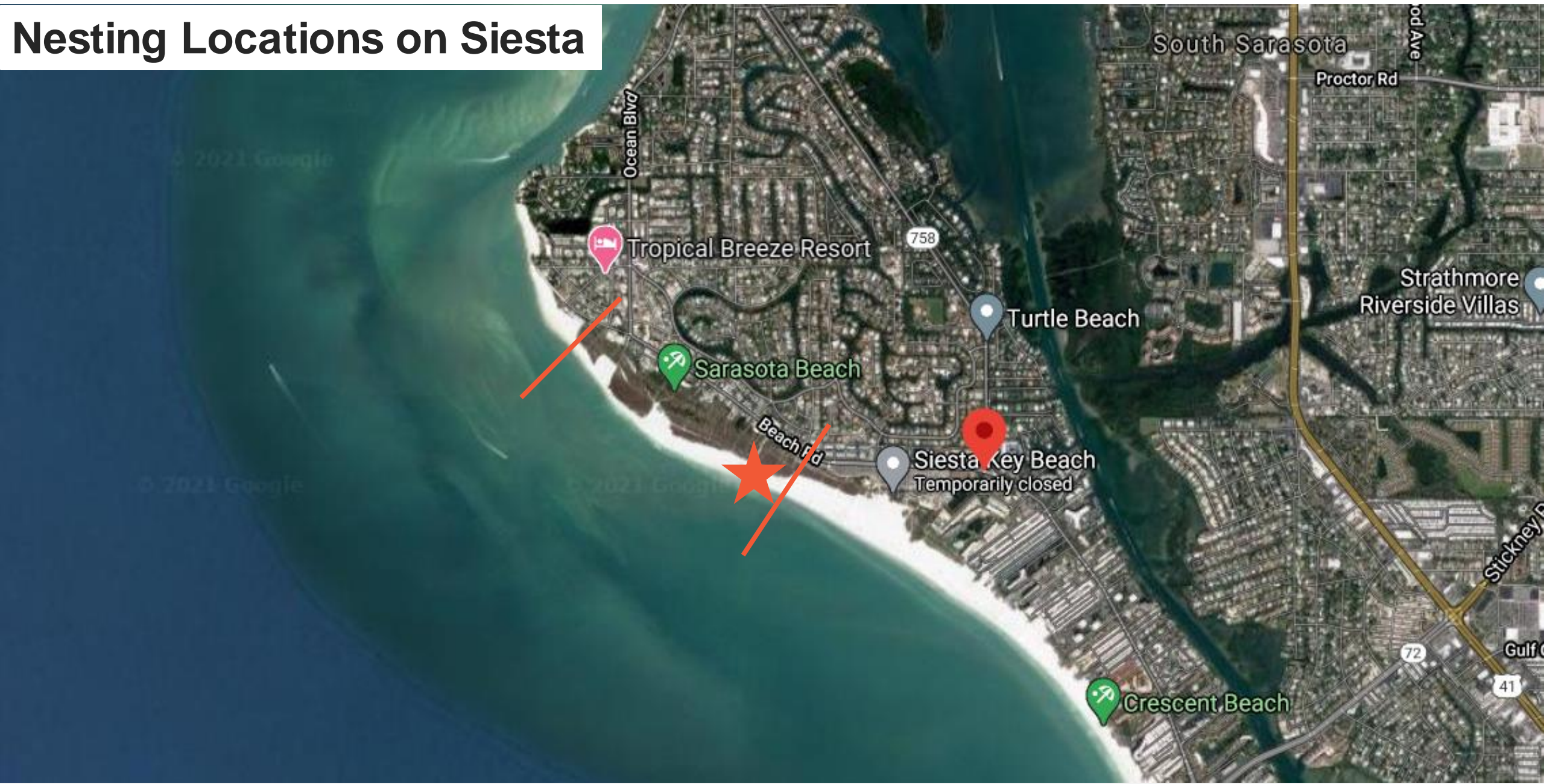






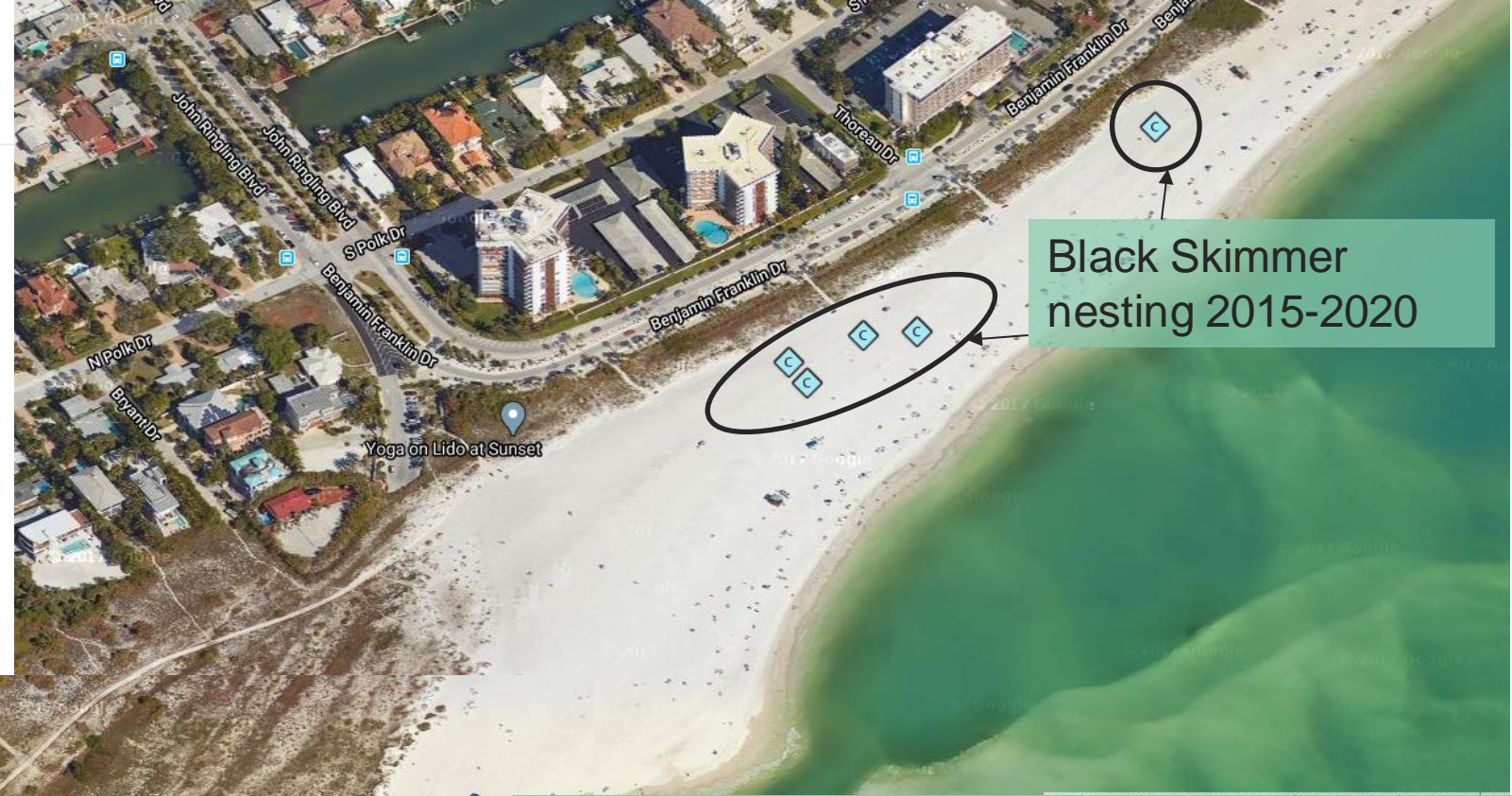
Nesting Sites in Sarasota Co.

Nesting Locations on Siesta



Nesting Locations on Lido:

- Birds will return to the same area for nesting, if successful
- Black Skimmers have been largely successful since 2015 along the public beach
- Least Terns and Snowy Plovers are less predictable, moving around the northernmost end of Lido.



Map Satellite



- Lido Beach habitat is frequently changing due to movement of sand from storms/renourishment projects
- Habitat seems to have improved in recent years and more nesting is being seen, especially on north end.
- Nests are usually located near the vegetation line; if possible avoid walking in the dunes or vegetation.

Protecting Shorebirds and their Habitats



Potential Disturbances

These cause the birds to flush off their nests or cause chicks to scatter.

- Walkers, joggers
- Predators
- Beach toys
- Drones
- Fireworks
- Dogs
- Bicycles



Rules Protecting Shorebirds & Seabirds

68A-27.003(2) -

State-threatened species

- Snowy Plover
- American Oystercatcher
- Black Skimmer
- Least Tern

No person shall **take**, possess, or sell any threatened species or parts thereof or their nests or eggs...

Rules Protecting Shorebirds & Seabirds

68A-27.001 -

Take: to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect

- **Harm:** kills or injures wildlife directly or through impairing essential behaviors including breeding, feeding, and sheltering
- **Harass:** creates the likelihood of injury through activities that annoy wildlife to such an extent to disrupt normal behavioral patterns like breeding, feeding, or sheltering





Signs for Nesting Areas

Placed around nests or colonies:

- Identifies the species within the posted area.
- Aimed to prevent people from crossing into the protected space.
- Lists the Florida statute for protections and the Wildlife Alert Hotline.



Signs for Nesting Areas

Placed near nesting sites when chicks are present:

- Indicates that flightless chicks are present and nearby.
- Brings awareness to an area where chicks may wander outside the posted area.
- Encourages people to proceed with caution.

Shorebird Stewardship

Seasonal Stewardship Coordinator

A person is hired each year to monitor nests and organize volunteers.

- Trains new and current volunteers to be effective stewards.
- Installs signs and posts to mark off nesting areas.
- Coordinates with cities and counties to ensure bird protections and volunteer support.



Shorebird Stewardship

Volunteer Bird Stewards

The backbone of the shorebird program!

- Educate the public about the birds, which helps prevent disturbance.
- Keep people out of the protected areas.
- Collect nesting and stewardship data.
- Report wildlife violations to FWC.



Thank you!

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What to do if:

You are patrolling the beach where there are nesting birds:

- Drive very cautiously (<6 mph), especially around the nesting enclosures
- Look out for any flightless chicks, especially if you see 'chick-crossing' signs
- Be aware of any people causing disturbances, if able try to educate

You find a nest outside the posted area:

- Cautiously back away, keep an eye out for any other eggs
- Do not mark the nest in any way
- Call the local coordinator ASAP so the area can be posted

You find an injured chick outside of the posted area:

- Call Save Our Seabirds – (941) 388-3010

If you patrol the beach with a vehicle, this guide is for you...



Always follow these rules:

- Avoid driving on the beach at night.
- Minimize ruts by using lightweight vehicles and four-wheel drive.
- Use designated beach access points and go directly to the hard sand below the tide line.
- Don't drive on the upper beach or through wrack.
- Drive **10 mph or less** to see any eggs, chicks or hatchlings in your path.
- Drive even slower in rain and fog.
- Be especially careful near posted nesting areas. Chicks may be outside the boundaries!
- Finally, watch for birds that are **calling out, running or flying towards you, or pretending to have a broken wing...** These behaviors signal that nests or chicks are nearby!

Scan ahead carefully to make sure nothing is in your path, then proceed *very slowly*.

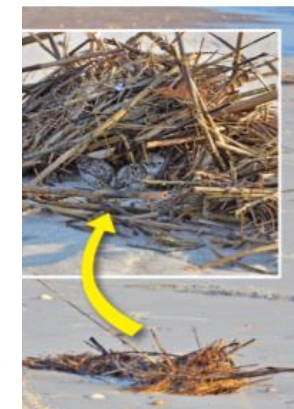
Please keep in mind:

- Shorebirds rely on their camouflage for protection. When startled, chicks often crouch in the sand, wrack (seaweed and marine debris at the tide line), or in tire ruts. They may "freeze" in place and might not move out of the way in time.



Chick in tire rut. © David Mac

- Sea turtle hatchlings may also be hidden in sand, wrack or tire ruts.



**Beach Drivers:
Please
watch out
for wildlife!**

