Threatened bird nesting again on Los Angeles area beaches

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The western snowy plover is nesting along the Los Angeles area coast for the first time in nearly seven decades, federal officials said.

Nests for the small, rare shorebird were found last month at Santa Monica Beach, Dockweiler State Beach, and Malibu Lagoon State Beach, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported Monday. Biologists placed wire cages around the nests to protect them.

"This is a sign that, against all odds, western snowy plovers are making a comeback, and we really need the cooperation of beachgoers to help give them the space they need to nest and raise their young," said Chris Dellith, a Fish and Wildlife biologist in Southern California.

Although western snowy plovers use LA County beaches for roosting during the winter, the last documented active nest was in 1949 at Manhattan Beach.

The 6-inch shorebird with dark patches on its back remains threatened by habitat loss, predation and human population growth. They were listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1993.

The birds lay their eggs in small depressions on sandy sections of beaches from Baja California in Mexico all the way north to Washington.

The plover's worldwide population was estimated at 1,800 as of 2016.

The plover nests on Malibu and Dockweiler state beaches are located within partially fenced areas, but remain at risk of disturbance, officials said. To ensure the eggs and future chicks have the best possible change of survival, biologists are asking beachgoers to keep their distance.

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