

***Addendum: 2007 Plover Monitoring  
Season Update***

*Western Snowy Plovers and  
Recent Changes in Human and Dog Use within  
the Snowy Plover Management Area at Ocean  
Beach*

*and the Wildlife Protection Area  
at Crissy Field*

National Park Service  
Golden Gate National Recreation Area

March 06, 2008

## **Introduction**

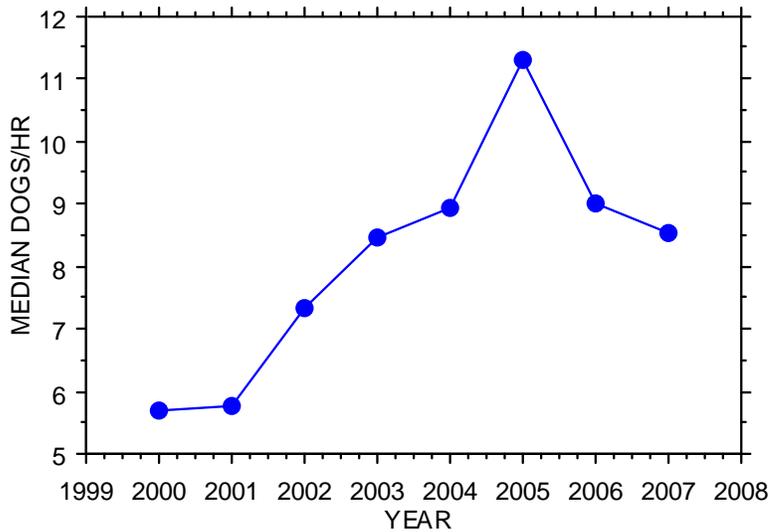
This report provides an update of western snowy plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) monitoring for the 2007 monitoring season to date (from July 2006-February 02, 2008) at Ocean Beach and the Wildlife Protection Area at Crissy Field of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). Snowy plover monitoring seasons typically last from July through early to mid-May, based on when plovers are known to be present on the beaches. As such, this is a preliminary report. All monitoring data to date has been entered and gone through initial screening procedures; however the full suite of end of season error checking will not be completed until the official end of the monitoring season. Errors in data entry may still be identified through the end of season data screening. Our initial screening tends to catch errors, but there are possibilities of identifying and correcting errors through the end of season data quality assurance process. In addition, we will be adding data for monitoring through the end of the season. Monitoring to date represents about 70% of the typical monitoring season. Thus, the end of season report for 2007 will invariably have different values for the summary statistics. It is anticipated that the trends shown in this report will be representative of the full season of monitoring, but some changes in parameter values will occur. A few surveys in November were not able to be conducted due to the Cosco Busan oil spill. In addition, NPS resumed surveys in late November, however only counted people and dogs. Snowy plover numbers were tracked by a contractor for the natural resources damage assessment related to the oil spill. NPS resumed the full monitoring protocol in early January 2008. The oil spill and clean-up also may have affected the use of Ocean Beach and Crissy Field.

This report is a supplement to the Status Report: Western Snowy Plovers and Recent Changes in Human and Dog Use within the Snowy Plover Management Area at Ocean Beach and the Wildlife Protection Area at Crissy Field (NPS 2006) and the Addendum: 2006 Plover Monitoring report (NPS 2007). This report focused on summarizing snowy plover occurrence in these two areas, as well as numbers and trends for people and dog use.

## **Ocean Beach**

To date in the 2007 monitoring season, 30 surveys have been conducted at Ocean Beach. The first survey of the season was July 7, 2007, and the last survey included in this analysis was conducted on February 2, 2008. The maximum snowy plover count was 49.

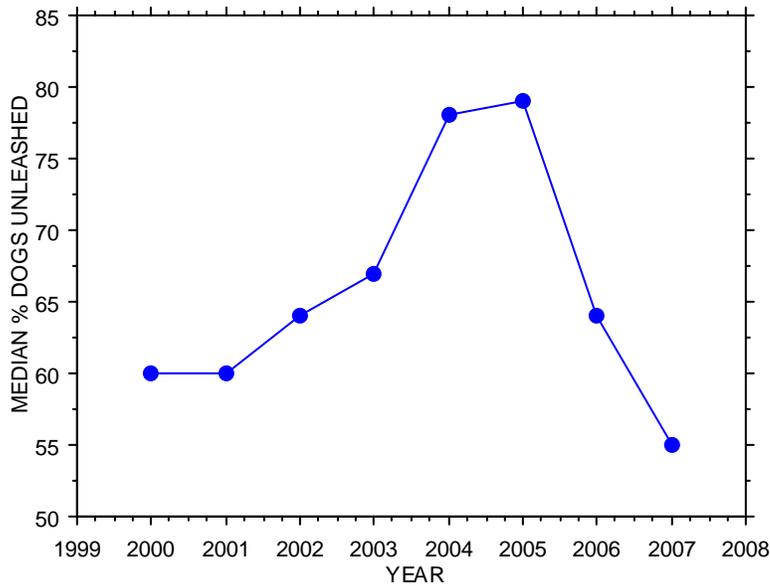
The average number of people per hour observed at Ocean Beach was 84 in 2006, increasing to 103 in 2007. The median number of dogs per hour within the Snowy Plover Protection Area (SPPA) at Ocean Beach was 8.6 for 2007 monitoring season to date. This value is similar to the 9.0 dogs per hour observed for 2006, however indicates a decrease in the number of dogs in the SPPA from the 2005 season (11.3 dogs per hour), when dogs were allowed off-leash (Figure 1). The 2007 value for dogs per hour is still above the values from 2000-2002, which ranged from 5.7—7.3 dogs per hour.



**Figure 1. Median number of dogs per hour at the Ocean Beach SPPA from 2000-2007 (includes weekdays and weekends).**

The median percentage of dogs unleashed in the SPPA in 2007 was 55%. This compares to a median percentage of 64% of dogs unleashed in 2006. However, the 2007 value is very close to the median 57% of dogs observed unleashed when only surveys from after the implementation of leash restrictions in 2006 was included. The pets on-leash restriction was not enacted until early November of 2006, so the 2006 median percentage of unleashed dogs was affected by the timing of implementation of the pets on-leash restriction. This shows a decrease from higher percentages of unleashed dogs in the SPPA in 2004 and 2005, back to levels observed during the period of 2000-2003 (Figure 2). The U.S. v. Barley decision in December 2004 permitted dogs off-leash in the SPPA at Ocean Beach. The pets on-leash restriction appears to have reduced the percentage of off-leash dogs in the SPPA, however we continue to observe over 50% of dogs off-leash in the SPPA even with the pets on-leash restriction.

On the 30 surveys conducted to date in 2007, there have been 18 observations of dogs chasing shorebirds, and one observation of a dog chasing snowy plovers. These numbers indicate that off-leash dogs chasing shorebirds and snowy plovers remains a problem on Ocean Beach.



**Figure 2. Median percentage of dogs unleashed at the Ocean Beach SPPA from 2000-2007 (includes weekdays and weekends).**

### **Crissy Field**

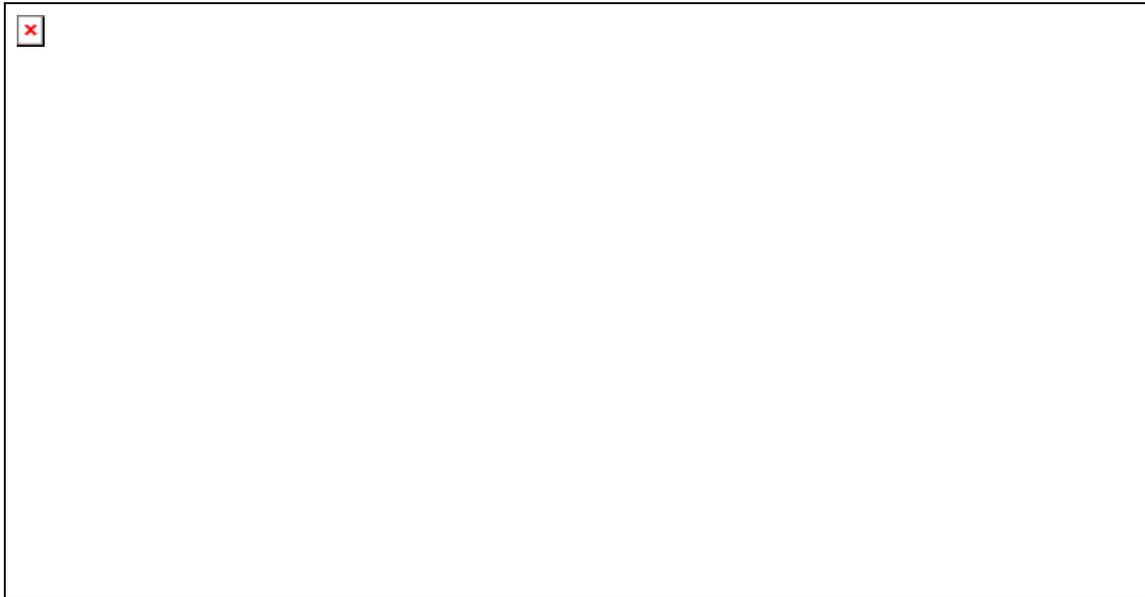
To date in the 2007 monitoring season, 30 surveys have been conducted at Crissy Field. The first survey of the season was July 5, 2007, and the last survey included in this analysis was conducted on February 2, 2008. NPS began using a similar monitoring protocol to that used on Ocean Beach in September 2006. The 2007 data collected to date was compared to that collected in 2006.

In 2007, on average nearly 57 people per hour were encountered on Crissy Field during surveys, this compares to 45 people per hour observed in 2006. In 2007, the number of dogs per hour declined to 5.5 compared to 9.9 dogs per hour in 2006 (Figure 3). The median percentage of dogs unleashed declined from 78% in 2006 to 50% in 2007 (Figure 4). In 2007, there were 12 surveys out of 30 total with no dogs observed. This compares with 7 surveys out of 29 in 2006 with no dogs observed. There were no observations of dogs chasing shorebirds or plovers during 2007 monitoring. In 2006, there were three observations of dogs chasing shorebirds and no observations of dogs chasing plovers. Crissy Field has lower numbers of shorebirds and snowy plovers, as well as more surveys without dogs observed compared to Ocean Beach. All these are factors in explaining why dogs chasing shorebirds and plovers is less commonly observed through monitoring at Crissy Field than Ocean Beach.

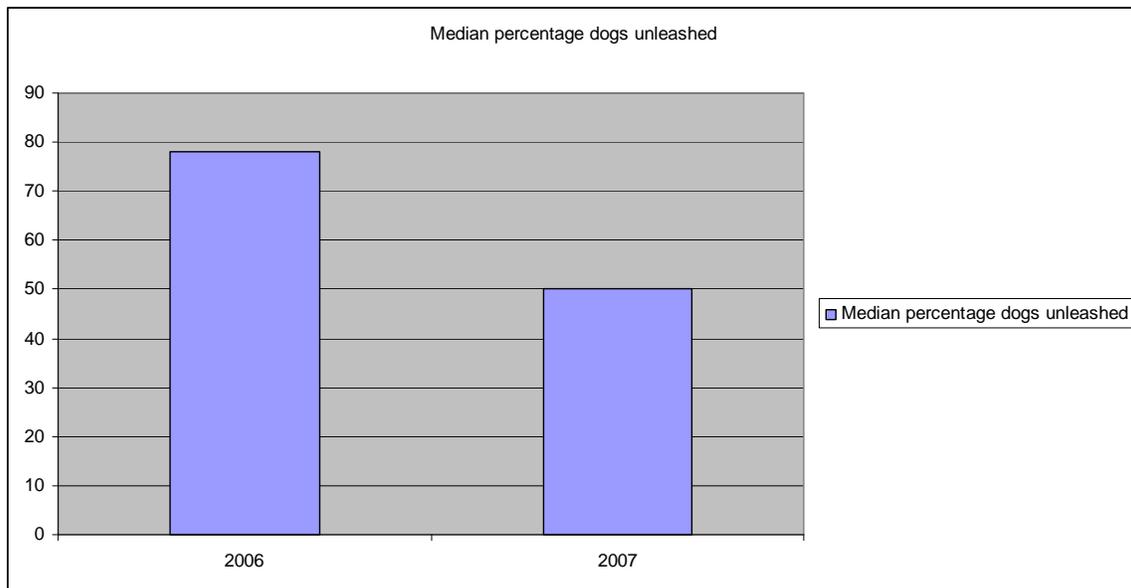
### **Conclusions:**

The monitoring data from 2007 year to date indicate a slight improvement in the percentage of off-leash dogs in the SPPA at Ocean Beach compared to 2006. At Crissy Field, it appears that compliance with the leash restriction is considerably better than

observed in 2006. However, high numbers of off-leash dogs at both sites still remain a threat to shorebirds and snowy plovers. Dogs were frequently observed chasing shorebirds in the SPPA at Ocean Beach in 2007. The monitoring data from 2006 and 2007 indicate that the pets on leash restrictions for the SPPA's at Ocean Beach and Crissy Field have reduced numbers of off-leash dogs. Increased efforts in both these areas to raise compliance levels with the on-leash restrictions, which would then reduce threat levels to snowy plovers and shorebirds, are still necessary.



**Figure 3. Average number of dogs per hour observed on Crissy Field in 2006 and 2007.**



**Figure 4. Median percentage of dogs unleashed at Crissy Field in 2006 and 2007.**