

## Western Snowy Plovers Recovery Efforts

Since 1995, the National Park Service and PRBO Conservation Science have been implementing a recovery project for the breeding western snowy plover population within Point Reyes National Seashore. Beginning in 2001 and continuing to the present, the snowy plover recovery program initiated a volunteer stewardship and education effort. Through this program, docents patrol Seashore beaches on weekends and holidays, providing general park information and snowy plover education to the visiting public.

This breeding season around 35 snowy plovers were observed daily and this fall the numbers will rise to nearly 200 snowy plovers that over-winter at Point Reyes. In 2005, a total of 17 nests were enclosed with protective fencing to keep predators out, and there were 12 successful nests producing 34 chicks. At the season's close, 17 chicks survived to fledge from Point Reyes beaches, which is about the same number for the past three years.

While predation rose this year because of the presence of a nesting peregrine falcon near Kehoe Beach, the number of human disturbances declined due in large part to the effort of docent volunteers. Docents logged over 434 hours and contacted well over 1,243 visitors on weekends and holidays. Of those visitors contacted, 120 were documented to have changed their behavior as a result of contact with docents. This includes people who left restricted areas, walked closer to the water, leashed their dogs, or walked pets in appropriate areas.

Additionally, over 50 acres of coastal dune habitat were restored in the plover nesting area over the past three years with funds from the Cape Mohican Oil Spill Restoration Program, the National Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The plovers responded positively to this habitat enhancement program because the beach was not dominated by the invasive non-native European beach grass. Of the 12 successful nests this season, 11 broods visited for some amount of time in the restored habitat and two nests were successfully produced there.



Docents and park rangers, using displays and personal communications, have reduced the number of plover disturbances over the past several years

