

- Home Page
- Contact Us
- News
- The Almanac
- Recent Editions
- Palo Alto Online
- Palo Alto Weekly
- Mountain View
- Voice
- Fogster Classifieds
- Town Square Forum
- Shop Menlo Park
- Community Calendar
- Submit information
- Letters to the Editor
- Submit News
- Calendar Event
- Home Delivery
- Options
- Advertising Inquiry
- Real Estate
- Obituaries
- Restaurants
- Movies
- Things to Do
- Community
- Resources
- About the Almanac

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News - Wednesday, May 4, 2011

Avocets, snowy plovers nest at former salt ponds

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Submitted by Susan DeVico, a spokesperson for the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project.

American avocets and threatened Western snowy plovers are nesting on the newly created islands on a former industrial salt pond just south of the Dumbarton Bridge, according to the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project.

"As of last week we spotted 44 American avocet nests and three plover nests," said Cheryl Strong, a wildlife biologist with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. "Restoration of this habitat is proving to be beneficial to these species."

The Fish and Wildlife Service manages a major part of the restoration project as part of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

The newly restored habitats at Pond SF2 were designed to create nesting and resting areas for species that have come to rely on the low-salinity ponds created by years of salt harvesting operations along the edge of the Bay. Creating habitat for pond-loving species like avocets and black-necked stilts enables project managers to restore other salt ponds to tidal marsh.

Currently, half of the avocet nests are located on just one of the 30 nesting islands created by the restoration project. But this is only the beginning of the nesting season for avocets and plovers. The birds will continue to arrive for a couple more months.

The nesting season usually lasts until late June or early July. With binoculars, the public can see the birds sitting on the nests from the first of two newly constructed viewing platforms along the trail that leads from a parking lot at the western end of the bridge.

Both avocets and snowy plovers will sit on their nests for about 30 days. Their chicks will leave the nest to begin foraging for food as soon as they hatch. Managers have put up a fence to prevent young chicks from wandering toward the freeway edge of the restoration site.

The restoration at Pond SF2 is the most visible component of the 15,100-acre South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project — the largest tidal wetland restoration project on the West Coast. In 2009 the project adopted a long-term plan to restore wetland habitat, provide public access and recreation, and improve flood management in the South Bay.

To date, the project has restored 2,280 acres of wetland habitats and 240 acres of managed pond habitat, and created 2.9 miles of new trail and other public improvements.

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Comments

Posted by Will, a resident of the Menlo Park: Downtown neighborhood, on May 5, 2011 at 9:36 pm

I don't want to say it's about time we see a return on our tax money investment for this venture, but, it's good to see and it's about time!

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