

**YOU MIGHT NOT SEE ANY CHICKS  
HERE...**



**... BUT THEY ARE HIDING IN THE  
WRACK !**

**For more information:**  
[http://dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/species/  
coastalbirds/index.html](http://dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/species/coastalbirds/index.html)



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**South Carolina Department of  
Natural Resources**

**ATV  
Best Management Practices  
for  
South Carolina  
Sea Turtle  
Nesting Beaches**





The use of ATVs or similar vehicles in sea turtle management activities, such as searching for nests and transporting equipment for nest protection, is recognized as an essential requirement for efficient daily coverage of certain sea turtle nesting beaches. However, on these same beaches are nesting seabirds and shorebirds. Their eggs laid in the sand, and mobile young can be harmed by the use of these types of vehicles.

The nesting species most commonly encountered are: the colonial nesting least terns and black skimmers, and the solitary nesting shorebirds, American oystercatchers and Wilson's plovers. These species are adapted to reproduce on the beach, and thus have evolved behaviors which enable their young to survive heat and predators. Chicks are mobile and cryptic, and the birds use the entire beach from the dunes to the water's edge. Even if a driver has good eyesight and focused driving skills, eggs and young chicks are mostly invisible from the view atop an ATV.



American Oystercatcher Chick

### PLEASE FOLLOW THESE RULES:

- ◆ As tidal height permits, drive the ATV as low as possible on the beach. Refrain from driving above or on the daily wrack line, especially during the first half of the summer when eggs and very young chicks are in this habitat.
- ◆ ATV speed should not exceed 10 mph or appropriate slow speed that allows for observation and avoidance of adults and young.
- ◆ Below the wrack line, do not drive over objects such as wrack piles, sticks, limbs, grasses, large shells, boards, bottles, cans, and any other object where a chick could be hiding.
- ◆ Assign one person to drive the ATV. The ATV driver does not look for sea turtle crawls, but focuses on avoiding objects and looks ahead for bird nests or any young chicks. Another person sitting behind the driver looks for turtle crawls/ nests, and signals to the ATV driver when to stop. If surveying a beach alone on an ATV, the driver must take extra effort to avoid objects, look for chicks, and identify sea turtle crawls.

- ◆ Do not drive around the ends of islands where bird nesting is typically concentrated and turtle nesting is typically low. Stop prior to the end and send an experienced individual on foot with binoculars to identify turtle activity: nest or "false crawl." If a nest is observed, retrieve an egg sample if needed and mark the nest (an experienced person should be able to locate a nest cavity quickly). Please consider not caging nests on the ends of islands. Seabird colonies must not be entered after 9:00 AM for longer than 3 minutes.
- ◆ Be aware of incubation periods and hatch dates of shorebird nests to avoid adults and roaming chicks. If a previous nest is lost, these species will lay additional clutches. Thus, young and eggs may be present in July.

SPECIES	NESTING PERIOD	# EGGS	TIME TO HATCH	TIME TO FLYING
Oyster-catcher	April thru July	2 - 4	25 - 30 days	30 - 35 days
Wilson's Plover	April thru July	2 - 4	25 - 28 days	21 - 25 days
Least Tern	May thru June	1 - 3	19 - 25 days	20 - 22 days
Black Skimmer	May thru July	2 - 4	23 - 25 days	30 - 35 days



American Oystercatcher Nest



American Oystercatcher Chick