

# sharing our seas and shores

Summer is right around the corner and with it the urge to flock to the beaches for sun and fun. Many visitors to the beautiful North Carolina coast are not aware that there is another type of flocking going on at the very same time. Every year shorebirds arrive at our beaches in the spring to make their nests. About the same time that we are all



packing our swim wear and coolers, these birds are scraping out tiny nests in the sand. That's right. The sand is their nest. They lay extremely well camouflaged eggs in these indentations and sit on them through the heat of the day and night until the babies hatch.

More than 20 million shorebirds migrate through the United States to nest as far as the Arctic each summer, and return back to Central and South America to spend the winter. Many species fly more than 15,000 miles in this long-distance intercontinental journey. The most endangered shorebirds along the Atlantic Coast include the Piping Plover and Red Knot with Least Terns, Common Terns, Black Skimmers and American Oystercatchers also of special concern.

You can imagine how hazardous building a nest on the sand can be. There is very little protection from predators, weather events and human traffic. And when the babies hatch, there is extreme danger that they will be overheated if the parents are scared off the nest for even a few minutes.

Every summer Audubon's coastal staff put up symbolic postings – posts with rope strung between them – to show where the nests are grouped and to advise visitors to be calm and careful around these critically important chick nurseries. At Wrightsville Beach, our beach bird steward volunteers educate beach goers about the unseen nests that are right in front of them. They speak with thousands of visitors each summer to aid in raising awareness about these birds and their need for protection.

This summer we are spreading the word about simple things people can do when visiting the beach to help protect those tiny nests and the tiny birds in them. As we often say, every action taken by an individual adds up to significant conservation impact. If most of our beach visitors took these simple actions to keep them safe, we would be truly successful in sharing our seas and shores with beach nesting birds.

*Heather Starck Hahn*

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Executive Director



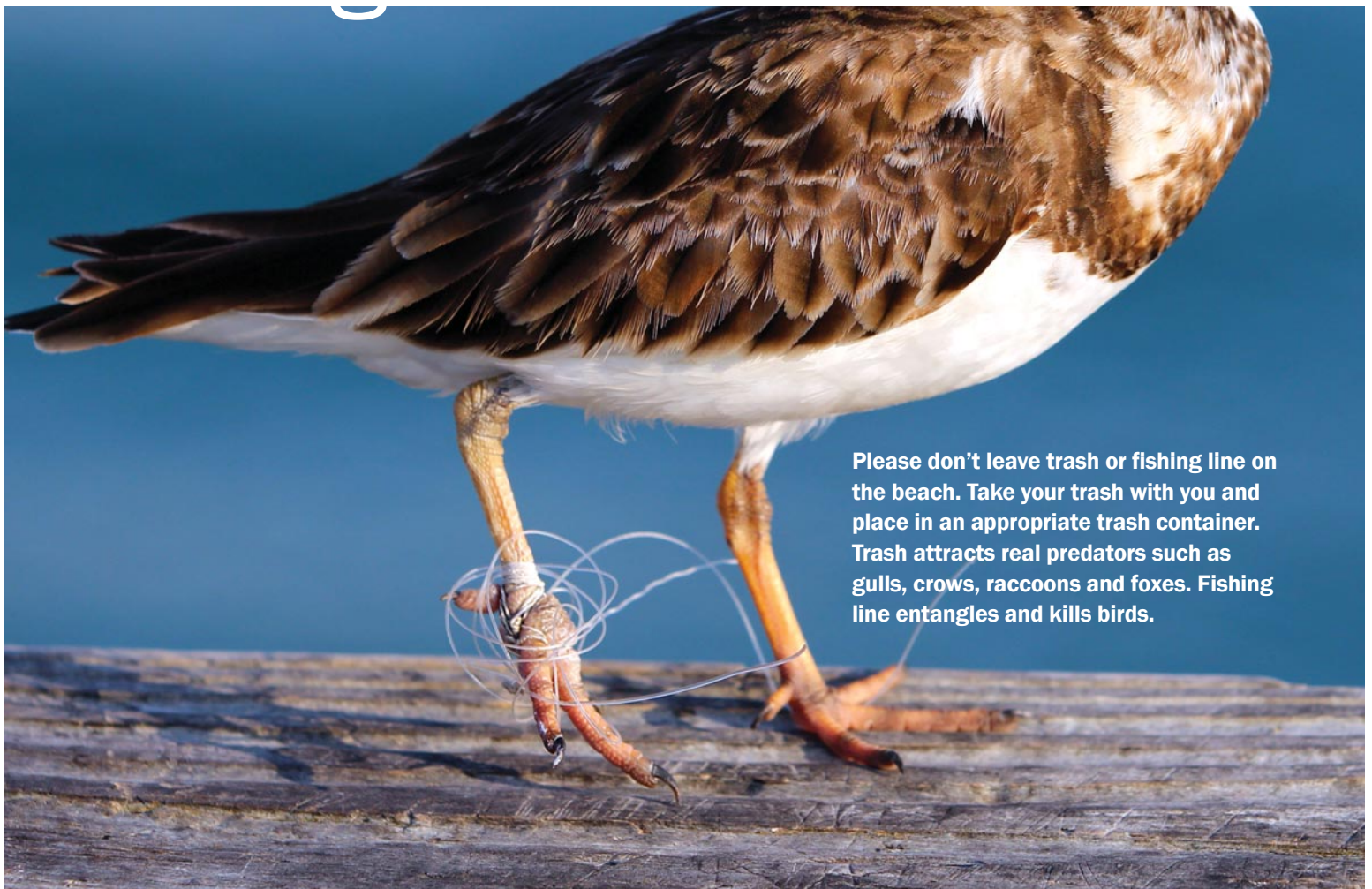
  
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Avoid disturbing groups of birds that are nesting or feeding. If birds take flight, call loudly or act agitated it means you are too close.



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Please don't leave trash or fishing line on the beach. Take your trash with you and place in an appropriate trash container. Trash attracts real predators such as gulls, crows, raccoons and foxes. Fishing line entangles and kills birds.



Keeping calm around protected nesting areas helps keep parents on the nest and protects the eggs and babies from overheating. Birds, eggs, nests and chicks are well-camouflaged and disturbance by people and their pets can cause birds to abandon their eggs and young.



Always aim to keep your dog on a leash and away from the birds. Shorebirds perceive people and pets as predators.

**We need your help!** June is also the end of our fiscal year at Audubon North Carolina and we are working to raise our final \$50,000 to continue protecting the thousands of baby birds hatching on the beaches and islands. Please send in a contribution today to help us to continue and to increase bird protection across the 300 miles of coastline in our state.



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## Join the Flock!

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**Share the Beach** As you head to our wonderful beaches this year have fun and remember to share the beach with shorebirds so that they can raise their young and keep future populations flourishing. Visit our website for more information about the birds that will be at the beach this summer at [nc.audubon.org](http://nc.audubon.org).



Photo credits: Piping plover eggs - Lindsay Addison.