

# RESPONSIBLE BIRDING AT MORRO BAY

Birding is easy and fun for everyone. Successful wildlife observation requires that you look without disturbing.

## YOU'RE TOO CLOSE IF THE BIRDS:

- ▲ Raise their heads to watch you
- ▲ Increase the frequency and volume of their calls
- ▲ Move away from you

Enjoy the pristine habitat of Morro Bay, and please keep a respectful distance from any wildlife you encounter.



## BE BIRD FRIENDLY



CAUTION:  
FEDERALLY  
ENDANGERED  
SNOWY  
PLOVER

### SNOWY PLOVER

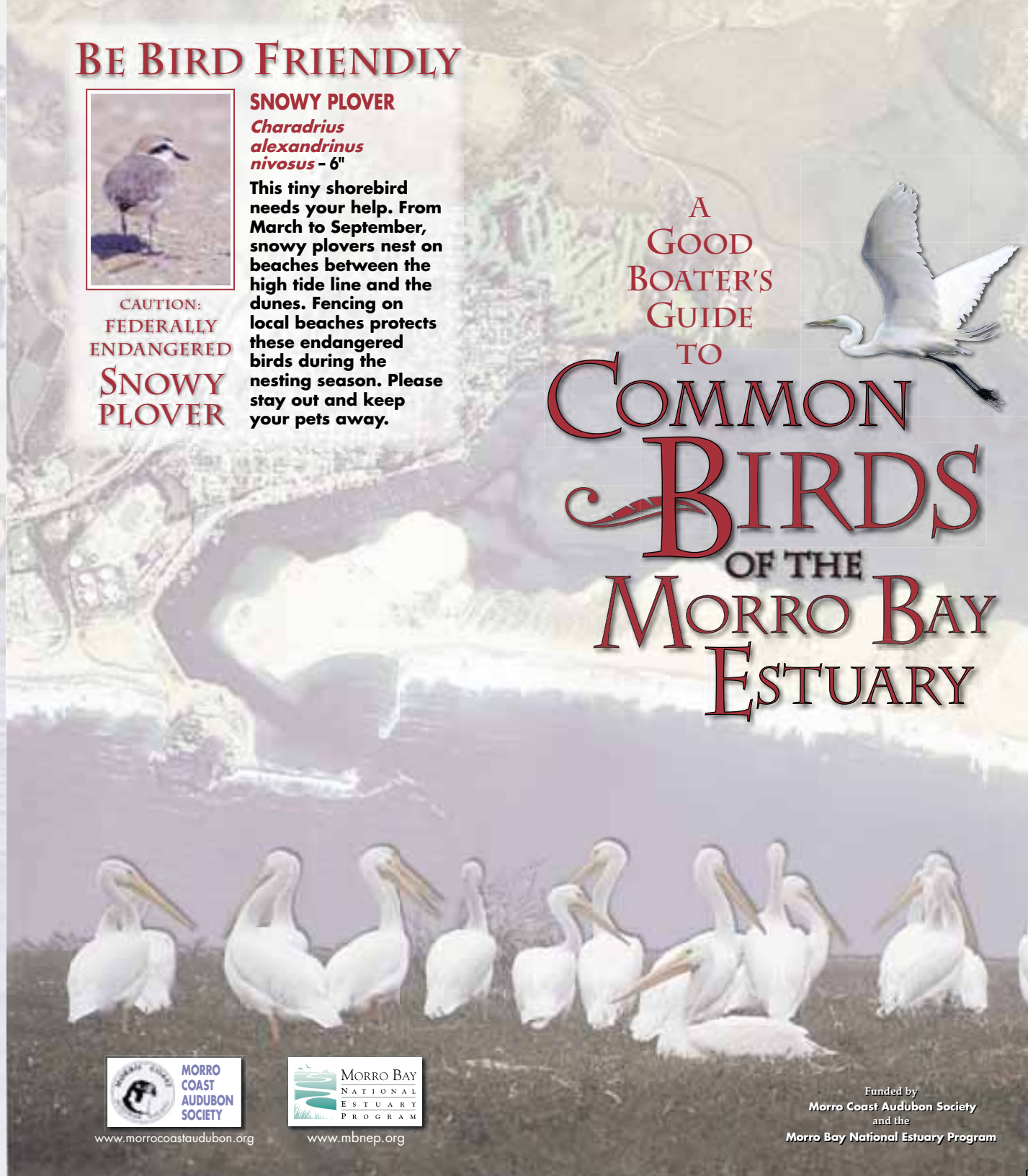
*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus* - 6"

This tiny shorebird needs your help. From March to September, snowy plovers nest on beaches between the high tide line and the dunes. Fencing on local beaches protects these endangered birds during the nesting season. Please stay out and keep your pets away.

A  
GOOD  
BOATER'S  
GUIDE

TO

# COMMON BIRDS OF THE MORRO BAY ESTUARY



[www.morrocoastaudubon.org](http://www.morrocoastaudubon.org)



[www.mbnep.org](http://www.mbnep.org)

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# MORRO BAY RESIDENTS



**WESTERN GREBE**  
*Aechmophorus occidentalis* - 25"  
 North America's largest grebe seems to walk on water during courtship. It eats fish, mollusks, and insects.



**BROWN PELICAN**  
*Pelecanus occidentalis* - 51"  
 This well-known bird dives for fish from up to 65 feet high. Air sacks under the skin cushion the blow and help them resurface.



**WHITE PELICAN**  
*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos* - 51"  
 White pelicans live year-round on Grassy Island in the middle of the bay. They feed from the water's surface.



**GREAT EGRET**  
*Ardea alba* - 39"  
 This wading bird spears food with its yellow bill. The much smaller snowy egret has opposite coloring of a black bill and yellow feet.



**GREAT BLUE HERON**  
*Ardea herodias* - 46"  
 A spear-like bill and long legs help this large wading bird hunt in shallow water and wetlands. Herons also eat small mammals.



**DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT**  
*Phalacrocorax auritus* - 33"  
 This commonly seen bird pursues schools of fish deep under water. Easily identified when flying by the crook in its neck.

# THE WINTER VISITORS ~ MIGRATORY SPECIES



**COMMON LOON**  
*Gavia immer* - 32"  
 A streamlined body helps this diving bird reach depths of up to 150 feet while hunting.



**BRANT**  
*Branta bernicla* - 25"  
 Migrates from Alaska to wintering sites in Morro Bay and Mexico. Eelgrass is a primary food. Seen in large groups.



**MARBLED GODWIT**  
*Limosa fedoa* - 18"  
 The godwit's bill is upturned with a pink base. This shorebird is commonly seen along the edge of the bay at low tide.



**LONG-BILLED CURLEW**  
*Numenius americanus* - 23"  
 This shorebird probes deep in the mud and sand for food. Look for this bird on the beach and the estuary edges.



**BUFFLEHEAD**  
*Bucephala albeola* - 13.5"  
 This small, brightly-colored bird can be found diving for food near Morro Rock.



**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER**  
*Mergus serrator* - 23"  
 This diving duck has serrated edges on its long, thin bill to grip fish. It is often seen with its head underwater looking for food.



**AMERICAN AVOCET**  
*Recurvirostra americana* - 18"  
 This shorebird has bluish-gray legs and uses its long up-curved bill to stir up aquatic insects when foraging.



**ROYAL TERN**  
*Sterna maxima* - 18"  
 This mid-sized tern dives from 20 feet in the air for small fish in the bay. It sometimes hovers before diving.

# THE PACIFIC FLYWAY



Each year millions of birds migrate north-south following a route called the Pacific Flyway. Morro Bay is one of California's most pristine estuaries offering shelter and abundant food to these long distance travelers. During the stresses of migration, the birds need low disturbance areas to feed and rest.



Bay illustration by **Debbie Black**. Photos by **Ruth Ann Angus** except Plover by **Peter Knapp**, Boater by **Terri Dunivant**, Grebe by **Bob Miller**, Bufflehead by **Lakehead University Forestry**