

# WB Elementary 5th Grade Posters Educate Public on Nesting Shorebirds

BY GEORGE CLARKE, PHOTOS BY KATY COFER AND HEIDI LEE, HARBOR ISLAND GARDEN CLUB

On the south end of Wrightsville Beach is a special nesting area for migratory shorebirds, including American Oystercatchers, Black Skimmers and Least Terns that arrive each year to mate, lay eggs, and raise their chicks.

Audubon NC's Bird Steward Program makes sure that these birds and their eggs are protected during the mating season (April – August) with volunteers who get help each year from students at Wrightsville Beach Elementary who create signs to alert and educate beachgoers not to disturb the shorebirds and their nests.

In February, Marlene Eader, Volunteer Coordinator for Audubon NC, joined by Bird Stewards Kathy Hannah and Deb Williams, visited 5th grade classes at the school to provide an educational talk on the birds at the colony and assist students with appropriate messaging as they drew their posters. “The signs made by these fifth grade students are critical in helping us educate beachgoers,” said Eader.

Thanks to the generous support of the Harbor Island Garden Club (HIGC) Rooty Rascals program, the students’ drawings were laminated into permanent signage and posted in March by Audubon volunteers around the perimeter of the nesting colony in preparation for the migration of shorebirds. HIGC’s Rooty Rascals partners with the NC Audubon Society’s Bird Steward Program to help educate beachgoers about protecting shore birds on the south end of Wrightsville Beach as well as on Masonboro and Lea Islands.

The nesting colony currently displays around 60 posters drawn by the 5th grade students as part of their school marine science project. The kids drawings of Oyster Catchers, Black Skimmers, Common Terns and Plovers provide colorfull outdoor signage with messages on how to protect nesting areas for these birds and their chicks.

Audubon volunteers are happy to give tours during nesting season. The public is invited to join the Wrightsville Beach Bird Stewards each Monday morning from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. for a free guided beach walk around the shorebird nesting colony. On the guided tour participants will learn all about the large colony of shorebirds that have chosen to nest on Wrightsville Beach. Bird walks begin the first Monday in May, through mid-August.

If you'd like to take this guided beach walk around the nesting colony, meet at the gazebo at Beach Access 43 on Jack Parker Boulevard. Binoculars, sunscreen and water are recommended.



Students in Mrs. Hayes 5th grade class at Wrightsville Beach Elementary learn about the American Oyster Catcher from Marlene Eader, Volunteer Coordinator for Audubon NC.



5th Grade students at WB Elementary draw posters to help educate the public about nesting shorebirds on the beach.

