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Abstracts

FEATURE ARTICLES

AGE-RELATED SURVIVAL AND BEHAVIOR OF SNOWY PLOVER CHICKS MARK A. COLWELL^{1,3}, SUSAN J. HURLEY¹, JAMES N. HALL¹, AND STEPHEN J. DINSMORE²

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Abstract. Precocial young often experience high mortality prior to achieving flight, especially in the first days after hatching. We quantified relationships between chick age, survival, behavior, and response to natural and anthropogenic danger for the threatened Western Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus nivosus*) in coastal northern California, USA. Plover chicks were most likely to die in the first three days of their 28-day pre fledging period, especially on sandy ocean beaches compared to coarser substrates of river habitats. Chick survival in both habitats increased across the ~120-day chick-rearing period. Improved survival of older chicks coincided with an age-related reduction in brooding and increased distance from the tending parent, which was not related to season. Lower survival of younger chicks was correlated with a tendency to lie motionless when approached by humans; nearly all older chicks responded to human approach by running to evade danger. Chicks of all ages were more likely to lie motionless when potential avian predators flew nearby. Age-dependent survival of Snowy Plover chicks paralleled a trend of increasing development, thermal independence from adults, and capability of evading predators.

Key words: antipredator behavior, *Charadrius alexandrinus*, chick survival, habitat quality, human disturbance, predation danger, Snowy Plover.