



Snowy Plover Scrape

Western Snowy Plovers are small birds that live close to the water on the shorelines from Oregon down through Baja California. Instead of big nests, they lay their eggs in “scrapes,” indents in the sand with some beach debris like dried kelp, shells, driftwood, pebbles, or even bits of plastic to help camouflage 2-3 eggs. Build your own snowy plover scrape—hatchlings and all!

Materials

3 cotton balls
Black or dark brown marker
Pipe cleaner
Scissors
Piece of paper
Glue
Sand
Pebbles, grass, sticks, or other natural materials
Colored pencils, crayons, or markers

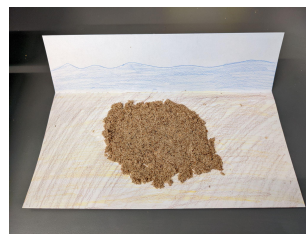
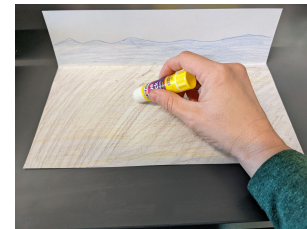
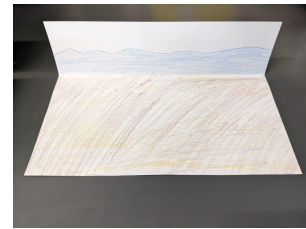
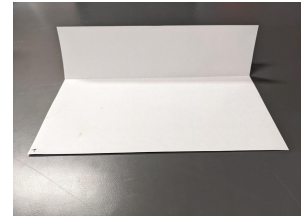
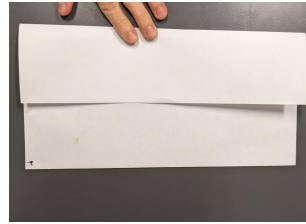


Directions

1. **Color** the top half of a cotton ball with a black marker. The cotton fluff will create a spotty pattern as you color.
2. **Color** a triangle on each side of the cotton ball to make wings for the plover.
3. **Repeat** steps 1 and 2 with the other two cotton balls.
4. **Cut** 3 1-inch pieces of pipe cleaner and bend each into a V-shape to make beaks. **Glue** one open part of the V to one end of a cotton ball and repeat for each cotton ball. Plovers typically lay 2-3 eggs at a time.



5. **Fold** one side of a piece of paper “hot dog” style about a third of the way and prop it up.
6. **Color** the paper to look like the beach with a sandy shore on the bottom part and blue waves on the part that is folded up. What other details can you add to your beach?
7. **Spread glue** across the middle of the bottom part of the paper, covering about half of it.
8. **Pour** sand slowly and carefully over the glue and spread the sand gently across the paper with your fingers.
9. **Wait** 1 minute and then carefully **pour** the extra sand off of the paper and back into a container or outside.
10. **Place** pebbles, twigs, leaves, bark, or other natural materials to make the plover’s scrape. Even though plovers lay their eggs out in the open (instead of hiding them in a tree or in dense bushes), they do camouflage their scrapes to look like the beach around them. How might this help protect their eggs?
11. **Place** the 3 cottonball hatchlings in the scrape.



After 28 days of mom and dad taking turns sitting on the eggs, the little birds will hatch! Dad will stay with the chicks for about another month, teaching them how to fly and hunt for their food, which includes small crustaceans, insects, and worms.