

WINNIE

THE
WILSON'S
PLOVER



by Celeste Silling
for Gulf Coast Bird Observatory

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Wilson's plovers are beach-nesting birds that lay their eggs in the sand. With increased development and use of beaches, nesting habitat is harder to find. Because of this, the Wilson's Plover is at risk of becoming threatened or endangered.

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and other agencies work hard to study and protect these and other birds. To help beach-nesting birds, please heed all signs and fencing, leash your dogs on the beach, and only drive where allowed.

To learn more about Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and our work with bird and habitat conservation, visit our website **www.gcbo.org**.



This summer, Winnie the Wilson's Plover is back on the beach and ready to build the best nest in the world!



In past summers, something has always gone wrong with Winnie's nests. Sometimes, they were taken away by waves during a storm.



Sometimes Winnie got tangled up in trash and the eggs got too cold to hatch.



Sometimes they were eaten by predators. Animals like raccoons, bobcats, coyotes, or even dogs would come for the eggs.



It was the cycle of life. Every animal has to eat. Winnie just wished they would eat something else.



Even though there are many obstacles, Winnie keeps trying. This is the summer that the eggs are going to hatch!



This time, Winnie makes the nest in the middle of a sand dune. It's a great spot with a view of the water and some strange sticks coming out of the ground...



Winnie doesn't know it, but those sticks are actually signs. They were put up by bird monitors to protect birds and their nests.



Winnie's nest has three speckled eggs, as most Wilson's Plover nests do. It is the parents' job to protect the eggs from all of the scary things in the world, because they can't protect themselves.



As soon as the nest is laid, scary things begin to happen. First, a tall creature with bright blue feet walks onto the dunes. Big blue feet can crush tiny speckled eggs!



Winnie has to be brave! It's time to peep-peep-peep and do a “broken-wing” performance. Winnie pretends to have a broken wing by flopping it on the ground. This is meant to distract the creature from the eggs.



It worked! The creature with the blue feet quickly runs away and the eggs are safe again. Good job, Winnie!



Next, there is a giant furry monster running through the dunes. Giant furry monsters can step on or eat tiny speckled eggs!



Winnie has to be brave! It's time to peep-peep-peep and do the “broken-wing” until the monster goes away. Way to go Winnie!



Winnie watches as the monster is leashed and led away. It won't be able to get to the eggs anymore! What a relief!



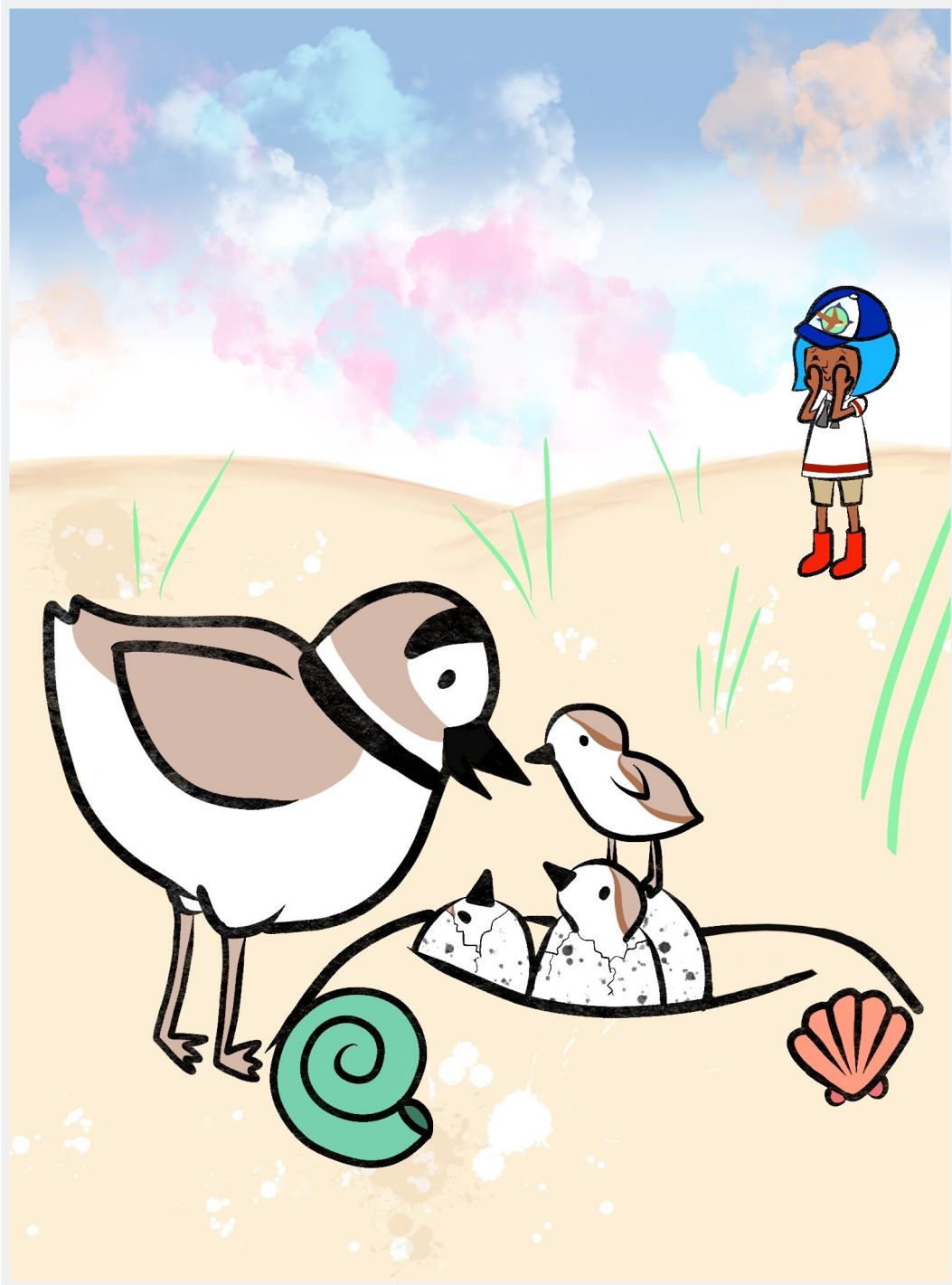
Then, when Winnie is sound asleep one night, there is a strange light and loud humming noises. It's an enormous metal beast!



It's so scary that Winnie wants to fly away and abandon the nest! But just in time, the beast decides to go the other way... The bird monitor and her signs have done their job! The nest is safe.



After twenty-five days of protecting the tiny speckled eggs, Winnie hears the tap-tap-tap of a shell cracking.



It's time for the eggs to hatch! One, two, three Wilson's Plover chicks pop out of their shells and let out their first "peep-peep"s!



Well done Winnie! The nest was a success!



It will be another 25 days before the chicks are be able to fly, and Winnie has to protect them all during that time. It will be a lot of work, but Winnie is up to the challenge.



There are a lot of obstacles out there, but that didn't stop Winnie. Anything is possible! Especially with a little help.



Learn more at
www.gcbo.org

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Thank you!



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