



Respect Nesting Birds: 'Fish, Swim and Play 50 Yards Away'

CORPUS CHRISTI - Kite boarding, boating and fishing are popular summer activities here in the coastal bend. However, one local conservation group says those fun things are a threat to many birds that call the gulf 'home.'

Owen Fitzsimmons, with the Coastal Bend Bays and Estuaries Program says, little islands out in Laguna Madre, are home to hundreds of birds. The conservation biologist says, especially from February through August, when they're nesting.

"We have a lot of colonial nesting water birds which are birds that nest in dense colonies on small islands and they're very sensitive to disturbance whether that be humans or dogs or raccoons or what have you," Fitzsimmons said.

He says the easiest way to conserve the natural habitat of the local species is to know where the boundaries are. Basically, "Fish, swim and play from 50 yards away. Keep a little distance from the islands, let them do their thing and reproduce," he added.

The islands are protected by state and federal law. However, Fitzsimmons says, the idea is to keep birds here without scaling back fun for the public.

"We're not trying to take anyone's fishing away or anybody's sporting rights, we just want to let them know, that the birds don't need much, if you give them a little bit of space they'll be able to do their thing and be happy," Fitzsimmons said.

If someone is unsure of which areas are protected, signs are posted, that caution people about birds that are nesting and shouldn't be disturbed.

"That'll warn you which ones to stay away from, which ones to keep your distance from and which ones you can see the birds at," Fitzsimmons said.

He says, usually if someone is too close for comfort the birds will scare and leave the area. He hopes, people will get the message and respect the birds nesting grounds.

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