

TEMPLATE #1 – UP TO 300 WORD COUNT

[Click to download an editable version in Microsoft Word](#)

Imagine a world where we all learn about animals through pictures and photos from the past, never being able to see them in person. With aquariums, zoos, and some nature centers closing for safety reasons, currently, children have to learn about animals second-hand. Audubon Connecticut, with its partners in the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds, is trying to make sure that does not happen to species like our native beach-nesting Piping Plover.

COVID-19 has affected everyone's life to some degree. It's also affecting nature: some local natural areas like Bluff Point in Groton, a nesting area for species of concern like the Piping Plover and Least Tern, are experiencing overcrowding. This has resulted in a problem for beach-nesting birds, since some of these visitors are unaware of rules which prohibit dangerous behavior that could hurt or even kill vulnerable chicks. We are seeing off-leash dogs running through nesting areas, people getting too close to nests inside protective string fencing, and trash, which can attract predators who then prey on eggs and tiny chicks.

We all need to do our part to protect these natural havens, so we can continue to enjoy them safely—and enjoy the native bird species that also call these their home. Audubon has called on us to “Share the Love, #ShareTheShore” and extend social distancing practices to nesting birds as well. As someone who loves watching those little cotton balls on sticks racing down to the wrack line and back, I ask everyone to keep your hearts open to helping our birds and their chicks.

Sincerely,

Name

Location, CT

TEMPLATE #2 – UP TO 200 WORD COUNT

[Click here to download an editable version in Microsoft Word](#)

In many positive ways, COVID-19 has brought people closer to nature. We have been given the gift of social distancing in spring, when migratory birds are returning and gardens are being planted. But there are some negatives that need to be urgently addressed.

Piping Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and other vulnerable shorebirds have always practiced social distancing – from people and pets, that is. Unfortunately, our beaches are currently seeing increased foot traffic and off-leash animals in areas where pets (dogs in particular) are not allowed.

Due to current restrictions, stewardship and monitoring activities are slowed, limited, or on hold (depending on the site), so birds may nest in areas that haven't been posted or fenced by staff and volunteers from groups like Audubon Connecticut and their partners in the Audubon Alliance for Coastal Waterbirds.

Even if they stay within protected areas, birds are easily scared off their nests and away from chicks by humans and dogs who get too close. We need to share the love and share the shore.

Piping Plover chicks weigh less than single scoop of ice cream. They don't ask for much from us... just room to grow up. Let's give birds space to nest and rest.

Sincerely,

Name

Location, CT