

SOUTHERN FOREDUNES, BEACH, & SALTPAN/MUDFLAT COMMUNITIES



These are coastal dependent communities that occur within a short distance from the water's edge. They are important for their value as shorebirds in particular. The Southern Foredune habitat is used by the Snowy plover and California least tern as nesting habitat. It is also important for certain plant species that are considered to be rare and endangered. However, very little of the Foredune Habitat still remains in an undisturbed state.

Originally, there were nearly 2,000 acres of these habitats present in San Diego County. However, because of beach development, these communities have been essentially eliminated. Small areas that may support components of the dune communities exist at the southern end of the Silver Strand on military lands, the slopes in Torrey Pines State Park that are adjacent to the lower salt marsh, and the mouth of the Santa Margarita River. In addition to the sensitive species of birds, these habitats are home to rare species of beetles.

Dominant plant species where the dune habitat has not been extensively disturbed include Sea rocket, Saltgrass, Ambrosia and Sand verbena. Many of these species have succulent leaves as a result of adaptations to a salty environment. One species of plant, the Coastal dunes milkvetch occurred on the Silver Strand and several other locations in the County as late as the 1930's and 1940's. However, due to disturbance on beach and sand dune areas, this species has been extirpated from San Diego County and is nearing extinction.

Saltpan and mudflat habitats are also very important for shorebirds that utilize them as feeding areas. The Salt Pan and Mudflat habitats are utilized by a wide variety of shorebirds and are an important part of the reason that Coastal San Diego County contains such a diversity of bird species.



Courtesy of the County of San Diego
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