

You are entering the STONE HARBOR NATURAL CONSERVATION AREA

which protects rare and endangered
birds and wildlife.

*The following are not permitted
beyond this point!*

- Dogs or pets of any kind
- Kitesurfing or kite buggies
- Kites, ball-playing or Frisbee (Mar.15 -Sep. 30)
- Walking on dunes
- Feeding birds or wildlife
- Landing of personal watercraft or boats
- Littering
- Alcohol
- Swimming

**Please stay outside of the protective
fencing at all times.**

Thank you,
Borough of Stone Harbor

Funding provided by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
as a result of the efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office, New Jersey.

NO KITES ALLOWED
BY PHIL BRODER

Hitting

Dogs aren't allowed down this trail," the police officer told me.

"Since when?" I responded. "I've been walking my dog here every afternoon for the last two years."

"It's a new law," the cop answered.

"Can you tell me why?" I asked on that Christmas Eve five years ago.

"It's to protect migrating birds," the overmatched patrolman explained.

"It's December 24th! Exactly what birds are migrating?" Mentally throwing my hands in the air, my dog and I turned around, left the beach, and returned to the offices of the conservation group I work for. My training in wildlife biology was no match for a small town cop with a municipal ordinance on his side.

It was dogs in this case, but it could've been kites. Stone Harbor Point, a huge spit of sand pointed south at Wildwood, NJ, just a short distance across Hereford Inlet, had long been a popular spot for kitefliers, kite surfers, and buggies, as well as dog owners and fishermen. Extending more than half a mile into the ocean, with few beachgoers around (no swimming is allowed due to dangerous currents), it's a perfect spot for those who need wide open spaces to launch a kite, ride a buggy, or let a dog romp.

But for those same reasons, it's perfect habitat for piping plovers, a baseball-sized shorebird that nests in the sand and ventures timidly toward the surf to feed. As an endangered species, it's gained the protection of state wildlife agencies

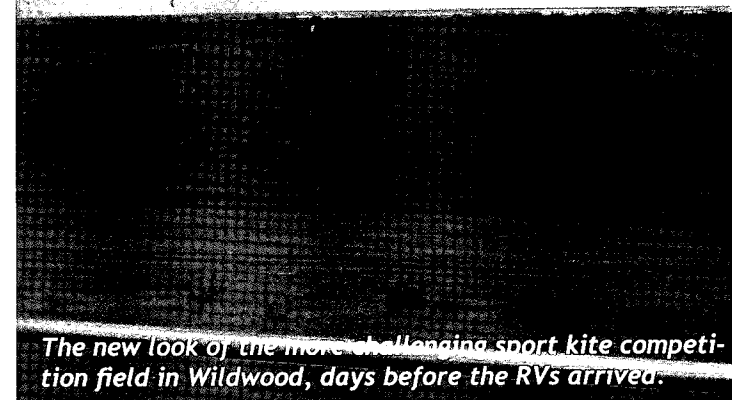
and conservationists, and the ire of those wanting unrestricted access to the sand.

On Stone Harbor Point, fully half the sand is roped off, out of bounds to all but the birds. But federal plover recovery guidelines also mandate keeping threats to plovers — kites and dogs among them, but not pedestrians or vehicles — an extra 500' away, and that effectively makes the entire Point off limits. Although fishermen are still allowed to drive trucks along the sand, and shell collectors, joggers, and walkers still trod the beach, dog walkers and kitefliers have had to move on.

How did this happen? What turns a popular kiteflying spot into empty sand and sky overnight? "History is made by those who show up," said British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. And kitefliers simply aren't showing up when it counts.

In early August, the city of Wildwood — strapped for cash and looking for new sources of revenue — opened a portion of its wide beach to recreational vehicles. A campground with more than 80 RV spaces sprouted from the sand, filled with waist-high posts to delineate each space. Kitefliers will recognize the spot as the sport kite competition field for the Wildwoods International Kite Festival, or part of the area where the MegaFlag was laid out at last year's AKA Convention. Local citizens, enraged by the plan, held last-minute protests, carrying picket signs along the boardwalk in a fruitless attempt to thwart the plan.

Once again, nobody was there to protest the plan when it was first proposed in a City Council meeting. Admittedly, the city kept it quiet and didn't expressly invite public comment early in the process. But if they had, would kites have shown up in droves? I represent 50% of the AKA members in the Wildwood area, and I doubt I'd have attended any council meetings. Earlier kite-unfriendly plans, like building a wind-blocking hi-rise on the site of the former Rio Motel directly across from the beach, also went unopposed by kitefliers.



The new look of the more challenging sport kite competition field in Wildwood, days before the RVs arrived.

In other areas, kites have been more successful. An attempt to ban kite buggies from Nahant Beach, near Boston, was met with quick opposition from kites. They were able to work with the managing agency to explain bugging, set up guidelines for doing it safely, and keep the beach mostly open.

At the Washington Monument, the Wings Over Washington club famously acted to keep the monument grounds open to kiting. The National Park Service banned kiting there, in a kneejerk response to problems created by Asian immigrants using fighter kites with manjha line. The club was able to educate the NPS, showing them the difference between safe