

[From Spring 2001]

Piping Plovers Return

Spring is just around the corner. How do we know? The first piping plover was sighted on the refuge on March 3. Refuge staff is busy preparing signs and other equipment for the upcoming nesting season. There will be no changes in the protocols this year. Like last year, the biology staff will conduct intensive monitoring of nesting plovers in the Overwash area adjacent to the Off Road Vehicle Zone (ORV). In addition to permanent staff, six interns and a seasonal Biological Technician will be brought on board to help monitor the Overwash area for around sixteen hours each day. The nesting area will be posted with informational signs and roped off to help prevent disturbance to the nesting birds. The ORV zone will remain open to recreational vehicles 200 meters north of the northernmost brood.

Like last year, pedestrians will be allowed to walk through the intertidal zone during the vehicle closures as long as the plover chicks are not feeding at the waters edge. If plover chicks cross into the ORV zone, the area will be closed to pedestrians for two days. The refuge will be increasing monitoring efforts on the Southern Island units this year, including Wallops, Assawoman, Metompkin, and Cedar Islands. The islands will be posted with extra informational signs this year to help keep visitors away from nesting plovers on the islands. Biological monitoring of the islands will be increased to a minimum of five days a week, and Law Enforcement patrols will be increased both during the week and on weekends to better protect the plovers on the remote islands.

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