

[From Spring 2004]

Preparing for Plovers

With funding provided by CNHA, the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge staff is making plans to continue monitoring the local piping plover population. Last year, 72 pairs of plovers nested on the refuge. Of the 196 chicks hatched, 147 survived to 25 days old, for a productivity ratio of 2.04 fledglings per nesting pair. This is the highest number of chicks fledged per pair the Refuge has ever had!

This season, the biology staff will continue intensive monitoring of nesting piping plovers on all of the Refuge's islands. Every year, areas are closed to the public to provide breeding sites for the piping plovers. This year the Hook will be closed on March 15. The nesting areas will be posted with informational signs and roped off to help prevent disturbance to the nesting birds.

Six interns will be brought on board to help monitor the Overwash area adjacent to the Off-Road Vehicle Zone for around sixteen hours each day. A significant portion of the ORV zone will be closed just prior to the first plover nest hatch. Like last year, if plover chicks cross into the ORV zone, the ORV zone will be closed to pedestrians as well as vehicles for two days. It may sound a little confusing, but this effort will allow the continued use of the area by the public while protecting the plover chicks. The results of this year's monitoring effort may have a significant impact on public use and management of piping plovers here at CNWR.

Amanda Avery, Wildlife Biologist
CNWR