

[From Summer 1997]

Piping Plover Update

Until a northeast storm hit in early June, Chincoteague Refuge piping plover nesting activity for the 1997 season appeared to be progressing well above that recorded for last year. A total of 35 nests have been documented as of June 6, with all three nesting areas (Hook, Wild Beach, and Wash Flats) on Assateague Island and all the southern island divisions recording nests.

However, starting on June 2 and continuing through June 4, an unusually late 'Northeaster' storm hit the Eastern Shore. High winds and extremely high tides during the three-day period caused substantial losses for nesting shorebirds.

On the Assateague Island portion of the refuge, piping plovers lost seven nests, with six from the Hook nesting area and one from the Wild Beach. Two of the six on the Hook were from the three nests in the overwash area, a location with typically the highest fledgling success.

On the islands of Assawoman and Wallops which had a total of 8 active nests, only two survived the high tides produced by the storm. The fate of piping plover nests on the islands of Metompkin and Cedar, which are also part of the refuge, are not known at this time. To date only two nests have hatched on Assateague Island and two on Assawoman Island.

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