

[From Fall 2000]

Plover Update

The piping plover nesting season has concluded for this year. An estimated 63 pairs of breeding piping plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) nested on Chincoteague NWR in 2000. The population has fluctuated from a low of 44 pairs in 1994 to a high of 63 pairs in 1999 and 2000. Nesting activity was documented on all traditional nesting sites of the refuge. Seventy-seven nesting attempts were documented, with 61 nests successfully hatching. Of the 152 chicks hatched, 98 survived to 25 days old, for a productivity ratio of 1.55 fledglings per nesting pair.

Again this year, refuge staff continued the intense monitoring and predator control on the overwash area. Refuge staff monitored the area from 5:00 a.m. 9:00 p.m. seven days a week. Six interns participated in the intense monitoring program this year and the results were well worth the effort. Nine pairs in the overwash area fledged 13 chicks this year, two more than last year, for an overall productivity ratio of 1.44 fledglings per nesting pair. In order to insure the safety of the chicks, the area adjacent to active broods was closed to ORVs from June 12th to August 4th.

Overall, the 2000 piping plover nesting season was a success. While some losses are inevitable, the knowledge gained each season helps us to improve our ability to protect this threatened shorebird.

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