

[From Fall 2002]

Piping Plover Update

Most birds have departed for their wintering grounds along the southeastern states, with many going as far West as the Gulf Coast of Texas. However, this season, an estimated 81 pairs of piping plovers nested on the CNWR and adjacent barrier islands. Nesting areas included Assateague and Assawoman Islands and parts of Metompkin and Cedar Islands. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' biologist monitored nesting activity and provided resting success data for Metompkin and Cedar Island.

Nesting activity was documented on, most traditional nesting sites. Ninety-two nesting attempts were documented, with 69 nests successfully hatching. Of the 221 eggs that hatched, 100 chicks survived to 25 days old for a productivity ratio of 1.23 fledglings per nesting pair, a decrease from last year's all time high of 1.81 fledglings per nesting pair. An increase in predation by avian and mammalian predators, despite intensive control measures, was attributed to the lower than expected fledgling success.

Four full-time Service employees, six student interns, and two Student Career Experience Program students invested more than 4,800 hours monitoring and protecting plovers throughout the spring and summer nesting season. A significant portion of this time was spent monitoring plover broods from sunrise to sunset in the Overwash nesting area adjacent to the high public use beach and within the off-road vehicle zone.

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