

[From Fall 2005]

Piping Plovers Increase!

The 2005 piping plover nesting season has concluded. Refuge staff continued intense monitoring and predator control within the piping plover nesting areas. Nesting areas included Assateague and Assawoman Islands and parts of Cedar and Metompkin Islands. Seven interns and refuge staff monitored the Refuge's piping plover population seven days a week across three islands. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' biologist monitored nesting activity and provided fledging success data for Cedar Island.

An estimated 120 pairs of piping plovers nested on the Refuge this year compared to 98 pairs in 2004. This is the greatest number of pairs the refuge has supported since recovery efforts began! However, even with the increase of breeding pairs, the plovers still had a tough season. Only 53% of the eggs laid actually hatched this season. Most of the low hatching success can be attributed to a storm which hit the islands in late May. High tides and flooding associated with the storm washed away 23 nests. Despite this setback, 106 nests successfully hatched chicks. A total of 167 chicks fledged or reached 25 days in age for a productivity ratio of 1.39 chicks fledged per nesting pair.

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