



beachbird

What's new?

Welcome to *beachbird* a newsletter of Bird Studies Canada's Nova Scotia Piping Plover Conservation Program that focuses on endangered Piping Plovers, other beach wildlife, and the dedicated volunteers and beach conservation partners throughout Nova Scotia.

Bird Studies Canada (BSC) is a national, non-profit organisation dedicated to advancing the appreciation, understanding and conservation of birds and their habitats. Across Canada, BSC's programs depend on the expertise and dedication of thousands of volunteers. In April 2006, BSC initiated the Nova Scotia Piping Plover Conservation Program, which links plover monitoring and protection efforts with habitat stewardship activities conducted by volunteers (such as Piping Plover Guardians) and other conservation partners. We're pleased to share program highlights and Piping Plover trends from 2006 as well as what will be happening this spring and summer on Nova Scotia beaches.

beachbird trends

Censusing Piping Plovers

In June 2006, the International Piping Plover Breeding Census was conducted across the Atlantic Provinces. The Census was initiated in 1991 to measure changes in breeding population and distribution over time by surveying beach habitat across the Piping Plover's range. Organised by researchers at the US Geological Survey in Corvallis, Oregon, the Census occurs every five years and relies on an enormous, cross-border, cooperative effort.

Staff and volunteers from BSC, Canadian Wildlife Service-Environment Canada (CWS), and Nova Scotia Dept. of Natural Resources (NS DNR) surveyed over 100 beaches in Nova Scotia. A total of 37 pairs of Piping Plovers (87 adults) were counted on 27 beaches in NS. The good news is that the population in NS increased over 2005. The bad news is that the steady loss of breeding pairs in southern NS (-46% since 1991) is greatly contributing to the long-term decline of Piping Plovers in the province: a total loss of 27% pairs since 1991.

What's happening to Piping Plovers in southern NS?

Southern NS (Halifax, Lunenburg, Queens and Shelburne Counties) once provided breeding home to the majority of plovers in NS, but numbers of breeding adults have plummeted in this region. Regular monitoring has provided valuable data to begin to examine this problem. Between 2000-2006, nest failure (nests that do not hatch) was a main limiting factor in this region. Predation, abandonment, and flooding from tides and storms were the primary causes of nest failure (see Figure 1). In 2007, BSC will continue working with CWS to increase understanding of Piping Plover breeding success, so that we can

make well-informed decisions that improve long-term breeding success of Piping Plovers in southern NS. Support from World Wildlife Fund and NS DNR will help us with this work.



On some southern NS beaches, like Sand Hills Provincial Park in Shelburne County, high tides and storms can reduce the amount of dry habitat and flood nests.

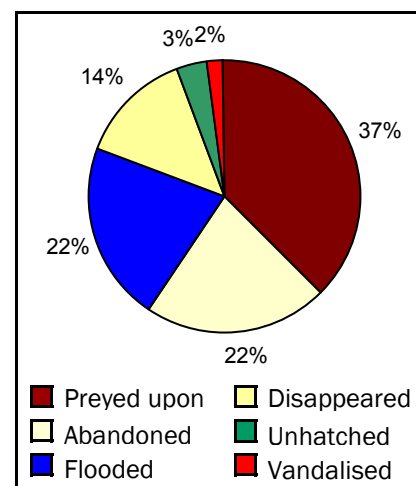


Figure 1. Causes of failure of Piping Plover nests between 2000-2006 on 25 beaches in Lunenburg, Queens and Shelburne Counties (total failed nests =144).

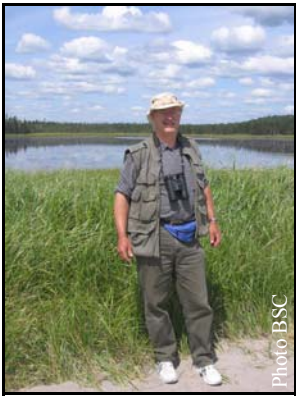
beachbird

on the beach

In 2006, more than 100 people spent over 1000 hours assisting with stewardship activities, including on-the-beach education and clean-ups. Our educational activities reached more than 1,200 people in coastal communities. We developed a small bilingual display, designed to sit on restaurant and store tables, that highlights five ways for beach goers to help plovers while visiting the beach. Please let us know if you can assist with distributing these.

We need your help on the beach in 2007! We are seeking volunteers to walk beaches and share plover-friendly tips with beach goers. There are also other ways that you can help. Contact us and let us know what your interests are and which beach is your focus. Volunteer training sessions will be scheduled during spring.

Longstanding volunteer Guardian protects two plover families at Cherry Hill Beach, Lunenburg Co.



James Hirtle, a well known Nova Scotia birder, has long been a volunteer Piping Plover Guardian. In 2006, James assisted BSC and CWS biologists follow and protect two breeding pairs and their five fledglings. We recently acknowledged his commitment to Cherry Hill Beach and its breeding Piping Plovers with a piece of artwork (donated by Carl Abbott).

Two Guardians help 3 plovers fledge at James Beach (Black Point), Pictou Co.



In partnership with NS Dept. Transportation & Public Works, summer staff Allison Hallett and Suzanne Brown, spent about 60 hours protecting Piping Plovers on James Beach (Black Point), Pictou Co. Steve Vines also assisted by providing valuable observations.

BSC acknowledges stewardship on privately-owned beaches

Five landowners were acknowledged by BSC for their commitment to beach stewardship in 2006 at the following beaches in Nova Scotia: Crow Neck, Shelburne Co.; Fox Bar, Shelburne Co.; and James Beach, Pictou Co. We thank Gordon Prince for his donation of five beautiful Piping Plover photographs.

other needs

Please let us know if you can help by donating any of the following items for our program: clipboards; laminator (for letter-sized paper); binoculars; GPS unit; laptop; colour printer.

contact us

Sue Abbott, NS Piping Plover Conservation Program
Bird Studies Canada
c/o Environment Canada—Canadian Wildlife Service
45 Alderney Dr., 16th floor
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 2N6
PHONE (902) 426-4055
EMAIL nsplovers@gmail.com; sabbott@bsc-eoc.org
WEB <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/regional/nsplover.html>

beachbird profile



Piping Plover
(*Charadrius melodus melodus*)

Size: 17 cm (adult)

Favorite place to hide nest: dry, open sand

Typical number of eggs laid: 4

Number weeks before chicks can fly: 4

Favorite food: crustaceans; marine worms; insects

Population in Nova Scotia: less than 100

Stewardship tip: reduce disturbance to nesting birds by walking on the wet sand on beaches May through August.