

From the Director



Piping Plovers at Allens Pond. Photo by John Van de Graaff.

After 13 years at Mass Audubon, this February I will head west to California and sadly leave the organization. However, I will take with me all I have learned about bird conservation while at this wonderful organization. Not only are plovers and terns threatened here along the east coast, but they suffer from similar threats throughout the US. It is critical to protect coastal waterbirds from all the challenges they face both on their breeding and wintering grounds, and it underscores how important Mass Audubon's work is locally. The CWP serves as a model for similar efforts across the country. In Massachusetts we can be proud of significantly increasing numbers of plovers and terns and protecting the fragile coastal environment.

Many of you who receive this newsletter have been volunteers, donors, and friends of the CWP for the past 19 years! I thank all old and new supporters and know everyone has made a huge difference! If you have not contributed during our December campaign, please consider making a gift to the Coastal Waterbird Program with the enclosed envelope. ***We need to raise \$25,000 this spring in order to fully staff our summer field program!*** This spring a new director will be hired and the program will embark on its 20th field season. I look forward to hearing about the CWP in coming years—I know that under Mass Audubon's guidance, it will remain a strong and solid program for years to come.

Thank you and best wishes, Andrea Jones

Tern Restoration and Electric Fencing Project Underway, 2006

Least Terns in the Northeast are a challenging species to protect and to monitor, and appear to be declining in Massachusetts. When Least Tern colonies experience high rates of predation, the birds often relocate to a new site within a few days. The CWP manages and protects 45-55% (about 1,200 pairs) of the MA population of Least Terns, giving us the ability to find the highly mobile birds when they relocate.

In 2005, to combat the mammalian predation that Least Terns face (by coyotes, skunks, foxes and others), the CWP experimentally installed electric fencing at Sampsons Island and Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuaries. The fencing was installed in May when the birds arrived, and was electrified at nighttime through use of a timer. We are happy to report high success rates for these colonies in an overall poor year for nesting coastal birds!

At Sampsons Island, the colony grew to 200 pairs and at Allens Pond, 250 pairs were counted; each colony produced at least 100 fledglings! Observing hundreds of chicks being fed by their parents, vocalizing, and stretching their newly formed wings was an incredible site for staff and volunteers, many of whom had never seen a Least Tern chick before.

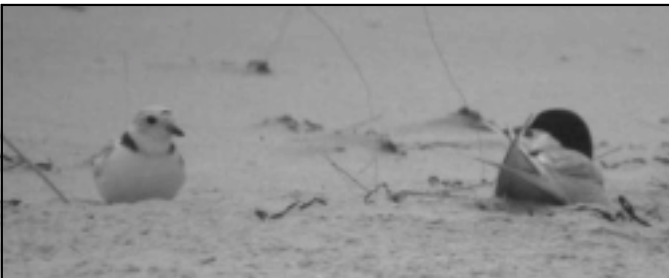


Least Tern at Allens Pond. Photo by John Van de Graaff.

UNUSUAL EVENTS OF 2005

Below are two stories of unusual tern and plover behaviors witnessed by CWP staff!

CWP field assistant Tony Dalisio and Plymouth Beach staff observed unusual Arctic Tern and Piping Plover behaviors on Plymouth Long Beach. The tern laid a 1-egg nest a few feet from a 3-egg plover nest but incubated the plover nest rather than its own. The plover needed to lay a 4th egg, but couldn't get to its nest. Instead, it laid the egg nearby and, once the tern left to go fishing, the plover rolled its egg into the nest. The now 4-egg nest was again incubated by the tern returning from a fishing trip! Meanwhile, the tern nest was filling in with sand, so the plover cleaned it out. For a full story, go to: www.massaudubon.org/cwp.



Arctic Tern sitting on plover nest while plover watches. Photo by Tony Dalisio.

An unusual Common Tern nest was discovered on a floating platform, owned by the Duxbury Bay Maritime Academy, which was used by children during sailing lessons. The tern was harassing the children to protect its nest but under the guidance of CWP field assistant, Monique McHenry, the school moved its lessons and Monique built a fence around the nest to protect the chick from falling into the water—to Monique's and the young sailors' delight, the chick fledged!



Common Tern enclosure. Photo by Monique McHenry.

Thank you to all the foundations, organizations, & government agencies for their support!

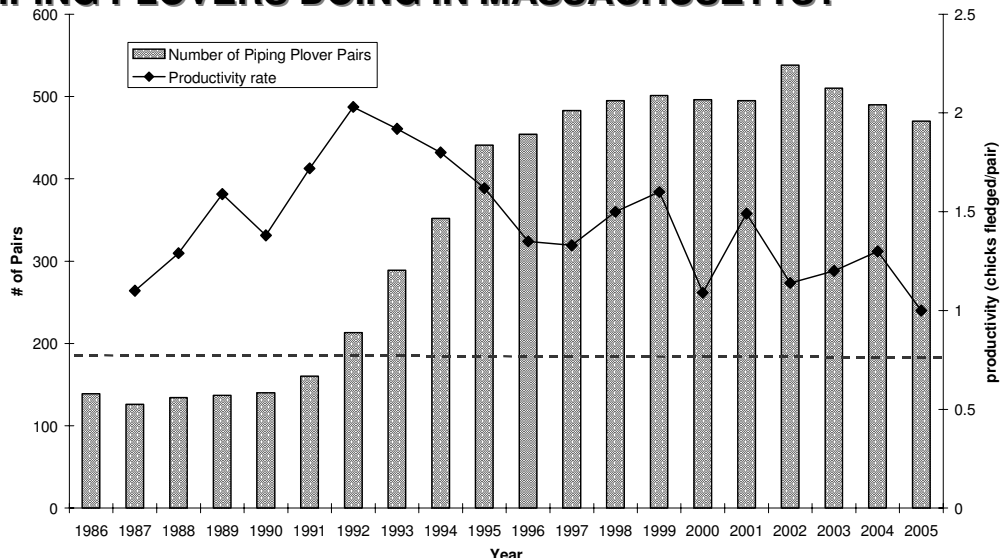
Duxbury Beach Reservation
 Goldenrod Foundation
 Island Foundation
 MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
 MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program
 Oliver S. and Jennie R. Donaldson Charitable Trust
 Quebec-Labrador Foundation
 Quidnet Squam Association

Save Popponesset Bay
 The Edey Foundation
 Three Bays Preservation, Inc.
 Towns of Sandwich, Yarmouth, Dennis, and Barnstable
 US Army Corps of Engineers
 US Fish & Wildlife Service

And to all the wonderful volunteers and supporters!

HOW ARE PIPING PLOVERS DOING IN MASSACHUSETTS?

This figure represents the number of Piping Plover pairs nesting in Massachusetts, from 1986–2005, and average productivity of pairs for each year. The dotted line indicates the “replacement rate” for productivity (1.24 chicks/pair), which is needed to maintain a stable population. Data provided by the MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.



Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary

To register and for more information, please call: 508-349-2615

Chatham: Coastal Bird Capital

Friday, March 3, 2 p.m.--Chatham: Important Bird Area; Wayne Petersen

Friday, March 10, 2 p.m.--Biology & Nesting Behavior of Plovers & Terns; Ellen Jedrey & Stephanie Ellis

Friday, March 17, 2 p.m.--A History Lesson: Understanding Population Changes; Ellen Jedrey

Friday, March 24, 2 p.m.--Current Management Efforts; Bob Prescott & Ellen Jedrey

Fee: FREE lectures; Registration not required, but requested. Location: Eldredge Public Library, Chatham.



Piping Plover. Photo by John Van de Graaff.

Return of the Piping Plover

Thurs., April 13, 1-3 p.m.--Corn Hill, Truro

Fri., April 21, 1-3 p.m.--So. Sunken Meadow, Eastham

Thurs., April 27, 10 a.m.--Noon--Hardings Beach, Harwich

Fee: \$10 NM/\$6 M, Registration required.

Leaders: Jean Ehret or Stephanie Ellis.

These field trips will focus on piping plover natural history, nesting requirements, habitat management, and the ecological importance of barrier beaches.

South Shore Sanctuaries, Marshfield

To register and for more information, please call: 781-837-9400

Duxbury Beach in Winter

Sundays, February 26 and March 26, 9 a.m.—12 p.m.

Fee: \$11 NM, \$8 M, Registration required.

Leader: John Galluzzo

Beginning Gull Identification

Saturday, March 4, 9 a.m.—12 p.m.

Fee: \$10 NM, \$8 M, Registration required.

Leader: Tim O'Neil

2005: A Tough Year for Piping Plovers! By Ellen Jedrey, Ass't Director

Overall, Piping Plover productivity was poor in Massachusetts in 2005, the lowest in 20 years of monitoring. Two strong May nor'easters decimated Piping Plover and other coastal waterbird nests across the region. The first storm pounded our coast in early May, washing away protective fencing and Piping Plover, American Oystercatcher, and tern nests. CWP staff and volunteers worked hard after the storm reerecting miles of fencing, and plovers began laying new nests, many of which farther from high tides, and safer from washover.

About 2 weeks later, the nor'easter of May 26 hit; the plovers' second nests were lost to the ocean, again along with protective fencing, particularly along the South Shore.

Plovers then began to lay their 3rd or 4th nests, far away from the storm tide line. However, in another unfortunate timing coincidence, This is late in the season, and also when many people go to the beach, as well young mammals that are learning to hunt. High levels of predation occurred at many beaches that had been hit by the storms, and productivity was below average.



Solar powered electric fence. Photo by Andrea Jones.

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This year, the CWP received funding from the MA Landowner Incentive Program to purchase and install electric fencing at 5 MAS-owned properties. We also will use decoys and sound systems to attract birds to areas within the fencing, and will initiate foraging and productivity studies (pending funding). In 2006, we hope the Least Terns at these sites and others experience an even more productive year in 2006. Lookout next year for a full report! By Ellen Jedrey.

WISH LIST

- **Seasonal housing for interns!**
Especially in Chatham, Harwich, Barnstable, Dennis; Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket
- Old or new Binoculars and Scopes
- Laptop computer
- Old or new Bird Field Guides
- GPS units
- Digital camera

*Visit our new website!
Donate online!*

www.massaudubon.org/cwp

Thank you Debra Swanson!

After 15 years of dedicated monitoring of Piping Plovers, terns, and American Oystercatchers on Martha's Vineyard for Mass Audubon and the Sheriffs Meadow Foundation, Debra is retiring. You may still find her on the beaches, training our new staff or conducting her own research project. We wish her the best in her new endeavors!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

- Building tern chick shelter boxes
- Painting plaster tern decoys
- Building wooden observation blinds
- Providing housing for interns
- Monitoring plovers or terns

Please contact Ellen Jedrey, Assistant Director, at 508-362-7475 x 2 or ejedrey@massaudubon.org



Piping Plover chick. Photo by John van de Graaff.



Coastal Waterbird Program
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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED