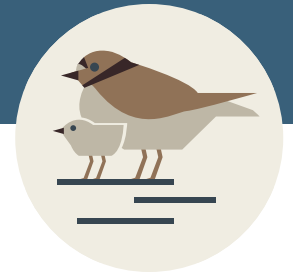




Coastal Waterbird Program 2025 Field Highlights



A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Mass Audubon’s Coastal Waterbird Program protected threatened coastal birds through management and education at 205 sites along 138 miles of the Massachusetts coastline. 58 staff members contributed to these efforts including six full-time staff, two regional staff, and 42 seasonal staff. In addition, two AmeriCorps teams and more than 50 volunteers provided essential support to the program. The Coastal Waterbird Program installed protective fencing and signage, monitored nesting activity, provided educational opportunities for beachgoers, and supported landowners and local communities in coastal habitat protection. Our vital partnerships with over 44 towns, state and federal agencies, and hundreds of landowners supported thriving coastal biodiversity in Massachusetts.

Lyra Brennan

The **Coastal Waterbird Program** (CWP) currently protects close to 140 miles of Massachusetts coastline each year. The program focuses on protection of the most threatened species of coastal birds, and more broadly on coastal ecosystem management. The CWP serves as a model for integrated coastal resource management.

- Lyra Brennan, *Director*
- Jamie Infanti, *Program Manager*
- Rose Caplan, *Field Coordinator*
- Gina Purtell, *Conservation Project Manager*
- Courtney Yancy, *Islands Field Coordinator*
- Deb Davidson, *Administrative Assistant*

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Piping Plover © Geoffrey Kronik

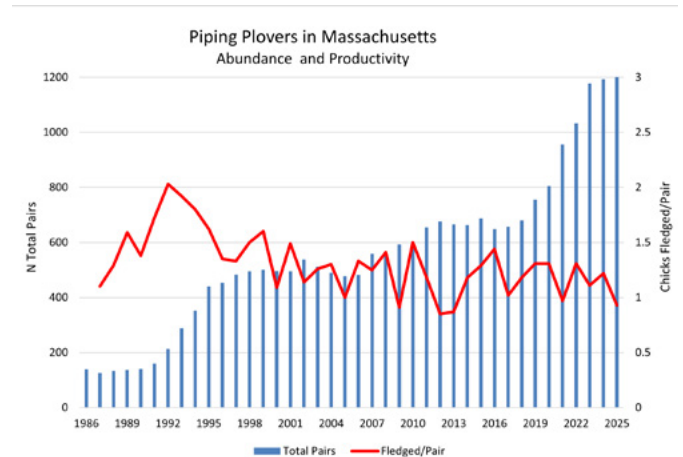


PIPING PLOVER

State abundance of Piping Plovers continued to increase in 2025 to an adjusted preliminary count of 1,221 pairs, compared to 1,196 pairs in 2024. Preliminary statewide estimates of reproductive success

were lower than in 2024, with a range of 0.68-1.19 chicks fledged/pair in 2025, compared to 1.22 chicks fledged per pair in 2024. Mass Audubon’s Coastal Waterbird Program (CWP) protected 398 pairs of Piping Plovers—33% of the state population and roughly 18% of the Atlantic Coast population estimated at over 2,200 pairs. Plovers at CWP-protected sites produced 1.11 fledglings per pair in 2025 compared to 1.24 chicks fledged/pair in 2024. A Nor’easter storm event in the spring of 2025 contributed to this decline in productivity.

Plover abundance and success on CWP-protected sites continues to grow, showing that intensive management yields powerful conservation results. Overwash played a larger role in egg loss in 2025, causing 27% of losses compared to 11% of losses in 2024. However, the most significant proportion of egg loss was attributed to predation again in 2025: 50% of failed eggs in 2025 were predated, compared to 60% in 2024. Fewer eggs (6%) were abandoned or failed to hatch in 2025 compared to 9% in 2024.

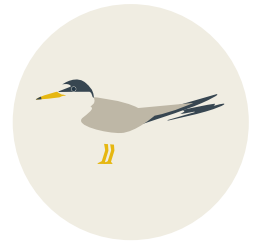




TERNS

Mass Audubon surveyed a total of 164 sites statewide for tern species. We protected 1,403 pairs of Least Terns (33% of the MA breeding population in 2025), 270 pairs of Common Terns, and 110 pairs of Roseate Terns courting or nesting at 65 colony-sites. Statewide abundance of Least Terns was consistent from last year with a 2025 preliminary statewide estimate of 4,315 pairs compared to 4,318 pairs in 2024. Reproductive success of Least Terns nesting at 44 sites protected by Mass Audubon in 2025 ranged from no fledglings produced to 0.55 fledglings/pair. Terns at approximately 18% of nesting sites experienced fair or better fledging success. As in 2024, predators were the most important factor determining tern nesting success in 2025. Tidal and storm overwash events played less of a role in tern productivity this season, compared to the significant impact on Piping Plover productivity.

State and federally endangered Roseate Terns engaged in courtship and nesting activity on 5 sites monitored by CWP. 1 Black Skimmer pair was also monitored and protected by CWP in 2025 on Martha's Vineyard.



AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER

American Oystercatcher abundance in Massachusetts increased by 13% to approximately 283 pairs in 2025 compared to 250 pairs in 2024. 83 pairs were observed on Mass Audubon-monitored sites, approximately 29% of the state population, of which 61 breeding pairs were monitored for productivity by Mass Audubon.

Mass Audubon-monitored Oystercatchers were successful in hatching approximately 31% of all eggs laid, a decrease from 42% of eggs in 2024. Known attributed factors of egg mortality (% of failed eggs) were as follows: 42% overwash (an increase from 13% overwash in 2024); 33% predation; 4% failure to hatch; 3% abandonment. The fledging rate at Mass Audubon-managed sites was lower in 2025 than in 2024, with 0.67 chicks fledged/pair compared to 0.99 chicks fledged/pair, respectively.

Statewide, average fledging ranged from 0.45-0.72 chicks fledged/pair. Estimated annual productivity to maintain a stable oystercatcher population is 0.35 fledged chicks/pair.



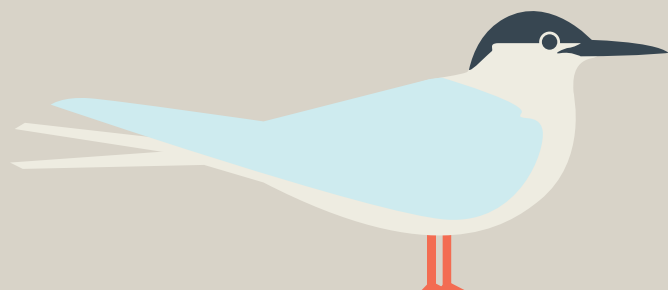


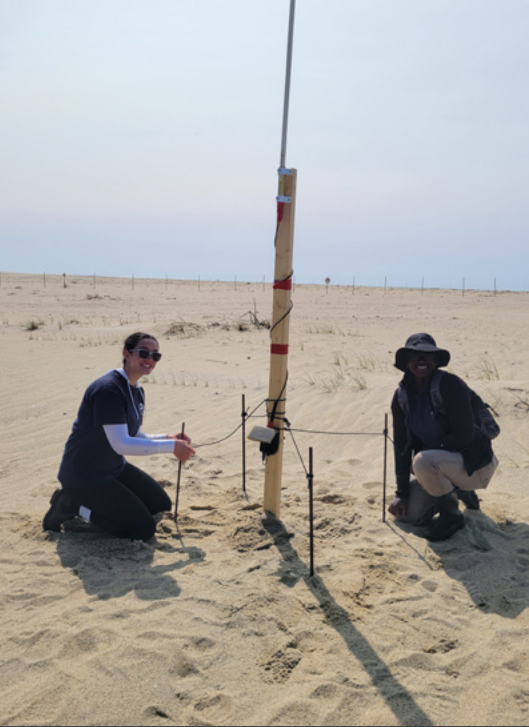
NOTABLE BEACHES

Significant increases in abundance and productivity occurred at several sites in 2025 including:

- **Sylvia State Beach** (Oak Bluffs) saw a jump in Piping Plover abundance from 2 pairs in 2024 to 6 pairs in 2025;
- The first documented incidence of nesting plovers at **Edgewater Beach** in Quincy fledged 2 chicks from 1 nesting pair;
- Piping Plover productivity at **Allens Pond Wildlife Sanctuary** increased from 0.71 in 2024 to 1.23 chicks fledged/pair in 2025;
- A Piping Plover pair nested for the first time in at least 15 years at **The Hook** on Lieutenant Island in Wellfleet. The pair successfully fledged 2 chicks on the first nest attempt;

- Private beaches at **Bayview Beach** in Dennis fledged 1.71 Piping Plover chicks per pair and saw an increase in overall pair abundance from 3 pairs in 2024 to 7 pairs in 2025;
- Least Terns at **Third Cliff** in Scituate had good productivity and fledged 38 chicks;
- American Oystercatcher abundance increased at **Quansoo** on Martha's Vineyard increased from 3 pairs in 2024 to 4 pairs in 2025;
- CWP protected 24 pairs of American Oystercatcher in **Boston Harbor** in 2025.





By the Numbers

Coastal Waterbird Program

2025

Mass Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program has a thirty-nine year legacy of protecting vulnerable beach-nesting birds and their habitats. Our primary objectives are to 1) directly protect and monitor coastal birds and habitats, 2) advocate for coastal ecosystem protection, 3) build conservation capacity in local communities through training and outreach, and 4) conduct management research and develop best practices for wildlife management. In partnering with agencies and local communities, the Coastal Waterbird Program has been instrumental in achieving an eight-fold increase in Piping Plovers, and significant increases in tern and oystercatcher populations in the state.

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398

pairs of Piping Plovers were protected by the Coastal Waterbird Program (CWP) in 2025.

12

different states were represented in our seasonal crew members.

138

miles were under the protection of the CWP in 2025.

38

islands or offshore habitats were censused and monitored by CWP.

205

coastal sites protected by CWP

1,403

pairs of Least Terns protected by CWP in 2025.

13%

increase in the number of American Oystercatchers protected by CWP.

