

Piping Plover Update #3 - Grand Beach Provincial Park – Aug. 18, 2006

Nest #3 – All three chicks have fledged (age which chicks are able to sustain flight) and have been seen occasionally feeding around the channel area.

Nest #4 – All four chicks have fledged, but can still be seen feeding around the channel area. Having reached adult size, they are now comfortable feeding among the gulls which have been known to predate the chicks at a very young age.

Nest #5 – All four chicks have fledged and are currently spending their time feeding along the shoreline between the channel and East Grand Beach. The chicks are now able to identify dangerous predators as witnessed by a chick taking cover in a depression in the sand when a Northern Harrier flew by in the distance.

A total of 13 Piping Plover chicks survived this season at Grand Beach which is a great improvement over the four chicks that survived last year. The success of this year can be attributed to the great work that the Grand Beach Park Staff performed in helping us with the protection and conservation of the Plovers, as well as the countless hours that our volunteer guardians provided in helping with the monitoring and protecting of the juvenile chicks. For those of you who have shown interest in the program, but were unable to help out this year, we invite you to join our team next season.

Thank you for your support.

Piping Plover Update #2 - Grand Beach Provincial Park – July 26, 2006

Nest #3 - Currently all three chicks remain in good shape feeding along the shoreline in spite of the heat and hundreds of beach goers. They are now beginning to take short flights along the shoreline.

Nest #4 – The clutch of four eggs completed hatching, Friday, July 21st and the four chicks and two adults continue to feed along the shoreline and rest in the shade of the willows of the sand dunes.

Nest #5 – The clutch of four eggs completed hatching, Tuesday, July 25th and the four chicks and two adults continue to feed along the shoreline and rest in the shade of the willows of the sand dunes.

During the next two weeks the Piping Plover Recovery Program staff is in desperate need of volunteers to spend a few hours monitoring the chicks. This is particularly important in early morning and late evening hours to guard against predators taking a chick or two.

Anyone willing to help out with the guardian program later this month and early August would be most welcome. You will be provided with training and the now familiar blaze orange t-shirt identifying you as a plover guardian. You will be required to watch over the chicks for a set number of hours per day for a set number of days that will be worked out with the guardian coordinator. Call (204) 945-6817 to volunteer or for more information. WE NEED YOUR HELP.

Piping Plover Update at Grand Beach Provincial Park – July 13, 2006

Since 1991 an International Census of the endangered Piping Plover has been conducted every five years. 2006 marked the fourth census. The number of birds in Manitoba has dropped on each count and this census was no exception. Although a crack team of birders volunteered countless hours and scoured all the known nesting areas and a few other suitable beaches in the province only four pairs and possibly a single bird were counted. These eight or nine birds were all identified along the west and east beaches in Grand Beach Provincial Park.

Unfortunately, this does not bode well for the species' continued existence in this province. However, Manitoba Conservation along with a host of volunteers is pulling out all the stops in an attempt to save the bird from extirpation in the province. To that end, four nests and one re-nest that have been located at GBPP this summer are being closely guarded and monitored to ensure maximum success for the eggs and young. The following is a summary of the nest success for each nest in chronological order.

Nest #1 - Three eggs laid. On two separate occasions a single egg was lost. One chick hatched, but it was predated. Although we have no concrete evidence of what happened all the usual suspects were close at hand including ground squirrels, gulls, crows and ravens.

Nest #2 - Four eggs laid. Two hatched, two did not. The unhatched eggs were collected a week later and will be analysed at a later date in an attempt to determine why they did not hatch. Currently the two young have reached an age where they are now beginning to take short flights.

Nest #3 - Four eggs laid and all hatched. One chick was lost three days later when a car scattered the family and the fourth chick disappeared. I personally witnessed and assisted with the Lawrence of Arabia-like-trek of the other three chicks and their parents over 300 meters of sand dunes from the parking lot to the lakeshore. This was one of the most amazing things I have witnessed in my 30+ years dealing with these birds and working for the department. Currently all three chicks remain in good shape feeding along the shoreline in spite of the heat and hundreds of beach goers.

Nest #4 - A clutch of four eggs laid; these are currently being incubated. Hatch date is expected to be later this month.

Nest #5 - A re-nest by the pair that was unsuccessful with nest #1. Currently incubating a clutch of four eggs. Hatch date later this month.

When the nests hatch out and until the young are at least two weeks old, Piping Plover Recovery Program staff are in desperate need of volunteers to spend a few hours monitoring the chicks. This is particularly important in early morning and late evening hours to guard against predators taking a chick or two.

Anyone willing to help out with the guardian program later this month and early August would be most welcome. You will be provided with training and the now familiar blaze orange t-shirt identifying you as a plover guardian. You will be required to watch over the chicks for a set number of hours per day for a set number of days that will be worked out with the guardian coordinator. Call (204) 945-6817 to volunteer or for more information. **WE NEED YOUR HELP.**