

# Piping Plovers Experience Poor Nest Productivity Year in Delaware

A banded piping plover male photographed in mid-July at Cape Henlopen State Park on Delaware's Atlantic coast/DNREC photo.

## *DNREC Provides Updates on Other Beach-Nesting Bird Species*

Beach-nesting piping plovers experienced poor nest productivity on their breeding grounds in Delaware during 2021, the [Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control](#) announced today in summarizing the rare shorebird species' nesting success within the state.

Six pairs of piping plovers were recorded nesting at The Point at Cape Henlopen State Park with 18 more nesting pairs at Fowler Beach on Prime Hook National Wildlife Refuge, making for a modern-day record total of 24 breeding pairs. Despite the record number of breeding pairs, piping plovers were less successful in producing only 19 fledglings, young birds that hatched and can fly in leaving their nest. Poor fledgling productivity is suspected to be the result of nest loss from a Memorial Day storm and higher-than-average predation at Fowler Beach.

Record piping plover productivity was documented in Delaware over the previous three years for the federally-listed threatened species and Delaware state-listed endangered species. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service established a goal of 1.5 fledglings per breeding pair in 1996 as part of the piping plover recovery plan, with Delaware's nesting productivity exceeding that goal from 2018 to 2020. This year, the DNREC Division of Fish and Wildlife recorded 19

fledglings, for a productivity rate of 0.8 fledglings per breeding pair. In 2020, 21 breeding pairs were documented, producing 47 fledglings for a productivity rate of 2.2 fledglings/pair.

Delaware's piping plover recovery effort involves partnerships between DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife and Division of Parks and Recreation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services.

In other beach-nesting bird species nesting season updates, two pairs of American oystercatchers nested at The Point at Cape Henlopen State Park while one pair nested at Delaware Seashore State Park. Although the nest successfully hatched at Delaware Seashore State Park, the chicks did not fledge. A pair of American oystercatchers were observed using the marsh islands of Delaware Seashore State Park and were seen with two chicks that appear to have successfully fledged. Least tern counts were lower than recent years, with only four breeding pairs and four nests found at Cape Henlopen State Park, where only two chicks hatched, and neither of them fledged.

#### **About DNREC**

The Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control protects and manages the state's natural resources, protects public health, provides outdoor recreational opportunities, and educates Delawareans about the environment. The DNREC [Division of Fish and Wildlife](#) conserves and manages Delaware's fish and wildlife and their habitats, and provides fishing, hunting, wildlife viewing and boating access on nearly 68,000 acres of public land. For more information, visit the [website](#) and connect with @DelawareDNREC on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).

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