

Living with Rare Species

Each spring, **Piping Plovers** return to Massachusetts' coastal beaches to nest and raise their young. This species is so rare that it is listed under both the Massachusetts¹ and Federal² Endangered Species Acts to receive special protection and prevent their extinction. The Department of Conservation and Recreation supports the efforts to protect and conserve these rare birds on our state beaches.



Why are Piping Plovers Rare?

In the past, Piping Plovers were hunted for their feathers, used as an accessory for hats and dresses. Wearing many feathers from rare birds became a fashionable status symbol, although hunting these birds is now illegal. Hunting led to the decline of many bird species, including Piping Plovers. More recent factors impacting these birds are increased predation and the degradation and loss of nesting habitat, including beach development.

Piping Plovers' eggs and chicks are very small and blend in with the sand; thus the nests and young are highly vulnerable to people and dogs.

Federal and State regulations makes it illegal to harm or harass the birds, chicks, or eggs. String and post fencing with signs have been erected at this time to protect nesting habitat and prevent such illegal acts.

Mass Audubon is the official DCR contractor responsible for monitoring Piping Plovers nesting behavior, maintaining the symbolic fencing, and providing educational information on the beach.

Staying away from these fenced areas will aid in successful early nesting, encouraging Piping Plovers to leave beaches earlier in the season.

If nests are disturbed or destroyed, Piping Plovers may lay eggs again, extending the nesting season late into the summer.

If you would like to be added to an email list to receive DCR announcements, or if you have questions or wish to report a concern, please contact: mass.parks@state.ma.us or Dept. of Conservation & Recreation, Office of Community Outreach, 251 Causeway Street, Suite 600, Boston, MA 02114

¹ M.E.S.A: M.G.L c.131A and regulations 321 CMR 10.00; and MGL. c. 131 S5, 74 & Title 50 CFR

² Federal E.S.A: Act of 1973, as amended, 16 U.S.C. §§ 1531 et seq.