

News Release



Will Piping Plovers Return to New York's Lake Ontario Shores in 2016?

For the first time in over 30 years, a pair of piping plovers successfully nested on the eastern shores of Lake Ontario in 2015. The shorebird's return marks an exciting step toward recovery of the federally and state endangered piping plover Great Lakes population.

Three adult plovers were observed this summer for several weeks on New York's Ontario shores, including a lone bird in Oswego County and a breeding pair that nested in Jefferson County. An additional two adult birds joined the single bird after their nest failed in Canada.

A collaborative effort by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Student Conservation Association, Audubon and several volunteers ensured the protection of the birds and nest from disturbance. "Having the birds nest on public lands was definitely beneficial to the success of the nest" commented Judy Drabicki DEC regional director. "Staff and volunteers were excited about helping to protect an endangered species" she said and their work paid off when the birds successfully hatched two chicks. Although one chick did not survive to fledging (able to fly), the other plover chick did fledge and took flight from the shore in August to head south for winter.

"We were thrilled to see the successful breeding of piping plovers on Lake Ontario this year. We thank the efforts of our conservation partners that helped monitor and manage the birds this year and look forward to seeing if any birds return next year" said David Stilwell, Field Supervisor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service New York Field Office.

The Great Lakes plover population at the time of listing in 1986 had fallen to just 16 pairs, all in Michigan. Today after decades of conservation efforts by many partners, the Great Lakes piping plover population now numbers 75 pairs breeding across much of the Great Lakes, with Wisconsin, Illinois, Ontario and now New York joining Michigan in hosting these beautiful but imperiled birds of our Great Lakes shorelines. Expansion of breeding grounds to New York and other locations is an important part of their recovery. A different piping plover population, the federally threatened Atlantic Coast breeding population, nests on New York's East Coast.

"The return of piping plovers to the eastern shores of Lake Ontario is a tremendous success story for birds and the environment," said Erin Crotty, Executive Director of Audubon New York. "There has been an exceptional population recovery effort in support of the Great Lakes population, which is Federally Endangered. That they're finding new and suitable habitat to successfully fledge chicks signals their recovery and emphasizes the need for additional investment in the protection and restoration of the habitats some of our most vulnerable species need to thrive and survive."

Learn more at: <http://www.fws.gov/Midwest/endangered/pipingplover/index.html>.

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Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Truskowski, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation:





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