

Piping Plovers Return to Chebeague Island's Indian Point



Photos by Krista Hayward

This year marks the third time endangered Piping Plovers have nested on Chebeague Island since monitoring began in 1981. During this sensitive nesting period, we're asking for everyone's help to keep the birds safe until the chicks are able to fly off on their own. Dogs are among their biggest threats, along with seagulls, foxes, cats, and careless beachcombers. If we're lucky, the chicks will grow wings and fledge in about four to six weeks.

So what can you do?

- Stay away from the roped-off area so as not to stress the birds.
- Hold off on bringing dogs to the beach until after July 31.
- Fill in any holes you make in the sand.
- Pack out trash, which attracts predators.
- Do not fly kites or drones, which are viewed by the birds as a threat.
- Note that throwing and hitting games, such as football, volleyball, spike ball, and frisbee are not allowed near the marked habitat areas.
- Keep cats indoors.

And it's not just the plovers who benefit from these actions. Last year, thanks to the absence of dogs and the care taken by locals—who mostly stuck to the trails and heeded the signs—many more shorebirds showed up, including Arctic Tern, Baird's Sandpiper, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone and Killdeer. The beach's wildflowers and grasses flourished. Denser dune grass provided better cover for the piping plovers to hide in. And all that extra foliage attracted songbirds, native bees, butterflies, and other pollinators.

To further protect and enhance this fragile ecosystem, Chebeague & Cumberland Land Trust (CCLT) and Indian Island Company have teamed up on a restoration project at Indian Point. They removed the seawall to allow the area to return to a more natural state and are adding a new and safer trail and hosting public education opportunities.. The plan for next year is to add native vegetation to enhance habitat and help reduce erosion.

Thank you for doing your part to help protect wildlife and the landscape at this special place!

If you have any questions, please contact CCLT Stewardship Coordinator Jonathan Dawson at steward@ccltmaine.org or Clare Ellis at clareelliswebb@gmail.com.