

Piping Plovers in Newfoundland

December 2015

by Russell Wall, Piping Plover Coordinator, Intervale

The Piping Plover is a small shorebird that nests on beaches of eastern Canada from late April to mid-August each year. The species is listed as endangered under the federal *Species at Risk Act* and endangered under legislation in some of the Atlantic Provinces, including Newfoundland and Labrador. Newfoundland is the northernmost extension of the Piping Plover's breeding range in eastern North America.



An adult plover and chick on Grand Bay West, Second Beach.

During the summer of 2015, there were 18 pairs and 8 single Piping Plover in Newfoundland, for a total of 44 plovers, an increase of 16% compared to 2014. Unfortunately, productivity was poor this year with only 0.285 chicks fledged per nesting pair.

This year saw an increase in the level of stewardship and monitoring work being done in Newfoundland. This summer eight groups took part in either the guardian program or the monitoring of Piping Plover: Environment Canada; Forestry and Agrifoods Agency; Intervale; NL Department of Environment and Conservation – Parks and Natural Areas Division; NL Department of Environment and Conservation - Wildlife Division; Parks Canada; Quebec Labrador Foundation (QLF); and Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band.

Plover Monitoring and Stewardship in 2015.

Intervale hired a summer student, Emily MacPherson, from the Codroy Valley and had the support of 10 QLF volunteer interns throughout various parts of the Piping Plover season. These individuals were trained as guardians who learned to identify the Piping Plover and common species that use the beach habitat. The summer student and intern guardians had an opportunity to learn about the coastline between the Codroy Valley and Port aux Basques and its role as critical habitat for Piping Plovers. They were able to learn about the threats that the Piping Plover face, both naturally and due to human activity. Most importantly, they were able to help in the monitoring and stewardship activities of Piping Plover.



Summer student Emily MacPherson (right) with QLF interns Anna Maritz (left) and Mia Thomas (center).

Intervale staff, with the help of the QLF interns, monitored and completed stewardship work on eight beaches between Codroy Valley and Port aux Basques between May 21st and August 14th. They collaborated with the town of Port aux Basques Green Team, who were helping to spread the Piping Plover stewardship

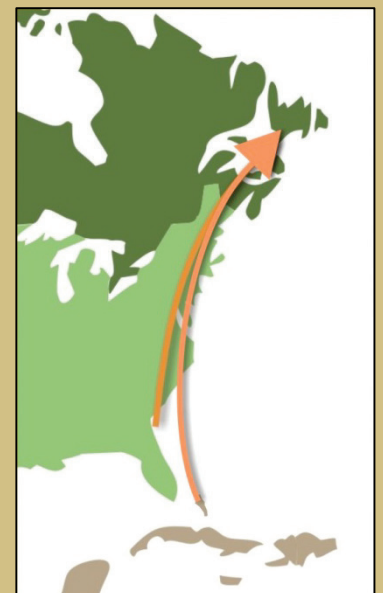


Intervale Staff and QLF interns during index count at Big Barachois Beach.

In 2015 there were 7 monitored nests in Newfoundland that fledged 2 Piping Plovers, for a combined productivity of 0.286. Although productivity was low this year, the total number of Piping Plovers was 44. This is a 16% increase from 2014.



Piping Plovers winter along the southern Atlantic coast of the United States, the Bahamas, and the Caribbean. A plover banded during winter in coastal Georgia, USA, nested on a beach in Grand Bay West near Port aux Basques. We named him Gaspar and he has returned to Grand Bay West three years in a row!



message through community events and activities. The Piping Plover project coordinator, Russell Wall, also spoke to the CBC news about the threats facing the Piping Plover and the actions that could help make a difference to Piping Plovers in Newfoundland. Intervale also continued to distribute the Piping informational placemat to restaurants throughout the Southwest coast of Newfoundland.

This year, Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band (Qalipu) was happy to have received funding for their avian species at risk monitoring project. Piping Plover is the main species of interest under this program. Qalipu staff began monitoring June 4th and finished August 14th. Surveys took place in the Bay St. George area between Stephenville Crossing and Flat Bay. Five plover nests were located in total with four being on the Flat Bay Peninsula and one in Stephenville Crossing. Fifteen adult plovers were also observed in these areas. Six Qalipu staff assisted in completing these surveys and educating the public on the conservation of the Piping Plover. Project coordinator, Stephen Rose, believes this research coupled with community engagement is important to assist the plover in recovering to a healthy population so they can thrive for many years to come.

How you and others helped.

Most beach walkers kept their dogs on a leash and walked on wet sand, away from plover nesting areas. Awareness among beach users is clearly building, and we are confident that more users are following the important "best practices" that prevent disturbance to plovers. Thank you!

Unfortunately, this season we observed some direct disturbance to Piping Plovers on the beaches we surveyed, with four nests appearing to have been destroyed by ATVs. ATV users are helping to spread the word about the importance of using designated ATV trails.



Piping Plovers typically lay 4 eggs. This nest on Short Sand Beach was lost due to ATV traffic.

2015 Piping Plover data for active beaches in Newfoundland.

Beach name	Pairs	Singles
Little Codroy ¹	1	0
Osmond ¹	1	0
Short Sand ¹	1	0
Big Barachois ¹	2	0
Bottle's Barachois ¹	0	1
Second Beach, Grand Bay West ¹	1	1
Flat Bay Peninsula ²	4	3
Sandy Point, Flat island ²	0	2
Stephenville Crossing – Main Gut South ²	1	2
Big Barasway (Burgeo) ²	3	0
Codroy Valley Provincial Park ²	2	0
J.T. Cheeseman Provincial Park ²	1	1
Deadman's Bay ²	1	0
Total	18	8

¹ Beaches monitored by Intervale where Piping Plover were active. ² Data provided by Canadian Wildlife Service.

Piping Plovers arrive in early May and remain on the beaches until mid-to-late August.



When in a plover nesting area:

- Walk on wet sand. Plovers nest on dry sand and their nests are difficult to see.
- Keep dogs on a short leash.
- Use designated ATV trails.
- Carry trash and food scraps away. Garbage attracts predators.



For more information on Piping Plovers you can visit:

www.pipingplover.ca

OR Contact

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