

Sippewissett Association

Newsletter

Watch Your Step!

By Nancy McDonald

By the time you read this there should be fluffy piping plover chicks running around on Woodneck Beach! There has been no previous record of a pair ever nesting there before. In April of this year, the Coastal Waterbird Program of Mass Audubon, in cooperation with the Town of Falmouth, installed signs and symbolic fencing to protect the dunes area where plovers showed signs of preparing to nest.

Eventually, a pair of piping plovers created a nest and incubated their eggs. Now, the fencing gives the adults and chicks a safe place to return to after foraging for food on the beach.

A little information about the plovers and their behavior helps explain the importance of the signs and fencing.

Successful nesting and the raising of young is critical for this species. They are considered threatened under both state and federal law, in part due to preda-

tors and habitat loss. In fact, there are only about 3,000 pairs of piping plovers left in the world.

The female of the Woodneck pair is unique. She is one of 57 piping plovers that were color banded (her legs) in the Bahamas in January/February 2010. Her travels back and forth, as well as a previous nesting site in South Dartmouth in 2010, are well documented and important for studying the migration of this species. She is one of only 10 banded plovers seen in Massachusetts this year; the others are down Cape and on the Vineyard.

Piping plover chicks hatch in early June and are precocial, which means that shortly after hatching they are on the run and must find their own food. They



A piping plover on the beach, photographed by Gene Nieminen for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

join the adults in moving back and forth from the fenced area to the seaweed near the edge of the water. They cover the whole beach, are the color of sand, move quickly, and will hide in footprints.

Although dogs are not allowed on Falmouth public beaches after May 1, their tracks have still been seen in the area cordoned off for the birds. All four-legged animals are seen as predators to the plovers, so dogs, off or on leash, affect their behavior and are a

(Continued on page 2)

The mission of the Sippewissett Association is to: protect and foster the mutual benefit and interests of landowners of the Sippewissett region of the Town of Falmouth, Massachusetts; to promote and encourage cooperation among such landowners in order to ensure that the future development of said region shall be in keeping with its general residential zoning restrictions and to take whatever action or actions may be necessary to this end; and to protect and prevent the misuse of public and common areas in the Sippewissett region.

stressor. Even leashed dogs can inadvertently scare chicks away, causing them to be separated from their parents.

You may not see the baby birds, but they see you. Getting too close is a disturbance that can upset their foraging and the safe raising of their chicks.

If the adults are peeping or try to lead you in another direction, this means the chicks are nearby.

Stop, wait until you see them move and try to walk around them. They can travel a long way from the fenced area.

The critical time is from now until mid-July, when most piping plover chicks fledge (fly).

Birds and dogs cannot read, but people can, and all beachgoers are urged to respect the closed areas and obey the signs.

Please be proactive if you see others disregarding the signs and fencing. All of us can help make this another successful breeding season for piping plovers in Falmouth. Thank you!

Nancy McDonald is a volunteer for the Coastal Waterbird Program of Mass Audubon.

The following is the Executive Summary of:

The Future of Falmouth's Buzzard Bay Shore

*Report of the Coastal Resources Working Group
to the Board of Selectmen, Falmouth, Massachusetts, October 2010*

In May 2000, the Falmouth Board of Selectmen formed the Coastal Resources Working Group (CRWG) and charged the Group to explore reasons for the current condition of the coastal zone and to provide future scenarios for the coastal zone based on an understanding of physical processes and management approaches.

The fundamental finding of the Coastal Resources Working Group (CRWG) is that over the past 150 years, the Falmouth shoreline has been developed in a manner that has significantly impaired the ability of the coast to evolve in response to natural processes, leading to an overall decrease in the viability of the coastal system. The natural processes that build and maintain beaches have become largely inoperative due to the presence of jetties, groins, and coastal armoring. Although groins and jetties trap sand on their upstream sides, downstream beaches become starved of sand because their continued erosion is no longer offset by sediment from an upstream supply. Sand supply is further interrupted by armoring with seawalls and revetments. In the near future, all of these problems will be exacerbated by a predicted acceleration in the global rate of sea-level rise.

The Town is today at a crossroads. It is clear to the CRWG that if the next 100 years of shoreline development is similar to the previous 100 years, the Falmouth shoreline will be an undesirable, even hazardous environment, devoid of all beaches except those artificially maintained. However, with aggressive action this trend can be reversed. Falmouth can restore the values of our shoreline and become a national leader in proactive coastal management.

The CRWG has developed a long-term "vision" for Falmouth's shoreline which includes restoration of natural sediment processes wherever possible and improving public access along the entire shoreline. This vision would be realized over the next 50 to 100 years, to achieve the following goals:

- Beaches and dunes will be wide enough for protection from storms and for public access and use.
- Sufficient sand will reside in the coastal system to maintain those beaches.
- Water quality, habitat and fisheries resources of the coastal zone, estuaries, ponds and marshes will be sustained and enhanced.

- A minimum of hard structures (groins, seawalls, etc.) will be found in the coastal zone, to reduce maintenance costs, allow natural sediment transport, and for ease and safety of public use; adverse impacts of their presence will be mitigated by passive and active management approaches.
- Shoreline armoring structures, where present, will not detract from the aesthetics of and access to the shoreline environment.
- Public infrastructure will be relocated from the immediate coast to reduce maintenance and repair costs and to reduce its impact on the coastal system.
- A pro-active approach to shoreline management will be aimed towards prevention of problems and provide a response protocol when shoreline damage occurs.

The CRWG recommends the following actions to achieve these goals. Most of these goals should be achieved over the next 20 years. Monitoring and revising these actions and timelines for implementation should occur as necessary over a 50- to 100-year time frame. Some of the recommended actions include:

- Acquire coastal land for open space to increase public access, reduce property and infrastructure damage, and improve the functioning of coastal processes.
- Move or change vulnerable public infrastructure to reduce damage and maintenance costs.
- Conduct beach nourishment at key “source” locations to restore the natural sand transport system and provide recreation and storm protection.
- Remove unnecessary, hazardous, or damaging coastal armoring structures.
- Create sand management systems that will keep sand from being transported offshore into deep water by jetties.
- Develop improved regulations to protect coastal systems and beaches.
- Encourage landowners to obtain conservation easements that protect valuable coastal assets

such as unarmored bluffs that provide sediment to down-drift beaches.

There is a clear need for a comprehensive coastal management plan that addresses long-term planning and provides for timely responses to short-term (e.g., storm-related) issues.

In addition to the tools listed above, local, state and federal regulations can be used to implement such a plan. It will require coordination among many Town groups and agencies that already are involved in different aspects of coastal management. The CRWG believes coordinated, proactive coastal management is both highly desirable and achievable through concerted Town effort.

The full report of the Coastal Resources Working Group to the Board of Selectmen can be found at: <http://www.falmouthmass.us/coastal/crwg%20buzzards%20bay%20report%20october%202010.pdf>.

Coastal Resources Working Group:

Jane Tucker, Chair, Bob Barker, Rocky Geyer, Jo Ann Muramoto, Beth Schwarzman, Doc Taylor, Rob Thieler, Chris Weidman, George Calise, Town Engineer (retired), ex officio, and Jude Wilber, ex officio

Save the Date!

Sippewissett Association Annual Summer Social

Sunday, August 7

2:30–5:30 pm

217 Sippewissett Road

Home of Geraldine Klein-Robinhaar

Sippewissett Association Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 25
Cape Codder Clubhouse

9:30 am: Coffee
10:00 am: Business Meeting
11:00 am: Dick Payne presents
information on the phragmites project

BRING A FRIEND!

BRING A NEIGHBOR!

*Introduce them to the importance —
and benefits — of membership in the
Sippewissett Association*

The Sippewissett Association
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