

Endangered shorebird nests in NY; first time in over 30 years

January 8 2016, by Mary Esch



In this July 26, 2015 photo provided by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, a piping plover wearing leg bands affixed by researchers stands on the shore of Lake Ontario in Jefferson County, N.Y. A pair of piping plovers successfully nested on New York's Lake Ontario shoreline for the first time in more than 30 years, which bodes well for the recovery of the endangered bird's Great Lakes population, according to biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Audubon New York. (Elizabeth Truskowski/New York Department of Environmental Conservation via AP)

A pair of piping plovers successfully nested on New York's Lake

Ontario shoreline for the first time in more than 30 years, which bodes well for the recovery of the endangered bird's Great Lakes population, according to biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Audubon New York.

"We were thrilled to see the successful breeding of piping plovers on Lake Ontario this year," David Stilwell of the federal agency's New York office said on Wednesday.

The agency said three adult plovers were spotted over the summer on New York's Ontario shore, including a breeding pair in Jefferson County that hatched two chicks. One chick survived to migrate south in August.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, New York Department of Environmental Conservation, Audubon and other groups worked to protect the nest from disturbance.

The piping plover is a robin-sized bird resembling a sandpiper that nests on beaches and is colored to blend in with sand and sticks. The Great Lakes population had fallen to 16 pairs in 1986, when the species went on the endangered list. All were in Michigan.

Protection of nest sites and other conservation measures have increased the population to about 75 pairs across the region today, according to the wildlife agency.

A separate piping plover population, the federally threatened Atlantic Coast population, breeds on coastal beaches from Quebec to North Carolina.



In this July 25, 2015 photo provided by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, a piping plover sits on its nest along the shore of Lake Ontario as one of its chicks stands nearby, in Jefferson County, N.Y. It was the first time a pair of piping plovers, an endangered species, successfully nested along Lake Ontario in New York state in more than 30 years. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says there are about 75 nesting pairs across the Great Lakes region, mostly in Michigan. (Elizabeth Truskowski/New York Department of Environmental Conservation via AP)

The species' decline is attributed to habitat loss, disturbance of nest sites by people and pets, and predators such as foxes, gulls and crows.

"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. "That they're finding new and suitable habitat to successfully fledge chicks signals their recovery." It also emphasizes the need for habitat protection and restoration to benefit other vulnerable species, she said.



In this July 26, 2015 photo provided by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, a piping plover and its chick walk along the shore of Lake Ontario in Jefferson County, N.Y. It was the first time a pair of piping plovers, an endangered species, successfully nested along Lake Ontario in New York state in more than 30 years. (Elizabeth Truskowski/New York Department of Environmental Conservation via AP)



In this July 1, 2015, photo provided by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation, three piping plovers stand on the beach along Lake Ontario in Oswego County, N.Y. A pair of piping plovers successfully nested on New York's Lake Ontario shoreline for the first time in more than 30 years, which bodes well for the recovery of the endangered bird's Great Lakes population, according to biologists from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Audubon New York. (Elizabeth Truskowski/New York Department of Environmental Conservation via AP)

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