

Three's a crowd? Imani, son of piping plovers Monty and Rose, joined by a female and another male at Montrose Beach

April 28 2023, by Nara Schoenberg



Piping plover. Credit: Mdf, CC BY-SA 3.0 , via Wikimedia Commons

Imani, the son of Chicago's famous piping plovers Monty and Rose, has at long last been joined by what appears to be a female.

But in a dramatic twist, our plucky hero has also been joined by a male.

In a post Thursday morning, the Chicago Piping Plovers Twitter account showed a photo of a comely bird with the classic white face, black headband and ebony collar. The photo was dated April 27 and the post read, "BREAKING: Unbanded female Piping Plover joins Imani and unbanded male on Montrose Beach."

The situation mirrors the love story of Imani's famous parents, according to Tamima Itani, lead volunteer coordinator for Chicago Piping Plovers. When Monty and Rose arrived at Montrose Beach in 2019, there was a second male.

Monty and his rival faced off in a nonviolent contest that includes chest-puffing and walking lines to mark territory, and the rest was history.

Now, it's Imani's turn, and the early results are, well, mixed.

"Unfortunately, Imani's chasing both of them away, so I don't know," Itani said, laughing. "I don't think he understands the concept yet."

Itani said the [physical attributes](#) of one of the unbanded birds points to her being female, but a piping plover's sex is usually not 100% certain until he or she courts and mates.

Imani's romantic ups and downs are of broad interest because Great Lakes piping plovers are federally endangered, with only about 250 summering in the region. The birds winter as far south as Florida, Texas and the Bahamas.

Monty and Rose sparked high hopes in 2019, when they became the first pair to successfully nest in Chicago in decades. Their love story landed them on T-shirts, posters and beer cans, and in two documentary films.

With Monty deceased and Rose missing, Imani has taken center stage. Last summer, the jaunty little shorebird, who is about 1½ years old, spent six lonely weeks at Montrose Beach, presumably hoping to find a mate. After a winter in an unknown southern location, he returned to Montrose Tuesday, to much fanfare.

Now, the plot is thickening. Will Imani's passion for his territory be matched by his interest in mating? Will the female stay around? And what about the unbanded male?

"What's really hopeful is that piping plovers are coming through and landing at Montrose," said Itani. "It's excellent and that gives more chances for Imani to find a mate."

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