

# Piping plovers popping in Massachusetts: Researchers identify record year for the bird species

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Long classified a federally threatened species, the small, stocky shorebirds are bouncing back, with more nesting on Bay State beaches

this year than ever before, according to a Mass Audubon report.

Mass Audubon has researched, monitored and protected vulnerable beach-nesting birds, including the piping plover, with hundreds of partners under its coastal waterbird program for more than 35 years.

This year, researchers identified around 1,145 breeding pairs nesting in the state, a massive increase of roughly 500% from the fewer than 200 in 1986, when the program began, officials highlighted.

"While Piping Plovers remain a federally threatened species, this season's data shows that these iconic birds are making real progress toward recovery in Massachusetts," officials stated.

Some controversy has followed steps taken to protect the piping plover.

After a three-year renovation, the Curley Community Center in South Boston reopened in June, but because of the piping plover's nesting season, it took an extra month for officials to allow the public to cool off at L Street Beach.

The city' Conservation Commission in July approved an operations and maintenance plan, outlining conditions officials need to take for beach access not to have an adverse effect on the piping plover.

One condition features "a qualified shorebird monitor" regularly monitoring the presence of the piping plover from April 1 through Aug. 31, with the areas of habitat delineated with fencing and warning signs by April 1.

Along the South Shore, officials prevented people from driving vehicles over the sand at Duxbury Beach in order to protect the bird. Some portions of the over-sand vehicle corridors reopened once newborns

fledged, meaning they could sustain flight.

In Gloucester, [city officials](#) in April entered an agreement with Mass Audubon to receive assistance in monitoring and managing the piping plover and other coastal nesting birds.

Piping plovers came back to Gloucester beaches after many years of researchers not spotting them at all in the North Shore [coastal city](#). The bird also made a return to the shoreline in Scituate, Cohasset and Chatham.

Efforts like those in Boston, Duxbury and Gloucester, researchers say, are the driver behind the increased piping plover population.

"Massachusetts Piping Plover populations have recovered at a faster rate than those of most other states along the Atlantic Seaboard," officials stated Tuesday. "As a result, approximately 50% of Piping Plovers worldwide now nest in Massachusetts. That makes coastal conservation even more important in our state—we're responsible for safeguarding a huge portion of this threatened species' worldwide population."

Researchers say they also identified population increases this year for American Oystercatchers and Least Terns.

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