

2020 Piping Plover Monitoring Program

A Partnership of CT DEEP Wildlife Division, Audubon Connecticut, Connecticut Audubon, and Roger Tory Peterson Institute

Volunteer Duties/Responsibilities:

- Observe and collect data for nesting piping plovers and chicks.
- Record all piping plover behavior in detail and submit as appropriate.
- Report any problems encountered (i.e., nest abandonment, predator problems, public problems) as soon as possible.
- Opportunities to assist with protective habitat fencing and evening monitoring may arise. Help will be needed in April to erect symbolic fencing in Milford, Stratford, West Haven and Groton. Help may be needed during the first week of June to check atypical beaches for any undetected piping plover pairs. Volunteers are also invited to help protect nesting areas during July 4th firework events.
- A secondary, but very important function involves educating beachgoers who may have questions about what you are doing, piping plovers and least terns in general, may be sitting or walking too close to a nest, or have a dog on the beach.
- Work at least one 4-hour shift a month from April until the end of August.

Volunteer Conduct

Your presentation and actions affect public perception of wildlife management and endangered species conservation. While being a Plover Monitor may be enjoyable, it is a job with responsibilities in the areas of behavior, dress, and appearance. For example:

- Drinking alcohol, foul language, swimming, sunbathing, smoking, surf fishing and the like, are not permitted.
- Plover Monitors should be neat in dress and appearance.
- Please keep in mind that above mean-high tide is private or municipal property and below is public land.

Plover Monitoring Procedure

1. Bring the following items with you:

- wear your volunteer ID badge
- binoculars
- piping plover brochures
- data sheets or notepad and writing utensil

For your comfort you may also like to have:

- jacket/coat, gloves during chilly or windy days
- insect repellent
- sunblock
- water and food

2. Monitoring

- Data Submission: Please submit observations via email to the following address ctwaterbirds@gmail.com
- For safety reasons (yours and the birds) **do not monitor on days of inclement weather** (e.g., violent winds, heavy rain, severe cold or heat, thunderstorms)
- Use the buddy system when possible. Most surveys require walking several miles on semi-remote sandy or rocky beaches.
- Your survey may include periods of standing, bending, hiking over uneven terrain, and exposure to sun and wind and potentially ticks.
- Begin your survey by recording weather, time, tide, date, and observer name(s).
- Before heading down the beach, scan area with binoculars paying close attention to the species and location of all birds on the beach, especially plovers. Also, record any human activities occurring on the beach. Scanning the beach before approaching allows you to observe the behavior of the birds before they are disturbed, after which they may exhibit defensive behavior.
- **Do not enter into the symbolic fencing for any reason** and stay as far away as possible from posted areas to minimize the birds being disturbed by your presence. We recommend walking along the water line when monitoring.
- Record all behaviors of piping plovers in detail, such as possible pairing, courtship, feeding, incubating, and defense of territory. Note the location of territories if birds are actively defending them. Pay close attention to the area where plovers are first observed because adults will escort you away from their nest or chicks.
- Minimize time spent monitoring areas with established plover pairs or nests. Nests are very difficult to find and more susceptible to predation and abnormal embryonic development when not attended by adult plovers.
- If a new nest is found, note landmarks on beach (large log, wrack line, section, pole number, etc) and call or email CT DEEP. **Never place any man-made objects at or near the nest or attempt to mark the nest in any way, it may attract predators.** Only CT DEEP staff may exclose nests. Many, but not all, nests will be exclosed as soon as possible after they are reported.
- Once a nest is exclosed, there is no need to keep tabs on the number of eggs in the nest. If an adult is incubating a nest, it is assumed that all eggs are accounted for. Flushing an adult off the nest to count eggs will expose those eggs to the elements unnecessarily.
- If a nest appears to be abandoned (parents are not observed near nest even as you have moved away from the nest) or destroyed call or email CT DEEP. Many nests wash out during full moon high tides. Other causes of unsuccessful nests are abandonment due to disturbance, destruction (both intentional and unintentional) by humans or pets, or predated by fox, crows, rats, domestic cats, raccoon, and other predators.
- Record sightings or signs of predators on the beach near plover areas, such as tracks, scat, and digging. Crows and gulls will often perch on posts, signs or exclosures, and may opportunistically prey on adults and chicks. Please record if you are seeing crows or gulls perching on exclosures or posts.
- Once chicks have hatched, record the number of adults and number of chicks seen. This information will help determine the number of chicks that survive until fledging, an indicator of a successful nest.
- Note other avian species you observe in the immediate area.

- If you see any suspicious behavior or suspect a person may be responsible for destroying or harassing adult piping plovers, nests, and chicks, follow the **Good Witness** guidelines, call CT DEEP EnCon Police (see **Important Phone Numbers** sheet). Once you are in a safe location, fill out an **Incident Observation Report** (attached). When you get home, please send Laura Saucier an email to let her know there was an issue and if/how it was resolved.
- Educate beach goers in a friendly and informative manner about piping plovers. Relay beach regulations only if you feel comfortable. Never attempt to physically stop someone from violating regulations. Volunteers are not responsible for enforcing beach regulations, but instead informing the public about what the regulations are. If a problem or hostile situation arises, diffuse the matter quickly and continue down the beach.

Guidelines for Being a Good Witness

Remember, **YOU ARE NOT A LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL!** Consider your safety at all times, it is the highest priority. If you see something happen, do not place yourself in a dangerous situation. **If you are in danger, call 911.** If you are safe, contact CT DEEP Environmental Conservation (EnCon) Police immediately (860-424-3333). If conflict or a hostile situation arises, diffuse the situation by identifying yourself as a CT DEEP Volunteer Piping Plover Monitor, explain that you're observing the birds, and if they have any questions to call CT DEEP at 860-424-3101. You may relay beach regulation information, such as closed/open areas and say that dogs are not permitted during the nesting season, but never attempt to physically confront anyone, verbally give commands, or demand personal information from any beachgoers.

Be observant, be curious, watch for something unusual or someone who catches your attention. Learn to describe what you have seen. Take notes, as they will later jar your memory.

What do you want to record or remember?

1. **Description of Vehicles:** Color, make, license plate state and number, condition, any usual characteristics (i.e. broken window, missing hub cap, extras, etc.)
2. **Description of People:** Sex, race, height, weight, color, and length of hair, clothes description (neat, ragged, sloppy, unusual hat, etc.) How many individuals are there?
3. **Date and Time of Day:** Record exact time of occurrence. Record all times that later may be important. Ex: "I saw him standing in the closed area for 10 minutes and all the laughing gulls were in flight swooping down on the man." It may be important later.
4. **Locations and Distances:** Be able to describe area and measure if necessary. Ex: "Individual walked within 5-feet of an area closed sign and proceeded into the closed area."
5. **Weather Conditions:** Can be very important as to visibility and the possibility of certain

actions or events.

6. **Describe Happenings:** Details of what happens might just make or break a case. Example: “The individual read the area closed sign and climbed under fence and proceeded into closed area.”
7. **Describe Statements:** Recall the exact words the victim/perpetrator stated (if applicable). Ex: “I didn’t notice the area closed sign as I jogged around it. And why are these damn birds chasing me?”
8. **Don’t disturb crime scene:** Tracks in the sand, wrack line position, and existing fencing measures may be important to the investigation. Do not remove carcass or eggs; authority must be given by US Fish and Wildlife Service or CT DEEP to do so.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Laura Saucier (DEEP Wildlife Biologist).....860-424-3101

Laura Saucier’s email: laura.saucier@ct.gov

Rebecca Foster (DEEP Piping Plover Technician)401-741-7403

Rebecca Foster’s email: rebecca.foster@ct.gov

Brian Hess (if Laura is not available)..... 860-424-3208

CT DEEP EnCon Police860-424-3333

The emergency dispatcher will connect you with an Environmental Conservation Police Officer in your area. Be prepared to explain who you are (CT DEEP volunteer piping plover monitor), where you are (where the problem is at), and what the problem is.

WHO TO CONTACT IN AN EMERGENCY:

If your life is threatened call 911.

If you see a situation that threatens (bodily harm) to the piping plover contact someone on the list below. Fill out an **Incident Observation Report** while you wait for law enforcement to respond. Take a picture of the incident, if possible. Email DEEP Biologist Laura Saucier **when you get home** to inform her of the resolution of the situation (if any).

If you witness someone intentionally trying to physically harm, or has killed, a piping plover call:

CT DEEP Environmental Conservation Police

860-424-3333 –Emergency Dispatcher will connect you with an Environmental Conservation Police Officer in your area.

If a vandalism incident has occurred and you find a dead plover that may be related to the incident call:

CT DEEP Environmental Conservation Police
860-424-3333 –Emergency Dispatcher will connect you with an Environmental Conservation Police Officer in your area.

If vandalism has occurred but the plovers are all OK call:

DEEP Wildlife Division
Laura Saucier 860-424-3101
or
Rebecca Foster 401-741-7403

If you find a dead plover and there is no sign of vandalism and you think death may be from natural causes call:

DEEP Wildlife Division
Laura Saucier 860-424-3101
or
Rebecca Foster 401-741-7403

We will make arrangements to collect the carcass.

If there is an unruly dog owner with an unleashed dog on the beach, call the local animal control to report the incident. SEE BELOW FOR LOCAL ORDINANCES.

<u>Bridgeport</u> (Pleasure Beach)	<u>Stratford</u> (Long/Short Beach)	<u>Old Lyme</u> (Griswold)
Animal Control	Animal Control	Animal Control
203-576-7727	203-385-4068	860-434-3047
203-576-7671 (emerg #)		860-434-1605x244

<u>Milford</u> (Milford Pt, E. Broadway)	<u>West Haven</u> (Sandy Pt)	<u>Groton</u> (Bluff Pt/Mumford)
Animal Control	Animal Control	Animal Control
203-783-3279	203-937-3642	860-441-6709

WHAT TO REPORT TO ANIMAL CONTROL OFFICERS (what info to include in your message):

- Exact location of incident
- Time of incident

- Description of action
- Description of person, vehicle, license plate number, any other pertinent information
- Your contact information for any follow-up questions they may have

Remember that while the officer may not be able to respond to the incident in a timely manner, leaving a message creates a record that there is an issue at this particular site. The officer may be able to follow up and catch chronic offenders if he/she can establish patterns of the offense with information that you have provided.

State of Connecticut Dog Laws:

Roaming Dogs

The Connecticut General Statutes do not mandate that dogs be leashed at all times but a dog's owner/keeper must not allow it to roam on another person's land or on public highways (including sidewalks) if it is not under his/her control. The methods of "control" are not defined in the statutes therefore it is a gray area as to whether a dog can be under "voice control" by its owner. Violating the state roaming law is an infraction punishable by a fine of \$92 ([CGS § 22-364](#)).

In addition to the state's roaming dog statutes, there is a statute that gives local governments the power to create leash ordinances. See below for the town ordinances for dogs in the towns that piping plovers breed in.

Additionally, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection requires that owners keep their dogs leashed in state parks at all times. Some parks have a seasonal restriction for dogs being allowed on beaches.

State Parks and Pets

Pets must be on a leash (no longer than 7-feet) and under control of their owner/keeper at all times at Connecticut State Parks ([CGS § 23-4-1 \(f\)](#)). Owners must remove and properly dispose of pet waste left by the pet or riding animal under their control. Pets are not allowed in buildings, swimming areas, or state park campgrounds.

In addition, there are seasonal restrictions for pets on the following State Park beaches:

- Sherwood Island State Park between April 15 and September 30
- Silver Sands State Park pets prohibited from being on the beach (year-round)
- Hammonasset State Park between April 1 and November 1

- Rocky Neck State Park between May 1 and September 30
- Harkness State Park pets prohibited from being on the beach (year-round)
- Bluff Point Coastal Reserve pets required to be on leash (but we post the beach closed to dogs during the bird breeding season)

Town and City Dog Laws:

Please keep in mind that above mean-high tide is private or municipal property and below is public land. Many of these ordinances are aimed at public and town-owned property only. Beach dog ordinances usually DO NOT trump private property (that is beach) rights.

Westport:

Beaches: Compo/Burying Hill/Old Mill

Dogs prohibited on beaches April 1-September 30.

From April 1 to Sept. 30 animals are prohibited at the beaches either in or out of vehicles except when going to and from boats at Ned Dimes Marina. Beaches are defined to include the water adjacent to the property, the sand areas adjacent to the water, the parking areas, grass areas, playing areas and roads. Dogs are permitted in vehicles entering into the Soundview parking lot Monday thru Friday at anytime, weekends and holidays prior to 9 a.m. and after 5 p. m. Dogs must be on leash. Persons with dog(s) at Ned Dimes Marina (Compo Beach) and E.R. Strait Marina must have dogs on a leash.

Fairfield:

Beaches: Sasco Hill, Jennings, Penfield & Fairfield

Dogs prohibited on beaches April 1 –September 30.

Parks and Rec. Section 14 - (a) Dogs or horses may enter beaches, open space areas, and marinas only on the following conditions:

(i) Dogs and horses accompanied by a person responsible for them shall be permitted to enter any town beach only during the period from October 1 to March 31. At all other times dogs and horses are forbidden to enter any town beach, including the parking areas for such beach.

Bridgeport:

Beaches: Pleasure Beach

Dogs are prohibited on Pleasure Beach per approved Park Management Plan.

6.04.030 - Dogs at large—Violation—Penalty.

A. No person shall permit any dog to be at large in the city at any time. A dog is at large when the animal is: (1) in any public street, alley, park or other public grounds or when off the premises of the owner or person who has custody of said dog, and not constrained by a leash, or (2) outdoors on any private property and not contained by a fence adequate to

prevent the dog from leaving the yard or constrained by a leash or dog run adequate for the same purpose. B. Any person violating the terms of this section shall be fined one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150.00) for each offense.

Stratford:

Beaches: Long Beach, Short Beach

Dogs prohibited on beaches from April through November.

152-17(a) Town of Stratford Beach Law

Dogs are not permitted on any portion of any town beach. This includes, but is not limited to, all of Short Beach Park, Long Beach, Long Beach West and the beach at The Sea Wall.

[§ 83-15 Leash required; removal of feces; violations and penalties.](#)

No owner or keeper of any dog, whether licensed or unlicensed, shall allow such dog to roam at large upon the land of another and not under the control, by leash or similar restraint, of the owner or keeper or agent of such owner or keeper, provided that nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or prohibit the legal use of hunting dogs during the open hunting or training season. The unauthorized presence of any dog on the land of any person other than the owner or keeper of such dog or any portion of a public highway, street or sidewalk or any other Town property when not under the control, by leash or similar restraint, of the owner or keeper, shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of the provisions of this article. Any person who violates this article shall pay a fine of \$25 for the first offense and \$50 for the second offense, and for any subsequent offense, the same shall be a misdemeanor in violation of C.G.S. § 22-363, Nuisance, and a court appearance would be required.

Milford:

Beaches: Milford Point, Myrtle & Walnut, Silver Sands SP, & East Broadway

Dogs prohibited on beaches.

[Sec. 4-25 Restraint and confinement—Generally.](#) [Ord. of 9-8-1997, § 4.25]

a. It shall be unlawful for the owner or keeper of any dog to fail to keep the dogs under restraint or to permit dogs to run at large upon the streets and public ways of the City or upon property other than that of the owner or keeper.

b. No owner, keeper or custodian of any dog shall fail to exercise proper care and control of such dog to prevent the same from becoming a public nuisance.

East Haven:

Dogs required to be leashed.

Sec. 12-5 Leashes for dogs required. No owner/keeper shall allow the dog to roam or traverse outside the owner or keeper, unless dog is securely confined upon a suitable leash or similar restraint that is a maximum of seven-feet in length held continuously in the hands of a responsible person capable of controlling the dog.

West Haven:

Beaches: Sandy Point

Dogs prohibited from April 1-September 1.

Per West Haven Shoreline Regulations.

Madison:

Dogs prohibited on town beaches (per town beach and recreation guidelines).

Town Ordinance Section 5-2: On public or quasi-public property, the dog is properly on a leash of no more than ten (10) feet in length held by the owner or keeper of the dog.

Westbrook:

Dogs prohibited on town-owned beaches between May 1-September 30.

Section 2-10 Use of Town Properties (c) Horses, Other Livestock, Dogs and Other Pet Animals: In no event shall any horse, other livestock, dog (except as set forth herein) or other pet animal be permitted, either leashed or unleashed, walked or ridden, on any park, athletic field, playground or beach, except in such areas and at such times as may be designated by the Board. Dogs shall be permitted on any beach between October 1 and April 30, provided they shall be properly leashed.

Old Saybrook:

Beaches: Fenwick Point

Dogs prohibited on beaches from May 2-October 14.

Chapter 401 Beach Regulations § 401-8 Animals. [Amended 11-28-2005]: Dogs, horses, ponies, pets, and other animals will not be permitted anywhere on beach property; provided, however, that during the period from October 15 through May 1, the owner or keeper of a dog shall not be prohibited from transporting a leashed dog across beach property for the purpose of accessing the area below the mean high-water mark.

Old Lyme:

Beaches: Griswold Point, White Sands, Mile Creek

Dogs prohibited on beaches.

§ 183-1 Adoption of regulations: The following regulations of the Point O' Woods, Old Lyme Shores, Old Colony, Miami and White Sands Beach Associations are hereby adopted by the Town of Old Lyme, applicable and enforceable within the territorial limits of each such Association: (E) No dog may be allowed to go at large or on any beach area.

East Lyme:

Beaches: Hatchett's Point

Dogs not permitted on beaches during the summer. Dogs must be leashed when off private land.

Waterford:

Beaches: Jordan Cove, Waterford Town Beach

No dogs allowed at Waterford Beach from June 20-September 20.