

## Piping Plovers on Chebeague



*Photos by Krista Hayward*

It was big news last year when a pair of endangered piping plovers decided to nest on the Hook because it was the first known nesting pair on any Casco Bay island since monitoring began in 1981. The big news just got bigger and better: this year, the Hook is home to two breeding pairs!

The way the Chebeague Island community rallied around these endangered birds last year is a big reason the birds did so well. Last year's success story of four chicks fledging is remarkable when you consider the odds. Owing to an extensive list of predators—seagulls, crows, rodents, and dogs among them—their survival rate is quite low. Piping plovers typically lay four eggs. On average only 1.3 chicks survive; most die within the first couple of days after being hatched.

As endangered species, piping plovers, who nest on the shifting sands up and down the East Coast, are under the protection of state and federal law—and it's paying off. In 1983, there were only six recorded nests in the entire state of Maine; last year, they numbered 157.

### **So what can we do to help these birds?**

- Stay away from the roped off area so as not to stress the birds.
- Hold off on bringing dogs to the beach until after July 31.
- Fill in any holes you make in the sand.
- Pack out trash, which attracts predators.
- Do not fly kites or drones, which are viewed as a threat.

## **For how long?**

The entire breeding season lasts about two months, but it can vary. Once they hatch, which will probably be in mid- to late-June, the chicks will be foraging on the beach, unable to fly, and particularly vulnerable. After about four weeks they'll have enough strength—and wing power—to fly, but the timing can vary. Last year's chicks stuck around until early August.

The Chebeague & Cumberland Land Trust (CCLT) and Indian Island Company are working closely with experts at Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and Maine Audubon to monitor the plovers and help protect them. Thank you for doing your part to ensure these special birds stay safe!

If you have any questions, please email CCLT steward Jonathan Dawson at [steward@ccltmaine.org](mailto:steward@ccltmaine.org), Laura Minich Zitske at [plovertern@maineaudubon.org](mailto:plovertern@maineaudubon.org), or Clare Ellis at [clareelliswebb@gmail.com](mailto:clareelliswebb@gmail.com).