MASHKIIZIIBII
NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

2026 Chequamegon Point Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) Seasonal Report

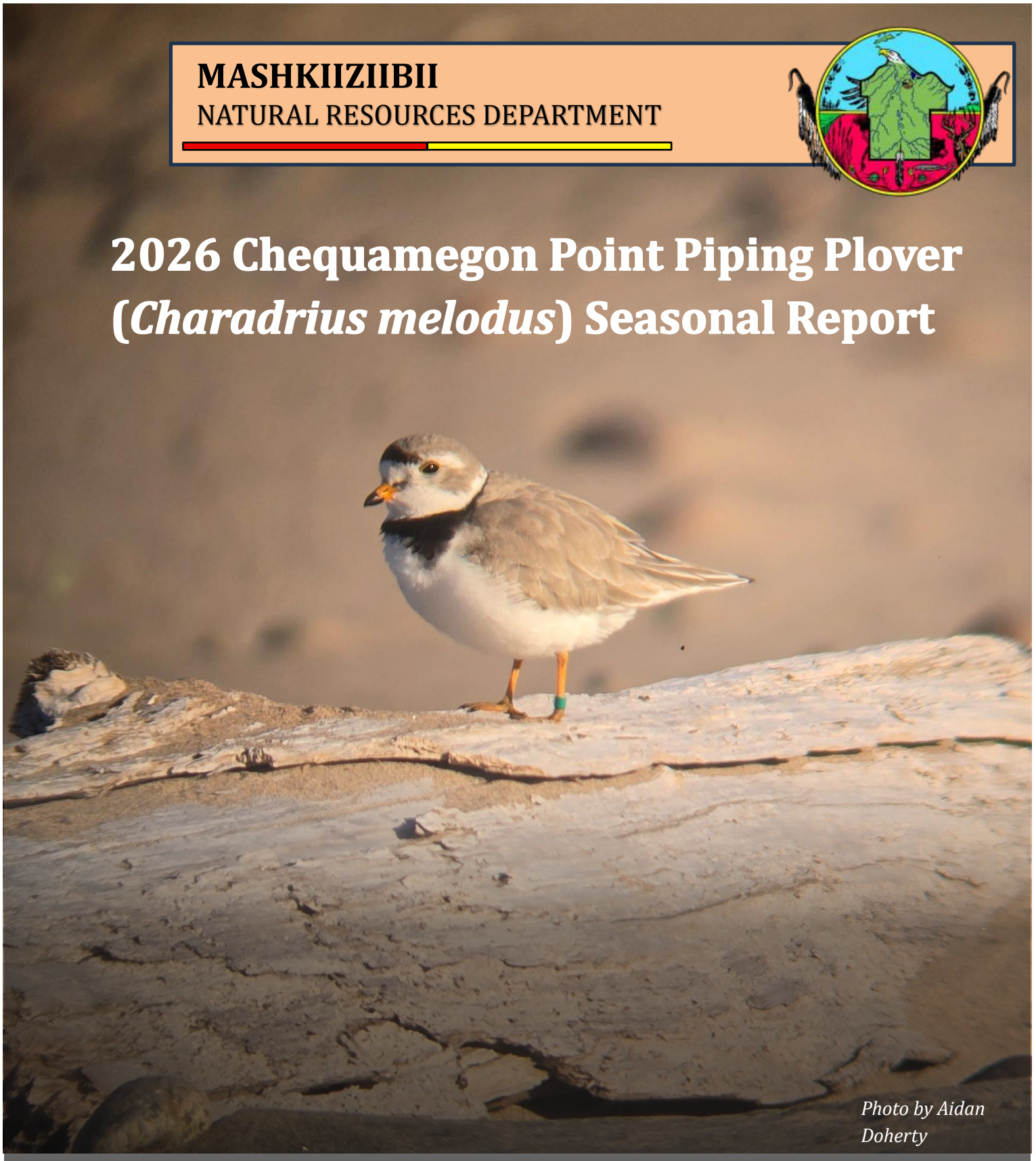


Photo by Aidan Doherty

BAD RIVER BAND OF LAKE SUPERIOR TRIBE OF CHIPPEWA INDIANS
ODANAH, WI, U.S.A

MASHKIIZIIBII NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Naomi Tillison, Director • Angelina Godinez, Deputy Director • Elouise Lozinski, Wildlife Program Manager • Jakob Wohlford, Ornithology Specialist

Mailing Address: PO Box 39, Odanah, WI 54861

Physical Address: 72682 Maple Street, Odanah, WI 54861

Building Name: Chief Blackbird Center

Department Phone Number: 715-682-7123

©2026 All Rights Reserved. Reprint with permission only.

2026 Piping Plover Report prepared by

Rowan Gibson and Aidan Doherty &

additional data sourced by Jakob Wohlford

Photos taken by Rowan Gibson, Aidan Doherty, and Billy Flynn



CONTENTS

Overview 4

Nests 6

Piping Plover Behavior……15

Predators.....18

Visitation and Human Impact.....20

Chick Banding 22

Other Wildlife.....24

Weather 29

Glossary.....30

Special Thanks 31



OVERVIEW

What are Piping Plovers?

Piping plovers (Charadrius melodus) are small, sand-colored migratory shorebirds, typically measuring 7 inches long. They only nest in the middle of wide beaches with ample amounts of cobble. The Great Lakes subspecies (Charadrius melodus circumcinctus) of Piping Plover is listed as endangered due to nesting habitat loss and anthropogenic disturbances (pet dogs, development, ATV traffic, aircraft traffic, harassment).

Before human encroachment, an estimated historical population of 500-800 pairs inhabited North America. Piping Plovers were listed as endangered in 1986, when there were only 16 nesting pairs left around the Great Lakes. Since then, due to recovery efforts, the number of unique pairs nesting along the Great Lakes has grown to 99, as of 2026. This marks the highest number of pairs recorded since the species was first listed as endangered in 1986.

Project Goal

The mission of the piping plover project is to restore the species to sustainable population levels resembling those prior to human disturbance, ultimately leading to delisting from the endangered species list.

Here, in Northern Wisconsin

On Chequamegon Point, a team works to accomplish this goal, including two piping plover monitors recruited each year to monitor the areas where these birds nest. During the breeding season, monitors walk the beach daily to locate and document piping plovers, nests, eggs, and chicks. The monitors look for signs of predators and human disturbance, assist with plover chick banding, and educate the public.

Making Progress

Great Lakes Piping Plovers are Federally Listed as Endangered Species

Less than 15

breeding pairs in ALL the Great Lakes

Who is Involved?

1986

In ALL the Great Lakes:

- **99 Unique breeding pairs**
- **101 Nests**
- **160 Chicks fledged in the wild, 36 captive-reared chicks released**



Locally, at Chequamegon Point:

- **7 unique breeding pairs**
- **9 chicks fledged in the wild**
- **7 Nests**

2026



This project is a cooperative effort between the Mashkiiziibii Natural Resources Department, the National Park Service (Apostle Islands National Lakeshore), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the Nature Conservancy.

2026 was the 53rd year of monitoring the Great Lakes piping plovers at Chequamegon Point on the south shore of Lake Superior, the 40th year since the species received endangered status, and the 28th year of partnership in restorative efforts with the Mashkiiziibii Tribe.

The monitors for this field season were Aidan Doherty and Rowan Gibson. Between May 20th and August 4, the monitors conducted daily surveys on Chequamegon Point, weather permitting. Seven piping plover nests were documented and monitored this season, matching last year's record amount. This season, 21 eggs hatched on Chequamegon Point and nine chicks **fledged** in the wild. Of the seven observed nests, one was abandoned. Two of the four eggs from this nest were viable. The two captive-reared chicks from Chequamegon Point fledged and were released in Michigan. There were no nests observed near the point of Long Island or at the mouth of the Bad River.

CHEQUAMEGON POINT AND LONG ISLAND

Where is Long Island?

Long Island was at one time a true island, located at the northeast of Chequamegon Bay on Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin. However, since the 1970s, sand accumulation has connected the island with the mainland, making it part of a peninsula known as Chequamegon Point. An act of Congress in 1986 added the area known as Long Island to the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore (National Park Service). Wetlands near Chequamegon Point have resulted in less development. The absence of roads results in visitors arriving at the Long Island portion of Chequamegon Point by watercraft or float plane/ultralight.

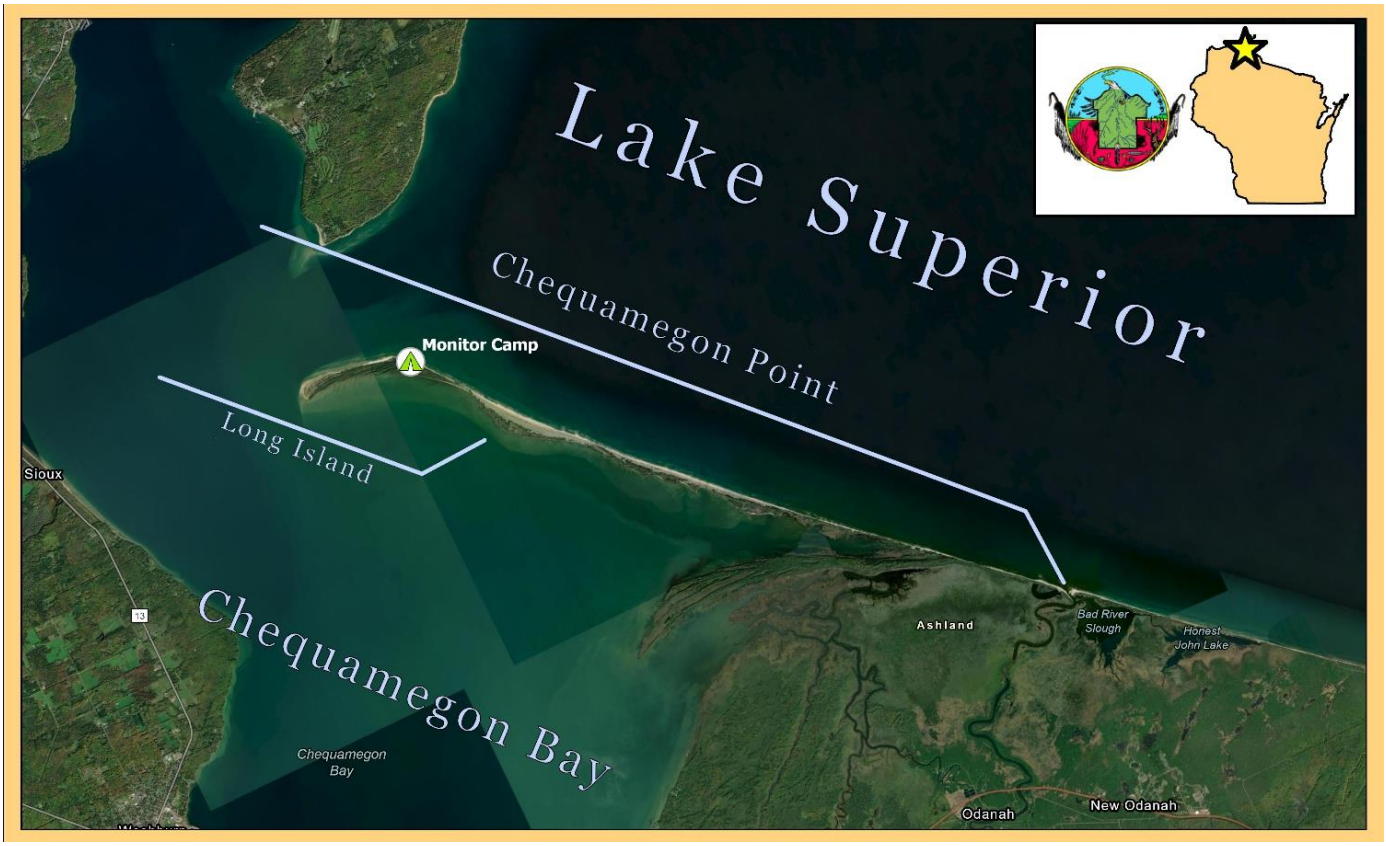


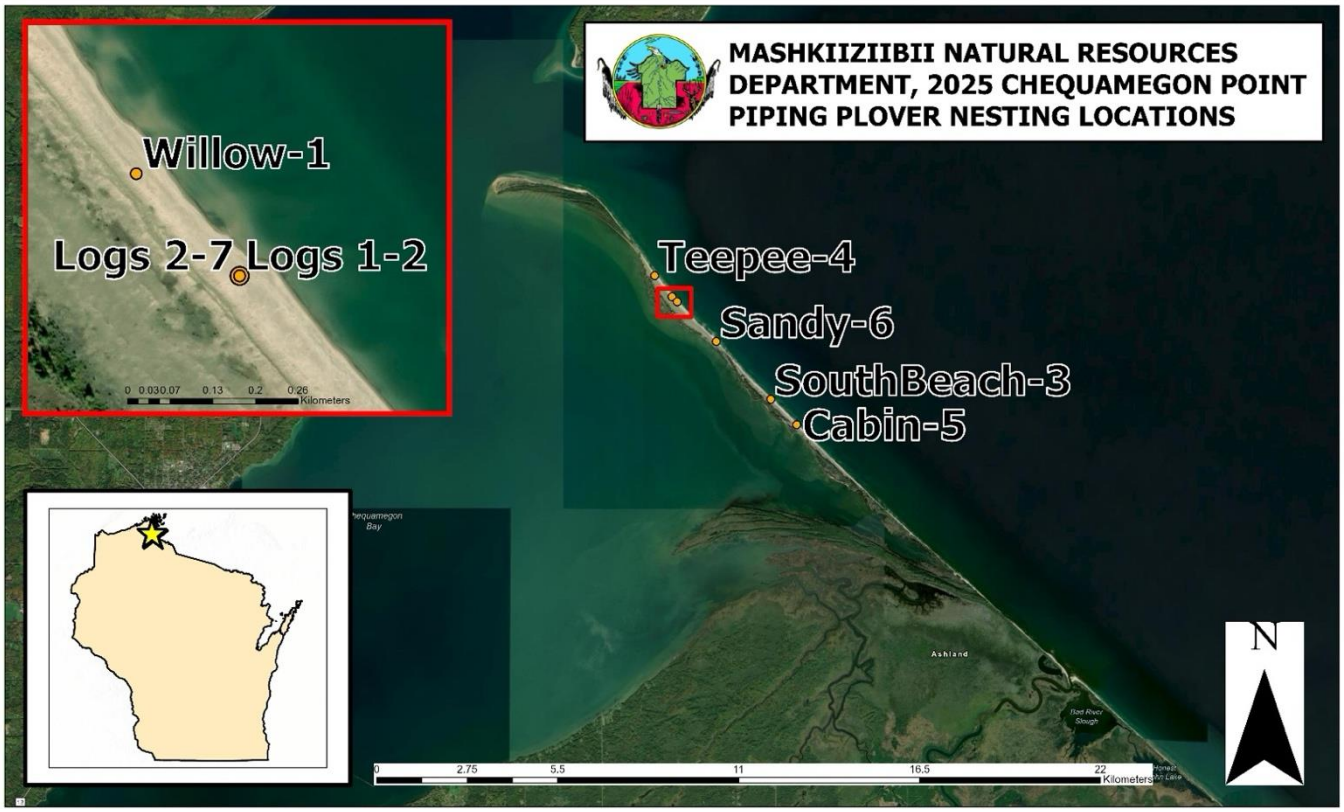
NESTS

Seven piping plover nests were monitored during the 2026 season. Five nests were located on the north-west shore of Chequamegon Point within an area commonly referred to as Plover Beach due to the recurrence of nests for several years. These five nests at Plover Beach also fall within the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. The other two nests are located further south along the eastern shore. Although seven nests were monitored throughout the season, only six were active at any given time. When Nest 2 (Logs 1) became abandoned, an opportunistic, unpaired male quickly replaced the nest at the existing site. This replacement nest became Nest 7 (Logs 2). The typical clutch for a piping plover consists of four speckled, sand colored eggs. Occasionally, clutches can deviate by a single egg. In years past, Chequamegon Point has had nests with three and five eggs.

All nests were located within the historical tribal lands of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The Bad River Reservation was established with the 1854 Treaty of La Pointe with the U.S. Government and was sited along the beautiful shores of Anishinaabeg-Gichigami and Chequamegon Bay. Bad River is the largest Chippewa reservation in the state of Wisconsin at 124,459 acres. The reservation boundaries encompass lands in two counties and six municipal townships with 36 miles of Anishinaabeg-Gichigami shoreline and over 488 miles of rivers and streams. To learn more about the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa you are encouraged to visit https://www.badriver-nsn.gov/history/.

(Source: https://www.badriver-nsn.gov)





NEST 1: Willow

Female: Blueberry

- **Band combo**: X [2651/63503], B : Of, bb
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/21 – 6/29

Male: Otto

- **Band combo**: X [-831/83598], -: Of, O O
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/22 – 6/29

Incubation Start: 5/24

Hatch date: 6/20

Exclosure Installed: 5/26



Psychological fencing installed: 5/31

Nest Overview/Site Description

Located on the main Plover Beach, this was the first nest found and the second most northerly nest, named for the prominent willow shrub growing on the dune above the nesting site. Nest #1 was one of the closest to the **foredune,** placing this nest furthest from the shoreline. This nest location consistently hosts piping plover nests annually. This area of Plover Beach is an expansive, flat beach with wide **wash zones**, cobble, and driftwood scarcely scattered throughout.

Coincidentally, this pair of adults were the same pair observed at last year's nest one. Otto and Blueberry paired up for two consecutive years. They also nested in roughly the same area. Piping Plovers form seasonal pairs, often retiring their mates after chicks fledge. This pair likely reunited because they both returned to the same area as their nest from the year prior. Blueberry also hatched at this site in 2024.

Last year, Otto and Blueberry only had two chicks hatch, both of which were immediately predated. The pair wasn't any more successful this year; of their four eggs, three hatched, but all fell victim to predation. The remaining egg was infertile and the last remaining chick was seen in early July.

Nest 2: Logs 1 (Abandoned)

Female: Big Little Betty

- **Band combo**: X(-831/83452), b: Of, L(missing)B
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/13 – 8/1

Male: Gary

- **Band combo**: X(2651/63531), G: Of, -
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/13 – 6/2

Incubation Start: Before 5/23

Hatch date: *Abandoned before hatching*

Exclosure Installed: 5/26

Psychological fencing installed: 6/02



Nest Overview/Site Description

Nest #2 was also in very close proximity to nest #1. Near or adjacent nests can cause constant **parallel walks**, territorial disputes, and **flight displays** between adults. This became a more consequential issue later in the monitoring season after the chicks hatched. Adults from both nests frequently focused on each other and the territory boundaries, leaving the chicks vulnerable to nearby avian predators.

Four eggs were laid but were abandoned after about nine days of incubation due to the disappearance of Gary, the male of this pair. It is most likely that Gary was the victim of predation. Shortly after his disappearance, a merlin (*Falco columbarius)* was seen perching near nest 6 (Sandy) chicks, where Gary was last seen. The species was also observed approximately three miles north, within two days of his disappearance.

Gary and Betty's eggs were collected following nest abandonment protocol and transported to a captive-rearing facility in Southern Michigan where two of the four eggs hatched. Both of Gary's chicks fledged.

Gary nested at Chequamegon Point in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, successfully fathering and fledging 10 chicks.

Nest 3: South Beach

Female: Georgia

- **Band combo:** X(2651/63498), O(Ydot), G/O/G
- **Arrival and departure**: Before 5/20 – 7/??

Male: Pippin

- **Band combo**: X(-831/83584), P: Of, P N
- **Arrival and departure**: Before 5/20 – 7/??

Incubation Start: Before 5/23

Hatch date: 6/16

- X[3231/79764], O/G: O^{Y}, G^{540}

Fledge date: 7/8

Exclosure Installed: 5/27

Psychological fencing installed: 6/02





Nest Overview/Site Description

South Beach nest was located two miles southeast of the main plover beach and about half a mile from Nest 5. This is nearly the exact location the male from this pair nested last year. This nest was the first to hatch this season. All four eggs hatched, but only one chick survived to fledging.

Nest 3 had the least amount of beach habitat between the nest, the foredune, and the waterline. Despite this pair inhabiting an incredibly narrow segment of beach (atypical behavior for piping plovers), the decision proved to be advantageous. The wider beach adjacent to Nest 3 was flooded several times during thunderstorms late into the monitoring season. Despite this, the occupied section of beach remained relatively unscathed.

During the first few weeks, Pippin and Georgia were seen engaging in several territorial disputes with the Nest 5 adults (roughly half a mile east). **Intraspecific competition** is common among nesting plovers whose territories are in close proximity to one another. Constant territorial disputes, when nests are too close, can result in chick mortality due to distraction. The spacing between nests 3 and 5 didn't eliminate this issue but mitigated the potential impact.

Nest 4: Teepee



Female:

- **Band combo**: O(Ydot), b^{510}: X (8101/37041), b/O
- **Arrival and departure**: Before 5/20-7/06

Male:

- **Band combo**: X (8101/37094), G^{477}: O(Rdot), G/O
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/13 – 7/29

Incubation Start: Before 5/23

Hatch date: 6/29

Fledge date: 0 chicks fledged

Exclosure Installed: 6/10

Psychological fencing installed: 6/2

Nest Overview/Site Description

Slightly north of this nest was the area with the highest concentration of human activity. A nearby access trail connecting the lake and bay sides also offers shade for visitors. When visitors were not present, the adults frequently foraged at this area of high traffic. Adults at this site would forage in the dune, near the water, and in the driftwood. Foraging primarily occurred north of the nest due to competition further east.

This site sees so much human disturbance that it's even named after its proximity to a driftwood structure visitors created. Digging in the sand, building structures, and removing rocks are all habitat-altering activities that harm the plovers. Nest 4 also saw increased harassment from off-leash dogs and disruptive visitors. These illegal behaviors likely contributed to the brood's failure.

Three of the four eggs hatched and three chicks were seen; however, after a strong storm on 6/28 (the day after hatching), none of these chicks were seen again. The adults were seen in the area about a week after this before they presumably left.

Nest 5: Cabin

Female: Rose Girl

- **Band combo**: X(0831/83590), R: Of, GL
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/22-7/??

Male: Zorro

- **Band combo**: X, O: Of, RO
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/22 –7/??

Incubation Start: Before 5/23

Hatch date: 6/26

- X(3231-79765), A: -, O(Rdot)
- X(3231-79767), A: -, O(Bdot)
- X(3231-79766), A: -, O(Ydot)

Fledge date: 7/18

Exclosure Installed: 6/10

Psychological fencing installed: 6/2



Nest Overview/Site Description

Nest 5 (Cabin) was the furthest nest monitored this year. This nest was nearly five miles from camp, a ten-mile round trip for the monitors. Due to distance and time limitations, this nest was monitored more infrequently. This is nest also marks an important milestone for Chequamegon Point. Nest 5 is the furthest the piping plovers have nested from Plover Camp on Chequamegon Point. This year's nest 5 is about half a mile south of our furthest nest from years prior. This is especially good because three of the four chicks survived and fledged, making it a successful site.

When monitoring Rose Girl and Zorro, they were observed to be especially protective of their chicks. Both adults would respond aggressively to passing seagulls and crows. They would even attempt to chase away monitors. This highly protective parenting strategy likely contributed to the high fledge rate of the nest.

Nest 6: Sandy

Female: Bobbie

- **Band combo**: O(Ydot), b: X(8101- 36934), b
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/20-7/20

Male: Oly

- **Band combo**: X(2331-9585), -: -, Y
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/20 – 7/15

Incubation Start: 6/5

Hatch date: 7/02

- X (3231-79760), A: O(Ydot), -
- X (3231-79761), A: O(Rdot), -
- X (3231-79762), A: O(Gdot), -
- X (3231-79763), A: O(Bdot), -

Fledge date: 7/24

Exclosure Installed: 6/8



Psychological fencing installed: 6/30

Nest Overview/Site Description

Nest 6 (Sandy) was another returning nesting site from last year. Oly and Bobbie, the pair from Sandy last year, also returned to occupy this site again. The nest was located on a wide sandy beach with little to no cobble and trace amounts of driftwood, hence the name. Because of this, seagulls frequented the shoreline, a likely reason for the nest being very close to the foredune.

Last year Oly and Bobbie were very successful, fledging three chicks. This year, the pair was lucky enough to have all four chicks fledge. This nest was the most isolated from other plover nests, limiting competition with other plovers. Late in the season, the plover pair from WI Point used Nest 6 as a stopover site. This caused a lengthy territorial dispute, nearly resulting in the predation of one of the chicks by a herring gull.

The nest did have increased human and dog visitation, being just north of one of the two dune-crossing points used by visitors to get from the bay side to the lake side. Efforts from plover monitors prevented any negative visitor impact on the birds.

Nest 7: Logs 2



Female: Big Little Betty

- **Band combo**: X(-831/83452), b: Of, L(missing)B
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/13-8/1

Male:

- **Band combo:** X(8101/36784), -: O(Gdot), A
- **Arrival and departure**: 5/25-7/15

Incubation Start: 6/15

Hatch date: 7/10

- One Fledged (did not band)

Fledge date: 8/1

Exclosure Installed: 6/17

Psychological fencing installed: 6/2

Nest Overview/Site Description

With Logs 1 abandoned and the male (Gary) missing, the Nest 2 female, Big Little Betty, renested with an eager unpaired male only a few meters from her original nest (Logs 1). Nest scraping began only 2-3 days after Gary disappeared, and eggs were laid the following week. As a result of this renesting, this nest hatched last, eight days after Sandy.

Three eggs hatched, and all three chicks were initially accounted for. However, in the coming weeks, two chicks were lost to presumed coyote predation. On the morning of chick banding, nest 7 also began to hatch. While this was happening, a monitor observed a juvenile coyote around and near the psychological fencing. Measures were taken to deter the coyote, but in the coming days two of the chicks vanished.

The adult male from this nest was a chick hatched at the Bad River Mouth nest last year.

PLOVER BEHAVIOR

This season we observed many typical nesting behaviors of Piping Plovers. Nesting starts with scraping, depressions in the sand that suggest nest placement. Once a scrape is chosen, plovers lay eggs and take turns incubating, swapping roughly every 30 minutes so both adults can forage. When chicks hatch (late June-early July), they will brood underneath their parents. This helps the tiny chicks regulate heat on cold Lake Superior days. During this period, the plover adults are highly territorial and will chase off any perceived predators.

Based on observations, the plovers seemed to have few issues with incubation, except for Log 1's nest due to the loss of a mate. Plovers were observed swapping consistently, rarely leaving the eggs alone for long periods. Despite this, some of the eggs were infertile. Between all seven nests, three eggs weren't viable. Three of the nests had infertile eggs. When plovers incubate infertile eggs, they often leave their newly hatched young unguarded. This can lead to higher rates of chick predation.

As usual, after chicks started becoming more independent, adults began departing the area to their wintering grounds. By late July, most adults had left, leaving Big Little Betty as the only adult remaining.

NON-NESTING PLOVERS

While most of the Piping Plovers on Chequamegon Point this season were nesting, we also encountered several individuals that did not nest. This includes a female with a Y/O/Y band on her lower left leg, seen for only a few days in late May at the tip of the point. Another individual (X, A: O [red dot], –) (male) was observed throughout the season until mid-July on the main nesting beach and was unsuccessful in finding a mate. He was hatched the previous year at the Bad River Mouth.

An unbanded male Piping Plover was seen for about three weeks starting in late June. The unbanded male likely originated from an undiscovered nest. Lastly, a pair that had a failed nesting attempt at Wisconsin Point was present at Chequamegon Point for several days in early July.



During the 2026 nesting season, five trail cameras were deployed to supplement traditional Piping Plover monitoring at the Willow, Teepee, Cabins, Sandy, and Logs 2 nest sites. The cameras provided an additional means of monitoring activity at nest sites and surrounding habitat when staff were not present, allowing for more continuous documentation of Piping Plover activity, wildlife, potential predators, and human activity.
Trail camera footage helped confirm chick hatch timing and provided additional information on chick presence after hatching. When chicks were no longer detected on camera, the last documented sightings helped narrow the timeframe in which chicks may have been predated or otherwise disappeared from the area. While predation could not be confirmed directly, these observations provided useful supplemental information for evaluating chick survival and potential brood loss.

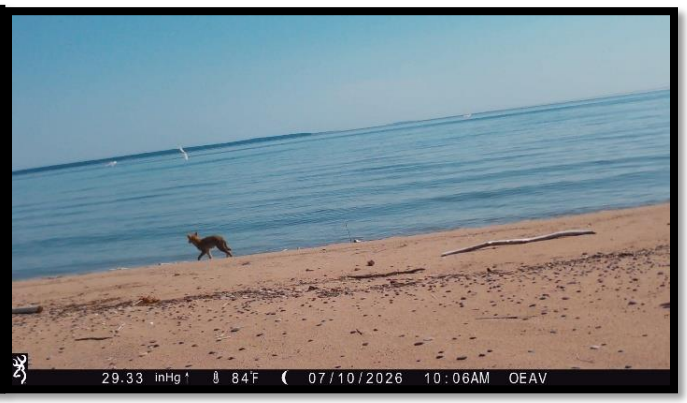
The trail cameras also provided valuable information on wildlife and potential predator activity within Piping Plover habitat. Coyotes were documented at two different camera locations, while an American Kestrel was also recorded at one of these sites. These cameras were positioned in close proximity to one another and on the beach where the majority of observed predation occurred during the nesting season. Although camera detections cannot directly confirm that a particular species was responsible for a predation event, documenting coyotes and other potential predators in areas with known predation provides useful information for understanding predator presence and activity around Piping Plover nesting habitat. Other wildlife documented included gulls, deer, geese, and a variety of birds. A hawk species was also recorded, although it could not be definitively identified based on the portion of the tail feather visible in the image.
The cameras also captured numerous instances of human activity. Documenting public use of the beach and areas surrounding nesting habitat provides an additional source of information for evaluating potential human disturbance. These observations may help identify patterns in the timing and frequency of human activity and inform future outreach, signage, and management decisions.

Several challenges were encountered during the first year of trail camera deployment. Wind, waves, vegetation movement, and other environmental conditions occasionally affected camera positioning and detection capabilities. On days with significant wave activity, movement of the water repeatedly triggered the cameras, resulting in thousands of photographs of waves and substantially increasing the time required to review the data. These false triggers presented a significant data-management challenge and will be an important consideration when determining camera placement and settings in future seasons.

Despite these limitations, trail cameras proved to be a valuable addition to the Piping Plover monitoring at Chequamegon Point. In addition to documenting potential predators, wildlife, and human activity, the cameras provided supplemental information on chick hatch timing, continued chick presence, and the approximate timing of chick disappearance. This information complemented traditional field observations and provided a useful foundation for improving monitoring and evaluating reproductive success in future seasons.



Adult coyote near nest late into the night



A clear image was captured of a juvenile coyote



Visitors with properly leashed dogs



A Kestrel, a potential predator for newborn chicks



PREDATORS

The plovers experienced nesting pressure from predators throughout the entire season. Opportunistic avian predators such as falcons, crows, ravens, owls, and seagulls target newly hatched chicks for quick and easy meals. Larger falcon species, like Merlins and Peregrines, will even target adults. This is believed to be the reason Gary disappeared, which resulted in the failure of an entire nest. The presence of a single falcon can deter plovers from utilizing an entire stretch of suitable nesting habitat.

Gulls pressured the plovers throughout the entire monitoring season. Throughout the season, up to 500 herring gulls/ring-billed gulls were observed semi-regularly along the beach. Seagulls were most problematic on Plover Beach, where hundreds of seagulls accumulated. Both seagulls and plovers prefer wide stretches of beach, putting chicks especially at risk of predation.

Monitors didn't observe what was definitively responsible for predating the chicks; however, given past observations and the abundance of seagulls nearby, monitors assume seagulls were partially responsible. These predation events potentially happened early in the morning, before monitors could intervene.

Several things deterred the seagulls from targeting newborn and adolescent plovers. Seagulls would relocate when high winds and excessive wave action hit the lakeside of Chequamegon Point/Long Island.

Another problem monitors faced was visitors accidentally pushing large flocks of seagulls towards nests when beaching their boats. This resulted in monitors having to chase seagulls away from active nests and chicks.



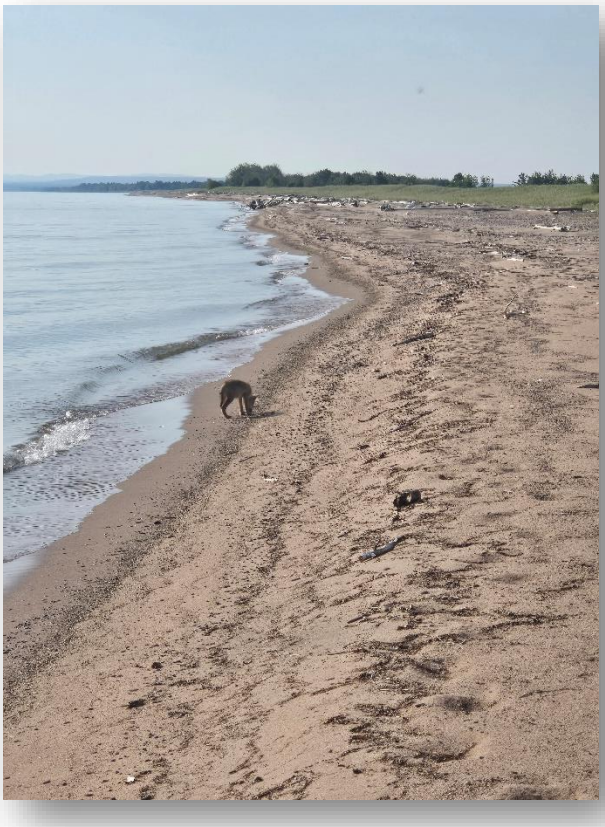
Predators Continued

This season, coyotes were incredibly problematic. Coyote tracks were commonly seen in all areas: near the nests, shore, cobble, foredune, dune tops, and dune valleys. Fresh tracks littered the waterline each morning. A juvenile coyote pup was also seen several times during the day near newly born plover chicks. Many efforts were made to scare away the curious pup, including motion-triggered alarms, whistles, and chasing. While we believe these efforts helped reduce predation, some chick mortalities may still be attributed to the coyote.

Plovers recognize the threat coyotes pose to both themselves and their young. Constant canine presence can result in abandonment of nests or chicks. Because plovers can't distinguish between coyotes and other domesticated canines, they may mistake off-leash dogs as predators, which can lead to nest failure. This is just one of the several issues associated with off-leash dogs

Evidence of non-plover predation was observed throughout the season. Many bird remains, predominantly wings, were found along the beach. Later in the season a newly deceased seagull was found near one of the exclosures; this didn't correspond to any loss of plover life. It's not definitively known what predated these birds.





A juvenile coyote pup, seemingly unafraid of people or noise deterrent devices. Assumed responsible for chick predation at nest 7



Visitation and Human Impact

Human Visitors

How do they get to the Point? All observed visitors to Chequamegon Point arrived via watercraft this year. The most popular site for anchoring was at the north end of Plover Beach and the nearby "Narrows" area directly to the north. At the Narrows, boats anchored on both the east and western shores of Chequamegon Point.

Humans/Dogs Impact

As one might expect, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday were the busiest days for beach and water visitors, as were sunny, hot days. The 4th of July and the following two weekends saw the highest numbers of visitors for the season. Visitors often created campfires, arranged driftwood into large piles, and even constructed structures using driftwood. This was often done in the evening hours, after the monitors had left the area, so the opportunity to discourage this behavior was rarely available. These creations would be discovered the next morning and promptly disassembled. When abandoned campfires and vertical sticks litter the beach, it can limit foraging opportunities for plovers. Abandoned imported firewood can also lead to the introduction of destructive, invasive pests.

Plastic, glass, fishing lures/lines/nets, cans, and other debris were also collected by monitors. Mylar balloons were the most common trash, found in locations including on the beach, behind the dunes, and in the tree lines. Visitors would also frequently leave/forget children's beach toys. Clothing would also frequently wash up on the beach. Litter doesn't only pose a threat to plovers, but also to all wildlife and guests who visit.

Monitors also had to enforce leashed dogs, a strict rule on Chequamegon Point/Long Island. Monitors reminded visitors that dogs are required to be leashed within park boundaries and in and around the plover habitat. While visitors acknowledged the rule, many were dismissive or didn't adhere to the rule. Others promised to keep their dogs close, leashed, or on the boat. Dogs running on the beach, near or towards plovers, can cause abandonment of eggs or chicks. Remember that wild canine species prey on plovers at Chequamegon Point/Long Island, and plovers cannot distinguish between the threat posed by dogs or coyotes. Dogs digging in sand can also create obstacles for plovers foraging on the shoreline. Animal owners are liable and responsible for any harassment, injury, or death of a plover due to negligence of any kind. To avoid expensive fines, have all pets on a six-foot leash at all times.

AIRCRAFT

Piping plovers can't distinguish aircraft and drones from avian predators that want to eat them or their young. The loud noise can also interfere with foraging, courtship, and **copulation**. At worst, low-flying aircraft can cause piping plovers to abandon nests or young, greatly impacting population revival efforts. Disturbing piping plovers this way is illegal and considered harassment under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Plover monitors work with FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) investigators to ensure all aviation laws are being adhered to for the safety of the piping plovers and all guests
(Source: https://pipingploverproject.org/tag/drones/)



A grouping of large vertical sticks placed by

HUMAN/MONITOR INTERACTIONS

Printed brochures are provided to receptive visitors, along with small cards featuring a QR code that directs to www.greatlakespipingplover.org for additional information.

People are more than welcome to walk the beach and experience the rarity of piping plovers. To safely do so, walk in the wet zone and carefully listen for a quiet "peep-lo" or "keep-er". If you hear the call, and find yourself too close, carefully walk around any birds.

The majority of visitors knew piping plovers were in the area. Many guests asked questions and were quite interested in learning more, especially how to best navigate or behave in the area while visiting. The majority of visitors are at Chequamegon Point/Long Island are locals from Ashland, Bayfield, or Odanah. Visitors who self-identified as repeat or annual visitors to Chequamegon Point would ask how many nests there were this year, how many chicks, etc.

Unfortunately, the public was also one of the largest issues this season. On too many occasions, people were confrontational to monitors. Most of these problematic people knew of the plovers and disregarded their well-being. Because of these prominent issues, new safeguards and methods of plover protection will need to be implemented.





CHICK BANDING

BIRD BANDER:

Stephanie Schubel, Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team

ATTENDEES AND SUPPORT:

Representatives from Mashkiiziibii Natural Resources, National Park Service, Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team, Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), and St. Louis River Alliance participated in the banding effort.



Both plover monitors were present during chick banding.

On Friday, July 10, 2026, eight chicks were banded. Four chicks were banded at the Sandy nest, three at the Cabins nest, and one at the South Beach nest. The South Beach chick was approximately 21 days old at the time of banding, making it the oldest chick banded during the 2026 season.

Prior to banding, each chick was weighed and processed by the banding team. Following banding, chicks were released in the direction of their parents and monitored until they reunited before the team departed.



Three additional chicks hatched at the Logs 2 nest on the day of banding. Only 1 of those chicks survived, and due to this the lone chick had only recently hatched, it was not banded due to the logistics of making a separate trip to capture and band a single chick. The chick was subsequently observed and successfully fledged, bringing the total number of chicks known to have survived to fledging to nine.







National Park Service Boats at Plover Beach for Chick Banding



Plover banding team slowly and methodically approaching chicks from the dune for capture



Delicately releasing a newly banded chick



Released chicks run in unison to parents nearby



OTHER WILDLIFE

Mammals

This year we had some minor issues with Black Bears around plover camp. At least one adult Black Bear and three young cubs were seen on several occasions near plover camp starting in mid-June this season. One morning we found our screen tent had been ripped in several places by an adult Black Bear. After this we took extra precautions to avoid further incidents and luckily, we had no further issues.

Three *Peromyscus* mice were attracted to food at plover camp and took shelter in the camp stove after monitors were away for a few days due to smoke.



A Porcupine was observed steadily walking up the point at plover beach.



List of Mammal Species Observed this Season:

Common Name	Scientific Name
River Otter	*Lontra canadensis*
Little Brown Bat	*Myotis lucifugus*
Coyote	*Canis latrans*
American Black Bear	*Ursus americanus*
Red Squirrel	*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*
Gray Squirrel	*Sciurus carolinensis*
North American Porcupine	*Erethizon dorsatum*
Southern Red-backed Vole	*Clethrionomys gapperi*
White-footed/Deermouse	*Peromyscus sp.*
Shrew sp	*Soricidae sp.*
White-tailed Deer	*Odocoileus virginianus*

Birds

This year monitors were deployed on Chequamegon Point on May 20th which coincides with peak northward bird migration at this location, and as a result, the following two weeks were full of a diverse and every-changing set of migrants on the point. In total, 138 species were observed this season. Highlights included roughly eight *Rufa* Red Knots (a federally endangered sub-species), 12 Hudsonian Whimbrels, 500+ Blue Jays, 22 species of warblers, 20 species of shorebirds, and both an Arctic Tern and a Laughing Gull (significant rarities for the area).













BIRDS

Common Name	Scientific Name
Canada Goose	*Branta canadensis*
Trumpeter Swan	*Cygnus buccinator*
Wood Duck	*Aix sponsa*
Gadwall	*Mareca strepera*
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*
Green-winged Teal	*Anas crecca*
Bufflehead	*Bucephala albeola*
Common Merganser	*Mergus merganser*
Red-breasted Merganser	*Mergus serrator*
Ruffed Grouse	*Bonasa umbellus*
Mourning Dove	*Zenaida macroura*
Common Nighthawk	*Chordeiles minor*
Chimney Swift	*Chaetura pelagica*
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	*Archilochus colubris*
Sandhill Crane	*Antigone canadensis*
Black-bellied Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*
Killdeer	*Charadrius vociferus*
Semipalmated Plover	*Charadrius semipalmatus*
Piping Plover	*Charadrius melodus*
Whimbrel	*Numenius phaeopus*
Short-billed Dowitcher	*Limnodromus griseus*
Spotted Sandpiper	*Actitis macularius*
Solitary Sandpiper	*Tringa solitaria*
Lesser Yellowlegs	*Tringa flavipes*
Willet	*Tringa semipalmata*
Greater Yellowlegs	*Tringa melanoleuca*
Ruddy Turnstone	*Arenaria interpres*
Sanderling	*Calidris alba*
Red Knot	*Calidris canutus*
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*
Baird's Sandpiper	*Calidris bairdii*

White-rumped Sandpiper..... *Calidris fuscicollis*
Least Sandpiper..... *Calidris minutilla*
Pectoral Sandpiper..... *Calidris melanotos*
Ring-billed Gull..... *Larus delawarensis*
Herring Gull..... *Larus argentatus*
Laughing Gull……*Leucophaeus atricilla*
Caspian Tern..... *Hydroprogne caspia*
Forster's Tern..... *Sterna forsteri*
Common Tern..... *Sterna Hirundo*
Arctic Tern……*Sterna paradisaea*
Common Loon..... *Gavia immer*
Double-crested Cormorant..... *Nannopterum auritum*
American White Pelican..... *Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*
Great Blue Heron..... *Ardea herodias*
Turkey Vulture..... *Cathartes aura*
Osprey……*Pandion haliaetus*
Northern Harrier..... *Circus hudsonius*
Sharp-shinned Hawk..... *Accipiter striatus*
Bald Eagle..... *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Broad-winged Hawk..... *Buteo platypterus*
Great Horned Owl……*Bubo virginianus*
Belted Kingfisher..... *Megaceryle alcyon*
Downy Woodpecker..... *Dryobates pubescens*
Hairy Woodpecker..... *Dryobates villosus*
Pileated Woodpecker..... *Dryocopus pileatus*
Northern Flicker..... *Colaptes auratus*
American Kestrel..... *Falco sparverius*
Merlin……*Falco columbarius*
Peregrine Falcon……*Falco peregrinus*
Eastern Wood-Pewee..... *Contopus virens*
Olive-sided Flycatcher……*Contopus cooperi*
Alder Flycatcher..... *Empidonax alnorum*
Semipalmated Sandpiper..... *Calidris pusilla*
Bonaparte's Gull..... *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*

Least Flycatcher..... *Empidonax minimus*
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher……*Empidonax flaviventris*
Eastern Phoebe..... *Sayornis phoebe*
Great Crested Flycatcher..... *Myiarchus crinitus*
Eastern Kingbird..... *Tyrannus tyrannus*
Blue-headed Vireo..... *Vireo solitarius*
Philidelphia Vireo……*Vireo philidelphicus*
Red-eyed Vireo..... *Vireo olivaceus*
Blue Jay..... *Cyanocitta cristata*
American Crow..... *Corvus brachyrhynchos*
Common Raven..... *Corvus corax*
Black-capped Chickadee..... *Poecile atricapillus*
Horned Lark…… *Eremophila alpestris*
Bank Swallow..... *Riparia riparia*
Tree Swallow..... *Tachycineta bicolor*
Barn Swallow..... *Hirundo rustica*
Northern Rough-winged Swallow…*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*
Cliff Swallow……*Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*
Ruby-crowed Kinglet…… *Corthylio calendula*
Red-breasted Nuthatch..... *Sitta canadensis*
Northern House Wren……*Troglodytes aedon*
Eastern Bluebird..... *Sialia sialis*
Wood Thrush……*Hylocichla mustelina*
Veery..... *Catharus fuscescens*
Hermit Thrush..... *Catharus guttatus*
Gray-cheeked Thrush……*Catharus minimus*
Swainson's Thrush……*Catharus ustulatus*
American Robin..... *Turdus migratorius*

Cedar Waxwing ..... *Bombycilla cedrorum*
American Pipit ..... *Anthus rubescens*
Purple Finch ..... *Haemorhous purpureus*
White-winged Crossbill ..... *Loxia leucoptera*
Red Crossbill ..... *Loxia curvirostra*
Pine Siskin ..... *Spinus pinus*
American Goldfinch ..... *Spinus tristis*
Chipping Sparrow ..... *Spizella passerina*
Clay-colored Sparrow ..... *Spizella pallida*
Dark-eyed Junco ..... *Junco hyemalis*
White-throated Sparrow ..... *Zonotrichia albicollis*
Savannah Sparrow ..... *Passerculus sandwichensis*
Song Sparrow ..... *Melospiza melodia*
Lincoln's Sparrow ..... *Melospiza lincolnii*
Swamp Sparrow ..... *Melospiza georgiana*
Eastern Towhee ..... *Pipilo erythrophthalmus*
Baltimore Oriole ..... *Icterus galbula*
Red-winged Blackbird ..... *Agelaius phoeniceus*
Bobolink ..... *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*
Common Grackle ..... *Quiscalus quiscula*
Ovenbird ..... *Seiurus aurocapilla*
Black-and-white Warbler ..... *Mniotilta varia*
Tennessee Warbler ..... *Leiothlypis peregrina*
Nashville Warbler ..... *Leiothlypis ruficapilla*
Mourning Warbler ..... *Geothlypis philadelphia*
Common Yellowthroat ..... *Geothlypis trichas*
American Redstart ..... *Setophaga ruticilla*
Cape May Warbler ..... *Setophaga tigrina*
Magnolia Warbler ..... *Setophaga magnolia*
Bay-breasted Warbler ..... *Setophaga castanea*
Blackpoll Warbler ..... *Setophaga striata*
Blackburnian Warbler ..... *Setophaga fusca*
Yellow Warbler ..... *Setophaga petechia*
Chestnut-sided Warbler ..... *Setophaga pensylvanica*
Black-throated Blue Warbler ..... *Setophaga caerulescens*
Pine Warbler ..... *Setophaga pinus*
Palm Warbler ..... *Setophaga palmarum*
Yellow-rumped Warbler ..... *Setophaga coronata*
Black-throated Green Warbler ..... *Setophaga virens*
Canada Warbler ..... *Cardellina canadensis*
Wilson's Warbler ..... *Cardellina pusilla*
Rose-breasted Grosbeak ..... *Pheucticus ludovicianus*
Indigo Bunting ..... *Passerina cyanea*

Insects

Biting stable flies were incredibly prevalent and bothersome throughout the season, especially on hot, humid days without wind. Stable flies are non-native and hatch from washed-up vegetation and driftwood. Both male and female stable flies bite. They made monitoring quite difficult. Stable flies will bite any open skin but tend to target legs, ankles, and wrists. Bug repellents do not deter biting flies, and they can bite through thin or tight-fitting fabrics. The best preventative option monitors found was to wear loose-fitting clothing and tall boots.

Mosquitos were also very prevalent this season at Plover Camp and much time spent outside at camp rather uncomfortable. Wood ticks were also very abundant around camp, especially in the first few weeks of the season.









WEATHER

SURVEY PERIOD		MAX. TEMP.	MIN. TEMP.	AVG. TEMP. INCLUDES OVER NIGHT TEMPS	MEAN AVG. TEMP. NORMAL	TOTAL DAYS OF PRECIP.	SUM PRECIP.	NORMAL PRECIP. TOTAL	GUST MAX
May	Nest building and incubating	88 °F	24 °F	50.1 °F	51.5°F	5	0.88"	3.45"	41 mph
Jun	Incubating and hatching	90 °F	35 °F	60.4 °F	61.0 °F	10	3.29"	3.92"	43 mph
Jul	Fledging and departing	95 °F	47 °F	69.4 °F	66.7 °F	7	2.07"	3.93"	41 mph
Aug (6 days)	Fledging and departing	85 °F	46 °F	64.6 °F	65.1 °F	3	1.50"	3.44"	36 mph

Historical weather data sourced from weather.gov and wunderground.com

Most notable this season in terms of weather was the lack of rain and abundance of smoke, namely in July. Smoke from nearby wildfires in the Boundary Waters area of Northern Minnesota and Canada was blown to Chequamegon Point. Monitors were taken off the point and could not monitor from July 16th through the 21st due to bad air quality. Luckily, the smoke did not seem to have any impact on the nesting success of the plovers and did not persist after this.



A smoky day at plover camp

This season also saw especially hot temperatures in July with a heatwave spreading across most of the country. This made monitoring uncomfortable with increased biting insects and little escape from the heat but did not cause any major issues for the monitors nor the plovers.

One intense storm in early July came just after the teepee chicks hatched and may have been the cause of their death. Despite storms, there were no issues with nests flooding as all plovers had chosen nesting locations higher on the beach where the water would reach last.



A severe storm approaching plover camp

GLOSSARY

CANDLED-A method used for testing an eggs viability

COBBLE PAN-The strip of beach parallel to the shore where cobblestones (naturally rounded rock) have been most densely deposited by the tide.

COPULATION-The male hops onto the female's back and balances there kneading her with his feet. At the correct moment he transfers his sperm into her cloaca, the male tucks his tail under hers and then dismounts. He sometimes holds on to her neck feathers with his bill for a short time

FLEDGE -The point reached in a juvenile plover's life when its flight feather growth allows for the ability to fly

FLIGHT DISPLAY-The male circles over his territory with stiff, deep wing beats peeping constantly. Males usually do flight displays in response to other males intruding on their territory or to females they are trying to attract.

FOREDUNE -The dune ridge in a system of dunes that is closest to the shoreline.

INTERSPECIFIC COMPETITION-Competition for limited resources by members of the same species

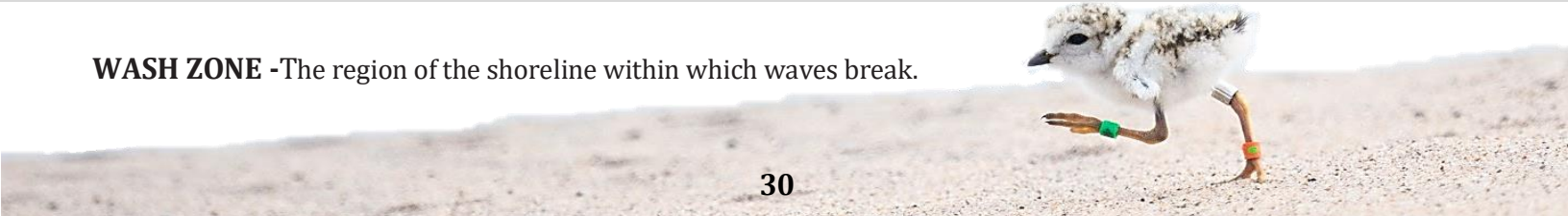
PARALLEL WALK-One territorial display is the parallel walk. (Photo #2, Back Cover) Two plovers, or sometimes more, with adjoining territories, walk side-by-side along the territorial boundary. They take turns running ahead, pecking and bobbing

PSYCOLOGICAL FENCING- A protective perimeter installed around active nest sites to limit public disturbance. It consists primarily of a set of posts and signs joined by a length of twine or string.

TERRITORIAL DISPUTES-Both males and females can be involved in territory defense. They puff up their back feathers and charge at each other with lowered heads. Sometimes they even jump on each other and tussle on the beach. There will be a lot of peeping during a dispute.

TREE LINE -The belt where the dune system transitions into forest habitat; the edge of the dunes where trees begin to grow

WASH ZONE -The region of the shoreline within which waves break.



Special Thanks

This report represents the effort of a much larger team. First and foremost, thank you to **Jakob Wohlford** and **Elouise Lozinski** for your leadership, mentorship, and logistical support throughout the season. The countless early-morning boat rides, late-night security check-ins, and behind-the-scenes responsibilities that allowed monitors to focus on the birds were invaluable. The knowledge and experience you shared regarding piping plovers and Chequamegon Point were instrumental to a successful monitoring season.

Our sincere thanks to the **Mashkiiziibii Natural Resources Department**—for your assistance with psychological fencing, transportation to and from camp, and other logistical needs throughout the season. Extra-special thanks to **Jakob Wohlford and Elouise Lozinski** for your continued monitoring and support at the mouth of the Bad River. Because monitors could only access this nest by boat while traveling to and from Chequamegon Point, additional support was essential.

Thank you to **Stephanie Schubel** of the **Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team** for your leadership and expertise throughout the season, including your work banding our chick plovers. Your knowledge and commitment were greatly appreciated.

We are grateful to **National Park Service** staff at **Apostle Islands National Lakeshore** for their continued assistance and partnership. Special thanks to **Kasey Arts** and the rest of the APIS staff for their assistance with monitoring, banding, transportation, and other logistical needs throughout the season.

Thank you to **Jade Arneson** of the **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** for your guidance and instruction throughout the season. The weekly meetings and consistent communication helped keep the monitoring team informed, prepared, and connected throughout the season.

Finally, recognition and appreciation to all of our partner organizations and supporters: the **Mashkiiziibii Natural Resources Department, National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, The Nature Conservancy, the Johnson Family, and WISKERT Corporation**. Your collective dedication to the conservation of Chequamegon Point piping plovers and the Lake Superior ecosystem makes this work possible.

Together, we continue to make progress toward ensuring that future generations can experience and appreciate these remarkable birds as much as we did this season.

Thank you all for your dedication, partnership, and commitment to piping plover conservation.

