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National Park Service
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Outer Banks Group:
· Cape Hatteras National
Seashore
· Fort Raleigh National
Historic Site
· Wright Brothers National
Memorial

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PIPING PLOVERS HATCH ON CAPE HATTERAS NATIONAL SEASHORE

Outer Banks Group Superintendent Mike Murray announced the successful hatching of at least 4 piping plover chicks on Cape Hatteras National Seashore. Piping plovers are protected by the Endangered Species Act and are federally listed as a threatened species. Three chicks hatched recently at the south end of Ocracoke Island and at least two have hatched at Cape Point on Hatteras Island.

Since plovers are typically mobile within 24 hours after hatching, the areas where they are located will continue to be closed to the public to protect the birds. The closure that was previously established a quarter of a mile south of Cape Point to Salt Pond Road will be maintained, while on Ocracoke Island the area 0.8 of a mile south of ramp 72 is now closed to all traffic. "It is our duty and responsibility to protect these chicks," stated Superintendent Murray. "We will make every effort to reopen these areas to the public as soon as it is a viable option."

Once mobile, the chicks will leave the nest and move extensively along the beach, intertidal zone, and mudflats to feed. Plover chicks have been documented to move hundreds of yards from the nest site during their first week of life. The three plover chicks on Ocracoke have already left the nest and may be foraging at the ocean and sound shorelines. Piping plover chicks fledge (are able to fly) 25 to 35 days after hatching. Park biologists will monitor all areas involved and provide for access when it is feasible. Closure areas can typically be reopened after the chicks fledge.

Beach areas used by chicks, for foraging and resting, etc. are closed to off-road vehicles (ORVs) since the typical behavior of piping plover chicks increases their vulnerability to ORVs. Chicks frequently move between the upper beach to moist sandy feeding areas such as mudflats and the intertidal zone. These movements can place them in the path of vehicles on the beach. Chicks sometimes stand motionless or crouch as vehicles pass by making them difficult to see or they simply do not move quickly enough to get out of the vehicle's way. Tire ruts also cause problems as chicks often stand in, walk, and run along tire ruts and have difficulty crossing or climbing out of deep ruts.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) prohibits harassing, harming, pursuing, hunting, shooting, wounding, killing, trapping, capturing, or collecting federally protected species. Penalties for violations of the ESA for threatened species include a fine of up to \$25,000, imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.

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