

# ecosystems

predator  
prey

## Two Orphaned Piping Plover Chicks from New Hampshire: Endangered Shorebirds Killed by Feral Cats

Two endangered piping plover chicks orphaned in Hampton Beach, New Hampshire, were orphaned the day after they hatched in mid-July, when their male parent was killed by a feral cat and their female parent and a third chick died shortly afterwards from injuries inflicted by a cat. There is a feral cat feeding station near Hampton Beach.

"Cats in the wild present a danger to wildlife. In a fragile ecosystem with endangered birds like plovers, cats can become predators to the Plovers and have a disastrous impact on the population," said John Kanter, coordinator of N.H. Fish and Game's program. The Plovers are easy targets for the cats and often become their prey.

"Biologists usually avoid keeping piping plover chicks in captivity because their best chance for survival is when they're reared by other piping plovers," said Jody Jones, coordinator of Maine's Piping Plover Recovery Project, "but this was a unique situation and we all felt the chicks deserved a second chance after losing both their parents."

"We released the chicks in Maine in order to give them the best chance for survival. They can join other plovers in the area that will flock up and migrate together," said Brendan Clifford, Piping Plover Monitor for Endangered Wildlife Program. "Without other piping plovers around, the chicks would not have been able to learn important natural behaviors before their journey south."

This has been a difficult year for piping plovers on the New Hampshire coast. Three pairs of plovers nested - two at Seabrook Beach and one at Hampton Beach. At Seabrook, four chicks hatched, but disappeared before fledging (learning to fly); the second pair's eggs did not hatch. The orphans released this week in Maine hatched from the single nest at Hampton Beach.

Maine Audubon has worked for nearly 25 years to restore Maine's piping plover population, which has grown from 10 pairs when recovery efforts began in 1981 to 55 pairs in 2004. The organization brings together towns, landowners, volunteers and wildlife agencies to locate and monitor plover nests, erect fencing to protect nests from predators such as the feral cats and conduct outreach about the birds, which are threatened primarily by habitat loss, but also by predators such as dogs, cats and like gulls and crows.

Answer the following questions using the article

What would happen to the Plover population if the cat's feeding station was moved away from the bird's habitat? Use facts from the article to support your answer.

Define:

Predator:

Prey:

What was the relationship between the feral cats and Piping Plovers?

What are two ways that you scientifically conclude that there had been a decrease in feral cats?

Our goal is to learn about harmful and beneficial relationships among organisms.

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