



TERN AND PLOVER CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

AS THE PLOVER TERNS

National Volunteer Week, April 18-24, 2004

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A Newsletter for and by Volunteers and Partners

Greetings! Although there is still a little nip in the air, it's never too early to start planning for the exciting arrival of least terns and piping plovers. Already the migratory flights of geese, ducks, and cranes are well on their way.

Field season six for the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership is just around the corner. With the

new season, we are introducing a new program.

As part of our commitment to reach out to communities and educate others about terns and plovers and the Platte River ecosystem, we are introducing a **job shadowing** program. See Page 2 for more on this exciting new program.

Also with the new season comes new technicians.

Clare Welch, a native of Aurora, Nebraska. Another technician will be hired next week.

We look forward to seeing you all soon!

Chris Thody, Volunteer Coordinator

Reminder: It's not too late to fill out evaluations forms for 2003.

Features

- Volunteer Voice
- Job Shadowing program
- A note about PACE
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Volunteer Voice

by Nelli Falzgraf

Renae Held and **Chris Thody** will soon start the 2004 season by training us on mine safety and monitoring protocol, before they and the biologists search the Platte River to find nesting Least Terns and Piping Plovers.

It's fun watching young terns scurry on sandpiles while their parents fish for minnows. By mid summer, they've learned to fish and are ready for their southerly migration. It's sad when the birds leave, but rewarding to have helped monitor for the Adopt-a-Colony program of the Partnership.

It's not all work. While watching, mapping, and recording the birds on sandpits, we saw Western & Spotted Sandpipers and Long-billed Dowitchers at Lyman Richey Gravel in Plattsmouth; Willets, Lesser Yellow Legs, Pectoral Sandpipers, Orchard Orioles at Western

Gravel in Louisville; Eastern Wood Pewee, Warbling & Red-eyed Vireos, and Lark Sparrows at the Girl Scouts' Camp Maha.

Audubon is about birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. The Audubon Society of Omaha provides monthly programs on birds and nature, field trips led by birders, conservation meetings, and newsletters to keep us informed. Members help with birdcounts and Hawkwatch, monitor Bluebirds and Kestrels, and conduct the Breeding Bird Survey throughout Nebraska.

Volunteers restore our prairie, manage a wetland, started & maintain a beautiful Butterfly Garden, and organize a summer Garden Walk. We provide a speaker to church and civic groups, teach a Metro Community College birding class, promote at the Gardening Show

and Earth Day, recruit members, and fundraise to pay for events. If we can afford them, add an Art Contest for K-12 students and a scholarship for local college students in environmental science.

The Omaha Raptor Team has partnered with the ASO since 1999 and provides excellent programs with non-releasable birds of prey for schools, scouts, libraries, and other venues. Recently the Team earned Honorable Mention in the Omaha World-Herald Master Conservationist program. What's amazing is the enthusiasm of volunteers for birds and nature.

Nelli Falzgraf is President of the Audubon Society of Omaha and has given many hours of service to the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership.

Technician's Tidings

By Kari Andresen

It was a balmy May afternoon, the inviting water lapped gently against the sandy beach of the sand pit lake just outside of Schuyler, Nebraska. We had been anticipating their arrival for weeks. A glimmer of wings flew overhead and my heart jumped excitedly for a moment, but then I recognized the abrasive call of the Killdeer. My nerves calmed and I soon reclaimed my stance at the spotting scope. For just a moment the sun broke through the clouds, the wind calmed, and there it was. A Piping Plover! Finally! At last! There it stood on its long little legs, fluffy feathers blending in with the sand, sporting its single black necklace, one lone plover peacefully "peep-lowing" and picking at insects along the shoreline.

As dramatic as it may seem, that is really how my first encounter with a plover felt. This was only the prelude to my summer as a conservation technician with the Tern & Plover Conservation Partnership. Before I began my first post-college wildlife job, I was constantly questioned with skepticism regarding what exactly I was going to be working on all summer. And to be honest, I wasn't sure what I was in for.

Every experience I had this past summer was equally unique and excit-

ing. From my first plover sighting that cool May afternoon to trekking across sand dunes to float eggs; putting up what seemed like miles of electric fence; air-boating the Platte searching for fledglings; and dodging the last diving tern mob of the summer. I learned a lot from my research this summer, and two words that come to my head as I think back are patience and persistence. We spent hours upon hours waiting, watching, and recording our data, visiting site after site each week. The outcome was worth it. I learned that the protection and conservation of these two little shorebirds is making a big impact, not just along the Lower Platte but statewide and all across the country. I also came to appreciate the people who make wildlife conservation their career and also those people willing to volunteer their time to make a positive difference for Nebraska's native wildlife.

As the season came to an end, we began to put the results of our data together. We found that the population size and hatching success of both the terns and plovers had increased from previous years. It was a great feeling to know that what I worked on over the summer might have helped

in part of that success. So now when people ask me what I did over the summer I proudly say, "I researched and protected threatened and endangered birds."

Kari Andresen was a technician for the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership in 2003. She currently works in Outdoor Education at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.



Where's Sam?

Sam Wilson, our other technician for 2003, is currently working with John Dinan at Nebraska Game and Parks. At this writing, he is chasing long-billed curlews in western Nebraska.



Events



The Fourth Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic was held on September 7, 2003, at Platte River State Park. Catering was provided by Famous Dave's Barbeque and The Garden Café. Approximately 20 people attended. "Door" prizes were given out, courtesy of Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Wildbird Habitat Stores, and the Bird Education and Conservation Program. We would like to thank all of you who were able to attend and we hope to see even more of you next year!

Tern Tidbit: Interior least terns have been known to nest on the top of flat, gravel covered roofs in Pensacola, Florida.

Plover Point: The Latin term for piping plovers is *Charadrius melodus*. *Charadrius* means "a plover", and *melodus* means "a melody." Once you hear a plover, you will

