



TERN AND PLOVER CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP NEWSLETTER

AS THE PLOVER TERNS

Volume 7, Issue 1

Fall 2006

A Newsletter for and by Volunteers and Partners

Greetings!

It seems like Mother Nature has forgotten Fall this year. I was just thinking last night, while bundled up on my couch, that I went straight from running the air conditioner to running the furnace. And it snowed, good grief, during the Husker-Texas game!

October has been a month of contrasts. It started out on October 1, when it was 94 degrees in Lincoln; and three weeks later, it was snowing! Ahhh—you gotta love Nebraska weather.

Terns and plovers are like Nebraska weather—predictably unpredictable. Usually terns and plovers have flown south by mid-September. However this

year we had one straggler. A piping plover was still being spotted in early October at Branched Oak Lake near Raymond. I hope the little fellow got while the getting was good, using those stiff north breezes to glide to southern locations and warmer temperatures. Of course, I can't blame the plover for staying late. Here it is the first of November and it's supposed to be near 80 degrees!

Inside this edition of *As the Plover Terns*, you will find a couple of important programs "revisited". One is Teaming With Wildlife that originally led the charge in procuring money for the states to use for nongame wildlife management. This group is revitalizing to encourage our representatives to continue to make

additional support available to states for nongame wildlife management.

The second program revisited is the Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas Project II. Volunteers are needed to make this project even bigger and better than the first.

The International Piping Plover Census has been conducted once every five years since 1991. See the article on page four—it looks like plover numbers, at least for Nebraska, look encouraging.

Have a safe and healthy winter, and I'll look forward to visiting with you all again in the spring.

- Chris Thody,
Editor



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We've moved!

By Chris Thody



The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership office is now located at Hardin Hall on University of Nebraska-Lincoln's East Campus. We were previously located at Biochemistry Hall. Hardin Hall, formerly the Division of Continuing Education, went through a complete renovation to house the School of Natural Resources.

Hardin Hall is at the corner of 33rd and Holdrege Streets. Our office is in the North Wing, 153 Hardin Hall, right off of 33rd Street and east of the fire station. There is plenty of visitor parking, so we invite you to drop in any time and check out our new digs!

Teaming With Wildlife Is Growing

by Mark Humpert

In the mid-1990's the national **Teaming With Wildlife** campaign was started to raise awareness about and seek funding solutions for at-risk nongame wildlife. Over 3,000 organizations (including 49 in Nebraska) joined the coalition to show their support for dedicated funding for fish and wildlife conservation, education and outdoor recreation. The coalition was successful in helping to pass legislation to start the federal State Wildlife Grants program. This program has provided over \$5 million of funding to Nebraska to support development of the Nebraska Natural Legacy Plan, provide

grants to conservation partners and Universities to conserve at-risk species, support inventory work and start partnerships such as the Nebraska Partnership for All-Bird Conservation. During the last several years the coalition has been effective in maintaining funding but now that each state has a plan, the time is right to expand the coalition to support implementation of these plans.

Last April a Nebraska Teaming With Wildlife steering committee was formed to re-energize and expand Nebraska's coalition. The coalition has already grown to 138 organizations in

Nebraska and over 4,500 nationally. There is no cost to join the coalition, and organizations who join the coalition will receive valuable information through an on-line newsletter. If you would like to learn more about Teaming With Wildlife or are interested in joining the coalition visit

www.outdoornebraska.com/wildlife or contact Mark Humpert, Wildlife Diversity Program Manager at 402-471-5328.



Tern Tidbits: Least terns have several "nicknames". Among them are: little tern, little striker, minute tern, sea swallow, and silver ternlet. - Source: The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of No. American Birds.

Plover Points: Adults don't normally swim or dive, but downy chicks run into the water and swim away if they are being harassed. - Source: The Birds of North America, No. 2, 1992

Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

by Chris Thody

Despite cool and windy weather on September 23rd, a hardy crew of 17 people enjoyed "A Taste of Lincoln", a celebration honoring our Adopt-a-Colony volunteers.

Picnic attendees were treated to a variety of dishes—Cajun, Greek, Mexican, and American— all which can be found in our little corner of Nebraska. Volunteers and guests were even treated to a little of Lincoln's air show!

Awards were given out to volunteer logging the most hours for the

season. The awards for the 2006 season are as follows:

The Golden Binoculars—given to the person logging the most hours—went to **Elliott Bedows** of Bellevue.

The Silver Binoculars—given to the person logging the second most hours—went to **Diane Pratt** of Lincoln.

In addition to the "Binocular" Awards, several people were awarded their five year pins for volunteer service with the Adopt-A-

Colony Program.

The recipients this year are: **Diane Pratt**, Lincoln; **Shari Schwartz**, Lincoln; and **John Carlini**, Lincoln.

The number of hours logged by volunteers for the 2006 season stands at 289.5, with more to be tallied.

Thank you to all the volunteers, award winners, and five year pin recipients.

Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas Project II *by Wayne Mollhoff*

The Nebraska Breeding Bird Atlas Project II is underway and needs volunteers. The project will update and refine the information collected during the first bird atlas project (1984-1989). In addition to basic information mapping the breeding ranges of all wild birds in Nebraska, this project will collect detailed data about the habitat used by each species. As with the first atlas project volunteer field workers are planning to collect data for the next 5 years. The end result will be publication of an atlas, with individual maps showing the current breeding distribution.

The atlas published at the end of the first project was used by federal, state and non-governmental agencies to develop management plans for the wildlife of Nebraska. It was used during the development of the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project. Stated goals of the Nebraska Natural Legacy Project include: reversing the decline of threatened, endangered and other at-risk species; and keeping common species common. It is also useful for anyone with an interest in our birds.

To accomplish the goals of the project, the volunteer workers will survey the 520+ priority blocks scattered across the state. Each block is a quarter of a township - 3 X 3 miles. The workers will visit the blocks at various times during the breeding season to develop a list of the species that breed in each block.

During the first project, more than 125 observers drove more than 75,000 miles and logged nearly 6000 hours of observer time to complete the project. Those numbers will probably be exceeded this time around, despite the current gas prices.

The first project (1984-1989) was the first systematic, statewide attempt to map the breeding ranges of our birds. Since that time noteworthy changes have occurred. Bald eagles, which built only one nest in the state during the first project, now breed nearly statewide. House finches and great-tailed grackles have increased their ranges as well. Eurasian collared-doves, never seen in Nebraska until the late 1990s, are now found throughout the state. The list of changes goes on, with the extent of change unknown until completion of the project.

The project is co-sponsored by the Nebraska Ornithologists' Union and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, with funding by the Nebraska State Wildlife Grant and matching funding by the co-sponsors.

Contact Wayne Mollhoff at (402)944-2840 or [wmollhoff\(at\)netscape. net](mailto:wmollhoff@netscape.net) to volunteer.

Article courtesy of Nebraska Ornithologist's Union website <http://rip.physics.unk.edu/NOU/BBAtlasOverview.html>

Job Shadowing Program 2006

by Chris Thody

The Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership's Job Shadowing Program started its second year with Bellevue West graduate Samantha Janousek participating. Samantha's studies at Bellevue West High School included courses in Biology, Zoology, and Chemistry. She was also active in her school's Key Club, has been involved in the National Honor Society, and has volunteered for a variety of activities, including Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF.

Samantha is currently in her first year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She would like to work in research or one-on-one with animals, perhaps in a zoo.



Samantha Janousek, Job Shadowing student, picks up mylar flagging at a sand and gravel mine. Mylar flagging is used as a deterrent to keep terns and plovers from nesting in areas where mine operators must have access during the birds' nesting season.

We enjoyed sharing our work with Samantha this summer and wish her the best in her future endeavors. Thanks, Samantha!

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Job Shadowing is a great opportunity for students to experience what it's like to be a wildlife biologist. If you or someone you know may be interested in this program or would like more information, please contact:
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 Chris Thody
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 402-472-8741
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 cthody2@unl.edu
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International Piping Plover Census 2006

by Renae Held

One plover, two plover, three plover, four! It definitely was a busy field season for the Partnership. This past summer all of our staff were involved in the 2006 International Piping Plover Census (IPPC). The IPPC is a census of all breeding and wintering piping plovers in United States, Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, St. Pierre and Miquelon (France). This was the fourth International survey conducted, with one complete census every five years since 1991.

From June 5-16, Partnership and Nebraska Game and Parks Commission staff were responsible for surveying sandpits and river habitat on the lower Platte, Elkhorn, and Loup rivers and a small portion of the central Platte. This was an especially exciting summer for me because I learned how to drive an airboat and logged about 20 hours on the river!

In 2006, 723 adult Piping Plovers were

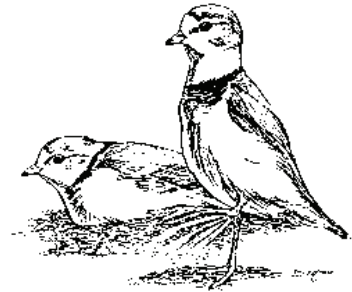
counted in Nebraska. This total reverses the trend of decreases recorded during previous IPPCs and represents increases of 135% from 2001 (308 adults), 98% from 1996 (366), 82% (398) from 1991, and a 102% (357) increase from the average of previous IPPCs.

The most notable increase in birds was at Lake McConaughy, Keith County, where 358 adults were counted. Numbers recorded at sand and gravel pits that are associated with and often located adjacent to rivers, such as the Platte, appear to have remained relatively stable with 134 adults recorded this year (52 on Lower Platte, 15 on Elkhorn, and 38 on the Loup rivers) (personal comm. J. Jorgensen).

With the continued drought, piping plovers have shifted dramatically from river habitat to the open shores of Lake McConaughy, as the birds have evolved to do. National numbers are still being

analyzed and will give a better idea of the overall population, not just the documentation of movement of birds from one type of habitat to another. We will update you with this information in an upcoming newsletter.

Thanks to the following people for putting in up to 16 hours a day to help the Partnership complete our surveys: Kari Andresen, Diane Beachly, Joel Jorgensen, Sean O'Brien, Dan Roberts, Robin Smith, and Chris Thody.



Piping plovers perform the "happy dance" after hearing of the IPPC results.

STAFF CONTACT INFORMATION

Renae Held, Program Coordinator
153C Hardin Hall
3310 Holdrege Street
Lincoln, NE 68583-0931
Office: (402) 472-8878
Fax: (402) 472-3461

Chris Thody, Volunteer Coordinator
153D Hardin Hall
3310 Holdrege Street
Lincoln, NE 68583-0931
Office: (402) 472-8741
Fax: (402) 472-3461

Diane Beachly, Regional Coordinator
309 Steinhart
Hastings College
710 North Turner Avenue
Hastings, NE 68901
Office: (402) 463-2406 x 7222



Partners: Nongame Conservation Fund, Overland Sand and Gravel Company, Western Sand and Gravel Company, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Girl Scouts-Great Plains Council, Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, Nebraska Environmental Trust, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, Arps Gravel and Concrete, Lyman-Richey Corporation, Mallard Sand and Gravel, and United States Fish and Wildlife Service.
<http://ternandplover.unl.edu>