

SANDY NECK TRACKS

The Sandy Neck Beach Newsletter Spring 2010

Piping Plovers on the Neck

The Federal and State protected Piping Plovers returned to breed on Sandy Neck in late March and early April. The first nest was found April 28th and at the time of publication 33 nests had been identified.

Once a nest is found, an area of at least 50 meters around the eggs is closed to pedestrian and vehicular traffic to avoid disturbance of the incubating adults. Sometimes cage like structures called "exclosures" are placed over the nest to protect the eggs from predators.

Once the eggs hatch the highly mobile chicks begin to forage the wrack line under the supervision of highly protective plover parents. When perceived predators are close, the chicks squat motionless while the parents attempt to attract and lead the intruders away from the chicks. The

motionless chicks often crouch in depression in the sand such as tire tracks. Therefore, portions of the ORV beach close once nests in the

ORV corridor hatch. Currently, the ORV portion of the beach is open 1.6 miles to trail 2.



Recovery Status

Piping plovers are listed as "threatened" under the State and Federal Endangered Species Acts, which means Piping Plovers would become endangered and face possible extinction without protection. Intensive management efforts have helped increase the Piping Plover numbers by more than double the last 20 years, but the most recent surveys place the Atlantic population at fewer than 2,000 pairs.* US Fish and Wildlife

Cape Cod Jeep Club "Have Shovel Will Travel"

The sun came out in late May to welcome members of the Cape Cod Jeep Club as they helped Sandy Neck fence the ORV corridor. Approximately 24 volunteers dug over 1000 holes to secure posts that delineate endangered shorebird habitat along the ORV corridor. The symbolic fencing often crosses rocky terrain making for what one sweaty Jeep Owner accurately described as "hard digging". What may have taken Sandy Neck staff days was reduced to a few hours. In addition, their efforts keep our beach in compliance with the State DEP Order of Conditions ensuring that ORV use will not harm our endangered species and thereby keep our beach open to ORV use. Prior to fencing, Sandy Neck merchandise and the rights to the coveted Non-Resident Sticker #1 were raffled off. As per tradition, a BBQ was held after the fencing was completed.



A BBQ celebration for a job well done

Thanks Cape Cod Jeep Club!

New Bathhouse Construction Scheduled for this Fall



After several years of planning, public hearings, and reviews, the construction of the new Sandy Neck Bathhouse is scheduled to begin Labor Day 2010. The design of the Bathhouse includes several improvements and the structure will be built on the existing footprint. The image above represents the north side of the bathhouse (the view from the lower parking lot). Additional images can be found by clicking on [Sandy Neck Bathhouse - Final Presentation](#) on the Sandy Neck website. The bathhouse is scheduled to open Memorial Day 2011.

Storms Affecting Beach Recreation

Winter erosion has reduced the "high ground" available to campers and daytrippers this season. Areas of the ORV corridor are completely covered in water at tides over 10 feet causing temporary two hour closures and occasional early curfews. Campers are arriving early and choosing spots wisely to avoid saltwater damage to their vehicles. On days when 10 foot high tides are expected, we ask that ORV users do not make plans to enter or leave the beach one hour before high tides and one hour after. The erosion that has occurred highlights the importance of not hiking in the dunes. Hiking on designated trails preserves the existing vegetation that helps protect our dunes from the constant barrage of elements.

HEAD START FOR SPADEFOOTS

This spring several Spadefoot Toad tadpoles were retrieved from a vernal pool near the ORV access trail. The tadpoles were candidates for stage one of a pilot program to reintroduce Spadefoots from Sandy Neck into Mass Audubon's Ashumet Holly Wildlife Sanctuary in East Falmouth, where populations have dwindled. If successful this project could have a significant and positive impact on the recovery effort of this state "threatened" species.



Spadefoot Toad (photo by Ian Ives)

The primary goal of stage one is to gain skill at Spadefoot Toad husbandry, however, valuable data has also been gathered regarding the current location of Sandy Neck's population, the populations demographics and the species habitat preferences. The tadpoles for this phase were raised at several locations including the Sandy Neck Gatehouse, Mass Audubon's Long Pasture Wildlife Sanctuary and West Barnstable Elementary School. Once the tadpoles grew legs and lost their gills, Park Manager, Nina Coleman, and seasonal Natural Resource Officer, Justin Willey, released some of the toadlets back into Sandy Neck swales with the help and guidance of

Ian Ives, of the Audubon Society. The remaining toadlets will be released in late June.

The Spadefoot Toad reintroduction program will enter phase two next year. In 2011, 50% of all headstarted tadpoles and toadlets from Sandy Neck will be released at Ashumet and 50% will be returned to their natal vernal pools in Sandy Neck. We anticipate that this headstarting program will result in a significant net increase in the number of spadefoot toads surviving at Sandy Neck and thus will be a net benefit to the population.

Spadefoot Toad Background

Spadefoot toads, *Scaphiopus holbrookii*, dig into the soil where they spend the day secure and hidden in their burrow. At night they emerge to search for insects, worms and other prey. Their digging is aided by the unique spade-like tubercles on their hind feet.



Spadefoots breed only in ephemeral or extremely short-lived ponds. Most of these ephemeral breeding ponds appear only as dry depressions in the woods until a heavy rain fills them with water. The advantage of breeding in these temporary ponds is that tadpoles do not have to contend with the usual complement of fish and aquatic insects that normally prey on tadpoles.

Sandy Neck Beach Park

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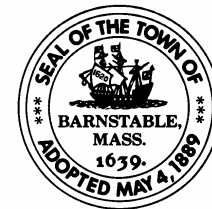
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For the latest Sandy Neck information
visit the Sandy Neck website at:

www.sandyneckbeachpark.com



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All questions and comments are welcome.
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