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- Piping Plovers are vulnerable birds that nest on the ground along the beach. They are extremely rare and need our help. The **global population stands at approximately 8,000 adult birds**—less than the number of beachgoers that might be at one popular beach on a hot August afternoon. As a result piping plovers are listed and protected under both the state and federal Endangered Species Acts.
- Massachusetts is a key player in piping plover conservation; the state supports about 35% of the Atlantic Coast breeding population, and due to the conservation efforts of beach operators and the public the Commonwealth’s plover population has experienced significant increases during the past three decades.
- A variety of measures are used to protect piping plovers and their habitat including symbolic fencing to prevent disturbance and trampling of nests, seasonal restrictions on pets, predator exclosures, and prohibitions of the use of oversand vehicles when unfledged and flightless chicks are present. In recent years, modest regulatory changes have been implemented to give recreational beach operators more management flexibility under certain conditions (for more information on the Habitat Conservation Plan “HCP” click [here](#)).
- MassWildlife considers selective predator management to be an appropriate management tool *of last resort, at certain sites* with high predation rates. On average, scientists estimate that each breeding pair of piping plover must produce approximately 1.2 surviving chicks (fledglings) to maintain a stable population size. Some sites routinely experience much lower productivity because of unnaturally high predator densities and predators that have learned to key in on plover nest and chicks.
- It is important to note that many predator species such as fox and skunks increase in numbers in response to development, human alteration of the landscape, and availability of garbage or other unnatural food sources. Predator management should be selective, focused on the specific predators that are causing excessive nest and chick loss at a given site.
- Although MassWildlife does not itself manage beaches and does not directly manage predators to protect piping plovers, MassWildlife does issue permits to allow predator management, and supports the efforts of beach managers who are willing to selectively manage predators where such action is necessary to help stabilize and recover the Massachusetts and global plover population. In some cases, beach operators such as Duxbury Beach Reservation carry out selective predator management as part of their participation in the flexible management “HCP” referenced above.

- Relocation of wildlife is not an option [as it is ineffective, harmful and illegal](#). Populations of predators are generally abundant, and selective predator management does not pose a threat to predator populations.