

# Project monitors plovers

BY PAMELA MacEACHERN

The Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island initiated a project to monitor the Piping Plover in the Crowbush - Lakeside area. The 1987 Piping Plover survey carried out by the Society showed that approximately 50% of the plovers nesting on the Island outside the National Park use the beaches at this site.

The Piping Plover is a small North American shorebird whose status was changed from threatened to endangered on the Canadian Endangered Species List in 1986. Its favored nesting sites are flat beaches with lots of pebbles and shells close to the sand dune systems, and above the high tide line. The plovers generally lay a clutch of 4 eggs in a small depression in the sand, usually surrounded by rock and broken shells.

There is a 28 day incubation period during which both the female and male take turns sitting on the eggs. This is an extremely important period of time for the population as both the eggs and the parents are vulnerable to predation by animals in the area. Through nest protection schemes, it is quite probable that the numbers of Piping Plovers can be increased.

The 1988 Natural History Society Piping Plover Project had two aspects. The first was the monitoring of the Piping Plover in its natural habitat to assess population numbers and to observe nesting activities. The second was to implement a landowner contact program distributing information materials to increase awareness among the summer residents in the areas of Crowbush and Lakeside used by this endangered species. As well, the project staff ( Pamela MacEachern and Shelley Barrett ) participated in the Brudenell Provincial Environment Days, July 23rd - 24th by establishing an information booth and display about the Piping Plover and the Natural History Society.

An important aspect of the information material is the Piping Plover conservation poster which outlines the problems related to plover conservation and tips on how to counteract these. This Piping Plover poster is a result of the combined efforts of the Natural History Society of Prince Edward Island, The Prince Edward Island Conservation Strategy and the Qlf Atlantic Centre For the Environment. Tips include:

- RESPECT all areas fenced or posted for protection of wildlife;
- CARRY your trash and food scrapes away with you when leaving the beach. Garbage attracts predators, even if deposited in receptacles or buried;
- DO NOT approach or linger near Piping Plovers, their nests or their young;
- KEEP pets leashed at all times when at or near nesting beaches;
- DO NOT operate any motorized vehicle on or near nesting beaches, especially in May to August;
- SUPPORT research efforts and beach closures conducted to protect wildlife.



During the month of July we were fortunate to have Roland Chiasson and Sabine Dietz join the monitors for a few days in the field. Mr. Chiasson has conducted studies on the Piping Plover in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia during past summers. he is presently working on his M.Sc. at York University in Ontario. His thesis dealing with the Piping Plover. Sabine Dietz is an exchange student from Germany working with the Atlantic Centre for the Environment and will be attending Trent University in Ontario this fall.