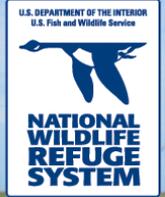


Through JUNE 17, 2018

ISSUE 1

MONOMOY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE



Biweekly Newsletter

Chelsi Burns/USFWS



Amanda Boyd/USFWS

Piping plover walking along the shore

STROLLING INTO SUMMER

The official start of summer is nearly here at Monomoy, and with it starts the season's biweekly newsletter! In this publication, you will find updates from our field staff, new happenings with visitor services, and events occurring on or near the refuge.

We appreciate any questions or comments about this newsletter. Feel free to call us at (508)-945-0594 or send an email to r5rw_mnwr@fws.gov.

Monomoy was featured in an article in the latest issue of Chatham Magazine! [Click here to read the article on pages 167-172.](#)

VOLUNTEER SHOUT OUT

As we approach the summer season, we are especially grateful for the long list of volunteers who donate their time to the refuge. This week, we'd like to thank the Friends of Monomoy. Their volunteers help staff the visitor center, upkeep gardens, maintain trails and facilities, and organize the summer lecture series. If you're interested in volunteering for the Friends of Monomoy, contact Steve Keenan at sjkeenan65@comcast.net.



Alyssa Pool/USFWS

Friends of Monomoy board members. left to right: Eddie, Dennis, Al, Steve, and Jackie

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

2018 Tern Census

Over 24 volunteers and staff worked diligently on June 8-9 to conduct the annual tern census, a focused count of all common tern nests on South Monomoy. Monomoy is home to the largest tern colony on the east coast. Federally endangered roseate terns nest among common terns in the 30-acre colony. See next newsletter for the final count.

Common terns spend their winters in South and Central America. They migrate north to breed and raise their chicks in the summer. Common terns are highly skilled at locating their nests in the crowded colony environment; they will even dig up their eggs if they have been buried in sand!



Yang Jing/USFWS

Staff and volunteers working at the tern census

A day at tern census can be over 12 hours in the hot sun. We're especially grateful for the volunteers who traveled here to assist with the census. Your efforts have a significant impact in these kinds of high-stakes, difficult projects. Thank you!



Sean Williams

Ruff walking along the shore at South Monomoy

Getting Ruff on the Island

On Wednesday, May 30th, a refuge visitor spotted a ruff on South Monomoy Island for the second time in the refuge's history. The ruff is a Eurasian shorebird that usually migrates from the tropics of Africa up to Russia and Scandinavia, so it is a rare visitor to Cape Cod! Ruffs are closely related to species such as red knots and western sandpipers. Visiting Monomoy in person provides a great chance to see more rare birds.

Horseshoe Crabs

Horseshoe crab surveys and tagging are well underway. A refuge technician has led eight spawning surveys on Morris Island this season. Additionally, staff and volunteers have tagged 247 crabs on South Monomoy Island. More than 18 volunteers assisted with the program this year, including a youth group from the Wampanoag Tribe.

Horseshoe crabs travel to the high tide line to spawn at the full and new moon, when tides are highest. Their eggs are a valuable food source for migrating shorebirds. Conducting surveys for horseshoe crabs allows biologists to track populations over time. The refuge reports our data to the state of Massachusetts, so they can make informed decisions when setting catch limits.



AnnaFaith Jorgensen/USFWS

A volunteer measures the width of the prosoma (large shell) before tagging a horseshoe crab

NEWS FROM THE FIELD



Peter Paton/USFWS

Piping plover with three chicks on South Monomoy

Piping Plovers Make Proud Parents

Refuge staff have counted 33 nesting pairs of piping plovers on South Monomoy. While 4 pairs lost their nests to depredation or high tides, around half of the active pairs have chicks ranging from newly hatched to two weeks old. A male piping plover with an injured leg was captured by refuge staff and partners (Peter Paton, URI) earlier this spring. While its overall body condition was good, the leg was found unlikely to heal. Fortunately, this proud dad had two chicks hatch, and he continues to defend his chicks like a great dad—and all around Father's Day, no less!

Gull and Wading Bird Censuses

Refuge staff and volunteers completed a gull census and a wading bird census in mid May on North Monomoy Island. Preliminary numbers indicate wading bird pairs are up, with over 300 nests. This includes over 20 Great Egret nests and over 75 Snowy Egret nests. Refuge staff also counted laughing gulls, black-backed gulls, and herring gulls on North Monomoy. Final numbers can be expected around July.



Laura Tanedo/USFWS

Staff and volunteers during the wading bird census



Adam Ells/USFWS

An American Oystercatcher wading in the shallows

Catching up with Oystercatchers

Strikingly colored and highly elusive, American oystercatchers are one of the rarer breeding birds at Monomoy. This year, refuge staff have recorded six breeding pairs on South Monomoy, three on North Monomoy, and two on Minimoy. There is one hatched brood of chicks confirmed on South Monomoy, with another brood likely as staff noted the adults were highly defensive of their territory.

A Snowy Summer on South Monomoy

We have an unusual resident on the refuge this summer! Snowy owls spend their winters in southern Canada and the northern United States. They typically migrate north to the arctic in late April, but this individual was spotted by refuge staff in early June. Staff also found fresh owl pellets in mid June. The owl likely remained on the island this late because of the abundance of food. It's uncertain whether he'll move on or remain through the summer—although it's unlikely he's been enjoying the heat.



Nichole Nuttall/USFWS

Snowy owl on South Monomoy in June 2018

VISITOR SERVICES

Hello from the authors, Alyssa and AnnaFaith! We are the 2018 visitor service interns. Alyssa is a student at University of Massachusetts, Amherst majoring in Environmental Science. AnnaFaith studies Human Ecology at College of the Atlantic in Bar Harbor, Maine. We are here through the Student Conservation Association and excited to be at Monomoy for the season!

Throughout the summer, you will find us staffing the visitor center, leading nature walks, and maintaining trails and grounds. We'll release this newsletter and post updates on the Facebook page to keep you in the loop about the refuge.

Chatham History Weekend

We were happy to participate in Chatham History weekend on June 16-17. On the 16th, staff drove the new grant-funded shuttle bus and made hourly stops to nine historical attractions around Chatham. Visitors rode to stops such as the Atwood House, Nickerson Homestead, and Chatham Lighthouse, as well as the Refuge. On the 17th, refuge staff and the Monomoy Island Ferry led 16 guests on a tour of Monomoy Point Lighthouse. Blessed with beautiful weather, visitors hiked to the lighthouse and climbed the tower while learning about the island's cultural history. It was a wonderful way to end another successful History Weekend.



Rebecca Arnold

Visitors hiking to Monomoy Point Light



Meg Bradley/USFWS

Visitor services interns Alyssa and AnnaFaith

Come on in and say hello to us at the Visitor Center! The Friends of Monomoy have new items for sale (including children's t-shirts). We have updated our children's naturalist backpacks, which are available to borrow during your hike. The Visitor Center is located at 30 Wikis Way in Chatham and is open every day from 9 AM to 5 PM.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 5th Lecture Series



B. Michelson

Gray seals on the beach at Monomoy

Dr. Wendy Puryear will be speaking at the Chatham Community Center about her annual studies of gray seals' disease and regional movements in her lecture "Gray Seals and Influenza: How the health of a species is intricately tied to the ecosystem." Sponsored by the Friends of Monomoy. 7pm, free of charge

Weekly Nature Walks

We will be holding guided nature walks every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at 9am and 3pm through the summer. Join us outside the doors of the visitor center to learn about the refuge's flora and fauna as well as the cultural history of the area. Tours are also available other days between 9am and 3pm upon request.



Click here to stay connected with updates from our official Facebook Page!