

Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge

May 10 – May 16, 2014 [Issue 1]

Spencer Kennard
www.capecodphotos.com

Inside This Issue

- 1 Message from Monomoy
- 1 2015 Field Season Update
- 1 Bird Sightings
- 2 Bird Activity
- 2 Roseate Habitat Restoration
- 2 Wading Bird Census
- 2 Nanofag Project
- 2 Exclosure Study
- 3 Salt Marsh Integrity
- 3 BREAKing News & Accessibility
- 3 Current & Upcoming Events

Photo of the Week



Photo Credit: USFWS/Isabella Welch

A Message from Monomoy

Time to wake up from your winter slumber and stretch your tired legs, spring has returned to the Cape, along with our favorite nesting birds! On May 11, 2015 we held our annual staff orientation, and welcomed back returning staff, Claire Revekant and Kaiti Titherington. We'd also like to give a warm welcome to our new staff this season: Rob Finer, Cheryl Horton, Derek Trunfio, Zena Casteel, and Carson Fehner. Two more interns are expected to arrive in the coming weeks, including Emilie Seavey, who will be returning this year as a tern intern.

Staff hit the ground running, posting the Monomoy islands with the help of complex staff, followed by nest searching for American oystercatcher and piping plover nests. And that's not all! Our infamous tern colony is slowly returning as we prepare for camp setup to take place next week.

So get ready for another eventful field season! And read on for more information about our new plover projects and current completed work.

2015 Field Season Update

This is a weekly synopsis of biological activities on South Monomoy, North Monomoy, and Minimoy Islands. Information within this report is subject to change. For up to date information, please contact Refuge Staff.

Bird Sightings

Double-crested cormorant	Black-bellied plover
Great black-backed gull	Semipalmated plover
Herring gull	Semipalmated sandpiper
Ring-billed gull	Sanderling
Iceland gull	Dunlin
Laughing gull	White-winged scoter
Bonaparte's gull	Common eider
Great egret	Red-breasted merganser
Snowy egret	Black duck
Killdeer	Horned lark
Willet	Saltmarsh sparrow
Greater yellowlegs	Turkey vulture
Black-crowned night heron	Peregrine falcon
Whimbrel	Bald Eagle
Barn swallow	Northern Harrier
Least sandpiper	Red-winged blackbird
Ruddy Turnstone	American crow

Bird Activity

Piping Plovers (PIPL)

During staff's first overnight, the first PIPL nest was found on 23 April. As of May 15, a total of 22 nests have been found on South Monomoy Island (7 more than last year at this time). Scraping was also observed on Minimoy Island, which produced two nests in 2014. Staff will continue to monitor nesting areas.

American Oystercatchers (AMOY)

The first AMOY nest of the 2015 field season was found on 4 May on South Monomoy Island with 2 eggs. A total of 2 nests on South Monomoy Island, 1 nest on North Monomoy Island, and 4 nests on Minimoy have been found, for a total of 7 nests on the Refuge. Staff will continue to monitor and nest search nesting areas.

Common Terns (COTE)

The first common terns of the 2015 field season were seen on 29 April. Nest boxes have been scattered throughout the colony, productivity plots have been cleaned, and blind areas have been flagged in anticipation of the nesting season. As of this week, the colony is at a high count of ~4000 COTEs and rising. And more good news! Staff has seen scraping and are on the lookout for the first nest of the year. Camp setup is expected to occur on 18 May.

Roseate Terns (ROST)

Although staff have not seen a ROST yet this season, we are still preparing for their return. Two sound systems, shelters, nesting condos and teepees have been brought out and/or set up as of 13 May to attract roseate terns and provide cover for nesting. Updates on the Refuge's Roseate habitat restoration project is discussed in detail on page 3.

Black Skimmers (BLSK)

No new information to report. BLSK have not been sighted on the refuge.

Least Terns (LETE)

Least terns have been spotted feeding off South Monomoy Island as well as scoping out prospective real estate on Minimoy on 15 May.

Roseate habitat restoration Project

Monomoy's dedication to create more suitable habitat for the endangered roseate tern is continuing this year with news to report from last years efforts.

On 5/13, staff took photos at the plots designated last year. After an initial investigation of the area, plants in the main wash and northern half of the colony seemed to be doing exceptionally well. Many of the southern plants did not make it through the winter months.

Staff will continue to document the growth of the plants throughout the season by taking periodic photos of designated plots. More information on this project will follow as necessary.

Wading Bird Census

Our wading bird colony was censused on North Monomoy Island on 15 May. More information on our count will follow.

Nanotag Project

Monomoy is excited to continue support of Pam Loring's PhD work. Her project is using nanotags to track the offshore movements of coastal birds during the breeding, staging, and migratory periods of their lifescycles. The project hopes to identify potential threats posed by offshore wind development. During the 2013 and 2014 field seasons, American oystercatchers and common terns served as surrogates to this project by testing out the new nanotag technology and the efficacy of the tower area. This year in collaboration with Peter Paton of the University of Rhode Island and refuge staff, Pam will be trapping and tagging piping plovers on Monomoy and South Beach. Pam aims to place nanotags on 25 plovers from nests located on the Refuge and South Beach as well as 25 plovers from nests monitored by Rhode Island NWR Complex staff. The project will then move towards placing nanotags on roseate terns at other sites.

This project is funded by BOEM (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management) and is in collaboration with USFWS, UMass Amherst, and URI.

Exclosure Study

This year, Monomoy will also be participating in a new study out of SUNY- College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF), led by lead investigator Jonathan Cohen and postdoctoral student Abigail Darrah. The objective of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of nest exclosures in regards to abandonment, adult mortality, and nest survival of piping plovers. Twenty-seven specific data points are taken at each nest

including predator presence and distance to high tide line. The results will be compiled and used in a model designed to help guide site-specific effects of management actions including enclosure use on plover population growth rate.

Salt Marsh Integrity

Last year, Monomoy participated in the region wide Saltmarsh Integrity assessment, a project aimed at evaluating the health and resiliency of our saltmarshes. In late September 2014, six SETS, or Surface Elevation Tables, were installed throughout the refuge; 3 on North Monomoy, 1 on Morris Island, and 2 on Minimoy. The last SET was installed at Hospital Pond on 29 April. Saltmarsh elevation changes over time due to a multitude of factors including sediment load and sea level rise. SETs will help the region monitor elevation and accretion over time. This information will then be used to evaluate natural and human-induced changes in elevation as we advance our understanding of saltmarsh resiliency to seal level rise.

On 4/29, staff read the first SET on Morris Island. This reading will serve as the baseline for future readings. SET readings will be completed twice a year. Staff hopes to read the other six SETs by late spring/early summer and again this upcoming fall.

Lastly, after facing complications with Monomoy’s sandy substrate last year, staff installed a waterlevel logger (WLL) on North Monomoy Island on 16 April. The WLLs record changes in pressure due to atmospheric and water level. The North Monomoy Island WLL was collected on 5/15.



BREAKing News and Accessibility

This winter, most of the sand existing between the 2013 and 2014 cuts was pushed into the southway. As of now, access to the southern half of the southway is limited to 3

hours before and 2 hours after high tide. The current navigable channel to the southern end of the Southway flows from the refuge headquarters, east past the south tip of South Beach into the Atlantic Ocean, around a series of shoals, and then westward around the north tip of the southern section of south beach. To navigate to the Southway, boat operators are currently required to enter the ocean side of the break then turn back into the Southway. In addition to tide restrictions, northward and eastward winds causing large waves to roll into the shoals can make the break impassable. We expect weather and tides to play an even larger role in accessibility this year and are embracing the logistical conundrum as best possible. See photo on page 1 for visual.

Current & Upcoming Events

- Annual staff orientation meeting** **May 11**
- Wading Bird Census** **May 15**
- Shorebird Survey Window 3** **May 14-29**
- Plover Trapping Window** **May 24-26**
- Tern Census** **June 9-10**

May 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						