

Duxbury Beach Access Update
July 12, 2019
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The Town of Duxbury provides periodic updates on the status of nesting pairs of Piping Plovers currently inhabiting the Duxbury Beach and the potential impacts their presence may have on beach patrons. Since beach stickers are non-refundable, we provide this information to the public as soon as it becomes available so that individuals may plan accordingly in terms of whether or not they decide to make a purchase. This information is being provided by the Endangered Species Officer in conjunction with the Duxbury Police Department.

Beach Status

As of July 12, 2019, there are 28 plover pairs on Duxbury Beach. It is important to understand that additional plovers may continue to arrive to the beach. Plovers are still considered a Threatened Species (the level just below Endangered) by Federal and State Fish and Wildlife, and their protection is mandated by both State and Federal laws. There are also over 120 Least Tern pairs on Duxbury Beach. Least Terns are listed as a Species of Concern under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act by the Massachusetts State Fish and Wildlife, and their protection is mandated by State law.

Beach Access

As mandated when restrictions occur, the maximum ORV (Off Road Vehicle) limits may be reduced (below 250 Resident and 250 Non-Resident max ORVs allowed when no restrictions are in place) on the front beach to maintain compliance with the Duxbury Beach Management and Conservation Plan, and to maintain public safety and order.

Currently, the entire ORV access corridor (i.e., First and Second Crossover area) is closed to both Resident and Non-Resident beach patrons. The walk-on portion of Duxbury Beach Remains open and valid OVR stickers for both residents and non-residents will allow beach patrons to park in the respective lots to access these areas. Attendants are on site to guide patrons to the designated resident and non-resident parking lots.

Once the birds have fledged, portions of the ORV corridor will be re-opened and patrons will then be allowed to visit the ORV section of the beach.

Six years ago, the Town was faced with a similar situation when the presence of birds in critical (vehicular and pedestrian) access points caused a closure of the beach for over 30 days. As a result of that experience, since beach stickers for both residents and non-residents are non-refundable, the Town committed to providing periodic updates via hand-outs, social media, websites and a variety of other communication methods on the status of the beach including the number of birds/nests, the potential impacts their presence could have on the beach-going public, estimated reductions in the number of vehicles allowed in the ORV corridor and possible closures. The purpose in providing this information was to make the public acutely aware that the potential for limited or prohibited access existed prior to purchasing a sticker.

On Friday, June 28, 2019, the Town provided written advance notification that the closure of Duxbury Beach was a strong possibility via several Twitter outlets, posting on the Town's website and copies to a number of Town departments. That notification indicated that as a result of bird activity occurring at that time, the road south of the Powder Point Bridge would be closed to non-essential traffic as there would be no recreational opportunities south of the bridge. The notice further stated that the exact hatch dates for the birds was unknown at that time but could be immediate and could prohibit beach access during the week of July 1st and numerous days thereafter.

With regard to this most recent closure, the predominant question being asked is when the ORV corridor will re-open.

Since these are wild animals, it is impossible to predict or guarantee a steadfast date but we anticipate that portions of the ORV corridor could reopen around August 1st (give or take a week on either side of that date). Again, this estimated date is based on the probabilities associated with wild animals so it is impossible to precisely predict the date of the beach re-opening.

It is important to note that these are wild animals and therefore are unpredictable and may be susceptible to tidal over wash, predation, and mortality from exposure to severe weather, as well as unpredictable movements throughout their habitat on the beach. ORV and pedestrian restrictions for plover chicks are in place until they are able to fly for a specific distance, meaning these restrictions may or may not be incrementally altered. Also important to note is that many of these restricted areas may overlap to an extent in both space (area) and timing (time until chicks can fly) and may change based on movement of the chicks.

Where to Find Updated Information

Please continue to check for the latest updates as conditions and circumstances can change with little or no advance notice based on activities of wild animals. This information will be updated if conditions change or as new information becomes available. For further information about Duxbury Beach conditions, please visit the Town of Duxbury Police Department Beach Operations Division website at:

<https://www.duxburypolice.org/beach-operations>

The most up-to-date information pertaining to beach conditions including restrictions and access limitations may be found by following the Duxbury Police Department Beach Operation's Twitter feed at:

https://twitter.com/DPD_Beach_Ops

Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we continue to maintain as much pedestrian and ORV access as possible while managing protected species.