

American Oystercatcher 2019 State and Country Updates

Maryland

Assateague Island National Seashore - Maryland District

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Under the guidance of Maryland DNR, several American Oystercatcher chicks from Assateague were banded this summer to enhance monitoring. In addition to a uniquely numbered metal band, each chick received a field-readable color band. In 2019, a total of eight American oystercatcher chicks were banded.

An estimated 36 pairs of American Oystercatchers nested on the Maryland portion of Assateague Island National Seashore during 2019 and fledged 14 chicks, resulting in a productivity of 0.39 chicks fledged per pair.

Since monitoring began in 2005, the breeding population has fluctuated between 13 and 36 pairs, while productivity has fluctuated between 0.16 and 1.4 chicks fledged per breeding pair. In the last five years, the breeding population averaged around 26 pairs, with an average productivity of 0.5 chicks fledged per breeding pair.

There are three distinct breeding areas within the Maryland portion of Assateague Island. The northern six miles of the island supports 75% of the piping plover breeding population, the twelve mile stretch of beach known as the Over Sand Vehicle (OSV) zone supports 14%, and the small islands behind Assateague and within the seashore's boundary support 11%. The 27 pairs on the north end fledged 11 chicks, the 5 pairs in the OSV did not fledge any chicks, and the 4 pairs that inhabit the islands fledged 3 chicks.

Maryland Department of Natural Resources

The state of Maryland completed the first statewide census of American Oystercatchers in over 10 years in 2019. Many former nesting sites on small natural islands were unsuitable or gone entirely due to erosion and/or SLR.