



Engaging Stakeholders and Citizens in Long-term Protection of Species at Risk and Their Habitats

With support from the Government of Canada's [Habitat Stewardship Program](#) (Species at Risk Stream), [Attention Fragiles](#) led a one-year project in 2014–2015 to protect dune habitats and raise public awareness of habitat disturbance.

WHY THIS PROJECT IS IMPORTANT

The sand dune environment on the Magdalen Islands, Quebec, covers 6,960 hectares and contains abundant bird life and a diverse flora unique in the province. Numerous species that use the dunes are listed under Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), notably the Endangered [Piping Plover](#) (*Charadrius melodus melodus*). Piping Plovers are threatened by habitat destruction and degradation, erosion of dune ecosystems, and human disturbance. Another species of interest is the SARA-listed Threatened [Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster](#) (*Symphyotrichum laurentianum*), which is subject to natural disturbances from waves and storms, as well as habitat loss from human activities.

WHAT WAS DONE

The project team inventoried Piping Plover nests on the beaches and worked to reduce and eliminate human disturbances by erecting fences to protect nesting sites, by posting information signs to increase public awareness on protection measures, and by removing garbage from the beaches, which is known to attract predators. Fencing and signs were installed to limit access to sand dunes by all-terrain vehicles and prevent further damage to the Piping Plover habitat. The team surveyed and monitored Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster to increase knowledge about species distribution and population size.

This project also emphasized the need to raise awareness about species at risk conservation and held a series of guided tours and training sessions on environmental protection and beach guardian programs with the public, school students, and beachgoers. In addition, Attention Fragiles hosted a one-day field trip with 20 local citizens and policymakers to highlight the existing challenges to the recovery of Piping Plover and other species at risk.



▲ Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus melodus*)

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THIS PROJECT

- Collected data on nesting Piping Plovers to survey hatching and fledgling success.
- Protected 100 individual Plovers with fences around nesting areas.
- Provided species and habitat monitoring training to youth. Raised awareness in over 500 people, including students, on habitat disturbance and threats to species at risk.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROJECT

Over 500 people were made aware of the significance of the Magdalen Islands sand dunes for Piping Plovers and learned how to help protect species at risk in these environments. Piping Plover nesting sites were protected from human disturbances with the installation of fencing, removal of predator attractants, and the installation of signs to increase public awareness.

INVESTMENT: 2014–2015

Habitat Stewardship Program Funds:	\$80,186
Partner Support Leveraged:	\$89,169
TOTAL:	\$169,355