

# Piping Plover

*Charadrius melanotos*

## STATUS

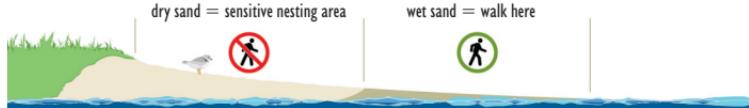
Endangered   
Endangered 

19



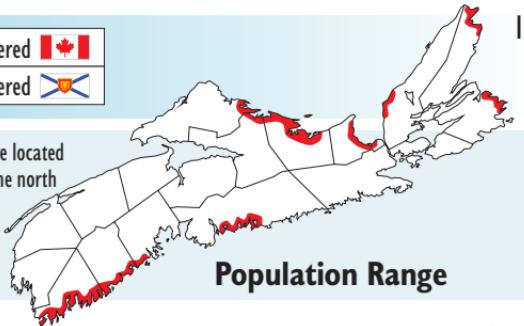
## Species Description

The Piping Plover is a small shorebird (approx. 17 cm long) named for its whistled “peep-lo” call. Its upperparts are sandy-gray, underparts white, and legs and feet orange. Breeding adults have a black forehead band and ‘necklace’ (not always connected) and black-tipped orange bill. Juveniles and chicks lack black markings and orange on bill.



Walk on the wet sand to avoid disturbing nesting plovers

About 50 breeding pairs are located on coastal beaches along the north and south shores of Nova Scotia. Winters from North Carolina, USA to the Caribbean and Mexico.



## Population Range

## Habitat

Found on coastal sand or pebble beaches and tidal flats from April to October. Nest and raise young on open sand or sparsely vegetated areas on the beach. Adults, chicks and juveniles also use tidal flats for feeding. Nests are shallow depressions or “scrapes” lined with small pebbles or shells that are very well camouflaged and easy to disturb if walking on dry sand.



Feeding lagoon

Nesting beach

Nest scrape with eggs

Piping Plovers are migratory shorebirds that are observed on coastal beaches from mid-April through September during breeding and migration.

## Interesting Points

- Individuals can live up to 14 years.
- To court a female, males perform a “goose step” display.
- Disturbance by humans, pets or predators can cause pairs to abandon their breeding site.
- Parents fake an injured wing to distract people or predators from nest or chicks.
- The male will take care of the chicks if the female leaves to start her migration south.



© HANS TOOM

## Similar Species

### Semipalmated Plover:

Similar size (18 cm) and shape; chocolate-brown upperparts; dark marking around eyes; abundant on beaches late summer-fall.



© HANS TOOM

### Killdeer:

Larger size (27 cm); chocolate-brown upperparts; two black stripes on breast; pinkish legs; loud repeated call when agitated; common in open fields and gravel lots, less often on beaches.



© HANS TOOM

### Sanderling:

Similar size (18-20 cm); grey or mottled brownish upperparts; longer black bill and legs; white wing stripe visible in flight; often runs and feeds in flocks at water's edge.



© HANS TOOM

## Threats to Survival

- Crows, foxes and other predators (which are attracted to garbage left by people) eat plover eggs and chicks.
- People (on foot and in vehicles) and off-leash dogs can disturb plover families or harm eggs and chicks.
- Coastal development and intense storms and sea-level rise associated with climate change can reduce beach nesting habitat.



© SUE ABBOTT, BSC

Dogs on-leash help plovers

© ENVIRONMENT CANADA



© SUE ABBOTT, BSC

on plover beaches. Do not litter, feed wildlife, or drive vehicles on beaches. Tell others how they can help and become a plover volunteer!

## Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship

**Contact:** Environment Canada (902) 426-2578

**Info:** [www.pipingplover.ca](http://www.pipingplover.ca)

**Sighting Reports:** 1-866-727-3447 or [www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings](http://www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings)

**Stewardship:** Bird Studies Canada's NS Piping Plover Conservation Program - (902) 222-2880 or [nsplovers@gmail.com](mailto:nsplovers@gmail.com)  
Kejimkujik Seaside - [volunteer.keji@pc.gc.ca](mailto:volunteer.keji@pc.gc.ca)