

# Piping Plover

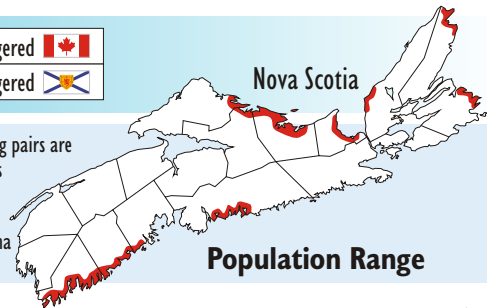
*Charadrius melodus melodus*

**STATUS**

Endangered 

Endangered 

Nova Scotia



Approximately 40 breeding pairs are located on coastal beaches along the north and south shores of Nova Scotia. Winter from North Carolina to Cuba.

## Habitat

Found along coastal beaches in open or sparsely vegetated areas of sand or pebble, or on mud flats. Nest and raise young from May to August on dry, open ground between the dense dune vegetation and the high tide mark. Nests are small depressions, lined with small pebbles or shells, and are well camouflaged.



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## Species Description

The Piping Plover is a small shorebird (17-18 cm), with sandy-gray upperparts and white underparts. It has a black band around the neck and forehead, an orange bill with a black tip and orange legs. Chicks have sandy-gray upperparts, white underparts, no black on the neck and forehead and a solid black bill. Its call is a whistled “peep lo”.



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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 or predators can cause pairs to abandon their breeding site.
- Close approaches to parents may result in a broken wing display.
- Male will act as “Mr. Mom” for his chicks if female leaves family early.



Male performing goose step display

## Similar Species

### Semipalmated Plover:

Similar size (18 cm) and shape; chocolate-brown upperparts; dark marking under eye; often seen in large flocks on water's edge.



### Killdeer:

Larger size (27 cm); chocolate-brown upperparts; orange rump; double stripe on breast; loud repeated call when agitated. Often nest in open fields and parking lots.



### Sanderling:

Similar size (18-20 cm); longer, black bill; mottled, brownish or grey upperparts; black legs; often seen in large flocks on water's edge.



## Threats to Survival

- Crows, gulls, and other predators eat eggs, and young and are attracted to the beach by garbage.
- Humans (on foot and in vehicles) and dogs disturb plover families and sometimes destroy nests.
- Habitat loss from natural beach succession and shoreline development.

## How You Can Help

During nesting season (mid-April to August) avoid disturbing plovers: walk on the wet sand, keep your dog on a leash, and do not drive OHVs along the beach.

Do not litter. Pick up garbage, tell your friends how to help, and get involved - become a Piping Plover Guardian.

## Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship

**Contact:** Environment Canada (902) 426-4196 or [www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

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

**Sighting Reports:** 1-866-727-3447 or [sightings@speciesatrisk.ca](mailto:sightings@speciesatrisk.ca)

**Stewardship:** Piping Plover Guardian Program - Bird Studies Canada (902) 426-4055, or [nsplovers@gmail.com](mailto:nsplovers@gmail.com).

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[www.speciesatrisk.ca/stewardship](http://www.speciesatrisk.ca/stewardship)



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