

IDENTIFICATION: The piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*) is a small shore bird about 7 inches long with a wingspan up to 15 inches. It has a sand-colored upper side and a white underside.

Breeding plumage includes a single black breast band, black bar across the forehead, orange legs and the bill is both orange and black. During the late summer or early autumn, the birds lose the black bands, the legs fade from orange to pale yellow, and the bill turns from orange and black to mostly black. Adult piping plovers can arrive on wintering grounds with partial breeding plumage remaining.



Breeding populations are known from the Atlantic coastal regions of North Carolina north to Newfoundland, a northern great plains population, and a Great Lakes population. This species was originally listed as a [threatened species](#) on 12-11-1985. The Great Lakes population is now listed as endangered while the northern great plains and Atlantic coastal populations are still listed as threatened.

Piping plovers winter along the Atlantic and Gulf coastal regions from North Carolina around to Texas and into Mexico as well as the Bahamas and West Indies. They may migrate to their wintering grounds as early as July. Recovery plans for each of the three populations recognize that continued availability of sufficient habitat during migration and wintering periods is critical for the survival of this species. Piping plovers spend about two-thirds of their annual life cycle either in migration or on wintering grounds. Progress towards recovery, attained primarily through intensive protections designed to increase productivity on the breeding grounds, would quickly be diminished or reversed by even small decreases in survival rates or fecundity that may be due to stress experienced during migration and wintering periods.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: These birds are affected by human disturbance but are unlikely to be impacted by forestry activities.

DISTRIBUTION: Baldwin and Mobile beaches.

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