

Rare Animals of Louisiana



Snowy Plover

Charadrius alexandrinus

Rarity Rank: S1B,S2N/G4

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



Identification:

- One of the smallest of the North American Plovers
- Upperparts range from gray-brown to tan with white underparts and incomplete breast band
- Forehead and eyebrow line are white with dark patches behind the eyes
- Legs slate colored
- Relatively long, thin black bill
- Length of adults is about 16 cm; the wingspread is 34 cm

Habitat:

- Nests in loose colonies on open beaches
- Winter habitat is mostly on dry sandy or shell beaches, above the high tide mark and along the coast or on barrier islands.

Food habits:

Variety of invertebrates including crustaceans, worms and insects

Range:

- Breeding Range: locally in coastal and western United States, Baja California, the Gulf coast of Texas and Florida, the Caribbean, and Central and South America as well as the Old World
- Winters in coastal regions of nesting range
- In Louisiana, the species is a relatively rare migrant and winter resident along the coast

Reproduction:

- Females may have up to three broods per seasons, with clutch sizes ranging from two to six eggs
- Female and male incubate and build the nest, but do not provide food for fledglings
- Nests are commonly depressions scraped into the sand and lined with material such as pebbles, vegetation or shell fragments
- Eggs are oval shaped with a buffy background, sometimes spots and scrawls are present in brown or black



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Threats:

- Trampling of eggs and nests by humans, vehicles or horses
- Entanglement in discarded fishing line
- Habitat degradation or abandonment as a result of the expansion of beachfront development and recreation
- Habitat loss due to coastal land loss and erosion

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Closing beaches off to the public
- Roping or fencing off areas to decrease disturbance of nesting sites

LA River Basins:

Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Barataria, Terrebonne, Atchafalaya, Vermilion-Teche, Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine

References:

- NatureServe. 2007. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.2. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: August 9, 2007).
- Page, G. W., J. S. Warriner, J. C. Warriner, and P. W. C. Paton. 1995. Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*). In the Birds of North America, No. 154 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.