

Rare Animals of Louisiana



Piping Plover

Charadrius melodus

Rarity Rank: S2N/G3

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Identification:

- A relatively small plover
- Light brown to sandy-gray above and white below
- Breeding-plumage adults possess a single, narrow black breast band, a black bar on the front part of the crown that extends to the eyes, a stubby bill with orange base and black tip, and orange legs
- Winter-plumage adults and juveniles are grayer, lack the contrasting black markings, only show a sandy patch on each side of breast and have completely black bills
- All plumages have a white rump
- Adults to 18 cm total length with a wingspread to 39 cm

Habitat:

Generally found on beaches and mudflats of barrier islands in southeastern coastal parishes

Food habits:

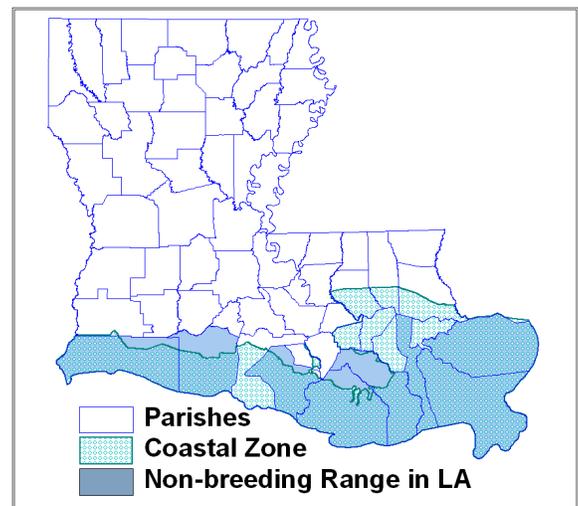
- An active forager, piping plovers run a short distance, pause, catch a prey item, then continue
- Feeds on a variety of aquatic invertebrates such as insects, crustaceans and mollusks

Range:

- Breeding Range: U.S. and Canadian Great Plains from Nebraska north to Alberta and Manitoba, Beaches bordering the Great Lakes, and Atlantic coastal beaches from North Carolina to Newfoundland
- Winter distribution includes the southern Atlantic and Gulf coast, and several Caribbean Islands

Reproduction:

- Males begin constructing nests as part of courtship
- Nests are scrapes of sandy substrate with pebble or shell lining
- One brood per year
- Chicks are tended for about 30 to 35 days, at which time they are fledglings
- Eggs are pale buff with black, brownish and purplish splotches
- Incubation by both parents



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

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Threats:

- Human disturbances and destruction of nests and young
- Loss of nesting habitat from erosion of nesting and wintering habitat as well as irrigation projects, woody species encroachment, pollutants, predation, livestock trampling and disturbance by dogs and coyotes
- Coastal land loss

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Restrict access to nesting beaches
- Annual surveys of nesting and wintering populations
- Research on diet and feeding habits, and effect of pesticides and pollutants on populations
- Identify migration routes
- Determine wintering ecology
- Create beach habitat with dredge material

LA River Basins:

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



Right: Plover habitat on Chandeleur Islands

References:

Haig, S. M. 1992. Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*). In *The Birds of North America*, No. 2 (A. Poole, P. Stettenheim, and F. Gill, Eds.). Philadelphia: The Academy of Natural Sciences; Washington, DC: The American Ornithologists' Union. (This account replaces an earlier draft, with limited distribution, published in 1991.)