

**WINTER OBSERVATION OF GREAT LAKES PIPING PLOVERS 1995-2004: CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS.** Jennifer H. Stucker<sup>1,2</sup> and Francesca J. Cuthbert<sup>1</sup>. <sup>1</sup>Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, MN. <sup>2</sup> jstucker@umn.edu.

Banding of the endangered Great Lakes population of Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) began in 1993. Since 1993 efforts have been made to band all nesting adults and offspring during the breeding season. With the assistance of observers throughout their annual range, >400 sightings of banded Great Lakes birds have been reported from the wintering ground between 1995-2004. These records indicate Great Lakes Piping Plovers winter from North Carolina to Texas, including the Bahamas; 75% of Great Lakes individuals reported winter in Georgia and Florida. Between year winter site fidelity appears high, with sightings of >25 individuals at the same location in consecutive years. On average, pair members winter ~550 km apart. Offspring winter about 500 km distant from their parents. About 98% of sightings occur near or within federally designated winter critical habitat for Piping Plovers. Results emphasize the importance of protecting for plover winter habitat and tracking use and movement of individual birds among habitat units.