



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Piping Plover

Oklahoma Ecological Service Field Office

Piping Plover

Charadrius melodus

Description

The piping plover is a 5 ½ inch long pale grayish-brown shorebird with a white breast. During the breeding season, it has a black breast band which is sometimes incomplete and a black bar between its eyes. The bill is dull orange with a black tip and the legs and feet are orange.

Distribution

Piping plovers occur in three disjunct populations in North America: Northern Great Plains, Great Lakes, and Atlantic Coast. This species migrates through Oklahoma each spring and fall.

Life History

In Oklahoma, the piping plover is a bi-annual migrant, traveling between its nesting habitat to the north of Oklahoma (the Great Plains population nests from Kansas to southern Canada), and its wintering grounds on the gulf coast. There is a record of piping plovers nesting at Optima Lake in Texas County.

Migration through Oklahoma is likely to occur from March-May and July-September. Piping plovers usually migrate as individuals or small groups and may be seen along sandbars of major rivers, salt flats, and mudflats of reservoirs. Piping plovers forage on these shoreline habitats and eat small invertebrates.

More detailed information on life history is available at *The Birds of North America* website.



Piping plover. USFWS

Conservation

The Great Plains population of piping plover was federally listed as a threatened species on December 11, 1985 (50 CFR 21784). There is no designated critical habitat for piping plovers in Oklahoma. Conservation of this species has focused on breeding and wintering habitat and relatively little is known about the habitat used during migration. During migration, piping plovers have been documented in many areas of Oklahoma from the panhandle to the eastern border and probably migrate through or over all of Oklahoma.

What Can You Do to Help

Ongoing conservation of large river and salt flat stopover habitat is helpful. Avoid disturbance of any piping plovers that may use river or reservoir shoreline habitat during migration.

References

Great Lakes & Northern Great Plains Piping Plover Recovery Plan, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1998.

The Birds of North America, No.2, 1992

For Further Information

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August 2011