

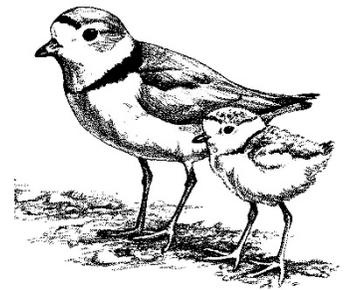


Share the Beach with Piping Plovers Spring/Summer 2020

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is following the most current guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control](#), the [Office of Personnel Management](#), the Department of Interior Office of Emergency Management, and state and local public health authorities to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Health and safety are our top priorities. With all the appropriate safeguards in place, we remain hard at work to fulfill our mission, which is *working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people*. One important part of our mission is conserving endangered and threatened species such as the piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*). Additional information about the piping plover in New Jersey is available on our web site at <https://www.fws.gov/northeast/njfieldoffice/endangered/plover.html>

How You Can Help the Piping Plover

If you're stuck at home, visiting beaches can help ease that cabin fever! But please remember that shorebirds need the beach, too. Piping plovers are migrating north to find safe shores – including many New Jersey beaches – to raise families, feed, and rest. Here we provide information to help New Jerseyans carry on the conservation of the piping plover at a time when some of the normal protective measures – like stationing educational stewards on the beach – must be modified.



Plovers have always practiced social distancing – from people and pets, that is. Please follow local rules and signage for beach access, and abide by government mandates and recommended practices for hygiene and maintaining distance from others. By following some specific steps, we can enjoy the beach and share it with piping plovers and their chicks:

- Please walk close to the water on the lower beach, so travel-weary birds can rest and nest on the upper beach. Usually signs or people will alert you to these areas, but due to the COVID-19 response, many normal posting and fencing efforts are delayed or scaled back.
- Birdwatching can be a great way to pass the time and maintain wellness. Keep your distance so the birds feel safe.
- If pets are permitted on beaches, keep them leashed and away from birds. Note that many New Jersey beaches have pet restrictions – please abide by local rules and signs.
- Remove trash and food scraps, which attract animals that might eat piping plovers and their eggs or chicks.
- Do not feed animals on or near the beach. Keep your cats indoors.
- Follow all other guidance on signs, and respect all areas fenced or posted for protection of wildlife. Besides plovers, your actions will also benefit many other kinds of shorebirds, terns, American oystercatchers, and black skimmers, as well as native beach plants that help prevent erosion.

Why Does It Matter?

Everyday activities on the beach can unintentionally harm piping plovers. Years of research confirm that when people or pets disturb plovers and other shorebirds, the birds are stressed, unable to feed, rest or raise families, and in some cases, die.

- Nests, and even piping plovers, are really hard to see. Eggs can be accidentally stepped on.
- When you get too close to birds, they fly away and cannot rest or feed. Imagine if you were hungry and tired, and forces beyond your control kept you away from food all day, and no place felt safe to rest.
- Even well-behaved dogs scare piping plovers. No matter the age or size, all dogs cause shorebirds to panic. Dogs can cause piping plovers to abandon their nests, stop feeding, and waste precious time and energy to distract dogs from chicks and eggs. Your dog might not chase birds, but it might step on an egg or a tiny chick by accident.
- Beaches are 'Home Sweet Home' for wildlife that need your support. They provide critical, dependable space for shorebirds raising families or migrating from one beach to another.
- The piping plover is making a comeback in the U.S.! Help make sure this shorebird is around for future generations. Decades of efforts by landowners, organizations, and government agencies are paying off. Progress has been made, but our work is not done. **You** can help the piping plover population reach full recovery!

Home Sweet Home Have a Heart. Share the Shore.

Birds Eat Here

Beach birds eat as the tide falls and reveals food along the shore and mud flats. When we give birds space, they feel safe to eat the food they need to survive.

Red Knot

Long Distance Travelers

Just as you are coming here to relax, many birds stop here to rest and refuel during migration. When you see flocks of sleeping or resting birds, please keep your distance.

Roseate Tern

Birds Have Babies Here

Birds like the Piping Plover can only raise their chicks on the beach. Eggs and chicks are hard to see, so they are protected with signs and rope fencing. Protecting nesting areas also protects our dunes and other beach birds and animals.

Piping Plover

Dogs and People FRIGHTEN Beach Birds

Even good dogs and responsible people can frighten beach birds. When scared they leave their eggs, stop feeding, and waste time and energy on distraction displays. Every dog is perceived as a threat no matter its size.

The House Rules

- Don't feed the birds.
- Kites and drones frighten birds. Know the rules.
- Place all trash and food scraps in trash bins or carry out.
- Give the birds space so they can rest and fuel up.
- Follow rules about dogs on this beach.

ATLANTIC FLYWAY SHOREBIRD INITIATIVE
www.atlanticflyway.org/share-the-shore