

INLAND PIPING PLOVER MIGRATION STOPOVER SITES: USING BIRDERS' REPORTS TO STUDY MIGRATION PATTERNS AND HABITAT USE. Vanessa D. Pompei^{1,2} and Francesca J. Cuthbert¹. ¹Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, MN. ² pomp0012@umn.edu.

The Great Lakes population of Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) has been extensively studied, but knowledge about migration ecology is limited; this information is needed for recovery. Because the population is small (~ 50 breeding pairs), tracking individual birds is not feasible. This study compiled records (e.g. state atlases, bird journals) of Piping Plover sightings from a “hypothetical migration pathway” used by Great Lakes birds between winter and breeding sites. Data were used to identify current and historic stopover sites and sites to visit to study habitat characteristics. Additionally, we examined chronology and spatial patterns of migration between the breeding and wintering grounds. We located >1200 fall and spring stopover records and visited > 15 sites to measure habitat characteristics. Results show that Piping Plovers use sites throughout the migration pathway during both fall and spring. Habitat used was shoreline of reservoirs, industrial ponds, natural lakes, and rivers. Finally, reports indicate that plovers do not concentrate in large numbers at inland stopover sites and site use is highly influenced by local water levels and water management policy.