



PIPING PLOVERS AND YOUR BEACH

Best Practices for Beach Habitat Managers in Eastern Canada

This document is part of a series of fact sheets and best practices that have been developed for people who use, own and manage sandy beaches for work or play in Eastern Canada.

Why use best practices on beaches?

On Eastern Canada's coastal beaches, endangered Piping Plovers breed on the open sand between the dunes and high tide line. About 250 plover pairs remain in Eastern Canada, well below the population recovery target of 325 pairs.¹ Piping Plovers, as well as other wildlife and plants, depend on healthy beach habitats for their survival. Federal and provincial legislation protect the plover and its habitats from destruction and disturbance.

What are best practices?

- Practical tips for any person to conserve wildlife and habitat
- General guidelines that can be adapted to local conditions
- Science-based

You can help keep beaches healthy and safe for Piping Plovers and other wildlife:

- Use these best practices
- Share this information with others
- Learn more and become involved

Nesting areas

Piping Plovers need areas of dry open sand that are free from trampling or disturbance to find a mate, make a nest, lay and tend eggs, and raise their flightless chicks (see Resource B). Trampling and disturbances by people and their pets and recreational equipment in or near sensitive nesting areas (see illustration below) can cause:

- Death or injury of eggs, chicks or adults by trampling
- Abandonment of nests, chicks or beaches due to excess disturbance
- Less time for tending nests, exposing eggs to cold or hot temperatures and to predators like crows or gulls
- Less time for feeding, making chicks and adults weaker
- Separation of chicks from their families and exposure of chicks to weather and predators^{1,2}

Feeding areas

Piping Plover adults and chicks need wet sand for feeding. Walkers and dogs off-leash can disturb birds during feeding and cause them to fly or run away. This can reduce their valuable energy reserves and disturb feeding.



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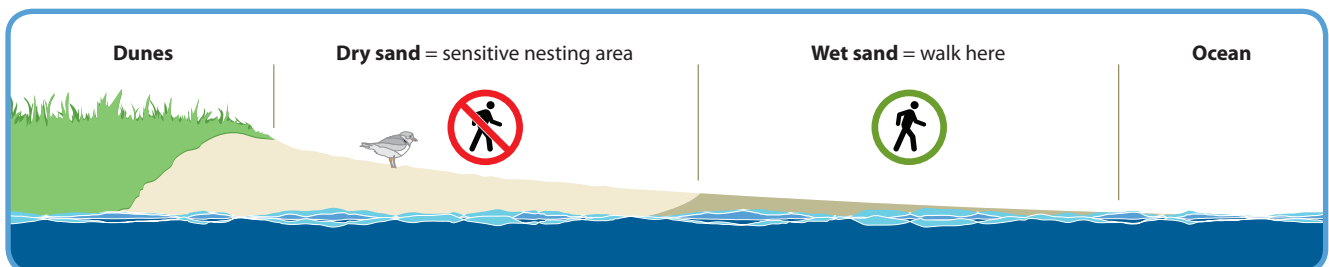


Illustration: Bird Studies Canada

Best Practices for Beach Habitat Managers

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				Piping Plover period							

1. Protect sensitive nesting areas when Piping plovers are present.

- Limit maintenance and recreational activities, outlined in 6 a) and b), when Piping plovers are present (see table).
- Restrict maintenance and recreational activities and events to periods when Piping plovers are not present (timing varies but generally, October to mid-April). See also Resource B.

2. Maintain natural features and processes and limit hard structures along shoreline.³

- Beach plants and wildlife need natural features, such as wash overs and blowouts.
- Hard shores (e.g., rocks and cement) and structures (e.g., boardwalks) can exacerbate erosion and alter natural sand movement; therefore, limit use of hard materials on beaches.
- Avoid placing hard infrastructure, such as roads and parking lots, adjacent to beaches.
- Limit use of dune fencing and remove dune fencing during fall and winter months.
- Remove upright, driftwood posts that provide perches for predatory birds, like falcons.

3. Implement a monitoring strategy for Piping plovers on your beach.

- Contact a biologist to discuss monitoring needs on your beach (Resource E).
- Determine presence of plovers and breeding activity: At minimum, have an experienced monitor survey all potential nesting habitat once in mid-May; if no birds are found, survey again in early or mid June. Adjust survey timing depending on region as needed.
- If a Piping Plover, nest or chicks are found, contact a biologist (Resource E) as soon as possible to ensure that the plovers and habitat are best protected.
- Do you know where your plovers are? Upon hatching, plover parents and chicks move, thus keep in regular contact with your beach's plover monitors for up-to-date information.

4. Use appropriate signage at access points and, when required, sign or cordon off sensitive nesting areas.

- Official plover signs (see right) should be posted in April and removed when plover migration is over (usually end of September).



- On busy recreational beaches, sensitive nesting areas, including chick foraging areas, may need to be cordoned off to prevent trampling and to reduce disturbances to plovers. Consult with a biologist or plover monitor (Resource E) about how to best protect nesting areas and acquire signs.

5. Educate your beach staff about the timing and location of possible plover nesting

- Ask your plover monitor (Resource E) to provide regular updates to your staff.
- Keep the public informed by posting updates at access points, and engage monitors and trained volunteers to conduct on-beach educational outreach to beach-goers (Resource E).
- Address enforcement issues with your local conservation officers and plover monitor.

6. Reduce habitat degradation and disturbances resulting from:

a) Human recreation activities

- Limit higher impact events or activities in or near sensitive nesting areas (see list below).
- Control night time use of beaches.
- Inform beach-goers by patrolling beaches, posting signs, and sharing tips.

b) Beach management activities:

- Schedule management activities to occur when plovers are not present.
- Implement a garbage strategy that does not encourage predators, e.g., leave no trace, or garbage receptacles with predator-proof or weighted covers.
- Keep vehicles off beaches year-round. **Permits may be required to operate vehicles on some beaches.** If you must use a vehicle and have a permit, ensure that drivers are able to locate plovers at all times and know how to reduce disturbance.
- Plan beach clean up events carefully: 1) clean-ups should occur when plovers are not present; 2) leave healthy components of beach habitat (such as kelp and driftwood).

Activities that can cause disturbance to Piping plovers and habitat:

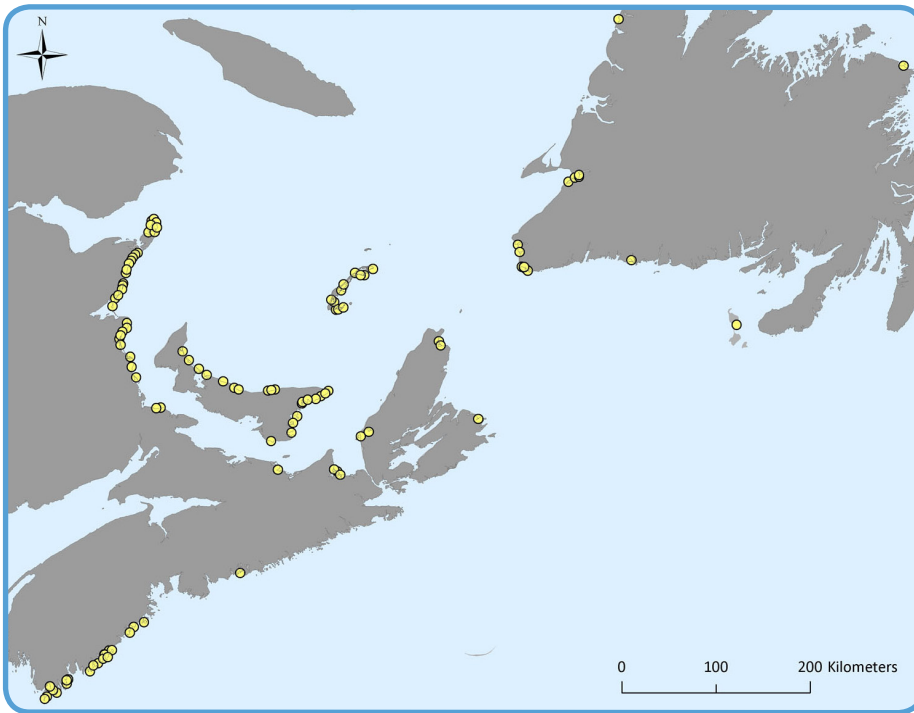
Fireworks, bonfires, graduation parties, beach parties, horseback riding, sports tournaments, beach clean-ups, beachcombing, kite flying, kitesurfing, kite buggying, camping

References

1. Environment Canada. 2012. Recovery Strategy for the Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus melodus*) in Canada. Species at Risk Act Recovery Strategy Series. Environment Canada, Ottawa. v + 29 pp.
2. US Fish and Wildlife Service. 1994. Guidelines for managing recreational activities in Piping Plover breeding habitat on the U.S. Atlantic Coast. (www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover)
3. Bird Studies Canada. 2009. Healthy Beaches and Dunes for Tomorrow. (www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/nspllover/NSHealthyBeaches.pdf)

Resources

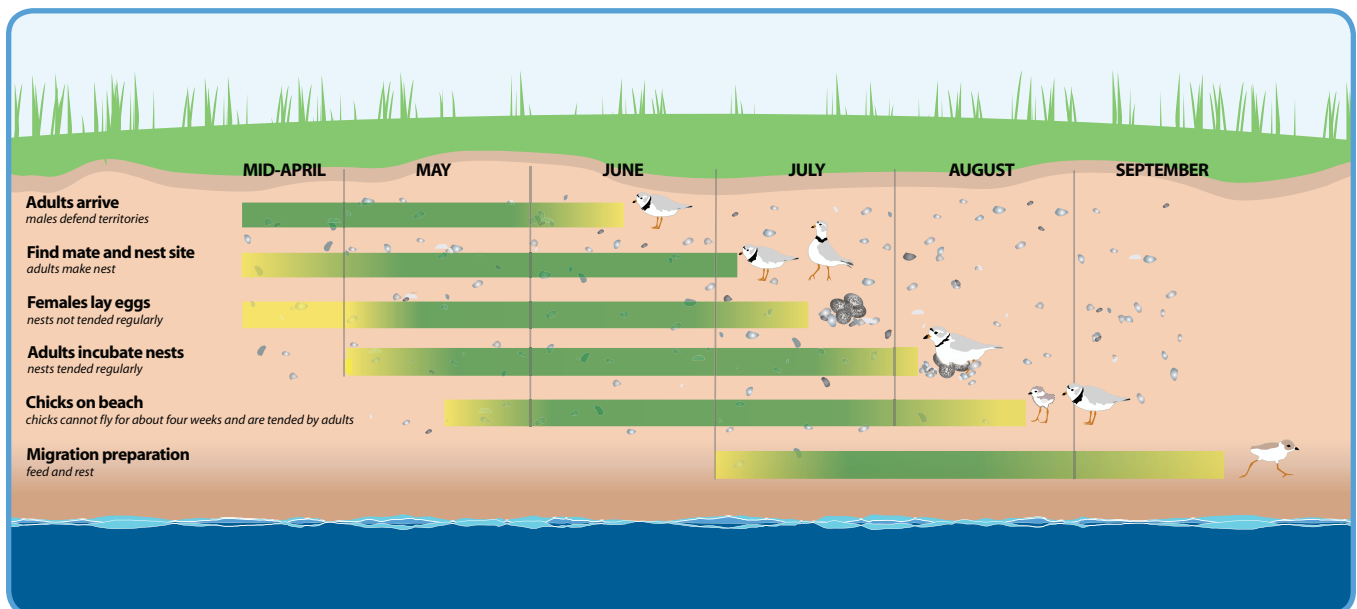
A. Distribution of Piping Plover Beaches in Eastern Canada.



B. Timing of Piping Plover Breeding and Migration Activities on Beaches in Eastern Canada.

LEGEND

	peak activity
	off-peak activity



C. Identification of Piping Plovers, Nests and Chicks

Adult Piping Plover, chick and nests.



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D. Identification of Other Similar Shorebirds

Many other shorebirds use beaches for feeding and resting and are commonly mistaken for Piping Plovers.



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Killdeer are larger, robin-sized, darker plovers with two breast bands.



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Semipalmated Plovers are similarly sized to Piping Plovers, but have dark facial markings and chocolate-brown upperparts.



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Sanderlings have black legs and a slim, black bill that is longer than a plover's.

E. Beach and Piping Plover Contacts in Eastern Canada

Province	Environment Canada	Provincial Departments	Piping Plover Conservation and Volunteer Programs	Links to Provincial Regulations
Newfoundland and Labrador	Krista Baker 709-772-3739 krista.baker@ec.gc.ca	Emily Herdman Dept. Environment and Conservation 709-637-2423 emilyherdman@gov.nl.ca		www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/department/legislation.html
Nova Scotia	Karen Potter 902-426-2578 karen.potter@ec.gc.ca	Mark Elderkin Dept. Natural Resources (902) 679-6091 elderkmf@gov.ns.ca	Sue Abbott Bird Studies Canada 902-426-4055 nsplovers@gmail.com	www.gov.ns.ca/natr/wildlife/laws/actsregs.asp
New Brunswick	Jen Rock 506-364-5078 jen.rock@ec.gc.ca	Kevin Connor Dept. Natural Resources (506) 453-2440 kevin.connor@gnb.ca	Lewnanny Richardson Nature New Brunswick 506-395-3500 pluvier@nb.aibn.com Bouctouche and area: Kent Watershed Coalition (506) 576-2118 research-dune@hotmail.ca	http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/natural_resources/wildlife.html
Prince Edward Island	Jen Rock 506-364-5078 jen.rock@ec.gc.ca	Rosemary Curley Dept. Environment, Energy and Forestry 902-368-4807 frcurley@gov.pe.ca	Jackie Waddell Island Nature Trust 902-892-7513 plover@islandnature.ca	www.gov.pe.ca/envengfor/index.php3?number=78037
Quebec (Îles-de-la-Madeleine)	François Shaffer 418-649-6864 francois.shaffer@ec.gc.ca	Claudiel Pelletier Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune 418-763-3301 ext. 246 claudiel.pelletier@mrfn.gouv.qc.ca	Catherine Denault Attention Fragiles 418-986-6644 action@attentionfragiles.org	www.mrnf.gouv.qc.ca/lois/lois-faune.jsp

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