



SANDY BEACHES, PIPING PLOVERS AND YOU

Best Practices for Beach-goers 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 recovery target (325 pairs) needed for a sustainable population.¹ Piping Plovers, as well as other wildlife and plants, depend on healthy beach habitats for their survival. Federal and provincial legislation protect wildlife and their 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:

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.

- 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}

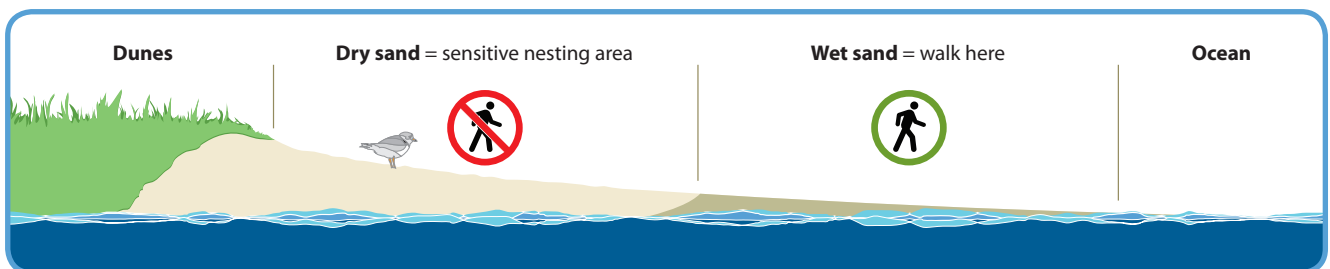


Illustration: Bird Studies Canada

These beach activities or events can disturb or harm Piping Plovers and beach habitat (some may also be prohibited at certain beaches)^{1,2}

- Fireworks
- Bonfires
- Beach parties
- Graduation parties
- Horseback riding
- Sports tournaments
- Beach clean ups
- Beachcombing
- Camping
- Kite flying
- Kitesurfing
- Kite bugging

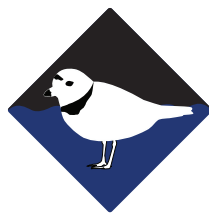
You can help by following these best practices and abiding by regulations.

Best Practices for Beach-goers

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
				Piping Plover period on beaches in Eastern Canada							

1. Avoid sensitive nesting areas when Piping Plovers are present: mid-April through August.

- Avoid the fines by following federal, provincial and municipal regulations that prohibit harm or disturbance of Piping Plovers and their eggs, chicks and habitat (see Resource E).
- Watch for signs and plover symbols (see right) at beach access points that indicate the presence of Piping Plovers on the beach.
- Walk on wet sand and stay clear of signs on the beach marking sensitive nesting areas.



2. Carefully plan location and timing of activities or events that take place on beaches.

- Piping Plovers need areas for tending eggs and young that are free from crowds, loud noise, trampling and disturbances from people and pet traffic (see Resource B).
- Some activities and events are not recommended on beaches where Piping Plovers breed (see list above).
- Time beach activities and events to periods when plovers are not present (generally, October to mid-April) or hold them on beaches that do not support Piping Plovers.
- Contact an Environment Canada or provincial biologist or non-government program before you plan your activity or event (see Resource E).

3. Keep pets on leash and under control.

- Many beaches in Eastern Canada have leash laws. Leash pets to avoid causing harm or disturbance and to avoid fines.

4. Walk around rather than through resting and feeding birds.

- Causing birds to fly can reduce their valuable energy reserves.

5. Protect natural beach features and processes.³

- Beach plants and wildlife need the natural features that are shaped by the wind and ocean.
- Stay on marked trails and boardwalks to avoid damaging dunes, trampling plants or disturbing bird nests.
- Plan beach cleanup events carefully: 1) cleanups should occur when plovers are not present; 2) leave healthy components of beach habitat (such as seaweed).
- Leave driftwood flat to avoid creating unnatural perches for predatory birds, like falcons.

6. Reduce predator-attracting garbage and food on and around beach.

- Safely dispose of garbage and food at home or within closed containers at the beach.
- Do not feed wildlife, such as gulls, crows and foxes.

7. Learn more and get involved.

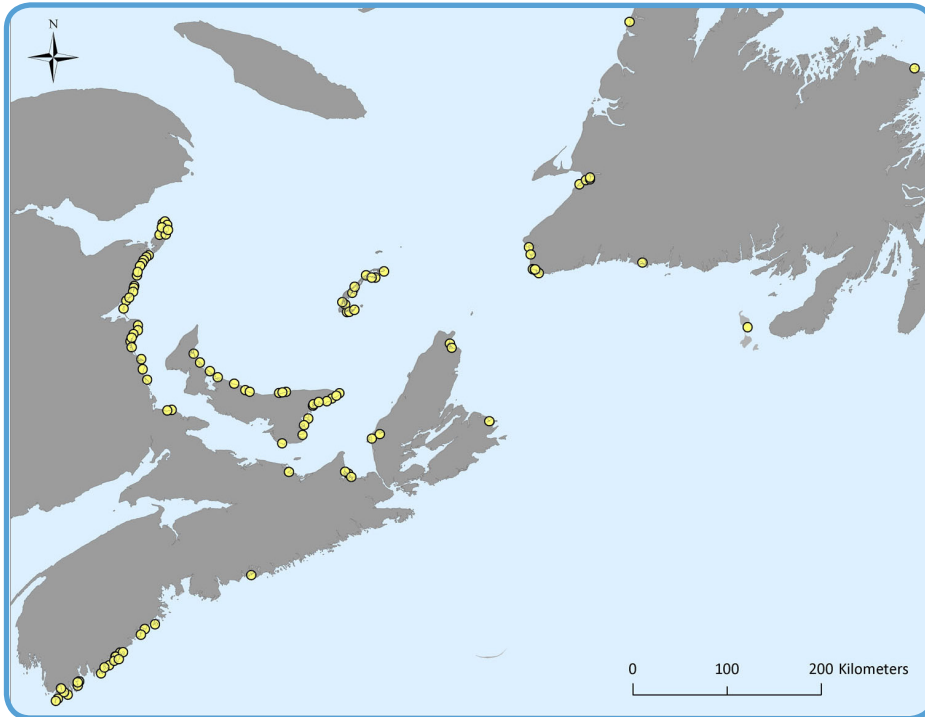
- Join the hundreds of Canadians who help conserve Piping Plovers and beach habitat.
- Visit www.pipingplover.ca to learn more about conservation efforts in Eastern Canada.
- Contact a Piping Plover conservation program in your province (see Resource E).

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. 2010. Piping Plover, US Atlantic Coast web site. (www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover)
3. Bird Studies Canada. 2009. Healthy Beaches and Dunes for Tomorrow. (www.birdscanada.org/volunteer/nsplover/NSHealthyBeaches.pdf)

Resources

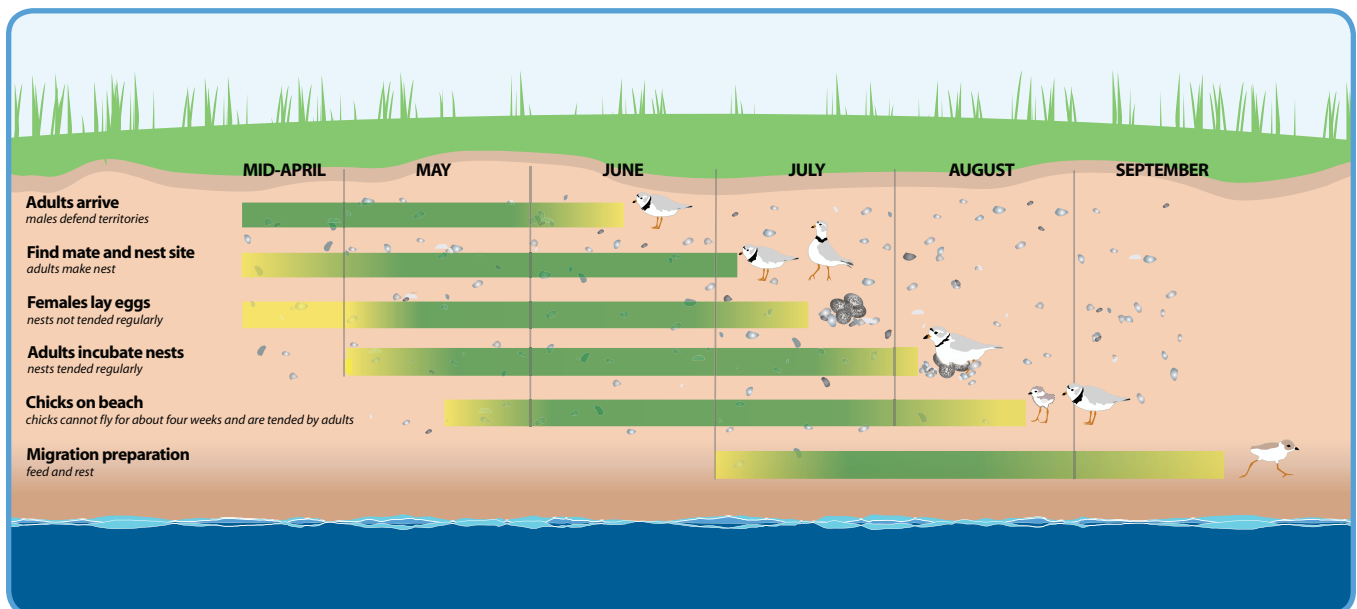
A. Distribution of Piping Plover Beaches in Eastern Canada



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 Boucoute 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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