



The Winter Monitor

An electronic newsletter for the greater Piping Plover non-breeding community
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Editor's Note

Hi all. Happy to say that I made it through yet another Minnesota winter. It finally warmed up enough so that I could wear my sandals. Birds are finally moving around these days. Interestingly enough, I saw a Cooper's Hawk attack a Pileated Woodpecker (multiple times) a few days ago. My first interesting Spring observation! This issue prepares the transition to the breeding grounds. Alice Van Zoeren, a dedicated field technician on the breeding grounds, shares her stories with us. This will be the last issue of the season and we'll be back in the Fall. My summer will be spent in Minnesota working on my dissertation. The rest of the lab will be keeping track of plovers in the Great Lakes. Keep us posted on plover movements!

Olivia LeDee, PhD Candidate, University of Minnesota

Double Lives...

"It's exciting for us northerners to realize that Piping Plovers will be returning in about a month (mid-April) to their Great Lakes breeding territories. The stories of their individual lives will once again play out on our beaches until late summer, when winter monitors will again be the audience for their life stories. It's often useful to know the whole story when talking with the public. The more one can tell people about the individual lives of the Plovers they see, the more attached and protective they become of them and of Piping Plovers in general. It would be useful to begin a dialogue between those of you monitoring winter activity and those of us watching over the brief, but eventful, breeding season. To this end here are tales of the summer lives of four individual Piping Plovers of Sleeping Bear Dunes.

BO:RX is the most "famous" of Sleeping Bear Dunes' Piping Plovers. BO:RX has been nesting in the same territory since 1997. He is a very successful dad, having fledged 3 chicks yearly from 1997 to 2000, and all four chicks each year from 2001 to 2005. Last summer he had a rough year. It started well-- he was on his usual territory and paired with the most dominant female on the beach, gO:OX. They had four eggs in an enclosure and were incubating, when she disappeared - likely the victim of a Merlin. Their eggs were collected, hatched and raised in captivity. All four chicks fledged, although BO:RX didn't know it. In 2005 he had quickly attracted a new mate when he lost the first one, but in 2006 he never did.

X,L:OG is an experienced mother. In 2005 she renested with a first-time father after losing her initial mate. All went well until after the chicks hatched. Her mate seemed to like the much older chicks of the neighboring nest and left with them when they fledged. X,L:OG remained with her young chicks until they were independent, long after all the other females had migrated south,. In 2006 she attracted X,g:OY, who appears to be becoming as good a dad as his father, BO:RX.

Y/O/YO:X,O was captive reared after a Great Horned Owl became tangled in the net on the nest enclosure and apparently caused the parents to desert the nest. The owl had cracked two of the eggs, but the other two were hatched and raised at the University of Michigan Biological Station. Y/O/YO:X,O nested in 2004 and 2005 on the mainland at Sleeping Bear Dunes with BO:RX's son: X,g:OY. In 2004 they were new and rather inattentive parents, but had learned the ropes by 2005. Last summer she nested on North Manitou Island with a new mate. X,g:OY stayed behind and joined X,L:OG (see above).

Ob:X,b nested for his first time on North Manitou Island last summer. He earned the year's Darwin award by stubbornly persisting in incubating on his own, empty scrape about 5 feet from the real nest.

Can anyone fill in the details of the winter lives of these birds?

Alice Van Zoeren

BREEDING

WINTERING



X,L:Og

LY:OX

If you see a marked Piping Plover...

1. Take care to keep disturbance of the bird to a minimum.
2. Please write down the **location, date, behavior** of bird, and a detailed description of the **bands**.
3. To describe a band combination, **describe each band and position on leg:**

Type: metal, color band, flag (band with a tab sticking out from the leg)

Colors: common colors are red, orange, yellow, dark green, light green, dark blue, light blue, white, grey and black.

Some bands are bi-colored/tri-colored (2/3 colors on one band).

Sometimes two bands of the same color are placed over each other on a leg (this may look like one very tall band).

Remember that bands can discolor, and occasionally fall off, so not every bird can be identified.

4. **Note if you are unsure of any of the bands or if you did not see all parts of the leg clearly.** Describe any injuries as carefully and completely as possible.

5. **Send an email with the details.** We'll let you know we got it and provide some information on the bird

Examples (Plover drawing by J. Zickefoose)



Adult: X, L: Of, bO

Left leg = Metal(X) band above, bLack band below
Right leg = Orange flag above, light blue band over Orange band below

Chick: O, -: X, G

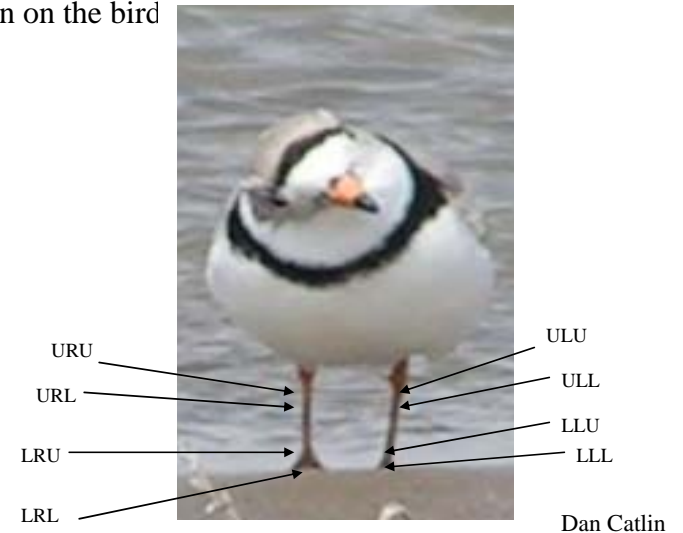
Right leg = Metal(X) band above, Green band below
Left leg = Orange band above

Adult: Og: XY

Left leg = Orange band over light green band below
Right leg = Metal(X) band over Yellow band on lower leg

Chick: XO/L: -

Left leg = Metal(X) band over Orange/bLack split band below



Dan Catlin

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

When you send a banded plover sighting to piping.plover@usace.army.mil, who does it go to? The answer is **Greg Pavelka**. Greg is wildlife biologist with the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** stationed at the Gavins Point Project on the Missouri River in southeast South Dakota. Greg's primary duty is administering the monitoring program for least terns and piping plovers on the Missouri River from Fort Peck Lake in eastern Montana down to Ponca State Park in northeastern Nebraska, a span of a nearly a 1,000 miles. Several of the banded piping plovers seen on the wintering grounds have a Corps of Engineers origin. Plovers sporting a light blue flag were reared in captivity by the Corps from 1995 through 2002. Plovers with a **green flag** were banded by researchers from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) for a Corps funded study. The VPI researchers are studying piping plover usage of sandbars on the Missouri River below Gavins Point Dam. Debuting in 2006 are plovers with **red flags**. These plovers were banded by researchers from the U.S. Geological Survey. These plovers were banded on Lake Sakakawea, a Corps of Engineers reservoir on the Missouri River in North Dakota.

VISIT THE GREAT LAKES WEBSITE! Orange Flags and more...

The following is from: http://www.waterbirds.umn.edu/Piping_Plovers/piping1.htm

Beginning in the early 1980's, Francie Cuthbert, graduate students, research fellows and field assistant began to study the Great Lakes Piping Plover population and to work for its recovery. Most of this research was done in collaboration with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (East Lansing Field Office; Region III Office) and dozens of people from other agencies. During the breeding season, our research base is the University of Michigan Biological Station (UMBS) in Pellston, Michigan.

Please send reports to Olivia LeDee, plover@umn.edu or lede0025@umn.edu

Great Lakes Piping Plover Color Bands

Original Colors	Fade to	Code	Split Bands	Codes	Triple-Split Bands	Codes
 Blue		B	 orange over blue	O/B	 red/orange/red	R/O/R
 Black		L	 orange over yellow	O/Y	 yellow/orange/yellow	Y/O/Y
 Green		G	 orange over green	O/G	 Green/orange/green	G/O/G
 Yellow		Y	 orange over light green	O/g	 light green/orange/l.green	g/O/g
 Red		R	 orange over black	O/L	 blue/orange/blue	B/O/B
 Orange		O	 orange over red	O/R	 light blue/orange/l.blue	b/O/b
 Lightblue		b	 orange over light blue	O/b	 black/orange/black	L/O/L
 Lightgreen		g				
 Metal		X				

Inverse of split bands also used (e.g. blue over orange B/O)

White or Black FLAGS. Approximately 800 adults and over 400 chicks have been uniquely marked in Saskatchewan since 2002, for a movements/survival study. Each uniquely marked bird should have 5 bands: one white or black flag on an upper leg (above the 'knee'), a metal normally on the other upper leg (rarely, on a lower leg under a colour band), and 3 plain colour bands on the lower legs (2 on one leg and one on the other). Sometimes two bands of the same colour are placed over each other on a leg (this may look like one very tall band). Colours used on the lower legs include: red, orange, yellow, dark green, light green, dark blue, grey and black. Some chicks were non-uniquely marked with a white or black flag on one upper leg, a metal on the other upper leg, and nothing on the lower legs. **Please send reports to Cheri Gratto-Trevor, Cheri.Gratto-Trevor@EC.GC.CA**

Green Flags

Birds banded as adults: Each bird receives 4 color bands (2 on each lower leg just above the foot) and a **dark green flag** (GF) on either the upper right or upper left leg. The lower leg band colors include Black (B), Dark Green (DG), Gray (GR), Red (R), Yellow (Y), and White (W). We have not used metal U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service bands, except on three adults.

Birds banded as chicks: Each bird receives 2 color bands stacked in one of 4 positions on the leg: upper left, upper right, lower left, or lower right. The colors include Black (B), Dark Green (DG), Gray (GR), Red (R), Yellow (Y), and White (W), Orange (O), Dark Blue (DB), and Pink (P; pink is celluloid and may fade to a light pink color). The chicks also receive a dark green flag on one of the upper legs. If you see a flag but no bands on the lower legs, look for them on the upper leg opposite the dark green flag (bands can slide up into the feathers and become difficult to see).

Please send reports to Daniel H. Catlin, dcatlin@vt.edu

Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center (USGS), Red Flags

Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center (USGS) has initiated work to evaluate survival, productivity estimates, and movement for Piping Plovers on the upper Missouri River. Efforts began in 2006 with a limited number of chicks, but will expand significantly in coming years. Each uniquely marked bird should have 5 bands: one red flag on an upper leg, a metal on the opposite upper leg, and 3 color bands on the lower legs (2 on one leg and one on the other). Colors used on the lower legs are all solid colors and include: red, orange, yellow, dark green, light flue, dark blue, and black. Please report sightings to Jennifer Stucker, jstucker@usgs.gov

Saskatchewan.

Starting in 2001, the majority of birds banded at Lake Diefenbaker, SK had a **white band on the upper left leg**.

From 2002-2005, several hundred chicks were marked with a **light/dark green bicolor**, metal and 1-3 other colours at Chaplin Lake, SK. In 2002-2003, chicks were given a bicolor (various positions); metal upper leg; and one to two white bands (various positions, but not upper left). In 2004, chicks were given a bicolor on one upper leg, metal on the other upper leg, and 2 colours bands on one lower leg, nothing on the other lower leg. In 2005, chicks were given light over dark green bicolor which fades to yellow/black on a upper leg with the metal on the lower portion of the same leg. This was in combination with various colour bands in various positions. The colours we've mainly used have been: white, yellow, red, orange, light green, dark green, light blue, dark blue. We did use some celluloid bands which degrade quite quickly: light greyish-blue, lime green, dark forest green. We also 4 black bands in 2004 and even 2 white flags in 2001. **Please send reports to Sharilyn Westworth, Sharilyn.Westworth@EC.gc.ca**

Alberta.

All birds from Alberta get a Black and White bicolor, plus a metal and one other color (white, yellow, orange, light green, or another black/white bicolor). We have occasionally also used a Red/Dk Blue bicolor in place of the black/white, but unlikely to do this on a regular basis.

Please send reports to Dave Prescott, Dave.Prescott@gov.ab.ca