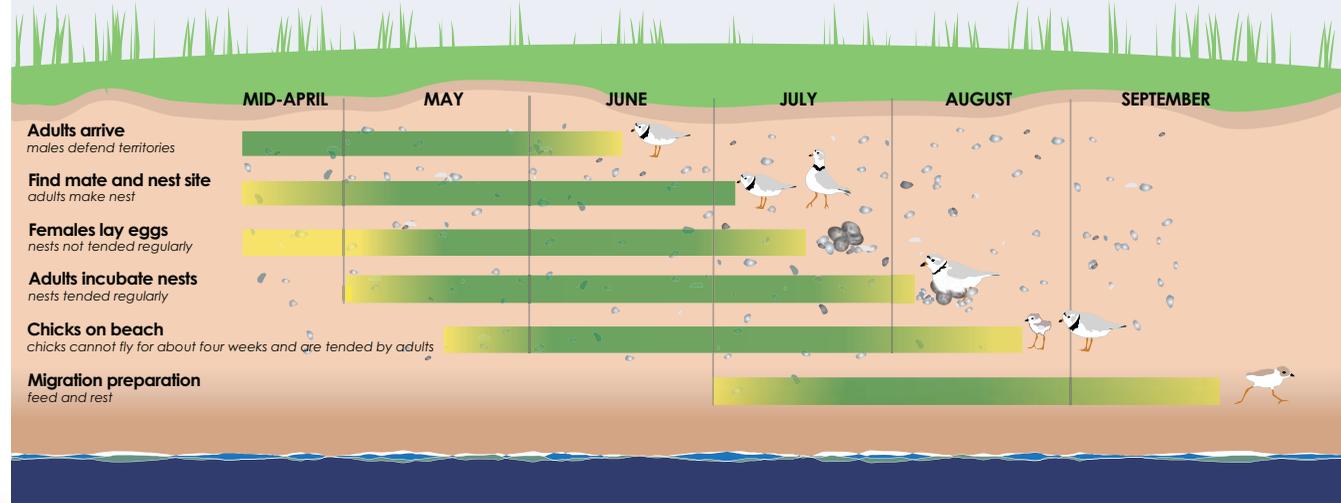


The Piping Plover

The Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus melodus*) is a small, migratory shorebird that breeds on the sandy and stony coastal beaches of Eastern Canada between April and August. The Piping Plover establishes territories, lays eggs and raises young on the open beach between the ocean and dunes. Camouflage is the Piping Plover's main defence. The sand-coloured adults, chicks and eggs are very difficult to see.

The Piping Plover IN EASTERN CANADA



LEGEND

	peak activity
	off-peak activity

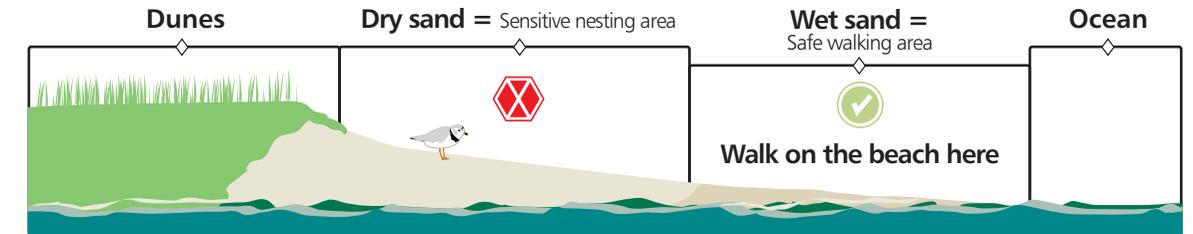
What is being done to protect the Piping Plover?

In 1985, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada designated the Piping Plover as endangered, which means that the species is at great risk of disappearing from Canada. The Piping Plover was listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* in 2003. Provincial endangered species or wildlife legislation to protect the Piping Plover exists in all Atlantic provinces as well as Quebec.

The recovery of the Piping Plover population requires a collective effort of individuals, communities, conservation groups, industry and governments. Already, local "Guardians" are posting signs on beaches to mark Piping Plover breeding areas and are sharing information on protecting the species with beach-goers and landowners. With the participation of all, the recovery of this species is possible.

You can help keep the Piping Plover safe by following these tips at the beach.

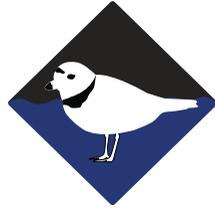
1. From April through August, stay away from fenced and posted Piping Plover breeding areas and walk on the wet sand close to the water's edge.
2. Keep pets leashed, because roaming pets can disturb Piping Plovers.
3. Remove food waste and garbage from the beach to avoid attracting predators that will endanger Piping Plover adults, chicks and eggs.
4. Leave driftwood, shells and seaweed on the beach, because Piping Plovers need these to feed on and for cover.
5. Do not operate any vehicles on beaches or dunes, because vehicles can disturb Piping Plovers, crush eggs and chicks, and damage beach and dune habitat.
6. Report the location of Piping Plovers and their nests to Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service.
7. If you see people, pets or vehicles disturbing Piping Plovers or their nests, contact Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service. The Wildlife Service will pass on the information to a local organization that can do something about it.
8. Get involved. Join a local Piping Plover conservation organization and volunteer to protect the species and its habitat, and help spread the word about its plight. Contact Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service for information on Piping Plover conservation organizations in your area.



(Source: Bird Studies Canada)

Photo credits
Front cover (left to right): Environment Canada, Sidney Maddock, Sidney Maddock.
Panels 2 and 3: Sidney Maddock.

Watch for this symbol on beaches in Atlantic Canada and Quebec



To learn more about the Piping Plover and how you can help protect the species, visit the Hinterland Who's Who website (www.hww.ca) and the Species at Risk Public Registry (www.sararegistry.gc.ca) or contact Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service:

Atlantic Region
Canadian Wildlife Service
Environment Canada
PO Box 6227
17 Waterfowl Lane
Sackville NB E4L 1G6
Tel.: 506-364-5044
Email: nature@ec.gc.ca

Quebec Region
Canadian Wildlife Service
Environment Canada
PO Box 10100
1141 Route de l'Église
CP 10100, 9th Floor
Québec QC G1V 4H5
Tel.: 1-800-463-4311
Email: quebec.scf@ec.gc.ca

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Why is the Piping Plover endangered?

The Piping Plover has only a limited time to mate, and finding a safe place to breed is challenging. Many human activities on beaches threaten, disturb or harm adults, chicks and eggs. Predators, habitat loss and environmental factors are also threats to the Piping Plover.



Human disturbances

Even seemingly harmless activities, such as walking, sunbathing and fishing near Piping Plover territories, can harm breeding pairs. Human presence can cause the adult birds to abandon nests completely or leave eggs exposed to the elements and predators. Unleashed pets, horseback riding, camping and campfires, fireworks and kite-flying on beaches can also disturb and harm adult Piping Plovers, nests and young chicks.

Vehicle traffic

Vehicles on beaches, including trucks, all-terrain vehicles and kite buggies, are severe threats to the Piping Plover. Adult birds, chicks and eggs are difficult to spot and are easily crushed. Disturbance from vehicle traffic can cause adult Piping Plovers to leave their nests. Tire ruts can trap chicks that cannot fly, causing them to become separated from the adults. Vehicles also damage dunes. This can accelerate beach erosion, which can lead to the permanent loss of Piping Plover habitat.

Habitat loss

Piping Plover habitat is being lost and damaged as more of Canada's coastlines are developed. Buildings and structures such as erosion control walls that are inappropriately placed can destroy beaches or cause Piping Plovers to abandon their nesting and feeding sites.

Predators

Predators that eat Piping Plover eggs, chicks and adults are a major threat. Gulls, crows and foxes are the most common predators in Eastern Canada. However, minks, weasels, raccoons, ravens, skunks and domestic pets also pose a threat.

Human activity makes the challenge of conserving the Piping Plover even greater, since food scraps, garbage and even human presence attract predators to beaches.

Environmental factors

Coastlines are constantly changing as the wind, waves and tides reshape them. An increase in powerful storm events and rising sea levels are among the predicted impacts of climate change, which will further reduce the availability of undisturbed breeding habitat for Piping Plovers.



Interesting facts

- Adult Piping Plovers weigh the equivalent of six to eight toonies.
- At hatching, Piping Plover chicks weigh approximately the equivalent of two pennies.
- Piping Plover chicks leave the nest hours after hatching and have to feed themselves.
- Male and female Piping Plovers spend equal amounts of time tending their eggs.
- As of 2008, there are approximately 250 pairs of Piping Plovers breeding in Eastern Canada.



Photo credits
Piping Plover chicks,
left and right: Sidney Maddock.
Panels 2 to 4 (left to right):
Environment Canada,
Photos.com, Environment
Canada, Sidney Maddock,
Photos.com.

