

## piping plover *Charadrius melodus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Aves

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Charadriidae

ILLINOIS STATUS state and federally endangered, native

### FEATURES

The piping plover is about seven and one-fourth inches long (bill tip to tail tip in preserved specimen). Its coloration is very pale: light tan feathers on the back and head and white feathers on the ventral side. There is a single, black band of feathers around the neck of breeding adults that may or may not extend entirely across the throat. The legs are yellow or orange. The bill of the breeding adult has a black tip and an orange-yellow base. Nonbreeding adults and immatures have a black bill and no dark mark around the neck. A white patch may be seen at the base of the tail when the bird is in flight.

### BEHAVIORS

Spring migrants begin arriving in Illinois in April. Fall migrants start arriving in July. Piping plovers winter along the coasts of the southern United States and Central America. This species is a rare migrant statewide and a very rare summer resident along Lake Michigan. It is endangered in Illinois and federally. Its decline is due to habitat loss (migrating and breeding), increased human recreational use of beaches and industrialization along shorelines. Recent nesting efforts by piping plovers on the shore of Lake Michigan in Illinois have been successful and efforts to protect the birds along the Great Lakes shorelines have shown promise. This species eats small aquatic macroinvertebrates and some plant materials.

### HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

temporary water supplies; Lake Michigan; rivers and streams

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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