

SNOWY PLOVER

Anarhynchus nivosus

Order: Charadriiformes

Family: Charadriidae

FNAI Ranks: G3/S1

U.S. Status: none

FL Status: Threatened



Description: Small plover with a slim, dark bill, dark ear patch, and dark legs. Extremely pale gray or brownish above with dark collar patches on each side of breast and a black band across forehead. Dark collar or neck-ring, head, and ear markings are less prominent in females and become indistinct in winter birds and juveniles.

Similar Species: May be confused with piping plover (*Charadrius melodus*; see species account), which is similarly colored when present in Florida, but has a stubbier, more compact bill and yellow to greenish-olive legs. In flight, piping plover shows a white rump.

Habitat: Restricted to dry, sandy beaches, where they nest in shallow depressions, usually near some vegetation or debris. Also forage in tidal flats along inlets and creeks.

Seasonal Occurrence: Present year-round. There appears to be some migration out of state as well as movement to other sites within state.

Florida Distribution: Most abundant as a breeder in the Panhandle from Escambia County east to Franklin County, and less so in the more developed stretch from Pinellas County south to Marco Island in Collier County. Highest counts in winter are found at Anclote Key Preserve State Park (Pasco and Pinellas counties). No longer breeds in Keys but occurs occasionally there and along Atlantic coast as a fall - winter visitor.

Range-wide Distribution: Cosmopolitan, occurring in suitable habitat worldwide. Traditionally considered as subspecies *C. a. tenuirostris*, which occurs along Gulf coast east of Louisiana and in the Bahamas, Yucatan Peninsula, Greater and Lesser Antilles, and islands off Venezuela. Recognizing Florida birds as subspecies *C. a. nivosus*, as in more recent accounts, extends range to include the rest of the U.S. and Mexico.

Conservation Status: Surveys conducted in 1989 suggest 170 - 200 breeding pairs, with 82 - 85 percent occurring in northwest Florida. Populations have been greatly reduced and fragmented by coastal development and increased

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human recreational activity. Much suitable habitat has already been destroyed or is in public ownership. Predation is also a threat, as is reduced productivity caused by increased harassment by humans and pets.

Protection and Management: Restore beach dune habitat and acquire undeveloped beaches, especially in southwest Florida.

References: Chase and Gore 1989, Poole and Gill (eds.) 1994, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Rodgers et al. (eds.) 1996, Sprandel et al. 1997, Stevenson and Anderson 1994.



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