

## WILSON'S PLOVER

*Anarhynchus wilsonia*

**Order:** Charadriiformes

**Family:** Charadriidae

**FNAI Ranks:** G5/S2

**U.S. Status:** none

**FL Status:** none



**Description:** Small to medium-sized plover with long, heavy, black bill, single broad breast band, and pinkish-gray legs. Upperparts gray-brown. In breeding adults, breast band is black in males and brownish in females. Sexes similar in non-breeding adults. Juvenile plumage similar to that of non-breeding adults, but upperparts have more scaly appearance.

**Similar Species:** Long, thick, black bill and broader breast band of Wilson's plover sets it apart from other small plovers (i.e., piping (*Charadrius melodus*; see species account), snowy (*C. alexandrinus*; see species account), or semipalmated (*C. semipalmatus*).

**Habitat:** Almost entirely coastal, inhabiting sandy beaches, tidal flats, and spoil islands. Nests on dry sand or bare soil, abandoned road surfaces, and (rarely) roof tops. Usually locates nests near vegetation or debris (as does snowy plover), although more tolerant of vegetated areas.

**Seasonal Occurrence:** Local breeder on parts of both coasts. Population shifts southward in fall, primarily in August and September. Spring movements back north begin late February - mid-March.

**Florida Distribution:** In breeding season, plovers are most abundant along Gulf coast from Escambia County east to Franklin County, and Anclote Key (Pasco County) south through Keys; less so on Florida Atlantic coast. Highest concentrations during winter are found from Tampa Bay south to Cape Sable area.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Breeds along coasts from central Baja California, northern Sonora, Mexico, and southern New Jersey south through Central America and West Indies to northern South America (east to northeastern Brazil). Winters from Baja, Sonora, Gulf coast of Texas and Louisiana, and Florida south to northwestern Peru and eastern Brazil.

**Conservation Status:** Although there has been no systematic survey for breeding Wilson's plovers, the Breeding Bird Atlas project (1986 - 1992) confirmed breeding in 64 (27 percent) of approximately 237 coastal 7.5-

## Wilson's Plover

## *Anarhynchus wilsonia*

minute quadrangles surveyed. Only 13 (5 percent) were on the east coast from Nassau County to Miami-Dade County. A statewide survey of winter shorebirds in 1993 - 1994 found an average of 282 birds at 29 of 60 sites surveyed (excluding Keys). Many breeding and wintering sites are on public lands, but recreational activity by humans and their pets, environmental pollutants, and predators are potential threats to nesting and foraging success. Coastal development and engineering activities (e.g., dredging, sediment diversion) also contribute to loss and degradation of habitat.

**Protection and Management:** Maintain habitat in a natural state.

**References:** Kale et al. 1992, Poole and Gill (eds.) 2000, Robertson and Woolfenden 1992, Rodgers et al. (eds.) 1996, Sprandel et al. 1997, Stevenson and Anderson 1994.



© Robert Gundy