

Species: Piping Plover
(Vernacular name)

Charadrius melodus 18-89-11
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 14 May 1989 ; 15 May 1989 Time Bird Seen: 10:55 - 11:10 am on 5-14
2:30 - 2:55 pm on 5-15

Locality: Cheraw Lake.
Cheraw; Otero Co.; Cal.
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: Nikon 9x30 binocs; KOWA TSN-4 20-60X Scope.

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: —

Number of birds seen: 1-2 Sex: — Plumage: Breeding; Complete breast bands.

Light conditions: Diffuse high sun; overcast on 5-15.

Distance from bird, and how measured: 75 yds, estimated.

Describe the bird's overall behavior:

These birds darted across mud/alkali flats; stopping & starting again, seeming to skim over the sand. On May 15th, one bird chased the other, crouching horizontal, puffing up the body feathers, tilting the head down and charging the other bird, chasing it across the mud aggressively. Walked close to Snowy and Semipalmated Plovers.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:

Lake edge; plains reservoir. Esp. white sand/white alkali.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):

None

Include: size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field. Small plump plover. Smaller than Killdeer & shorter-legged. Seemed slightly larger and plumper-bodied than Snowy Plover & Semip. Plover. Back is pale sandy gray color, as light as Snowy Plover but, grayer, less tan — much paler than Semipalmated Plover above. Undersides white. Rump white — seen both in flight and when spreading plumage while preening. Cap pale grayish-tan with narrow anterior black border that almost, but not quite, reaches eyes from above. Narrow, complete breast band, narrower than Semipalmated Plover. Thin, white superciliary. Black eye set off sharply against whitish face, not in black patch. Bill short, thick & orange-based / black-tipped. Legs med.-long, deep, bright orange.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

Not heard.

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

Small, pale, appearance; floating, sprinting movements, med.-long legs; short bill indicate Charadrius sp. plover.

Semipalmated = has dark brown back; black face; thick black breastband

Wilson's = heavy black bill; dark brown back; dark legs; thick "

Snowy = Head tan, back grayish; black legs; bill all black, long & slender; breast-band partial.

Combination of bright orange legs, short 2-toned bill; pale sandy back & complete narrow black breast band rule out all plovers but Piping.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

Piping → 1975 - Colo & I've seen it in Texas, on the coast.

I've seen several Snowy, Wilson's & many Semip. Plovers. In this case, Snowy & Semipalmated Plovers were nearby, for comparison.

This report was written from notes made during X after observation; from memory .

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