

First Record of a Snowy Plover in North Carolina

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On 2 May 1994, I arrived on Portsmouth Island in Carteret County to conduct shorebird surveys. On the afternoon of 3 May, Sue Philhower, a graduate student studying Piping and Wilson's Plovers on the island, told me that she had seen a Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) at the south end of the island near New Drum Inlet on 30 April and 2 May. I immediately drove to the area and finally located the bird at 1625 EDT. Since I was departing the island by ferry at 1645 EDT, I was only able to study the bird for about five minutes.

The bird was foraging on a tidal flat with other shorebirds including Piping, Wilson's, and Semipalmated Plovers. The bird was very pale, at least as pale as a Piping Plover. This feature alone separated the birds from Wilson's and Semipalmated Plovers, as did the lack of a complete breast band. The size was similar to that of a Piping, although the bird was noticeably slimmer. The legs were black, unlike the orange-colored legs of a Piping Plover. The bird also appeared longer-legged than a Piping Plover, perhaps because of the slimmer body. The underparts were white and unmarked. The mantle, upperwings, and crown were very pale brown. The bill was black and thinner than the bill of a Piping Plover. The bird had a black patch on the forecrown, black auricular patches, and a black "slash mark" on each shoulder. The latter marks represented a partial breast band, although it was much less extensive than that of a Piping Plover. The bird did not vocalize. I did not see the bird in flight, so I did not observe any features of the wing or uppertail.

This represents the first accepted record of a Snowy Plover for North Carolina (North Carolina Bird Records Committee, 1996).

Literature Cited

North Carolina Bird Records Committee. 1996. Report of the North Carolina Bird Records Committee 1995. *Chat* 60:136-141.