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First Documented Record of Snowy Plover for North Carolina

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A group of birders who were weathered out of a pelagic trip from Hatteras, Dare County, NC, on 27 May 2006 decided to spend the morning at Cape Hatteras point, about 10 miles farther to the east. At the back (western) side of the large tidal pond near the cape, Steve Howell identified a Snowy Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), in breeding plumage. It was relocated by Jeffrey Pippen and Lex Glover a couple of hours later and then seen by numerous birders that day, including Paul Sykes, Keith Camburn, Ricky Davis, and Derb Carter. I was contacted at my home about the presence of the bird, and I drove to see the bird on the following day. Neal and Pat Moore, Merrill Lynch, and Sidney Maddock were among a group of birders with me who saw the bird on 28 May; and Maddock obtained excellent photographs (see cover). On this latter day, the bird stayed along the south-facing beach at the cape, within a roped-off area for colonial nesting waterbirds. Interestingly, a few days later Davis, who is the Briefs for the Files editor of *The Chat* and regional editor for *North American Birds*, got word that the plover was originally seen on 25 May by Bill Langley (*Chat* 70:99). The plover was apparently last seen in early June (*Chat* 70:99).

The plover was slightly smaller in body length and size than adjacent Piping (*C. melodus*) and Semipalmated (*C. semipalmatus*) Plovers. However,

because of relatively “longer” legs, it seemed to stand about as tall as these latter species (i.e., was not “squatty-looking”).

The back and wings were the same pale shade of brown as on a Piping Plover. The back was a very pale, sandy gray-buff, and the wings were slightly darker. This pale color extended to the nape and crown. However, the bird had a black band across its forehead at the front of the crown. There were black bands/patches at its sides of the neck, in front of the bend of the wing. These black bands did not meet across the chest. Thus, the underparts were completely white.

The bill was slender and all black. It was quite short, typical in length for a small plover, but was more slender than the bills of Piping and Semipalmated Plovers. The legs were dark—either slate-gray or dull black, but not as black as on a Sanderling (*Calidris alba*) that was nearby for comparison.

The plover was presumably a male because it showed considerable territorial behavior, despite its being far from its usual breeding range in the central and western United States and the Gulf of Mexico coast, and despite its not having an apparent mate. It constantly chased away all Semipalmated and Piping Plovers in the general area. However, it did not chase the noticeably larger Sanderlings or Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) that were also on the beach and adjacent sand flats.

This is the second state record for Snowy Plover. The first was seen from 30 April to 3 May 1994 on Portsmouth Island, Carteret County by Sue Philhower and Stephen Dinsmore (Dinsmore 1999). However, no photos were obtained for this record; thus, the North Carolina Bird Records Committee (1996) accepted the species to the Provisional List rather than to the Official List. On the other hand, the North Carolina Bird Records Committee (LeGrand et al. 2007) accepted photographs of the 2006 bird taken by Maddock and Pippen; thus, acceptance of photos elevates the species from the Provisional List to the Official List. The Avendex database (Redshank Software 2006) lists three records for South Carolina, also all along the coast. However, whereas the North Carolina records are from the spring season, those in South Carolina range from November into February.

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