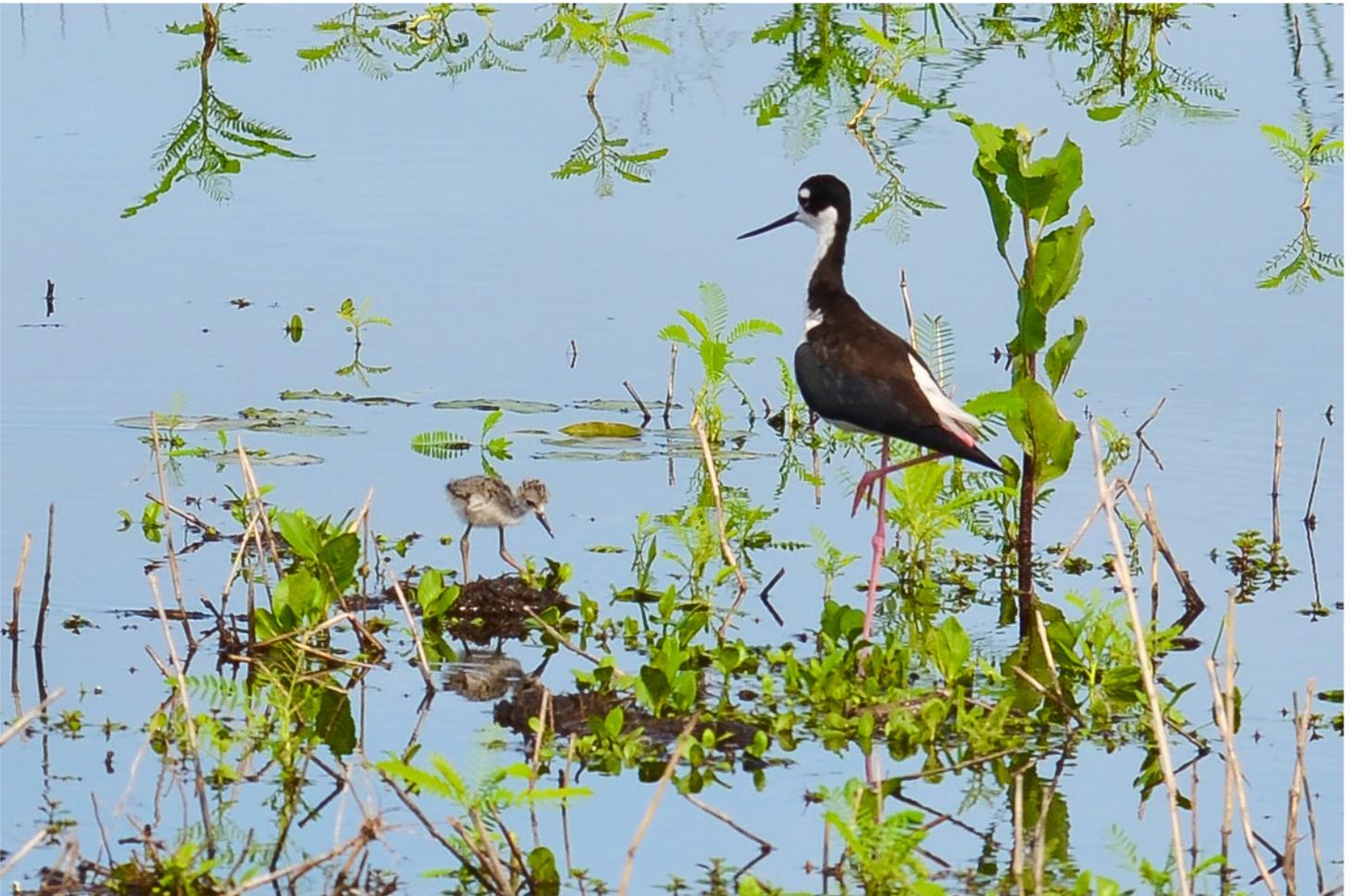




# *Peligrum*

September  
2021



*Vigilant Black-necked Stilt Parent Watching Over Downy Youngster* © Sandy Peterson  
June 23, 2021 T.M. Goodwin Wildfowl Management Area  
Nikon D7000, 150-600 mm, ISO 100, 150 mm, f/8, 1/250

## On the cover

# The Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus*

by Juanita N. Baker, Ph.D.

Father stands vigilant, ready for action, to protect his young downy chick who cautiously explores the limits of the mud flat. Parents peck, jab, or sweep with their slightly recurved bills to plunge under water and, probe through mud to snatch aquatic invertebrates, fishes, and insects to eat for themselves or to feed their young. Stilts choose to nest in wetlands with emergent vegetation—plants that have long roots and stems to be able to survive varying water levels along shorelines, mud flats, and human-made evaporation ponds and storm-water treatment facilities. Aquatic plants (like Sesbanias, water lilies) provide some cover for the young, as well as attracting insects and aquatic organisms that feed on the plant's roots and shoots.

Canal waters and runoff from agricultural lands and yards contain high levels of phosphorous and nitrogen from fertilizers. Those chemicals enter the storm-water facilities and constructed wetlands where they are removed ('eaten') by the algae and plants grown for that purpose. Cleaner water then is passed on to our Lagoon. California studies document that cumulative effects of contaminants, such as selenium, may impact chick growth and survivability.

eBird data show that at the end of September, all stilts leave Indian River County for Central and South America for the winter. In January and February, they begin migrating back, most returning by March. In May they've selected their breeding sites...not nesting closely together, but each nest on the mudflats at 10-15' apart, staking out their own territories which the females defend strongly. So, now in September, that young chick will have grown almost as big as Dad, but characteristic of all juveniles, with brown instead of black feathers, and soon ready to leave on its long, hazardous migratory route south, too!

**Reference:** Robinson, Julie A., J. Michael Reed, Joseph P. Skorupa and Lewis W. Oring. 1999. Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*), The Birds of North America Online (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from the Birds of North America Online: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/449>

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Go on a early "Morning Nature Walks" to local town parks & nature areas of interest. Get your morning walk, explore habitats, and let's see what's there! Details at [PelicanIslandAudubon.org](http://PelicanIslandAudubon.org). Want to lead a group to your favorite spot? Let Pelican Island Audubon Society know! Email us at [piaudubon@yahoo.com](mailto:piaudubon@yahoo.com)

*Our Mission: To preserve and protect the animals, plants, and natural communities, and the land and water on which they depend in Indian River County through education, advocacy, and public awareness.*

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# What do we need to do to Save our Lagoon and Earth?

Our Earth is undergoing its “Sixth Extinction,” as is Elizabeth Kolbert’s 2014 book title that alerts us to the rapid loss of biodiversity. Nearly 30,000 terrestrial vertebrate species with populations numbering fewer than 1,000 individuals are on the brink of extinction. More than 400 vertebrate species have become extinct in the last 100 years. 389 North American bird species are vulnerable to extinction. Called the Anthropocene Extinction because we humans have caused so many plants and animals becoming extinct. Actually, species loss began in the Pleistocene when humans hunted the large Ice-Age mammals, like Mammoths and Woolly Rhinos to extinction. Due to rapid population growth and consumption rates, the extinction crisis is accelerating. Depending upon agriculture to survive, humans have removed much of the natural habitats on earth. Deforestation, hunting, pollution, and introduction of non-native species are also causing ecocide.

Florida’s fishes are dying from lack of oxygen in the water from wastewater and fossil fuels acidifying oceans collapsing fisheries feeding billions of people. Over 905 manatees have died since January because of disappearing seagrasses on which they depend for food. Seagrasses are shaded to death by algae blooms that absorb needed sunlight. From agriculture and lawns, herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, and medicines go directly into canals to the Lagoon nurturing red tide, algae blooms, and also cyanobacteria (blue-green algae implicated in ALS, Parkinson’s, and Alzheimer diseases, respiratory and skin irritation) killing tons of marine life. Garbage is filling up our county’s dumps, our highest smelly mountains! We are using too many resources and wasting too much. It is not sustainable!

There’s a climate emergency: the U.S.’s highest temperatures, droughts and tremendous fires in the U.S., Canada, and even Siberia, burning not just forests, but homes and villages. Flooding is rampant in Miami, Arizona, Europe and China and famines in Africa, Yemen, and China. This is the beginning of climate crisis that threatens human existence. Our planet cannot sustain 7.8 billion humans unless we do something now.

What? Encourage a shift in societal behavior and thinking. In response to my request, thoughtful environmentalists and leaders made these suggestions to stop this massive global climate emergency, save Earth and our Lagoon:

- Value our environment daily, make changes hourly to reflect that value.
- Reduce our carbon footprint/use of fossil fuels and plastics: reuse, make do. Drive and consume less.
- Rethink our economy that relies on constant growth and resource consumption. Waste less food, compost waste.
- Use farmland more sustainably, avoid “clean-farming” and clear cutting.
- Educate children, the public to foster a sustainable and healthy environment.
- Stop poisons/polluting: Lead, Asbestos, Arsenic, pesticides, and herbicides. Neonicotinoid pesticides are putting 40% bees

out of business! The world cannot function without pollinators. We are finding glyphosate in our manatees. Spraying such unnatural and potentially toxic herbicides on waterways is madness. With all the effort we have, stop the anthropogenic pollution of the Lagoon.

- Let’s all work together, including our political leaders, city councilors, county commissioners, Governor DeSantis, and state government to take bold action immediately to provide funding and leadership.
- Support the land-conservation bond issue and the Rights of Nature Amendment.
- Stop “dumping” human poop on lands.
- Build innovative wastewater treatment facilities where liquid is treated to potable levels, and solid poop becomes saleable fertilizer and electricity.
- Fund conversion of septic to sewer.
- Improve stormwater treatment areas, swales, and bioreactors.
- Ban fertilizers with phosphorus.
- Ban glyphosate, atrazine and chemicals used in canals, lakes, and waterways.
- Restore habitats and plant native species, conserve and preserve remaining lands.
- Provide state tax incentives for electric vehicles, and solar power for homes and businesses.
- Save aquifer water for drinking, bathing, cooking only. Recycle everything especially water.
- Stop clear cutting and save trees in new construction.
- Reduce sod to 10-15% of the yard and cure our lawn fertilizer and chemical addiction.

Time is running out. We can do much to save our Lagoon, Earth, animals, plants, and us. The science is there. Join together, let’s live in harmony with the Earth on a genuine sustainable basis.



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# Jay Watch in Indian River County

by Ellie Van Os

As the current local coordinator for Jay Watch (JW) in Indian River County, I would like to share some insights. JW is a statewide initiative that originated with an assembly of scientists and evolved into a citizen science effort to understand what is going on with our state's only endemic bird, the Florida Scrub-Jay, *Aphelocoma coerulescens* (FSJ). Unfortunately, they are also listed as Threatened by the Federal Endangered Species Act. The program which originated in the early 2000s has been coordinated and administered by Audubon Florida since 2012. My original interest was sparked by a friend who was volunteering for JW at Jonathan Dickinson State Park and after retirement I joined her in the effort for a few years. Concurrently in Indian River County I



Florida Scrub-Jay, adult, Photo by Ellie Van Os

joined a respected former U.S. Fish and Wildlife field supervisor, Joe Carroll, who had been performing the count since its inception.

A committed birdwatcher I was drawn to the program by the opportunity to identify and follow individual birds as not only do many exhibit the same behaviors year-to-year but a few are banded. There is immense personal satisfaction in connecting with birds in this way.

The JW protocol, conducted between June 15th and July 15th, is to start within an hour of sunrise, confirm that there are no predators and then at predetermined stations, broadcast the call of the FSJ in all four directions. The idea is that the call initiates a territorial response if there are jays within earshot. As soon as even one bird responds, the calls are halted. Playing the call at all stations helps draw territory lines between multiple families. More importantly



Florida Scrub-Jay, juvenile Brownhead, Photo by Ellie Van Os

it also allows the censusing of new fledglings as their plumage is distinctly different at this time of year.

As one of Audubon Florida's strengths is education, the training programs for new and repeat volunteers is excellent. Under the direction of Dr. Marianne Korosy and Jacqui Sulek, over the years I have attended the training at Jonathan Dickinson State Park, Savannas Preserve State Park and Seminole State Forest. Others are offered all over the state. A benefit of the training in different locations is familiarization with the essential habitat for the FSJs, Florida scrub. Unfortunately Covid 19 has replaced onsite training and with online training for the time being.

We are fortunate that Indian River County maintains an active management program for our FSJs. Beth Powell, Asst. Director of Parks & Conservation Resources, oversees both a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) that can boast healthy FSJ families as well as a clearinghouse for volunteers' sightings around the county. Jay Watch provides further enhancement through yearly monitoring of four sites that are not part of the HCP but have shown FSJ activities. It is birding with a purpose as we keep track of these isolated families.

Training programs begin in the spring so be sure to register your interest at [PelicanIslandAudubon.org](http://PelicanIslandAudubon.org) to be put on a list for further information.



# Volunteer!

**Pelican Island Audubon Volunteers**  
Ricky Ray, Kathy Cunningham, & Steve Palmquist

## Visit

[PelicanIslandAudubon.org](http://PelicanIslandAudubon.org) to view the list of volunteer positions. Fill out the form online and let us know what you are interested in.

**Working together we can do great things for the environment!**

Volunteer opportunities include:

- Office help, Newsletter: fold, stuff envelopes
- Pullers: Join the potato pullers: (invasive species)
- Audubon House Maintenance- classroom, bathrooms, breezeway
- Landscaping, Nursery, Trees for Life Project, repotting plants
- Field Trip Leader
- Fundraising, Grant Writing
- Publicity
- Trail Maintenance

**A big thanks to everyone who makes it all work!**

# Pelican Island Refuge Highlight

National Wildlife Refuge | Florida

by Eddie Perri (Refuge Ranger) and Aleksandra Simmons (SCA Intern)



Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*)



Great Egret (*Ardea alba*)

Photo credit: Sandy Peterson/USFWS

If you have been following along with our monthly “Refuge Update” you may have noticed a focus on the changing flora and fauna and an emphasis on the small flowers and insects that are easily missed. This month we invite our visitors to look up once again and observe our feathered friends heading to and from Pelican Island proper, busy with their nesting and breeding activity. More than 140 species of bird use the Refuge as a roosting, feeding, or loafing area, with at least 16 different species using the island to nest, making breeding season very exciting here at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge! While we may be familiar with the showy and sometimes theatrical breeding and mating displays seen in the animal kingdom, the birds here at the Refuge undergo a more subtle display when attempting to attract a mate. A shift in coloration, and sometimes shape, occurs in their feathers, known as breeding plumage, and sometimes in other features like eyes and feet, too. The change in plumage, usually undergone by males, may last for the entire spring and summer in some species and only a few weeks in others. A beautiful example is one of our regular feathered visitors, the Great Egret (*Ardea alba*). Already a striking bird with its clean white feathers and long graceful neck, the Great Egret becomes even more amazing during breeding season. The yellow patches around their eyes turn a brilliant lime green and they grow long, lacy, delicate plumes on their backs. In contrast, the Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*), develops a blue ring around its eye and a mane on the top of its head and neck made up of decomposed greyish-brown feathers. While these beautiful displays do a great job of attracting mates, they also attracted plume hunters who decimated bird populations at the end of the 19th century when these feathers became popular adornments for ladies’ hats. Eventually, the backlash against the hunting of birds for their feathers led to the foundation of the National Audubon Society and the nation’s first National Wildlife Refuge, Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge.

## Trouble for Terns

by Linda Chancellor



orientation meeting at a location in Vero that had been an active nesting spot the previous year. Billi Wagner, who has been monitoring Least Terns for years, briefed us on the troubles Least Terns are facing. Historically Least Terns have nested along the eastern shoreline of Florida, laying their eggs in shallow depressions in the sand. That was before our beaches and spoil islands were used by increasing numbers of humans and their dogs. This activity not only disturbed the birds but it caused them to abandon their nests and colony sites. It was vital that the birds find new nesting locations that were similar to the barren beaches they had been using. They chose flat, gravel roofs preferably with no trees nearby that could hide predators. Few such roofs

Last May I volunteered to monitor Least Terns and enter my observations into the Florida Shorebird Database. Volunteers met for an

remain in Florida and even these will no longer be available when these buildings must have their roofs replaced. The roofs will be replaced using unsuitable materials such as rubber coatings or metal in order to meet new hurricane codes. The location we had met at was not active this year because the roof had been replaced.

We then drove to another location in Vero that was currently active to observe the birds. Since no one is allowed on the roofs the birds must be observed from a ground viewpoint (the parking lot). Occasionally the birds would flush - a large number of them would lift up from the roof at one time. Billi demonstrated the method of flush counting to estimate the number of birds that were nesting on the roof. This was not easy as the birds did not hold still once in the air. But these roofs also posed a danger to the chicks. The precocial chicks can stray to the edge of the roof and fall off. These chicks, when found, need to be returned to the roof. FWC (Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission) had installed a chick fence at this location to prevent falls. But the other buildings do not have this. This year, at a Sebastian location, many chicks fell and had to be returned to the roof. The installation of chick fencing is not always possible. Of the seven rooftop sites monitored only four were documented as active. Where will they go?



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# Raising Monarch Butterflies at Home – from Garden to Butterfly House to Garden

by Nanette Notestein

I often daydream about how amazing my yard and living space would be if I could plant all I wanted in the yard. There would be an abundance of fruit trees, a small veggie garden and a beautiful glass green house. Stone and mulch pathways would weave throughout the yard with flowers and herbs softening the edges..... and there would be no grass. Birds, butterflies and rabbits would feel welcome to play and live in this lush habitat.

Many of us have a similar wish but for various reasons we may have to create a garden space in other ways. When I decided to raise Monarchs, container gardening was the only acceptable option for where I live. So, I filled many pots with Milkweed plants for the Monarchs; and the butterflies found them and laid their eggs.

As soon as I saw holes and eaten edges on the Milkweed leaves, the search was on for tiny caterpillars. Since many things

in the garden eat caterpillars, I was seeing fewer of them each day. I purchased a small butterfly house for this reason and it was time to move the leaves or plants with caterpillars on them into it. Growing the Milkweed in pots made it easy to move them.... a nice benefit of container gardening.

The caterpillars lived peacefully and safely in the butterfly house. They feasted on Milkweed, rested and explored their environment. As the caretaker of the butterfly house and its inhabitants, my job was to make sure the caterpillars had plenty of Milkweed to eat, and to replace the paper that lined the floor where all the green poop would land.

The caterpillars grew quickly and shed their skin many times before shedding their skin for the 5th and last time. Then, like a magic show, each caterpillar disappeared and a beautiful green chrysalis with a sparkling crown was revealed. In less than two weeks, the green chrysalis turned clear and colorful butterfly wings could

be seen. The mysterious transformation was almost complete. The arrival of each butterfly was amazing to behold. Within hours their wings would strengthen and they would take their first flight into the garden, bringing delight to all.

If you have ever thought about raising native butterflies, I highly recommend it. Living in the presence of the Monarchs allowed me to photograph some of their fascinating and exquisite life moments. This wondrous experience seeded the idea to share their story through my children's ebook: *Who Wants to Fly? I Do! A Monarch Caterpillar's Tale* by Nanette Notestein. It is available and can be read on many devices at Amazon.com: *Who Wants To Fly? I Do! A Monarch Caterpillar's Tale* eBook: Notestein, Nanette: Kindle Store

I hope it inspires you to plant many Florida native and Florida friendly plants in your yard to welcome our wonderful pollinators. Enjoy!



Butterflies in butterfly house.



Caterpillars in J shape.

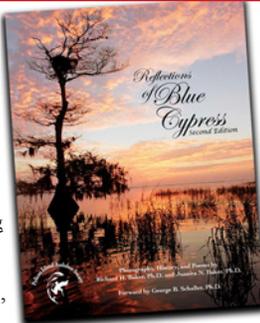


Just emerged butterfly.

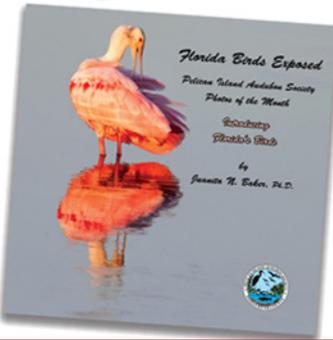


Nanette with caterpillars.

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## September 20, 2021 7:00 PM General Meeting on Zoom: Innocent Victims: Wildlife and Plastic with Terry Root, Ph.D. - Professor Emerita, Stanford University

The plastic polymer was invented in 1907, but the use of plastics did not really take hold until around 1950s. Since that time, the production of plastics has grown exponentially. To date over 8 billion tons of plastic have been produced, yet only 9% of that has ever been recycled. A total of about 8 million tons of plastic are dumped into our oceans yearly. To help stem that tide, 10 states have banned the use of plastic bags. Yet Florida has literally banned the banning of plastic bags! The plastic in the oceans are affecting five different types of marine animals: sea turtles, seals and sea lions, seabirds, fish and cetaceans (whales and porpoises). Thankfully there is lots we can each do. For example, we just need to stop using plastic bags, plastic straws, plastic wrap, and Styrofoam, which we all can easily do.

Terry L. Root is Professor Emerita at Stanford University. She was a lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change 4th Assessment Report that in 2007 was co-awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Vice President Al Gore. Also, she was a lead author for the 3rd Assessment Report (2001) and a Review Editor for the 5th Assessment Report (2014). In addition to other honors, Root was awarded the Spirit of Defenders Award for Science by Defenders of Wildlife in 2010, and Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016 for the conservation organization Point Blue. She served on the National Audubon Board of Directors from 2010 to 2019, currently serves on the board of Defenders of Wildlife, Birds Caribbean, and is on numerous science advisory boards, including the American Wind and Wildlife Institute.



Register at [www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org](http://www.PelicanIslandAudubon.org)

## Banded Piping Plover, South Beach Park, Vero Beach

by *Richard H. Baker, Ph.D.*

On our recent Morning Nature Walks 8/9/21 led by Ricky Ray at South Beach Park, in Vero Beach, Florida. The Group saw only one lone Piping Plover, an Endangered Species, hanging out with Ruddy Turnstones and Sanderlings along the shore. Dr. Juanita Baker took a photo from afar. Only when home examining her photos of this Piping Plover, did she noticed orange, silver, and green bands on its legs and reported this first to Niki Desjardin the Florida Shorebird Director of

Monitoring Shorebirds in IRC guiding the PIAS Least Tern monitors. She said to report all plover banding to the Great Lakes Piping Plovers to [https://www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/report\\_bands.html#](https://www.fws.gov/northeast/pipingplover/report_bands.html#).

How exciting! They responded back that our South Beach Piping Plover had just hatched this breeding season at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore in Wisconsin. In March or early April they select their nesting site, mate, form shallow depressions in the sand lined

with stones on the high beach close to the dunes and lay eggs. In 25 days, likely in May, they hatch. Downy chicks soon follow parents to forage for marine worms, crustaceans and insects growing rapidly. This juvenile left Wisconsin and by August had made it down to South Beach Park!

Many of the northern coastal beaches used by piping plovers for nesting have been lost to commercial, residential, and recreational developments and they are very sensitive to human disturbance and will

leave their nests. The Great Lakes population of the piping plover was at a perilously low level. But intensive conservation efforts have seen the number of breeding pairs steadily climb from a low of 12 in 1983. Also, the breeding range has expanded from Michigan into Wisconsin and Canada <https://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/pipingplover/piplnestingpairs.html>.

Please check out the legs of the plovers you see and report any bands to USFWS.



Photos by *Juanita N. Baker, Ph.D.*