

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MASSACHUSETTS PIPING PLOVER CENSUS AND  
RARE BIRD INVENTORY

Field volunteers are needed to help in two surveys sponsored by the Nongame and Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife: a Piping Plover Census and a Natural Heritage Program Rare Bird Inventory.

Piping Plover Census. In order to determine the current distribution and status of the Piping Plover in Massachusetts, this state organization is coordinating a statewide census during the period of May 18 through 24. The Piping Plover is a fairly widespread, though vulnerable, breeding resident on open, sandy beaches throughout coastal Massachusetts. Recently, the species has become the object of considerable concern because population declines have been documented or suspected in most of its North American range. Current estimates place the total breeding population at a maximum of only sixteen hundred pairs. Here in Massachusetts, the current breeding population is estimated at approximately one hundred pairs. However, this figure, based primarily upon incidental data gathered by the various individuals and agencies working with terns in the state, gives only a partial picture.

A comprehensive statewide census in 1984 will provide some of the necessary baseline information against which future censuses can be compared and upon which management decisions affecting the Piping Plover's survival in Massachusetts can be formulated. Volunteers are needed to visit potential breeding locations in their areas to determine the presence or, just as importantly, the absence of Piping Plovers.

Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program: Rare Bird Inventory. As part of its ongoing inventory of rare plants and animals and unique natural communities, this state program is soliciting site-specific information on occurrences of a number of bird species that are considered endangered, rare, or declining. They are particularly interested in monitoring population trends and documenting and mapping specific breeding sites for the following species:

Common Loon	Willet
Pied-billed Grebe	Black Skimmer
Great Blue Heron	Common Barn-Owl
American Bittern	Short-eared Owl
Least Bittern	Long-eared Owl
Cooper's Hawk	Sedge Wren
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Gray-cheeked Thrush
Northern Harrier	Loggerhead Shrike
Common Moorhen	Northern Parula
King Rail	Golden-winged Warbler
Piping Plover	Henslow's Sparrow
American Oystercatcher	Grasshopper Sparrow
Upland Sandpiper	Vesper Sparrow

Inventory information is maintained in a mapped and computerized data base and is used in environmental reviews, site protection planning, and the wildlife management and research activities of the state's Nongame and Endangered Species Program.

Interested observers who wish to help or have field reports to make can receive additional information and standardized field and census forms by contacting

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Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program  
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife  
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#### NOW AVAILABLE! NEW MAPS OF U. S. WETLANDS

Wetlands are probably the most biologically productive lands on earth. They shelter and nurture fish, shellfish, and migratory birds and also provide natural flood and erosion control and help to purify water. Of the 215 million acres of wetlands that originally existed in the United States, there are now only 99 million acres left, and an additional 458,000 acres (an area half the size of Rhode Island) are lost to development, drainage, and agriculture each year.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has prepared a series of maps to show the location of these remaining fragile wetland areas and to describe their geography, hydrology, and vegetation. These maps (10,000 in all) cover portions of 46 states - about thirty percent of the area of the Lower 48, six percent of Alaska, and the entire state of Hawaii. They include parts of the coastal zone, the floodplains of major rivers, and the Midwest's "prairie pothole" region. Prepared by using stereoscopic analysis of high-altitude aerial photographs and resembling large scale blueprints, the maps show wetlands ranging in size from thousands of acres to less than one acre at scales of 1:24,000 to 1:100,000 and are printed on U.S. Geological Survey base maps.

National Wetland Inventory Maps may be ordered from the National Cartographic Information Center, U.S. Geological Survey, 507 National Center, Reston, Virginia 22092 (phone: 703-860-6045). To place an order, consult the U.S. Geological Survey's map index for the map names. Information on prices, which vary, can be obtained at the above office.