

**Maryland's First Record of Snowy Plover, *Charadrius nivosus***

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On 4 May 2015, we discovered an adult male Snowy Plover (*Charadrius nivosus*) in alternate plumage on Hart-Miller Island, Baltimore County, Maryland. We first noticed a pale plover very close to us but it flew and dropped down on the far side of a dike and was not visible. Graff followed it and described the location where it dropped. At this point, we thought that we may have a Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*). We focused our scopes on the area which Graff described and the bird walked up from the far side of the berm. We noticed dark legs and a thin dark bill. We all got very excited and started calling out the field marks. Someone mentioned the dark patch behind the eye. By this time, Culler and Hanfman were taking many photos of the bird (Maryland Biodiversity Project 2015; Figure 1). Ringler got out Graff's Crossley (2011) guide and we reviewed the field marks. We also consulted the Sibley (2011) application from our cell phone. All four of the observers contributed to the shorebird's identification. It was a pale-backed small plover; dark legs; small narrow black bill; black patches on the sides of the neck; black behind the eyes; small black patch on top of the head; white throat, belly, and under rump. The black crown patch, ear coverts, and foreneck patches indicated a male (Page et al. 2009). A brief flight showed a bold white wing stripe, gray back, and white on the sides of its tail with a black tip. We eliminated Piping Plover by its dark legs and dark bill. Although there are currently no North American records, we also eliminated Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) of Eurasia since our bird was very gray above, did not appear to be especially long-legged, and was a male that lacked a brown head and nape, nor a breeding plumage cinnamon crown (Page et al. 2009).

The Snowy Plover was observed on 4 May and 6-8 May 2015. A total of 43 birders were able to observe it.



**Figure 1. Snowy Plover, *Charadrius nivosus*.** Hart-Miller Island, Baltimore County, Maryland, 4 May 2015 (photographed by Jeff Culler).

### NORMAL RANGE

Snowy Plover is found from the Gulf Coast of Florida to coastal Alabama, Mississippi, Texas and down to the Yucatan peninsula, and from Baja California, north to California, Oregon, and Washington. Inland populations are found in Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Colorado, and Kansas (eBird 2015). All states west of the Mississippi River have had sightings of Snowy Plover. We made the assumption that our Snowy Plover was the Gulf Coast/Florida race since its back was gray, unlike the browner back of the Pacific Coast/Great Basin race (Page et al. 2009).

### NORTHEAST AND ATLANTIC COAST RECORDS

Snowy Plover is very rare in the northeastern states (Table 1). Along the Atlantic Coast there have been sightings in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Connecticut, and Massachusetts (Table 1), and in Nova Scotia, Canada (Kingburg Beach, September 2010; NSBS 2015). Table 1 shows the state-bird-records-committee-accepted records for Snowy Plover north of

Florida. In Florida, Snowy Plovers are a non-review species (FOSRC 2013); they breed on the Gulf Coast and also are observed on the Atlantic Coast. Non-records-committee-accepted reports are not included in the list.

**Table 1. State-bird-records-committee-accepted records of Snowy Plover for the Northeast and Atlantic Coast states north of Florida (listed north to south).**

State	Date	Location	Citation
Maine	(no records)	(no records)	MBRC 2015
Vermont	(no records)	(no records)	VBRC 2014
New Hampshire	(no records)	(no records)	NHRBC 2010
Massachusetts	11, 21, 23 JUN- 10 JUL 1994,	Chatham, Mashpee, Yarmouth, Barnstable Co.	MARC 2013
Rhode Island	(no records)	(no records)	RIARC 2015
Connecticut	1 OCT- 7 NOV 2004	Sandy Point, West Haven, New Haven Co.	ARCC 2015
New York	(no records)	(no records)	NYSARC 2015
Pennsylvania (eastern only)	29 JUN 1986	The Pinnacle, Berks Co.	PORC 2015
New Jersey	(no records)	(no records)	NJBRC 2015
Maryland/DC	4, 6-8 MAY 2015	Hart-Miller Island, Baltimore Co.	submitted to MD/DCRC DBRC 2013
Delaware	(no records)	(no records)	DBRC 2013
West Virginia	(no records)	(no records)	WVBRC 2015
Virginia	19-25 JUN 1995	Cedar Island, Accomack Co.	VARCOM 2014
North Carolina	30 APR- 3 MAY 1994	New Drum Inlet, Carteret Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	late MAY 2006	Cape Hatteras point, Dare Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	7 APR 2007	Wrightsville Beach, New Hanover Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	17 SEP 2008	Ocracoke Inlet spit, Hyde Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	22 SEP 2008	Bear Island, Hammocks Beach SP, Onslow Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	18 FEB 2013	Hammocks Beach SP, nr. Swansboro, Onslow Co.	CBCBRC 2014
North Carolina	3 SEP 2013	North Topsail Beach, Onslow Co	CBCBRC 2014
South Carolina	winter 1992	North Island, Georgetown Co.	CBCBRC 2014
South Carolina	27 FEB- 20 MAR 2009	Kiawah Island, Charleston Co.	CBCBRC 2014
South Carolina	15 DEC 2009- 27 JAN 2010	Kiawah Island, Charleston Co.	CBCBRC 2014
South Carolina	10 AUG 2010	Kiawah Island, Charleston Co.	CBCBRC 2014
Georgia	29 DEC 2007	Jekyll Island, Glynn Co.	GCRC 2014
Georgia	2 DEC 2010	Jekyll Island, Glynn Co.	GCRC 2014
Florida		(breeds on Gulf Coast; non review)	FOSRC 2013

Records have occurred in every month, with May, June, September, and December each having three records. Winter records occurred primarily in South Carolina and Georgia. The earliest accepted record occurred in 1986.

Looking at the decades, one record occurred in the 1980s, four in the 1990s, eight in the 2000s, and six, so far, in the 2010s.

Other 2015 reported sightings (not officially accepted records) occurred on Little Tybee Island, Chatham County, Georgia (15-16 January), and Mason Inlet Waterbird Management Area (1-5 June) and Figure Eight Island-South End (8-9 June), both New Hanover County, North Carolina (eBird 2015).

In 2009, 39 birders across Maryland participated in Maryland's Next 10 Bird Species (Hafner and Hubick 2009). Snowy Plover came in as the 28<sup>th</sup> next expected species, as voted by the Maryland birders. Maybe Snowy Plover should have gotten a greater consideration. There are currently 448 species on the Official List of the Birds of Maryland (MD/DCRC 2015), and if accepted by the Maryland/District of Columbia Records Committee, this would be a new addition to that list.

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