

**Snowy Plover – *Charadrius alexandrinus***

1 alternate male, second-year?

May 16, 2008

Seen by myself from 5:30pm - 7:30pm, seen at 6:30am on May 17<sup>th</sup> by Stuart Mackenzie

Long Point Provincial Park along beach at marker “E” - roughly 500m. East of maintenance buildings.

Habitat: sandy beach with no vegetation, quite a bit of driftwood laying throughout beach

Weather: 18 degrees, SW wind at a 2 on the Beaufort scale, 100% cloud cover. Weather, particularly wind direction had been quite unsettled for the 24hrs leading up to the sighting.

Lighting: excellent, sun was at our backs for the entire observation.

Distance: 30-100m.

Optics: Leica Trinovid 10X42, and Swarovski 20-60X80 scope

Circumstance: I had just gotten back to Old Cut from dropping my brother off in Hamilton (!), when I was talking to Anna Calvert (another volunteer with LPBO). I asked her if she saw anything cool while walking throughout LPPP, she subsequently told me that she had seen a plover that was very white on the beach but didn't know what it was. I immediately “tuned-in” and started asking her questions such as; if she had seen Piping Plover before – which she had and said the bird was “whiter” and a little different. I immediately went to grab my bins and head over to where she had observed the bird, about 45 minutes before. Another guy, Chris ??? (he's working on the Prothonotary Warbler recovery team) came with me. We started walking along the beach just before the Provincial park boundary heading east. After about 400m of walking, I spotted the

bird about 200m east of where Chris and I were standing. We still couldn't tell which species it was due to the heat waves distorting the views. Trying not to spook the bird we climbed up on the dunes and worked our way east. Moving a little closer to the bird, I was able to get a good view and clearly see the incomplete breast band and "whiter" overall appearance to ID the bird as a Snowy Plover! Chris and I continued to get good looks at the bird for some 5-10 minutes. After that I ran back to Old Cut to get Stu Mackenzie, who phoned several other birders in the area. Stu and I went back with our scopes and camera where I was able to get good pictures. About 20-30 minutes later; Jody Allair, Ron Ridout and Denis Lepage had all seen the bird. We left the bird at around 7:30pm with the bird sitting on the beach, as it had been for the past 2 hours.

#### Description:

- roughly same size as a Semipalmated or Piping Plover
- overall very white, especially from a far distance
- underparts were a "snowy" white
- in the field legs appeared dark, although when looking at pictures they are a more grayish in colouring
- bill thinner compared to Piping's and all black
- eye dark black
- wings and mantle a sandy gray
- edging of individual feathers on wing were white and contrasted slightly with the rest of the feathers
- wings appeared to have a blackish edging
- greater primary coverts appeared a darker brown compared to the rest of the wing – could this be an indication of a second year or first-alternate bird?
- tail stubby, didn't really see it in the field
- head almost oval in shape
- cap was a sandy brown colouring – the same colouration as the wings and mantle
- nape was a "snowy" white separating the sandy brown colouring from the mantle and the crown
- "snowy" lores, with a black spot just above the lores

- Black spots in the auricular and on the side of the breast
- Black spot on the side of the breast gave the bird an incomplete necklace

Behaviour: Overall the bird seemed pretty tired. Most of the time while watching it, the bird was sitting along the beach. I did observe the bird on several occasions make short but fast bursts of running along the beach. The bird also fell asleep on one occasion and would stand on one leg for short periods of time. On one of two occasions the bird seemed agitated and would run a short distance, stop, and erect its head up and down fairly fast several times.

Similar species: Distinguished from a Piping Plover by the overall whiter appearance, the broken breast band, and all black bill.

Experience with species: none

Date report written: May 21, 2008, taken from field notes

Observer:

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Snowy Plover May 16, 2008. Long Point PP. Ken Burrell



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