



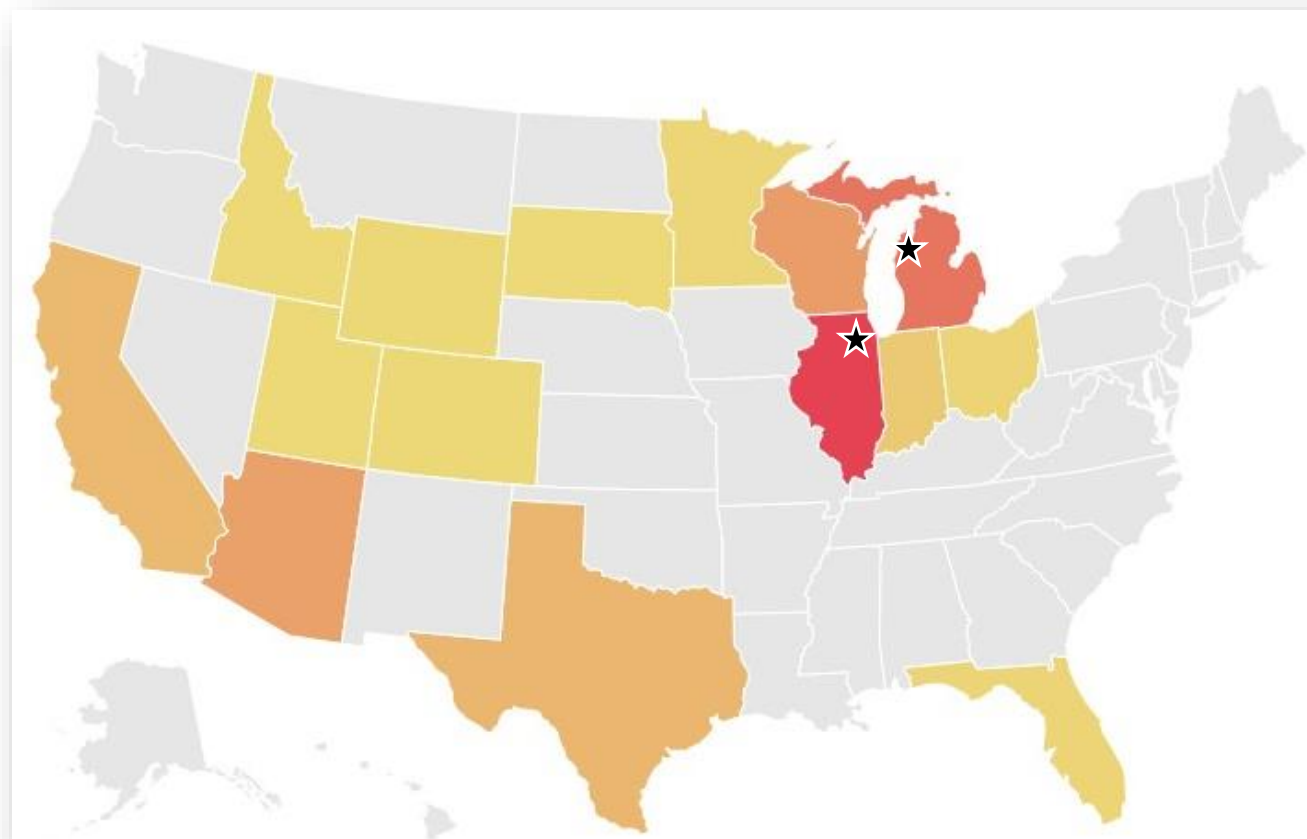
Protecting the Piping Plover

My experience in Piping
Plover Stewardship

Photo: Karl Hausler

Intro

- Bruce Rowland, resident of St. Charles, IL & Beulah, MI
- Birding since I was young
- Started listing in college
- Recently joined Benzie County Audubon



Source: eBird.org

Great Lakes Piping Plover Stewardship Program



- 2022 Pilot Program
- Established, funded & trained by Audubon Great Lakes
- Volunteers at a pop-up site in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore
- Sharing information about Piping Plovers and protection efforts

Photo: ©Mary Lundeberg

Collaborating Parties

- US Fish & Wildlife Service
- Audubon Great Lakes
- National Park Service
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Great Lakes Piping Plover Conservation Team
- The Detroit Zoo
- University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Central Michigan University
- Volunteers!

Audubon Great Lakes



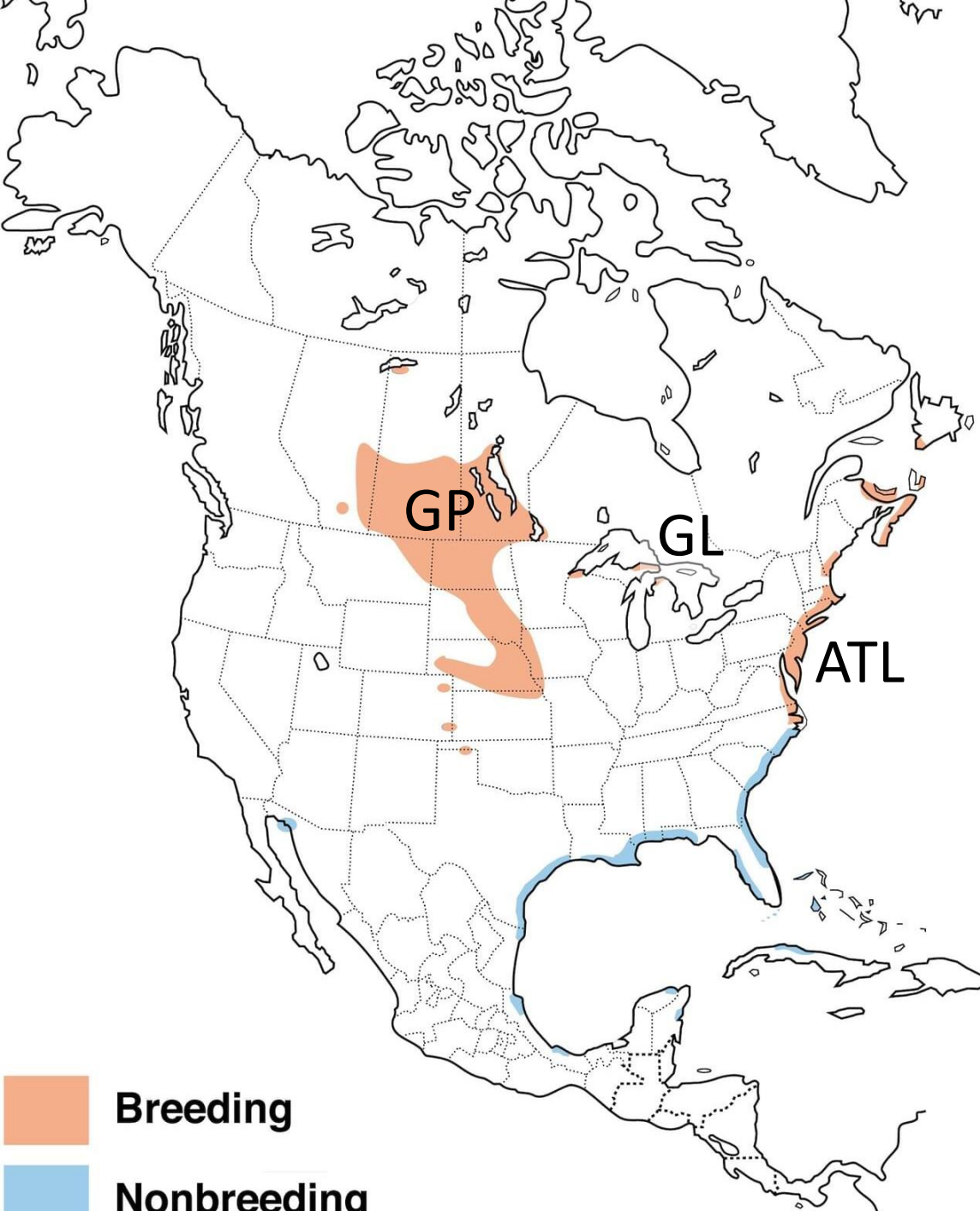
Adult Piping Plover

- Single black neck band
- Small black band between eyes
- Short plover beak: orange base, black tip
- Yellow-orange legs
- Light gray-brown back

Photo: ©Mary Lundeborg

Lundeborg





Range and Populations

- Three breeding (mid-April to mid-August) populations – Great Plains, Atlantic Coast, and Great Lakes (smallest)
- Wintering grounds (mid-July to April) along Gulf coast and from Florida to Carolinas on Atlantic coast

Source: allaboutbirds.com, Sarah Saunders

Nesting Habits & Habitat

- Scrape in the beach sand
- Best with debris from vegetation and beach pebbles
- Pair takes turns incubating nest
- Usually 4 eggs, second clutch is unlikely unless nest is abandoned or compromised

Photo: USGS.gov





Threats

- Habitat
 - Beach raking
 - Litter, invasive plants
 - Beach traffic & weather
 - Need area left natural for cover and foraging
- Predators
 - Raccoon, Skunk, Fox, Coyote
 - Gull, Merlin, Killdeer
 - Dogs, feral cats
 - Most threats are to chicks

Nest Protection

- Enclosure placed over each nest
- Plovers can enter and leave at will, most predators blocked
- Large area around nest is roped off to public with signage
- Nesting sites are located and watched daily by monitors

Mary Lundeborg

Photo: ©Mary Lundeborg



Monitoring

- Starting in April, search for presence of plovers and nests
- Verify that male and female continue to be present at nest each day – may take several hours per nest
- Monitoring finished in late July with migration



Photo: gl.Audubon.org

Captive-Rearing

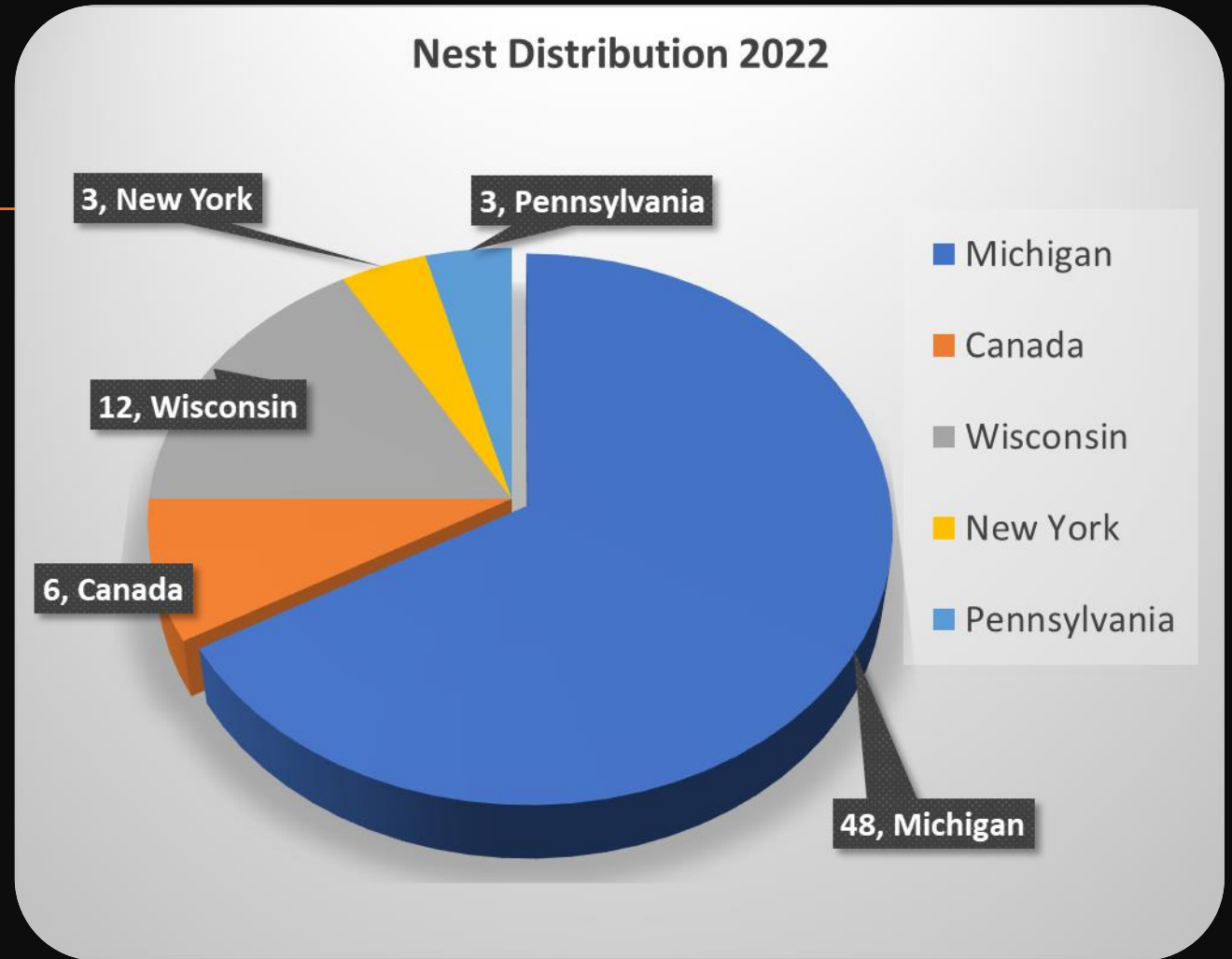
- Chicks or eggs collected from abandoned nests or when one parent is missing
- Brought to the University of Michigan Biological Station where Detroit Zoo manages captive-rearing facility
- Successful chicks then returned to a nesting site with others in the process of fledging



Photo: ©Mary Lundeborg

Breeding Pair Statistics - 2022

- 72 pairs in the Great Lakes region in 2022, now on each Great Lake
- 48 in Michigan
- 31 pairs in Sleeping Bear Dunes
- Up from fewer than 20 pairs in the 1980s



Source: Sarah Saunders



Brood & Fledging Success - 2022

- 233 wild chicks hatched
- 150 wild chicks fledged
- Fledge rate of 2.08 chicks per pair
- 10 captive-reared fledglings

Migration Reports

- 1st Great Lakes Piping Plover reported in non-breeding territory - 7/13/22, Tybee Island, GA
- 1st juvenile reported – a captive bred chick – 8/2/22, S. Topsail Island, NC



Photo: Pam Vercellone-Smith

Migration Reports

- 1st Great Lakes Piping Plover to return to Sleeping Bear this year was a female (pictured here) near Glen Haven on April 8th, 2023 (hatched on N. Manitou in 2016)
- A banded male was reported on eBird by Craig Campeau on April 10th on the beach near Old Indian Trail



Photo: Vince Cavalieri, NPS (from MLive)

Thanks for the help and support to:

- Sarah Saunders, PhD, Quantitative Ecologist, *Audubon Great Lakes*
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 - Vince Cavalieri (Wildlife Biologist), Chelsea Loomis & Tess Kohler, (NPS Rangers), *Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore*
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Share the Love, Share the Shore

What can YOU
do?

- Take the protection Pledge
 - <https://act.audubon.org/a/pledge-protect-great-lakes-piping-plovers> (Google “piping plover pledge”)
- Keep a safe distance from the birds
- Keep dogs off beach nesting sites
- Help to identify migrants
 - Report the band combo or take a photo and send to: plover@umn.edu