

- Bill - black, short
- Back & wings - light brownish gray
- Large black eye
- Legs dark
- Underparts white
- darker cap and cheeks
- black slash on both sides of lower neck
- In flight rump appeared dark
- Very pale color when flying with least Sandpipers

### Why not a Piping Plover?

- Legs dark - piping has yellow legs
- breastband not as complete as piping

### Why not Semipalmated Plover?

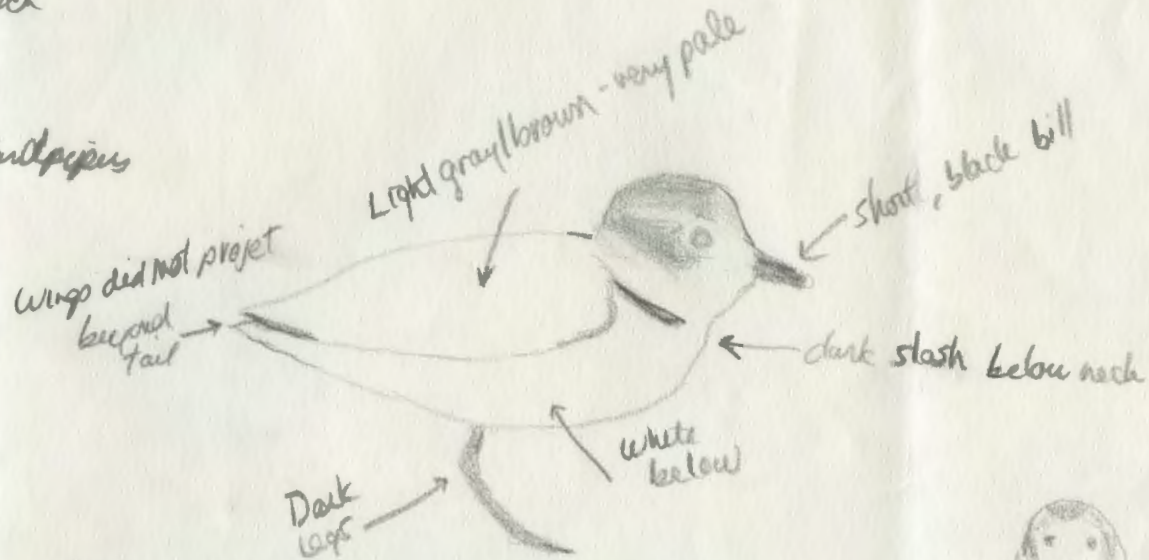
- Legs dark - semipalmated has yellow/orange legs
- Semip. Plover is darker brown above
- Semipalmated Plover has dark, complete breastband

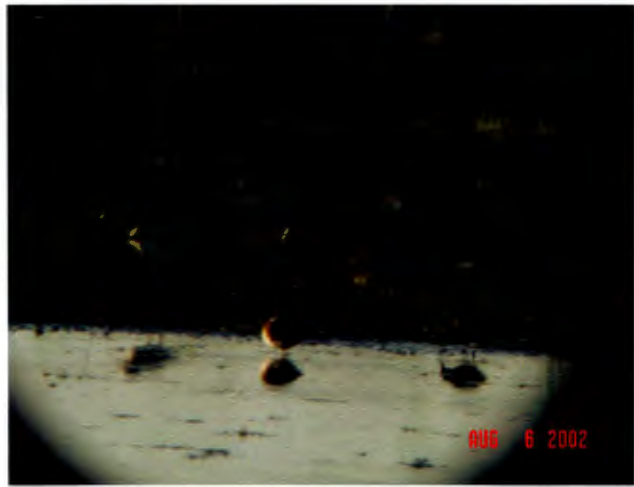
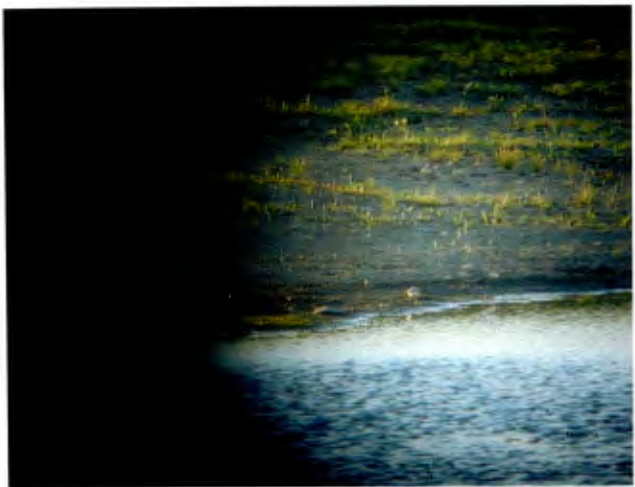
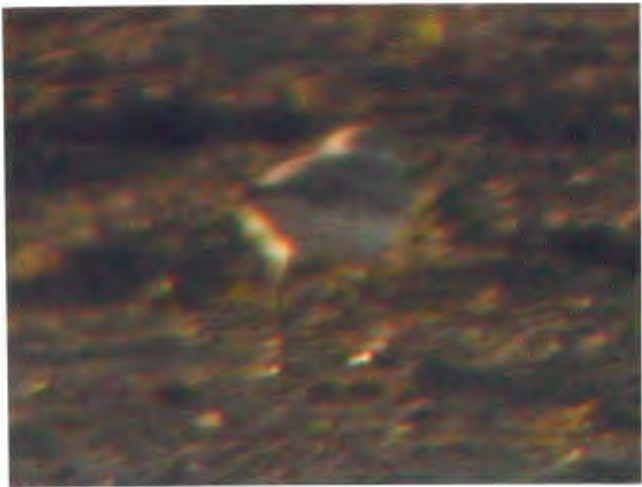
Snowy Plover

Imperial - Alliegheny Co

August 6, 2002

Mike Fiall









SNOWY PLOVER  
257-01-2002  
Imperial, Allegany Co  
8/6/2002  
Mark McLoughlin



257-01-2002

## Snowy Plover

*Charadrius alexandrinus*

Pond near Imperial, Allegheny County, PA

6 August 2002

Photos by Mark A. McConaughy

This Snowy Plover was found by John Yuhaniak at a pond along Bald Knob Road during the morning of 6 August 2002. John called Geoff Malosh who came out and confirmed the identification of the bird as a Snowy Plover. Malosh notified other local birders. Deuane Hoffman eventually heard about it from the local birders and put it out on the web. I managed to get over to see the bird just before sunset on 6 August 2002. The specimen was clearly a pale-colored, small plover. It had a light-colored mantle, small, black bill, an incomplete pale breast band and dark legs which eliminated Piping (orange with black-tipped bill, orange legs), Semipalmated (orange with black-tipped bill, yellowish-orange legs, darker mantle) and Wilson's Plovers (much heavier and larger bill, pinkish legs, darker mantle). The lack of any rufous or buff color around the face and breast and light mantle eliminated Mongolian Plover (rufous or buff around face depending on molt, darker mantle) as a possibility. The bird depicted in the enclosed photos also has a slightly darker "cheek" patch than the rest of the light brownish-gray mantle which also is typical of Snowy Plovers. The tail had white outer feathers with light brownish-gray interior tail feathers. The belly was white. This is a great bird for Allegheny County!

The size of the bird was determined by comparing it to other shorebirds at the pond. It was much smaller than the Killdeer and Lesser Yellowlegs that were

present. It was about the same size to slightly larger than that of the Least Sandpipers that were present. A comparison between a blurry Least Sandpiper (left, in the water) and Snowy Plover (right, on shore) can be seen in photo snplov09.jpg. Thus, it is the appropriate size for a Snowy Plover. You can also get a comparison of the bird with a Killdeer (left of photo) and plover (far right, hard to see along the shore) in snplov01.jpg. The Snowy Plover also was very active, running back and forth along the shore of the pond. It occasionally made a dip in the pond to bathe.

The photos enclosed on the CD were all taken just before sunset on 6 August 2002. The low sun cast a reddish glare over the pond while these photos were taken. Because of the low sun and need to computer lighted the shots to make them viewable (the only "raw" shot I saved was snplov03.jpg; snplov03t.jpg was a lightened and trimmed version of that shot if you want to see what I had to work with), it tinged the bird with rufous in some of the pictures. The reddish tinge is not the actual color of the bird, which was much paler and clearer when viewed straight through the scope. All of the pictures except snplov18.jpg were taken by holding a Sony DSC-707 up to the 32X objective of my Leica Spotting Scope. The lens of the camera was set at 10X and this yielded an effective magnification of 320X in all those pictures. All of the photos are blurry or less than sharp due to the low light levels and movement by the bird. However, I think they are still useful in determining the identity of the bird (and they may be the only photos of the bird you will get). The last photo, snplov18.jpg, was taken by holding my Fuji DX9 camera up to the 32X objective with its lens set at 3X for an effective magnification of 96X. The Snowy Plover is only a small dot in the photos I took with the Fuji camera, so I did not include the other shots. I doubt they would be of much use.

Snowy Plover  
Imperial Grasslands, Imperial, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania  
August 6, 2002.

257-01-2002

Author:  
Geoff Malosh  
431 Brookside Court  
Mars, PA 16046  
724.776.3479  
maloshgk@stargate.net

Location:  
The first large round pond on Bald Knob Road, approximately 200 yards west of the intersection of Bald Knob Road and Burgettstown Road, in Allegheny County.

Weather and other facts:

Temperature: ~70F  
Wind: N or NW 15-20MPH  
Sky: Almost entirely clear, very few clouds around  
Recent weather: Heavy thunderstorms and high winds the previous night ahead of a strong cold front that caused a fifteen to twenty degree drop in high temperature from the previous day.

Time: 11:20 AM to 12:10 PM

Equipment: Kowa TSN-824 spotting scope with 20-60x zoom eyepiece, set to 60x

Distance: Anywhere between about 75 and 125 yards from the bird, viewed from a slight rise above the pond.

Photos or audio recordings: none

Other observers at and before the above time: John Yuhaniak (discoverer), Greg Malosh

Physical attributes:

- \*\* Very small, pale plover of comparable size to semipalmated sandpipers which were nearby. Size and overall light color eliminate all other plovers except piping plover.
- \*\* Relatively long-legged for its size. The bird had a top- or front-heavy posture, as if it were constantly leaning forward. Never stood erect.
- \*\* Dark legs. Exact color could not be determined, except to say that they were indeed dark. The bird moved in and out of the water several times and the dark color remained (i.e., no dirt washed off). The dark legs eliminate piping and semipalmated plovers.
- \*\* Short, thin, dark bill. The exact shape of the bill could not be determined due to distance. Size of bill taken with overall color eliminates Wilson's plover.
- \*\* Appeared relatively large-headed.
- \*\* Short wings that did not extend beyond the tail.
- \*\* Pure white on all underparts.
- \*\* Light brown-gray on the mantle, scapulars, and tertials.
- \*\* Same light brown-gray colored crown, white lores, gray-brown cheek. Lighter-colored (compared to cheek and crown) supercilium.
- \*\* Same light brown-gray partial neckband which did not connect across the neck, but rather appeared as two patches on either side of the neck.
- \*\* Thin white collar across the back of the neck (nape).

Behavior:

- \*\* Skittish. The bird was easily spooked by passing shorebirds, and was repeatedly harassed by the resident, breeding killdeer.
- \*\* Fatigued. When not feeding or avoiding other shorebirds, the bird would actually lay down in the mud instead of simply standing. The bird also moved erratically between actively feeding and laying idle in the mud.

Other circumstances:

I observed the pond that morning from about 7 AM to 7:30 AM and nothing

however, I had received two calls at work, one from my brother Greg and another from John Yuhaniak, both of whom had observed the plover together at around 8 AM. Greg was more convinced of a snowy plover but had to leave the area and could not return until the later afternoon. John Yuhaniak also believed it was a snowy plover but was less sure, and, unlike Greg, had no previous experience with this species.

As a result of these calls I returned to the area at 11:20 AM and almost immediately located the plover. I confirmed the ID as a snowy plover and then spread the word via my cellular telephone. I also noted the presence of many more shorebirds at the pond than were present at 7:30. In addition to the snowy plover, there were three pectoral sandpipers, three or four semipalmated sandpipers, five or six least sandpipers, and two lesser yellowlegs in addition to the killdeer. This suggested a fallout of shorebirds moving in the storms the previous night into the first suitable habitat they could find.

I returned to the site from about 5:30 PM to 6:15 PM and observed the plover again. By this time the news had spread to all corners of the state, and a few dozen other birders had seen the bird and confirmed its ID.



- Back v wing - light brownish gray ;

- large black eye

- legs dark

- Underparts white

- darker cap and cheeks

- black slash on ~~both~~ sides of lower neck

- In flight rump appeared dark

- Very pale color when flying with least Scaupens

Why not a Piping Plover?

- legs dark - piping has yellow legs

- breastband not as complete or piping

Why not Semipalmated Plover?

- legs dark - semipalmated has yellow rump/orange legs

- Scaup Plover is darker brown above

- Semipalmated Plover has dark, complete breastband

Imperial-Allegan  
August 6, 2002  
Mike



## DELAWARE COUNTY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The 81st annual Delaware County Christmas Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 14, 2002.

Our count area is defined by a 15 mile diameter circle centered in Wallingford. I hope that you can participate as a feeder watcher this year. Please keep a record of the birds seen at your feeders and in your neighborhood on the count day. Be certain of your identifications. Some species are difficult to identify or to distinguish from similar species. Examples of similar species include Downy Woodpecker/Hairy Woodpecker, Black-capped Chickadee/Carolina Chickadee, Purple Finch/House Finch and various sparrows.

A form is enclosed for your report. Supporting details must be provided for unusual species and some species may need to be verified by another observer.

The suggested participation fee for feeder watchers is \$5.00 per person. This optional fee goes to the National Audubon Society to help defray costs associated with administering the count and publishing the results in North American Birds. Please make checks payable to the National Audubon Society.

Mail your completed report and payment to me at the address listed below promptly. All count participants will receive a copy of the final results.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your cooperation and have fun.

Nick Pulcinella  
613 Howard Road  
West Chester, PA 19380  
610-696-0687  
email: [nickpul@bellatlantic.net](mailto:nickpul@bellatlantic.net)

**Michael P. Fialkovich**  
**805 Beulah Road**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15235**  
**(412) 731 - 3581**  
**mpfial@sgi.net**

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December 16, 2002

Nick Pulcinella  
Rare Bird Reports Editor, Pennsylvania Birds; PORC Secretary  
613 Howard Road  
West Chester, PA 19380

Dear Nick,

Enclosed are descriptions for a Snowy Plover and Red-necked Phalarope for review by the P.O.R.C.

Both birds were in Allegheny County. Unfortunately, I could not get any photographs.

If it would help, I can email the written descriptions. I included both as hard copies since I could not email my original sketches and notes for the Snowy Plover.

Please contact me if you have any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Mike Fialkovich

Enclosures