

# PIPING PLOVER

*Charadrius melodus* (Threatened Colorado, Federally)

**P**LOVERS BELONG TO A group of birds commonly referred to as shorebirds. Most members of this group are normally found inhabiting beaches, lake shores, marshes and other wetland areas. The piping plover is one of the small plovers that can be found in Colorado.

About 7.25 inches in length, the piping plover is often described as being the color of dry beach sand, a pale gray-brown. When in its breeding plumage, the plumage most likely to be seen in Colorado, it has bright yellowish legs, a black breastband that may or may not go completely across the breast, a black bar across the forehead from eye to eye and a bill that is bright orange at the base with a black tip.

Normally, piping plovers arrive in

Colorado in early April. Those that nest here, mostly in southeastern Colorado, look for sandy beaches, preferably on islands, to make shallow depressions in the sand as their nests. An important component of this habitat is sparse vegetation. Piping plovers depend on their coloration for camouflage and protection. The nesting and young rearing takes about three months, and all piping plovers leave Colorado by late September or early October.

Human recreational activities at reservoirs, such as beach camping and ATV/OHV use, can negatively impact piping plovers and their nesting and brood rearing. By temporarily closing nesting areas to these uses, piping plovers can be afforded some protection at a vulnerable period in their life cycle.

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**Piping plovers nest on the sandy beaches of some of Colorado's southeastern reservoirs.**

