

Audubon Coastal Bird Survey: The Basics of Plover Identification

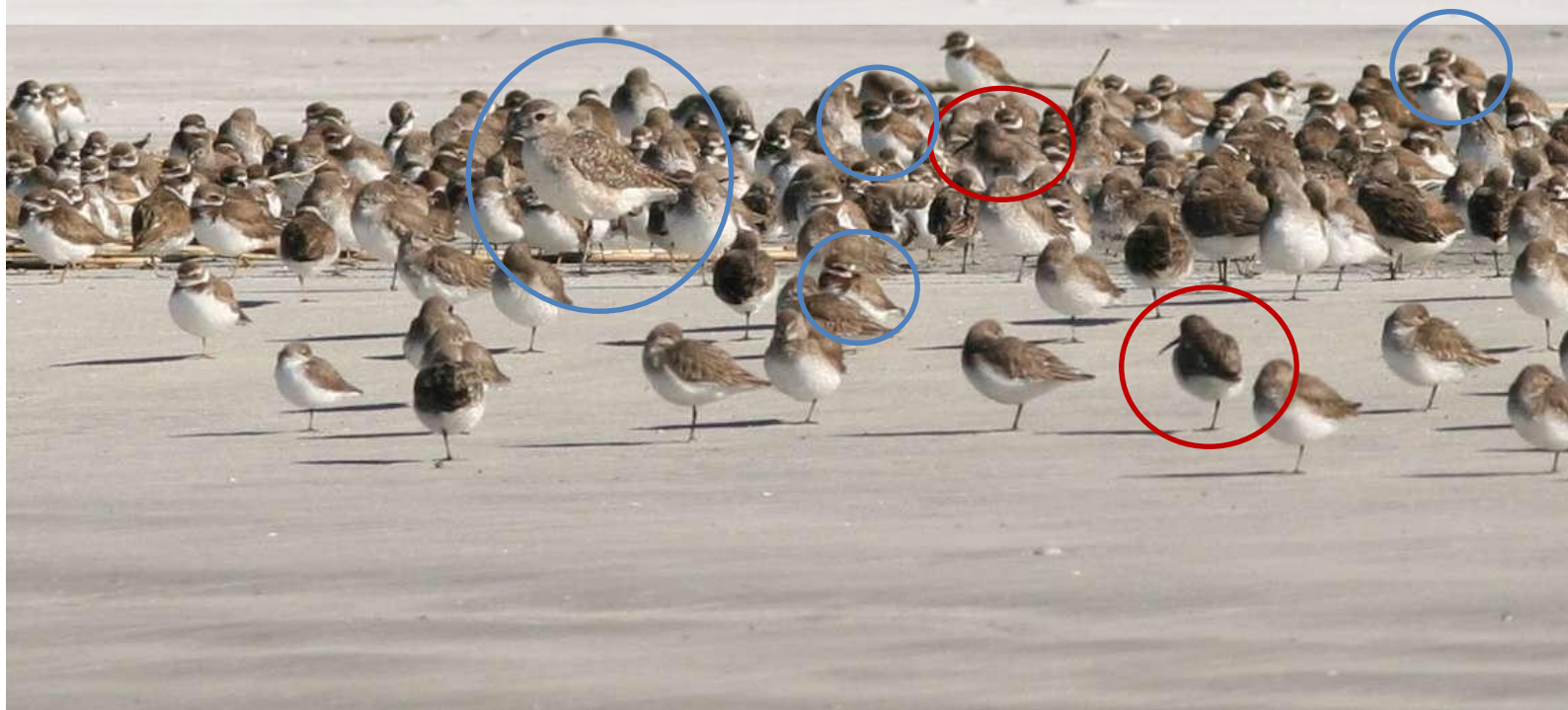


Identifying Shorebirds

- Size- compare to nearby known species.
- Structure- bill, leg length, body shape?
- Colors- feathering, legs, bill?
- Pattern-uniform, harlequin, hooded, bicolored?
- Habitat- beach, pond, pasture, marine, fresh?
- Behavior- feeding style, associations, density?
- Seasonality- migration window, mid-winter?
- Range- flyway specific?
- Age- buff, clean feather lines, scaly coverts...

Identifying Shorebirds

- Thin-bills
- Especially small sandpipers move quickly and non-stop (sparrow or warbler-like)
- Short, thick bills
- Pause between foraging attempts (robin-like)
- Note “ringed” look of small plovers



Breaking Down the Plovers

- Large Plovers
 - Black-bellied Plover
 - American Golden-Plover

- A little bigger than Killdeer
 - Willet- or Greater Yellowlegs-sized

- Small (“ringed”) plovers
 - Piping Plover
 - Snowy Plover
 - Semipalmated Plover
 - Wilson’s Plover

- Smaller than Killdeer
 - Sanderling (Wilson’s) or “peep”-sized



Killdeer – the Familiar Plover



Two dark rings



Rufous rump

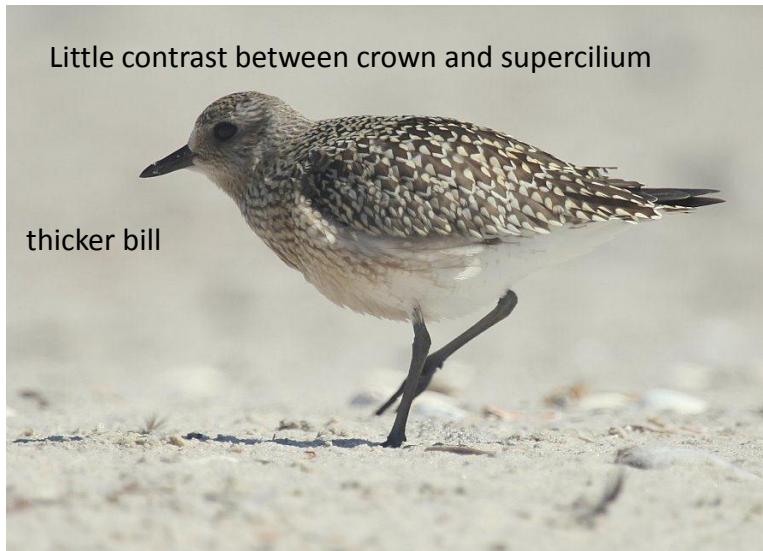
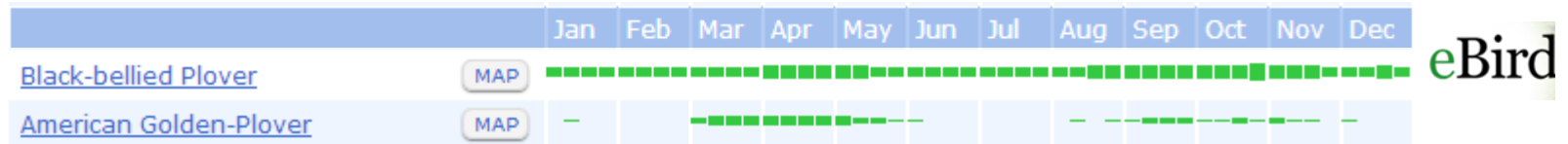
Large Plovers (genus *Pluvialis*)

Black-bellied Plover

- Common on beaches

American Golden-Plover

- Very rare on beaches



Juvenile or winter plumages look very similar between these two species

Large Plovers (genus *Pluvialis*)

Black-bellied Plover

- Common on beaches

Cautions

- back color is extremely deceiving
- bill shape is difficult to judge without a direct comparison
- BUT...99.9% of large plovers on beaches are Black-bellied Plover



Black-bellied Plover



Black-bellied Plovers

Large Plovers continued

Black-bellied Plover will have dark “wingpits” in all plumages

Black-bellied Plover



American Golden-Plover never has dark “wingpits”

Small Plovers

- Go by leg color then back color and bill size

Orange legs

- Semipalmated Plover (dark back)
- Piping Plover (pale back)

Gray/brown legs

- Wilson's Plover (dark back, largest bill)
- Snowy Plover (pale - slightly brownish back,
thinnest bill)

Semipalmated Plover



hawfinches.co.uk

Wilson's Plover



Richard Gibbons

Dave Patton



Piping Plover

Snowy Plover



Small Plovers: Species of Conservation Concern

Wilson's Plover



Piping Plover



Snowy Plover



N. A. Pop Size	~3000 pairs	~4000 pairs	~8500 pairs
Gulf Breeding Pop. Size	~2000 pairs	--	~750 pairs
Gulf Breeding Pop. Trend	Unknown (Declining?)	Increasing, but leveling	Unknown (Stable?)
Gulf Winter Pop. Size	~500	>1/2 global population	~2000
Non-breeding Pop. Trend in Gulf	Declining? (4.8%/year)	Declining? (1.4%/year)	Stable?

Plover Quiz: 1



Plover Quiz: 2



Plover Quiz: 3



Plover Quiz: 4



Plover Quiz: 5



Plover Quiz: 6



Plover Quiz: 7



Plover Quiz: 8



Plover Quiz: 9



Plover Quiz: 10



Plover Quiz: 11



Plover Quiz: 12



Plover Quiz: 13



Plover Quiz: Answers

No peaking!

Plover Quiz: 1



Piping Plover

Plover Quiz: 2



Semipalmated Plovers (and what look like Western Sandpipers - compare size with plover)

Plover Quiz: 3



Semipalmated Plover

Plover Quiz: 4



Black-bellied Plover

Plover Quiz: 5



Piping Plovers

Plover Quiz: 6



American Golden-Plover

Plover Quiz: 7



Snowy Plover

Plover Quiz: 8



Black-bellied Plover

Plover Quiz: 9



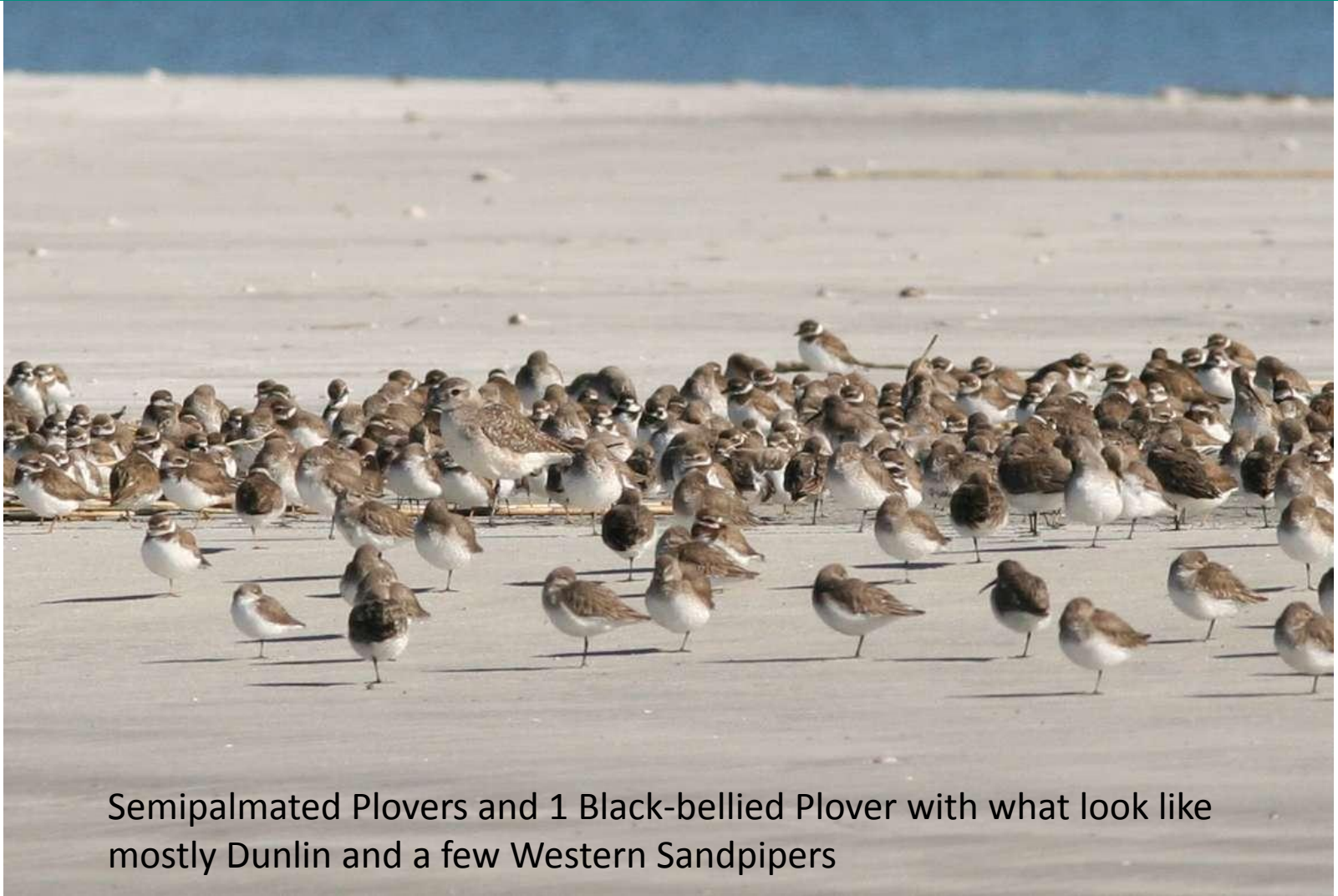
Wilson's Plover

Plover Quiz: 10



Snowy Plover

Plover Quiz: 11



Semipalmated Plovers and 1 Black-bellied Plover with what look like mostly Dunlin and a few Western Sandpipers

Plover Quiz: 12



Wilson's Plover

Plover Quiz: 13



Piping Plover