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Kale, H. W., II, B. Pranty, B. M. Stith, and C. W. Biggs. 1992. The atlas of the breeding birds of Florida. Final Report. Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, Tallahassee, Florida.

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## Wilson's Plover *Charadrius wilsonia*

The Wilson's Plover, sometimes called the Thick-billed Plover, is restricted to the coastal regions of Florida. It also breeds on coasts from central Baja, northern Sonora, and New Jersey south to middle America, the West Indies, Panama, and Brazil.

**Habitat.** Wilson's Plover is locally common on beaches, sand flats, and fresh dredged-material islands on both coasts and on the Keys, with concentrations on barrier islands and around large bays. The birds feed on tidal mudflats and sandy beaches, where marine invertebrates are abundant. Fiddler crabs are a favorite food, but a wide variety of other invertebrates are also taken (Howell 1932).

The nest is a shallow scrape in the sand, usually unlined, and is often built on dunes or a sandy or rocky beach, frequently placed near a piece of driftwood, a grass clump, or other object. Although the species has twice been recorded nesting on rooftops in Dade County, this is very rare (Fisk 1978). Three eggs comprise a typical clutch, unlike most other plovers, which lay 4 eggs. The eggs are cream or buff-colored and heavily spotted and speckled with black, chocolate, and gray (Harrison 1978). Incubation duties are shared by both sexes and last 24 to 25 days. The chicks are highly precocial and flee the nest almost immediately after hatching. They are capable of flight at about 21 days of age (Ehrlich et al 1988). The distraction display is highly developed in this species and was one of the easiest means of confirming breeding, along with observing recently fledged young.

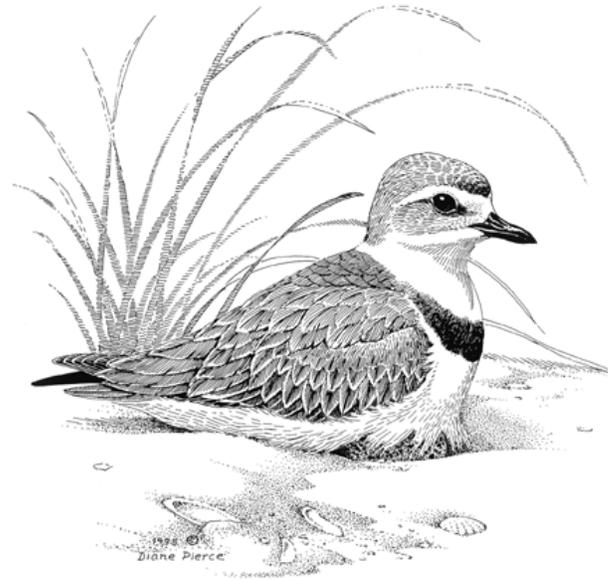


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**Seasonal Occurrence.** Egg dates range from 14 March through 28 June. Migration occurs as a spring influx, in February and March, and a southbound movement from mid-July to mid-September (Cruickshank in Stevenson and Anderson 1994).

**Status.** That no Wilson's Plovers were found in the vicinity of Choctawhatchee Bay may point to a continuation of the decline that Weston (1965) detected in northwestern Florida between 1916 and 1964. Wilson's Plovers are somewhat less widespread in Brevard County than one might expect. Cruickshank (1980) noted a sharp decrease in abundance of this species after 1960, which he attributed to human encroachment on its habitat. The Florida Committee on Rare and Endangered Plants and Animals is now reviewing the status of the Wilson's Plover, and will be listing it in a revision of the bird volume (Sprandel 1996).

Wilson's Plovers are seldom found far from salt water, so the breeding record of fledged young seen in the Hialeah Quadrangle in Dade County on 5 May 1989 (K. Sarsfield) is interesting because it is about 16 km (10 mi) inland.

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Sponsored by Caroline W. Wyatt

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