

## Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*



**Folk Name:** Little Ringneck

**Status:** Migrant

**Abundance:** Rare to Uncommon

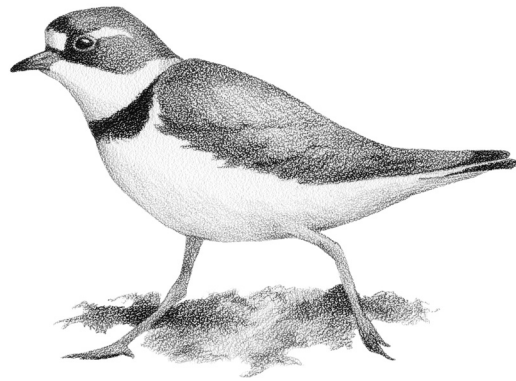
**Habitat:** Mudflats, lake edge

The Semipalmated Plover is commonly encountered during spring and fall migration along the coast of the Carolinas. At least one flock of 15,000 was counted in North Carolina in the twentieth century, and an “unbelievable” flock of an estimated 8,000 birds was found stopping at Fort Fisher in October 2003. This plover is a rare, but recently somewhat regular, spring and fall migrant here in the Central Carolinas. It is a small plover, about 7 ¼ inches long with a dark back, a dark breast band, orange legs, and a short orange bill with a black tip. It is usually found here on mudflats mixed in with flocks of other shorebirds.

We have reports of Semipalmated Plover from only seven counties in our region: all five counties along the Catawba River from Hickory to Charlotte and also Cleveland and Cabarrus counties. We have no reports of this bird from anywhere in the Yadkin–Pee Dee River corridor and no reports of it from our South Carolina counties. One possible reason may be that management of water levels on lakes in those areas results in less mudflat habitat being available—or this may simply be an artifact of fewer birders scoping out shorebirds in those areas.

Our spring records range from late April through late May. A Carolina Bird Club field trip spotted one in Pineville on May 15, 1982. David Wright’s Spring Bird Count party discovered a Semipalmated Plover at the McAlpine WWTP in Pineville on May 4, 1985. Three years later, David Wright found a Semipalmated Plover amongst a group of other shorebirds while he was conducting the Charlotte Spring Bird Count on May 7, 1988. JoAnn Martin found one moving through during spring migration at Lattimore in Cleveland County on April 25, 1996, and on May 6, 1997. Danny Swicegood found two on the muddy edge of the large observation pond at Cowan’s Ford Wildlife Refuge on May 18, 1999.

Fall birds usually move through from August through late September. Birders on a Mecklenburg Audubon field trip found three at the McAlpine WWTP in Pineville on August 2, 2010. Harriet Whitsett and Heathy Walker reported a Semipalmated Plover in Gaston County on the very late date of 27 October in 1984. This is our latest fall date on file. We have no other October records, and our latest September report is the 29th.



There have been about 50 reports since 2010, about 12 in the spring and the rest in the fall. Some of the fall reports appear to be of the same birds moving about. The largest group reported at a single sighting was a group of six found in Pineville on September 9, 2014. Kevin Metcalf provided this description of his sighting of two at Latta Plantation Nature Preserve in Huntersville on May 4, 2017:

On a mudflat along Gar Creek with migrant Least Sandpipers, Spotted Sandpipers, and Killdeer. Easily identified. Small size (a little larger than Least Sandpipers, much smaller than Killdeer) and single black breast band on otherwise white underparts. Even-toned gray-brown mantle. Stubby black bill with orange base and orangish legs (and not downy like young Killdeer). ...Local reservoirs have been drawn down lately, creating more shorebird habitat than usual.



*Semipalmated Plover in Mecklenburg County.*  
(Chris Talkington)