

	interior least tern ^(6, 7) whooping crane ^(8c, 9) Arkansas River shiner piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾ lesser prairie-chicken ⁽¹²⁾	Endangered Endangered Threatened, Critical habitat designated Threatened Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Canadian	black-capped vireo ⁽⁵⁾ Eskimo curlew interior least tern ^(6, 7) whooping crane ^(8c, 9) Arkansas River shiner piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾ lesser prairie-chicken ⁽¹²⁾	Endangered Endangered, Possibly extinct Endangered Endangered Threatened, Critical habitat designated Threatened Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Carter	interior least tern ⁽⁷⁾ whooping crane ⁽⁹⁾ piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾	Endangered Endangered Threatened
Cherokee	American burying beetle ^(1, B) gray bat interior least tern ⁽⁷⁾ Ozark big-eared bat piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾ Arkansas darter Neosho mucket mussel rabbitsfoot mussel	Endangered Endangered Endangered Endangered Threatened Candidate Candidate Candidate
Choctaw	American burying beetle ^(1, B) interior least tern ^(6, 7) scaleshell mussel winged mapleleaf mussel eastern prairie fringed orchid piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾	Endangered Endangered Endangered Endangered Threatened, Likely extirpated Threatened
Cimarron	interior least tern ⁽⁷⁾ piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾ lesser prairie-chicken ⁽¹¹⁾	Endangered Threatened Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Cleveland	black-capped vireo ^(4, 5) interior least tern ^(6, 7) whooping crane ^(8c, 9) Arkansas River shiner piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾	Endangered Endangered Endangered Threatened, Critical habitat designated Threatened
Coal	American burying beetle ^(1, B) interior least tern ⁽⁷⁾ whooping crane ⁽⁹⁾ piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾	Endangered Endangered Endangered Threatened
Comanche	black-capped vireo ^(4, 5) interior least tern ^(6, 7) whooping crane ^(8c, 9) piping plover ⁽¹⁰⁾ lesser prairie-chicken ⁽¹²⁾	Endangered Endangered Endangered Threatened Candidate, Warranted but precluded
Cotton	black-capped vireo ⁽⁵⁾	Endangered

Interior Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*)

Status: Endangered (50 FR 21784; May 28, 1985). Critical habitat has not been designated.

Description: The interior least tern is the smallest member of the tern family with a wingspan of 20 inches (50 cm). They have a grayish back and wings, and snowy white undersides. Least terns can be distinguished from all other terns by their combination of a black crown, white forehead, and a variable black-tipped yellow bill.



Life History: Interior least terns arrive at breeding sites from late April to early June where they typically spend four to five months. Pairs go through an elaborate courtship period that includes courtship feedings and a variety of postures and vocalizations. Least terns nest in small colonies on exposed salt flats, river sandbars, or reservoir beaches. Nests are small scrapes in the sand, and usually two or three eggs are laid. The young are fairly mobile soon after hatching. Both parents feed the young and remain with them until fall migration. Terns will travel four or more miles (6+ km) from their breeding colonies to find the small fish that make up the major part of their diet.

Habitat: Interior least terns favor islands or sandbars along large rivers for nesting. The sand must be mostly clear of vegetation to be used by terns. Least terns prefer shallow water for fishing. Water levels must be low enough so that nests stay dry.

Distribution: The historic distribution of the interior least tern was the major river systems of the midwestern United States. These rivers included the Red, Rio Grande, Arkansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Mississippi river systems. Currently, they occur as small remnant colonies throughout their former range. In Oklahoma, interior least terns nest along most of the larger rivers, as well as at the Salt Plains National Wildlife Refuge near Jet, Oklahoma. Interior least terns winter in South America.

Causes of Decline: Many nesting areas have been permanently flooded by reservoirs and channelization projects. Unpredictable water discharge patterns below dams flood nesting areas. Overgrowth of brush and trees also eliminates remaining habitat. This prevents terns from using these areas as nesting sites. The recreational use of sandbars by humans is a major threat to the tern's reproductive success.

Recovery Needs: Primary recovery tasks for interior least tern populations include determining population trends and habitat requirements, increasing breeding populations, and developing public awareness of the needs of least terns through educational programs.

Other information: The recovery plan for the interior least tern was released in 1990. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service is working with various state and federal agencies to monitor and protect the least tern. In Oklahoma, they are working with the Nature Conservancy to protect tern habitat along the Arkansas River near Tulsa, and along the Canadian River near Norman.

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Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*)

Status: Endangered in the watershed of the Great Lakes, threatened in the remainder of its range (50 FR 50726; December 11, 1985). Critical habitat has not been designated.

Description: The piping plover is a small shorebird about seven inches (18 cm) long with a wingspan of about 15 inches (38 cm). Adults have sand-colored upper parts and white undersides. During the breeding season, piping plovers have a single dark band across the breast and forehead. They can be distinguished from similar species by their bright orange legs.

Life History: Piping plovers arrive on their breeding grounds along the Atlantic Coast in late March and on their prairie breeding grounds in early May. Males defend territories and attract females with aerial displays. Piping plovers are monogamous and both parents participate in all stages of parental care. Four eggs are typically laid in a shallow nest

scrape and hatching occurs 25 to 31 days after completion of the clutch. Adults depart from breeding areas as early as the first week in July. Piping plovers feed on a variety of invertebrates, including worms, crustaceans, and insects.

Habitat: Piping plovers nest on sandy beaches along the ocean or lakes. Along rivers, piping plovers use the bare areas of islands or sandbars. They also nest on the pebbly mud of interior alkali lakes and ponds. Birds nesting on gravel have higher reproductive success than those nesting on alkali. During the winter, piping plovers use algal, mud, and sand flats along the Gulf Coast. Spoil islands in the intracoastal waterway are also used.

Distribution: Historically, piping plovers bred along the Atlantic Coast, on the Northern Great Plains, and around the Great Lakes. Piping plovers winter along the southern Atlantic and Gulf coasts, and in the Bahamas and West Indies. Although drastically reduced, remnant populations occur throughout their historic range. Piping plovers migrate through Oklahoma each spring and fall.

Causes of Decline: Piping plovers have been drastically reduced in number, due to the loss of beach habitat and to the modification of habitat through the channelization and damming of rivers. These practices eliminate sandbars and allow the growth of vegetation on nesting areas. Nesting success of piping plovers on beaches used by humans is much lower than on isolated beaches, because of disturbance.

Recovery Needs: Top needs for piping plover recovery include monitoring population trends, managing and protecting populations and their habitat, and further research on the general ecology of the species.

Other information: The piping plover recovery plan was completed in 1988. Hunters almost eliminated the species in the early 1900s. However, because of strict protection, populations recovered by the 1940s. The current decrease in numbers has resulted from habitat loss. Currently, the population of piping plovers is estimated at approximately 5,000 individuals.

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