

SEMPALMATED PLOVER

Charadrius semipalmatus

non-breeding visitor, occasional winterer

monotypic

Semipalmated Plovers breed throughout arctic N America and winter from s. N America through S America (AOU 1998); they have been recorded as vagrants to Europe (Cramp and Simmons 1983). The difficulty in separating this species from [Common Ringed Plover](#) has obscured its status in the Pacific Basin; members of this species-pair have been recorded from Johnston Atoll (at least 7 individuals, 1963-2003) and throughout Micronesia (Pyle and Engbring 1985, Pratt et al. 1987, Clapp 1990, AOU 1998, Wiles 2005), as well as in the Hawaiian Islands, where they are regular in small numbers. The majority of individuals in the c. Pacific identified to species, including specimens from Johnston (Amerson and Shelton 1976), Baker (Clapp 1968a), and the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (see below), along with numerous photographed birds from the Southeastern Hawaiian Islands ([HRBP Page](#)), have been of Semipalmated Plovers, so we treat all records of unidentified individuals here; see Common Ringed Plover for records confirmed as or suspected to be that species.

In the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* a [minimum](#) of 33 small plovers have been recorded, 12 of which have been identified through detailed description or photographs of birds or tracks (e.g., [HRBP](#) 1338, compare with [HRBP](#) 1120, 1379 of Common Ringed Plover tracks) as Semipalmated Plovers and five of which have been identified as confirmed or probable [Common Ringed Plovers](#). Of the 30 not confirmed to Common Ringed Plover, 15 individuals were recorded solely in fall, 13 were of over-wintering birds, and 3 were of spring transients; confirmed Semipalmated Plovers are included in all three categories. In addition, at least two individual Semipalmated Plovers over-summered on Midway, including one long-staying bird recorded from Sep 1997 to Mar 2001, and 3 over-summered on Laysan in 2007. Records exist for *Midway* (12 including 5 confirmed Semipalmated Plovers, 1983-2008; e.g., Clapp 1968b; USNM 543061; [HRBP](#) 1338 of tracks); *Lisianski* (1 Semipalmated Plover in 1967: USNM 544001; Clapp and Wirtz 1975); *Laysan* (10, 1967-2012; e.g., Ely and Clapp 1973, *E* 61:80, 64:65; USNM 543043 of a possible [Common Ringed Plover](#) or hybrid; PP examination); *French Frigate* (9 including 4 Semipalmated Plovers, 1967-2000; e.g., [HRBP](#) 0554-0557); and *Nihoa* (1 Semipalmated Plover, 9-10 Sep 2011). Excluding the oversummering birds, the earliest fall record in the Northwestern Islands was for 2 Sep (1995) and the latest spring date was for 29 April (1992), both on Midway.

In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands* there are records of a [minimum](#) of 190-200 individuals, at least 50 of which have been confirmed as Semipalmated Plovers and only two of which were considered possible or confirmed [Common Ringed Plovers](#); thus, the following summary will presumably reflect the status of Semipalmated Plover, the more expected of the two species in the Southeastern Islands. Approximately 52% of the records have involved over-wintering birds, 41% were of birds recorded only in fall, and only 7% were of spring transients. In addition, there are records of at least 14 over-summering birds from O'ahu (e.g., *E* 30:37), Maui, and Hawai'i I, including 3 together on O'ahu ([HRBP](#) 6395). Many individuals have been recorded during successive winters in the same locations, indicating successful annual migration between Hawaii and Arctic breeding grounds. In addition to those summarized below, a plover observed by C. Clerke

(in King 1779) in or near Kealahou Bay Jan-Feb 1779 was most likely this species (Medway 1981); Gray (1859), Finsch and Hartlaub (1867), and Dole (1869, 1879) also mention the occurrence of small plovers in Hawaii (under "*C. hiaticula*") although Dole (1879) mentioned that he had not observed one in Hawaii and doubted their occurrence. Finsch (1880) also reports an early sighting from Maui in Jul-Aug 1878. Surprisingly (given current regular occurrence and substantial presence of ornithologists in 1880-1903) the next record wasn't until 21 Sep 1952, when one was observed on O'ahu (*E* 13:46; see Clapp 1968b for a list of references to older records). This perhaps suggests that their occurrence in the Hawaiian Islands has increased during the past century.

Records for Semipalmated-type plovers since 1900 are from ***Kaua'i*** (13 records, 1968-2015; e.g., [HRBP](#) 5686); ***O'ahu*** (~80, 1952-2016; e.g., USNM 543344, Clapp and Pyle 1968; [HRBP](#) 0403-0405, 0528-0529, 0599, 5843-5845, 6395); ***Moloka'i*** (9, 1977-2015); ***Maui*** (~58, 1963-2016; e.g., [HRBP](#) 0971, 0975, 0980, 5194-5195, 5197); and ***Hawai'i*** (31, 1957-2016; e.g., *E* 45:73, [HRBP](#) 0328, 0356); there are no records as of yet from Ni'ihau, Lana'i, or Kaho'olawe. High counts have included 8 birds at Waipi'o, Oahu, 15 Oct 1977 (at least 6 of which over-wintered), 5 at Kealia NWR, Maui, during the winter of 1991-1992, 5 at Puunene, Maui, in Jan 1994, and 6 at Kanaha Pond State Sanctuary, Maui, during the winter of 1998-1999. Excluding oversummering birds, the earliest fall arrival was 29 Jun (2010, Ki'i Unit of JCNWR) and the latest spring date was 1 Jun (2007, Ki'i Unit of JCNWR, O'ahu).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

Citation: Pyle, R.L., and P. Pyle. 2017. The Birds of the Hawaiian Islands: Occurrence, History, Distribution, and Status. B.P. Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI, U.S.A. Version 2 (1 January 2017) <http://hbs.bishopmuseum.org/birds/flp-monograph/>