

Red Knot

Calidris canutus rufa

STATUS

Endangered 

Endangered 

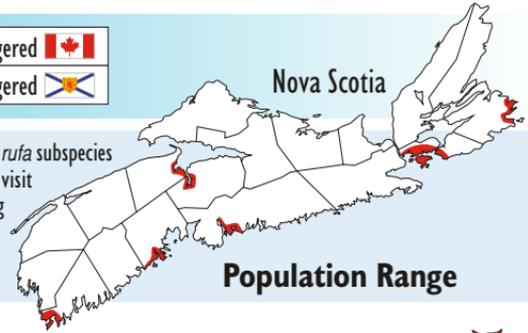


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Species Description

The Red Knot, *rufa* subspecies, is a medium-sized (25-28 cm) shorebird with a small head and straight, thin bill. In their non-breeding plumage, they have a light grey back (with white feather edges), grey-brown breast streaks, white underparts and grey legs. Juveniles are similar in appearance but have a black band along the inside of the white feather edge, buffy underparts, and green-yellow legs. In their breeding plumage, they have a brilliant chestnut red breast, neck and face, white underparts, dark legs and a brown back with reddish, tan and black streaks.

Fewer than 15, 000 of the *rufa* subspecies are left in the wild. Some visit coastal Nova Scotia during migration in the summer and fall. Winters in southern South America.

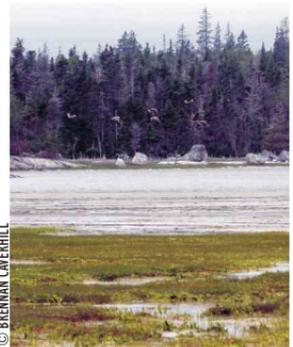


Habitat

Their wintering grounds and habitat during migration consist of coastal areas with large sandflats or mudflats, where they can feed on invertebrates. Peat banks, salt marshes, brackish lagoons and mussel beds are also visited. They breed in the arctic in barren habitats like windswept ridges, slopes and plateaus.



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Red Knots migrate through Nova Scotia along the coast in the summer and fall. Adults in faded breeding plumage are observed in July and August, while juveniles are mainly seen from August to October.

Interesting Points

- Migrate thousands of km from Arctic breeding grounds to wintering range at the southern tip of South America.
- The *nufa* subspecies has declined by 70% over the past decade.
- Without serious conservation efforts this bird may become extinct within 10 years.
- Males care for the chicks on the breeding grounds until they can fly.



Juvenile plumage

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Similar Species

Note: Godwits, curlews, snipes and woodcocks look similar, but can be distinguished by size and habitat.

Sanderling:

Smaller (20 cm); shorter, black bill; mottled, brownish or grey upperparts; black legs; seen in large flocks on water's edge.



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Willet:

Larger (35-40 cm); paler grey on back; striking black and white wing pattern in flight.



Threats to Survival

- Severe depletion of horseshoe crab eggs (a critical food source during migration) due to overfishing of horseshoe crabs in Delaware Bay (in the United States).
- Decreased habitat availability during migration (from activities like wetland drainage).
- Disturbance, severe weather events, oil pollution and climate change.



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Horseshoe crab

How You Can Help

Avoid disturbing Knots and other coastal birds when you observe them. Support a continued horseshoe crab moratorium in Delaware Bay. Be an advocate of shoreline protection, especially in important feeding areas along migration routes. Participate in monitoring programs such as the Maritimes Shorebird Survey.



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Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: Environment Canada (902) 426-4196 or www.ec.gc.ca

Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca, www.dcwild.com (photos)

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or sightings@speciesatrisk.ca

Stewardship: Maritime Shorebird Survey Coordinator: (505) 364-5044