

Red Knot

Calidris canutus rufa

STATUS

Endangered 

Endangered 



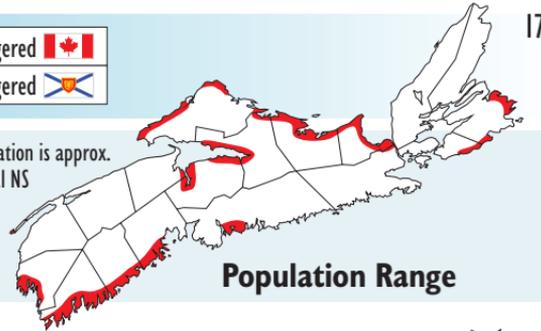
© GREG LASLEY

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.

Breeding plumage

The *rufa* subspecies population is approx. 30, 000. A few visit coastal NS during their migration. Winters from the Atlantic Coast down to southern South America.



Population Range

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.



© JULIE PACQUET, EC-CWS



© JULIE PACQUET, EC-CWS

Migrate through in the summer and fall; small numbers overwinter along the southern shore. Adults in faded breeding plumage are observed in July and August, while juveniles are mainly observed from August to October.

Interesting Points

- Some migrate thousands of km from Arctic breeding grounds to wintering range at the southern tip of South America.
- The rufa 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.



© RICHARD STERN

Juvenile plumage

Similar Species

Godwits, willets, curlews, snipes and woodcocks look similar, but differ in size and/or habitat.

Sanderling:

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



© ALAN & CATHY MURRIANT

Short-billed Dowitcher:

Similar size (30 cm) with a reddish tinge, however (despite its name) has a bill twice as long as its head.



© DARROCH WHITAKER

Threats to Survival

- Severe depletion of horseshoe crab eggs in Delaware Bay.
- Decreased habitat availability during migration (from activities like wetland drainage).
- Severe weather events leading to habitat loss.
- Unregulated shorebird hunting in the Caribbean and South America.
- Disturbance, oil pollution and climate change.



© DON CHENOFF

Horseshoe crab



© DARROCH WHITAKER

How You Can Help

Avoid disturbing Red Knots and other coastal birds when observed. 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 programs such as the Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey.



© JULIE PACOULET, EC-CWS

Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

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

Info: Parks Canada's You Tube Channel "The Red Knot rufa", www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings, eBird.org

Stewardship: Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey: ACSS-RORA@ec.gc.ca, (506) 364-5044