

Red Knot

Calidris canutus

The Red Knot is the largest of the “peeps” in North America, and one of the most colorful. It makes one of the longest yearly migrations of any bird, traveling 15,000 km (9,300 mi) from its Arctic breeding grounds to Tierra del Fuego in southern South America.

Keys to Identification

Adult Description

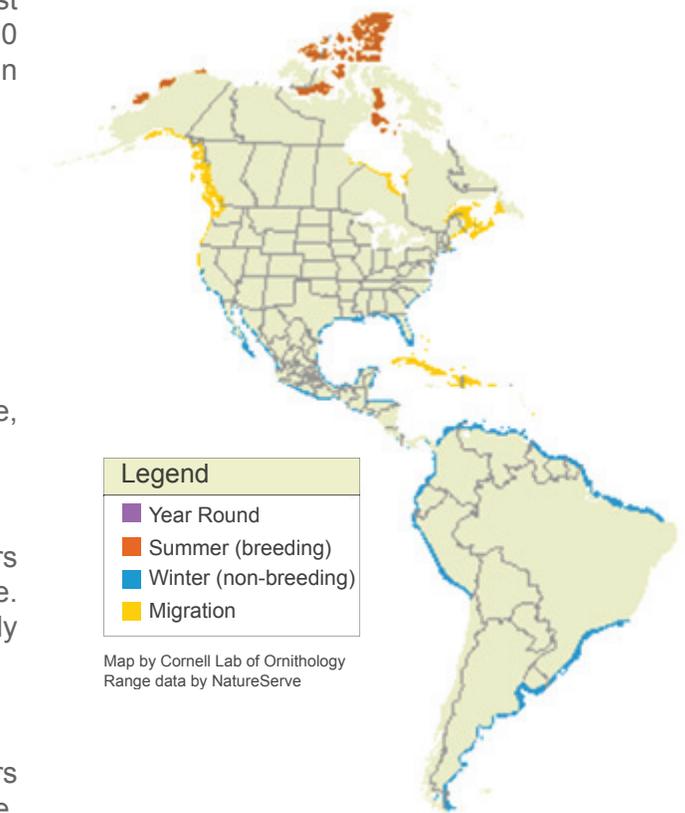
- Large, bulky sandpiper.
- Relatively short, straight bill tapering to tip.
- Legs short and thick.
- Head and breast reddish in breeding plumage, gray the rest of the year.

Female Description

In breeding plumage female has light-colored feathers amongst the belly feathers and less distinct eyeline. Sexes appear similar in winter. Female has slightly longer wings and bill.

Immature Description

Similar to adult winter plumage, but gray back feathers outlined in white and black, giving a scaly appearance.



Cool Facts

- The Red Knot does not regurgitate undigested hard parts of prey, as do many species of birds. Instead it excretes the hard parts in the feces. Researchers have used fecal content to examine food consumption rates.
- Red Knots concentrate in huge numbers at traditional staging grounds during migration. Delaware Bay is an important staging area during spring migration, where the knots feed on the eggs of spawning horseshoe crabs. It is estimated that nearly 90 percent of the entire population of the Red Knot subspecies *C. c. rufa* can be present on the bay in a single day. The reduction in food available to the knots because of the heavy harvesting of horseshoe crabs may be responsible for a decline in Red Knot populations.

Measurements

Both Sexes

- Length - 9.1 - 9.8 inches
- Wingspan - 20.5 - 22.0 inches
- Weight - 4.8 ounces