

Steve Williams, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

July 24-25, 2004

TO: DOW
FAXED TO R5
8/9/04

Subject: Petition for the Emergency Listing of the Red Knot *rufa* subspecies

Dear Mr. Williams:

The enclosed petition requests that you urgently list the Atlantic Flyway population of Red Knots (*Calidris canutus rufa*) for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

This subspecies is facing the real risk of possible extinction if immediate action is not undertaken. Experts estimate that the entire *rufa* population is less than 40,000 individuals. Federal listing is tantamount to providing the focus, resources and regulatory protection required to bring this species back from the brink. We are joining with our fellow Audubon Chapters in New Jersey and Delaware to enlist your action on this vital matter.

The Delaware Bay has been designated an Important Bird Area; it is the epicenter for the horseshoe crab population and main stopover point for the internationally important migratory shorebird population. The best known example is the Red Knot *rufa* population. This species migrates non-stop from Brazil to the Delaware Bay each spring where it gorges on the fat-rich horseshoe crab eggs before flying non-stop to its Arctic breeding grounds.

Over the years, scientists have documented the relationship between the decline in horseshoe crab eggs and the effect on the Red Knot population. Based upon the evidence New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware have lowered the catch of horseshoe crabs harvested by the eel and conch fisheries in those states. These measures cannot alone stem the loss of this marvelous shorebird. Federal listing will allow the resources to address the immediate cause of the decline and institute measures to save this species.

We urge you to join the above states and all concerned with the conservation and protection of our wild resources and administratively list the Red Knot *rufa* population as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this request.

Sincerely,

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DIVISION OF ENDANGERED
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To Steve Williams, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Please save the Red Knot *rufa* subspecies from imminent extinction by pursuing immediate listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Red Knots have declined by 50% over the last 2 years and there may be only 40,000 individuals remaining. The overharvesting of the Horseshoe crab in the Delaware Bay area is linked to the cause. These birds flying non-stop from Brazil to the Bay during spring migration, feed on the fat-rich crab eggs before continuing to their breeding grounds in the Arctic. Emergency listing will allow the resources, focus and protection needed to save this species from extinction.

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