

SHOREBIRD VIEWING AREAS

Please limit your viewing to these designated areas. Stay off beaches and, where provided, please remain on viewing platforms:

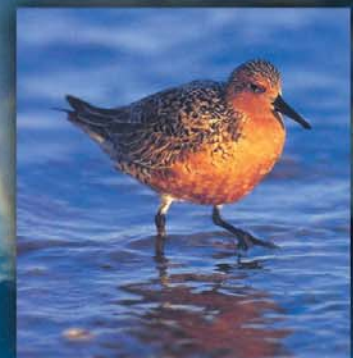
- 1 Fortescue:** Take Fortescue Rd. to New Jersey Ave., Go south .5 mi. to Raybin's Beach, a major horseshoe crab spawning area. View birds and crabs from the road or bridge that crosses Oyster Creek. Best viewing is two hours before or after low tide. Please do not walk on dunes or beach.
- 2 East Point:** Follow East Point Rd. to Lighthouse Lane. Park near lighthouse. View birds and crabs at stretch of beach in front of the lighthouse.
- 3 Reed's Beach:** Take Reed's Beach Rd. to Beach Avenue, turn right and park at marina parking lot. Parking available here during May and early June for \$1/car (supports ecotourism). Parking on road shoulders not permitted. Two viewing platforms are available: one on beach front, one inside marina parking lot overlooking marsh.
- 4 Norbury's Landing:** Park at end of Norbury's Landing Rd. Viewing area and interpretive sign located on beachfront.
- 5 Nummy Island:** Ocean Drive south of Stone Harbor crosses a salt marsh known as Nummy Island. No designated viewing areas. Park well off road and view from marsh edge. **CAUTION:** high speed traffic. The island is a popular roost for spring shorebirds in the late afternoon and at high tides.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

- Shorebird stewards are available on weekends at Reed's Beach and Norbury's Landing.
- The Cape May Bird Observatory (609-861-0700) conducts naturalist-led field trips.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
 NJ Department of Environmental Protection
 Division of Fish and Wildlife
 Endangered and Nongame Species Program
 PO Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625
 (609) 292-9400



IMPERILED SHOREBIRDS *on* DELAWARE BAY

What You Can Do To Help



IMPERILED SHOREBIRDS ON DELAWARE BAY

The spring migration of shorebirds through Delaware Bay is one of the world's most magnificent wildlife spectacles – and one of the world's most imperiled.

The bay's beaches are essential spawning habitat for the world's largest concentration of horseshoe crabs. The beaches also attract the Western Hemisphere's second-largest spring concentration of shorebirds, which feed on the crab eggs.

All told, over a million shorebirds – including red knots, sanderlings, ruddy turnstones and semipalmated sandpipers – pour into Delaware Bay each spring from about May 1 to June 7.

The birds arrive thin and spent from what, for some, has been a non-stop, four-day flight from South America. They need to quickly double their weight to both make the long flight to the Arctic and to be able to breed once they arrive. For this refueling, high-energy crab eggs are essential.

But since the early 1990s, there have been major declines in both the numbers of crabs and the eggs that they lay. The cause: an exploding crab harvest that grew from tens of thousands in 1990 to over 2 million in 1996. The harvest has been driven by people's growing demand for conch and eels, which are trapped using horseshoe crabs as bait.

Particularly hard hit by the crab declines has been the red knot; about 90% of its population in the Western Hemisphere stops to refuel on Delaware Bay each spring. The red knot is listed as a threatened species by the State of New Jersey.

In recent years, research led by biologists of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife working with prominent researchers from around the world has indicated:

- Declines of red knots on Delaware Bay, from 95,000 in 1989 to less than 32,000 in 2002.
- A decline of more than 50% of the red knot population counted at their main South American wintering area.
- A nearly 10-fold decrease in horseshoe crab egg density on bay beaches since 1990.
- Red knots that used to gain weight at the rate of 8 grams per day (in 1997), now gain at the rate of 2 grams per day – even though they need to gain a minimum of 6 grams per day.
- Many red knots aren't reaching the threshold weight they need to fly to the Arctic and breed.

If these trends continue, one survival model projects the red knot could become extinct in less than 10 years. Other shorebird species may face a similar fate if conditions worsen.

WHAT'S BEING DONE

In response to the shorebird issue, in 2003 New Jersey and Delaware are taking the following actions:

- Restricting beach access on critical beaches during late May.
- Closing the horseshoe crab harvest between May 1 and June 7.
- Capping each states crab harvest at 150,000 – nearly half 2002 levels.
- Requiring all conch fishermen to use bait-saving devices such as bait bags, reducing crab use by 50%.

SHOREBIRDS NEED YOUR HELP

Shorebirds are very sensitive to disturbance. With fewer crab eggs available, it's more important than ever for the birds to focus on feeding to bulk up for the long journey to their Arctic breeding grounds – not wasting their energy flying away to avoid people and pets.

That's why we all need to modify our activities for the short time they are here. Here's what you can do to help protect our shorebirds:

- Use designated viewing areas (see map in this brochure). Do not walk on beach when shorebirds are present.
- Honor the requests of beach stewards and conservation officers – including staying off any beaches that might be closed to human activity.
- Study shorebirds from a distance so they are not disturbed: Bring binoculars or a telescope.
- Keep dogs leashed at all times.
- Do not drive motorized vehicles on the beach.
- Support local businesses and tell them you are here to see the shorebird migration and Delaware Bay natural areas. That encourages local conservation.
- Check-off for wildlife on your state income tax form. These contributions fund Endangered and Nongame Species Program projects; the ENSP receives no state tax revenues.
- Purchase the "Conserve Wildlife" license plate from the NJ Division of Motor Vehicles.

**See anyone harassing shorebirds?
Call Operation Game Thief
1-800-222-0456**

