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## Rare Delaware Bay shorebird at risk of extinction

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Red knots one of nation's the top 10 species in need of protection

Wilmington, Del. – The red knot could join the extinct dodo bird if it doesn't get help soon. According to a report released today by the Endangered Species Coalition, red knots have landed on the top 10 list of species most in need of protection under the Endangered Species Act.

"The continued refusal of the Bush administration to list this highly imperiled bird is disappointing but not surprising in light of its dismal record protecting endangered species. We hope that the incoming Obama administration will do better," said Maya van Rossum of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network. It's now up to the states to step up and do all they can to protect this bird before it's too late. New Jersey has done its part by implementing a moratorium – we expect Maryland, Virginia and Delaware to take similar action."

The main threat to the red knot is the decline of horseshoe crabs eggs in Delaware Bay – spurred by the overharvest of adult crabs for bait in the conch and eel fishing industries. Red knots rely on horseshoe crab eggs to gain the weight they need to successfully complete the last leg of their spring migration – a nonstop 3,000 kilometer flight to their Canadian arctic breeding grounds.

Over the past 20 years, the number of red knots in the Delaware Bay region has plummeted from more than 100,000 to fewer than 15,000 in 2008. Since Bush took office, the peak counts of red knots in the Delaware Bay population have declined from 31,695 to 15,395.

"This report helps get the word out about the red knot and other species that have languished under the Bush administration's watch," said Caroline Kennedy, senior director of field conservation for Defenders of Wildlife. "Federal wildlife managers have ignored the clear decline in the red knot. It's time for them to get serious about protecting this rare bird and its major food source, horseshoe crabs."

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Adding the red knot to the ESA list would require federal agencies to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service on the impacts of the horseshoe crab harvest and other activities on the imperiled bird. In addition, federal protection could make the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, state and local governments, or other private actors potentially liable for their activities harming red knots and their habitat, including development projects and horseshoe crab harvesting.

The report, "Without a Net: Top Ten Wildlife, Fish and Plants in Need of Endangered Species Act Protection," highlights the need to address the Bush administration's backlogged species.

Other species featured in the report include: Pacific walrus, wolverine, Gunnison sage-grouse, fluvial Arctic grayling, island marble butterfly, Southern Rockies boreal toad, the mason's skypilot, great white shark, and wood turtle. A few species were given honorable mentions: the sand dune lizard, Grahams penstemon, and the Western population of the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl.

The full report and information on each species is available online at [www.StopExtinction.org](http://www.StopExtinction.org).

Defenders of Wildlife is dedicated to the protection of all native animals and plants in their natural communities. With more than 1 million members and activists, Defenders of Wildlife is a leading advocate for innovative solutions to safeguard our wildlife heritage for generations to come. For more information, visit [www.defenders.org](http://www.defenders.org).

The Delaware Riverkeeper and the Delaware Riverkeeper Network stand as vigilant protectors and defenders of the Delaware River, its tributaries and its watershed, including the Delaware Bay, and have been committed to restoring the natural balance where it has been lost and ensuring its preservation where it still exists since 1988. For more information, visit [www.delawareriverkeeper.org](http://www.delawareriverkeeper.org).