

## Red Knots wintering in Florida: 2005/6 expedition

LAWRENCE J. NILES<sup>1\*</sup>, AMANDA D. DEY<sup>1</sup>, NANCY J. DOUGLASS<sup>2</sup>, JACQUIE A. CLARK<sup>3</sup>, NIGEL A. CLARK<sup>3</sup>, A. STEVE GATES<sup>4</sup>, BRIAN A. HARRINGTON<sup>5</sup>, MARK K. PECK<sup>6</sup> & HUMPHREY P. SITTERS<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife, Endangered & Nongame Species Program,  
PO Box 400, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0400, USA

<sup>2</sup>Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, Southwest Region,  
3900 Drane Field Road, Lakeland, Florida 33811, USA

<sup>3</sup>British Trust for Ornithology, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, UK  
<sup>4</sup>17 Greenview Avenue, Princeton, New Jersey 08542, USA

<sup>5</sup>Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, 81 Stage Road, PO Box 1770,  
Manomet, Massachusetts 02345, USA

<sup>6</sup>Royal Ontario Museum, Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Biology,  
100 Queens Park, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1C6, Canada

<sup>7</sup>Limosa, Old Ebford Lane, Ebford, Exeter EX3 0QR, UK

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During Dec. 2005 and Jan. 2006, we counted 2,500 Red Knots in a survey of 300 km of the west coast of Florida between Anclote Key and Cape Romano. Sample surveys along parts of the remainder of the Florida coast located a further 1,530 so the minimum winter population of the state was about 4,000. Re-sighting of individually marked knots indicate that a substantial proportion of Florida birds migrate via the U.S. east coast and stopover on the Atlantic coast of New Jersey. Biometrics of knots caught show that Florida birds have longer bills and are heavier than those that winter in Tierra del Fuego. They are also heavier than knots wintering on the coast of Maranhão, N Brazil.

At one of our study sites, Longboat Key, which is probably typical of much of the Florida coastline, knots were feeding on beaches that were crowded with holidaymakers. Although they were habituated to people, allowing close approach, we consider that frequent disturbance is likely to be detrimental. We suggest conservation prescriptions.