

Protecting the Red Knot in South America

The *rufa* Red Knot has experienced alarming declines in recent decades — from well over 100,000 in the early 1990s to about 40,000 today — and is now in real danger of extinction within the next ten years. Populations of long-distance migrant Red Knots, which winter on Tierra del Fuego in southernmost South America, are of particular concern, having dropped from more than 50,000 in 1985 to fewer than 15,000 today. With numerous partners, ABC has advocated for the protection of one of the knot's essential food sources — the eggs of horseshoe crabs, the laying of which coincides with the knot's migration each spring.



The campaign's logo, seen on buttons, bumper stickers, and t-shirts, translates as "Choose the right path, protect our flock."



The Red Knot mascot, called Fabián Rojizo after a biplane pilot in a novel by Antoine de Saint Exupery, is a popular figure around San Antonio Bay, Argentina. Photo: Mirta Carbajal



Red Knot at Delaware Bay. Photo: Jan van de Kam

But addressing threats to the species only in North America may not be enough to prevent extinction, as the knot also faces challenges to its stopover and wintering areas in South America.

One important stopover site, the San Antonio Bay Natural Protected Area in Río Negro, Argentina, lies next to a resort town popular with tourists in

the Argentine summer months. Disturbance from beachgoers, especially those on 4x4 vehicles, can be severe.

A partnership among Rare, the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, and the Argentine non-profit Fundación Inalafquen recently led to the completion of a two-year social marketing campaign to reduce the disturbance to knots and other

shorebirds at San Antonio Bay. With a mascot, a play, songs, and celebrations, the campaign increased local knowledge of the importance of the knots, and increased local support for their protection. By building an alternative 4x4 trail away from the beach, it also provided the way for responsible 4x4 users to "Choose the Right Path," the campaign's slogan. Similar campaigns were also successful at two other locations in Argentina — the Costa Atlántica in Tierra del Fuego, and the Rio Gallegos Estuary in Santa Cruz. All three are sites in the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

Charles Duncan, Director of Manomet's Shorebird Recovery Project, commented: "Using marketing techniques to change attitudes and behaviors was entirely new to us. Fortunately, our partner, Rare, is a world leader in their use for conservation. We learned to connect shorebird conservation to the quality of life of the people at the sites. Red Knots and their habitats are the beneficiaries."