

# Red-necked Stint

*Calidris ruficollis*



Map courtesy of Mapping Unit, Customer and Commercial Services.

Map is not intended to indicate spatial distribution of the species, only the bioregions in which the species is found.

Red-necked Stints are migratory wading birds. When migrating, they travel by the East Asian-Australasian flyway and flocks of thousands of these birds travel together. Their breeding plumage gives the Red-necked Stints their name. After breeding they moult, and throughout the rest of the year their plumage provides good camouflage for their habitat in Australia, with a grey back and white underneath.

The smallest of Australia's migratory birds, the Red-necked Stint weighs just 30 grams and is small enough to fit inside a wine glass. Red-necked Stints are sandpipers; they have short straight bills, short legs and are quite plump in shape. Because of their short legs they can only walk in shallow water, and prefer to forage without getting their legs wet.

## Diet

These birds are omnivorous – they eat seeds, worms, insects, small vertebrates, plants in salt marshes, molluscs, and crustaceans. Once they arrive in South Australia these birds start fattening themselves up for the long journey north, and a healthy bird can increase its weight by 50 per cent in the months it spends here. Unlike humans they can instantly convert this fat to energy. Their favourite food at the Coorong is midge (chironomid) larvae, and they find these on the surface of saturated mudflats.

## Breeding

Despite their small size they still manage to make the annual journey north to breed, which is a distance of approximately 15,000 km one way. They breed in eastern Siberia and western Alaska and visit Australia only in summer.

## Habitat

When in South Australia they choose mudflats within estuarine wetlands, sand flats and inland salt lakes as their habitats.

## Threats

The destruction and degradation of their wetland habitats is the greatest threat to Red-necked Stints. This can be caused by coastal development, changed water regimes, drought and pollution. Flocks of migrating birds rely on a series of three to four stopovers so they can rest and find food on the journey from their breeding sites to their 'wintering' sites. If any one of these places becomes unsafe or degraded, it can be disastrous for them. These birds are also sometimes the victims of hunting.



In its lifetime (approximately 20 years) the Red-necked Stint flies further than the distance between the Earth and the Moon!

### Conservation

Australia has signed the migratory bird agreements with China and Japan to protect birds crossing international boundaries, and more international agreements are being developed.

you can help the Red-necked Stint by:

- being waterwise at home and helping save our Coorong
- Not polluting – anything washed down a stormwater drain goes straight out to sea
- checking out the book (and link) *Rusty Loses His Loop* and understanding the Murray Darling System and how vital it is for creatures like the Red-necked Stint.



Photo © SATC, Craig Ingramz

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Photo by Daniel Rogerts

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## For further information

### Public enquiries

For more local information on any of the species in this resource please contact your nearest Natural Resource Centre office on:

- Eastwood:** (08) 8273 9100
- Gawler:** (08) 8523 7700
- Lobethal:** (08) 8389 5900
- Willunga:** (08) 8550 3400

### Education enquiries

For teachers wanting more information about environmental education resources and opportunities please contact the relevant NRM Education sub regional team on:

- Northern Adelaide:** (08) 8406 8289
- Barossa:** (08) 8563 8436
- Central Adelaide:** (08) 8234 7255
- Southern Adelaide:** (08) 8384 0176
- Southern Fleurieu:** (08) 8551 0524

