

Summary of the Proposed final Management Plan for the Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) in Canada

This is a summary of the information provided in the proposed final management plan for the Red-necked Phalarope. Red-necked Phalarope was listed as a species of Special Concern under the *Species at Risk Act* in 2019.

The management plan is a plan that sets the goals and objectives for maintaining a sustainable population level for Red-necked Phalarope. The summary provided here is based on the information in the English version of the proposed final Red-necked Phalarope management plan in Canada. An English and Inuktitut copy of this document has been provided to you for reference (Appendix A).

Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) Assessment and Species Status Information (Pages 1-2)

These pages provide the COSEWIC assessment table, which is also included here. It describes why COSEWIC has assessed the Red-necked Phalarope as a species of Special Concern, where it occurs in Canada, and the history of the species status over the years.

This section also provides information on the status of the species throughout Canada, how it is protected in the Provinces and Territories, and the status given to the bird by other conservation programs such as NatureServe. NatureServe has assessed the status of Red-necked Phalarope in Nunavut as S3B, S3M. S = territorial level, 3 = Vulnerable, B = breeding, M = migrant.

Species Information (Pages 2-9)

This section of the proposed management plan for Red-necked Phalarope provides descriptive information such as what they look like, where they live and what they need to survive.



Female Red-necked Phalarope ©Willow

Date of Assessment: November 2014

Common Name (population): Red-necked Phalarope

Scientific Name: *Phalaropus lobatus*

COSEWIC Status: Special Concern

Reason for Designation:

This bird has declined over the last 40 years in an important staging area; however, overall population trends during the last three generations are unknown. The species faces potential threats on its breeding grounds including habitat degradation associated with climate change. It is also susceptible to pollutants and oil exposure on migration and during the winter. This is because birds gather in large numbers on the ocean, especially where currents concentrate pollutants.

Canadian Occurrence:

Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Pacific Ocean, Arctic Ocean, Atlantic Ocean

COSEWIC Status History: Designated Special Concern in November 2014.

* COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada)



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada

Canada

Species Description

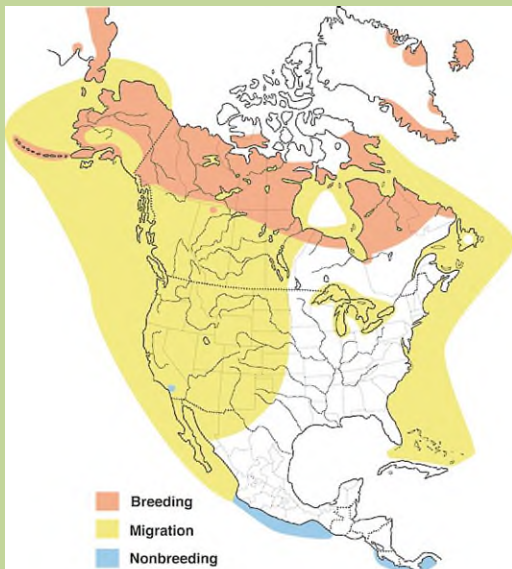
- Red-necked Phalarope is a medium-sized sandpiper with bright chestnut-red plumage that circles the base of the neck and extends up the sides of the face during the breeding season.
- Females are slightly larger than males (40g compared to 33g).

Species Population and Distribution

- Red-necked Phalarope is a circumpolar breeder.
- Breeding does not extend north of the southern portion of Baffin Island.
- Red-necked Phalaropes primarily migrates offshore and winters at sea off the coast of Ecuador, Peru, and Chile.

Population Size and Trends

- Data on population size and trends is limited because Red-necked Phalarope are a difficult species to survey due to spending months of the year at sea and have a vast breeding area.



Distribution of the Red-necked Phalarope (from Cornell Lab – Birds of North America's Website, Rubega et al. 2000)

- The Arctic Program for Regional and International Shorebird Monitoring (PRISM) calculated a new Canadian population estimate in 2020 of 2.3 ± 0.7 million.

- As PRISM does not monitor the southern breeding range, it is likely an underestimate.
- Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey and the International Shorebird Survey data from 1974 to 1998 show that Red-necked Phalarope that migrate through the North Atlantic have not significantly declined, but those that migrate through the interior have declined by 7.6% per year.
- The Bay of Fundy migratory stop has been surveyed extensively and the Red-necked Phalarope staging there have declined from 2-3 million in the 1970s and 1980s to 100,000-300,000 from 2008-2010.
- It is possible that Red-necked Phalarope are taking a different migratory pathway.
- Localized declines are also being seen in on Herschel Island, and the North Slope and Crow Flats, Yukon and in Churchill, Manitoba.

Needs (Breeding, Migration, Non-breeding and Diet)

- The Red-necked Phalarope primarily breeds in the arctic tundra wetlands, where more than 43% of the landscape is covered in water.
- Freshwater ponds serve as courtship grounds and provide food for the breeding pair and their offspring.
- They will breed in a pond based on the presence of other phalaropes, are not territorial, but maintain a home range.
- The species has been documented to breed below the tree line in the boreal forest, nesting habitat includes fens, bogs and other wetlands.
- Female Red-necked Phalaropes compete for males with males raising the offspring (including incubation and nest building).
- Predation is the main cause of nest failure.
- Females leave for migration before males.
- The Red-necked Phalarope flies approximately 120-130 km per day during migration.
- Most migrating Red-necked Phalaropes are found on or over open water, but a portion migrates over land (the Bay of Fundy is a major fall stopover site).

- The population winters at sea.
- The Red-necked Phalarope primarily eats aquatic invertebrates, fly larvae and other insects.

Threats (Pages 10-18)

This section of the proposed management plan describes the things that might cause Red-necked Phalarope populations to drop. Threats to Red-necked Phalarope can affect habitat, but can also affect individuals, nests and eggs.

The main threats to Red-necked Phalarope are:

- **Ecosystem Encroachment** –Modelling predicts over 90% of their current breeding range will become unsuitable due to climate change by 2070.
- **Garbage and Solid Waste** – plastic pollution is a growing problem in the oceans where phalaropes winter. Phalaropes ingest plastic particles which has negative effects.
- **Problematic native plants and animals** – Overabundant snow geese negatively alter the breeding habitat of Red-necked Phalaropes.

Management Objectives (Pages 18-19)

The management objective for the Red-necked Phalarope is:

- To have stable or increasing population trends by 2040.

Broad Strategies and Conservation Measures (Pages 19-24)

Actions currently completed or underway:

A number of initiatives are underway or completed and include:

- Population monitoring across the entire range
- Designation of some migratory sites as important
- Identifying the species as a priority under the Arctic Migratory Birds Initiative
- Developing a working group to set research and conservation priorities
- Developing management plans for some protected areas that identify measures that benefit the conservation of Red-necked Phalarope
- The signing of the Ocean Plastics Charter and investment in the marine litter mitigation fund

Broad Strategies and Conservation Measures:

- Centralizing data from past site surveys in a shared database and tracking the North American migration routes and determine the turnover and residency times at migratory stopover sites.
- Coordinate data collection to enable comparison and calculation of North American wide estimates where possible
- Calculating new population estimates and trends.
- Engage and educate the public about the species and its threats, encourage actions to mitigate threats and encourage the public to report sightings
- Conserving water and managing watershed surrounding migratory stopover sites to maintain appropriate levels and salinities in waterbodies.
- Identifying and protecting climate change resilient areas on the breeding grounds and migratory route.
- Working with international partners to support seabird protection within the Humboldt Current Large Marine Ecosystem on the wintering grounds.
- Incorporate information about the Red-necked Phalarope's migratory and wintering ranges into environmental assessments for projects that increase the risk of either chronic or catastrophic oil spills in key areas for the species and ensuring that these areas has oil spill response plans which adequately consider offshore seabirds in place.
- Determining location and quantity of the ingestion of plastics by Red-necked Phalaropes
- Investigating changes in zooplankton abundance at key migratory stopovers (e.g., Bay of Fundy) and wintering grounds.

Measuring Progress (Page 24-25)

Performance indicators are used to measure progress towards achieving the management objective and monitoring implementation of the management plan.

- By 2030, an accurate North American population size estimate is available.
- By 2030, a North America-wide trend estimate is available. This trend estimate should be robust enough to detect a 30% decline over a 10-year period.
- By 2040, the population trend of the Red-necked Phalarope is stable or positive as measured by population monitoring at migratory stopovers over a 10-year period.