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Red-necked Phalarope
PHALAROPE À BÈC ÉTROIT
Phalaropus lobatus (Linnaeus)

Fairly common migrant; breeds in the extreme north.

The Red-necked Phalarope is distinctly smaller than the Wilson's, with a shorter bill and a distinctive brick-red neck-patch. It is also more aquatic, with larger lobes on its toes to facilitate swimming. When feeding it often uses the "phalarope spin", twirling in tight circles to generate a vortex that draws invertebrate prey up to the surface, though on occasion it swims and pecks seemingly at random.

Most Canadian-breeding Red-necked Phalaropes winter off the coast of Peru in the plankton-rich Humboldt Current. Spring migrants have been recorded in southern Manitoba as early as 7 May, but most pass through in the second half of May and the first week of June. They pause at marshes, potholes, and sewage lagoons, often mingling with Wilson's Phalaropes. Flocks usually number fewer than 20 birds, and most occur west of the Red River valley. High counts of 50–100 Red-necked Phalaropes have been recorded near Oak Hammock Marsh between 24 May and 1 June. Peak migration is between late May and mid-June at Churchill, where flocks in the hundreds are not unusual, and 800+ were counted along Hydro Road on 31 May 1995.¹ Females usually precede males by a few days, though some birds pair up during migration.²

Red-necked Phalaropes breed from near the treeline northward to the southern Arctic Archipelago. Populations fluctuate according to the timing of spring melt, more birds remaining in the southern part of the breeding range when spring is delayed.³ During the breeding season, groups of 2–10 birds are dispersed widely at tundra ponds, although denser groupings can occur. Nests are scraped out by the male within a few metres of water amid sedges, grasses or small shrubs. The female abandons the male as soon as the clutch is complete; if successful at finding another mate, she can begin a second clutch just a week after completing the first.³ Egg dates for 72 nests in the Nest Record file extend from 15 June to 21 July; most of these nests were found at La Pérouse Bay by C. Gratto and M. Rausch in 1980–1981. Hatchlings have been observed as early as 2 July. Like several other shorebirds, this species declined markedly as a breeding species in the Churchill region during the second half of the 20th century.⁴

After leaving the nesting areas, females form small flocks along the Hudson Bay coast between early and mid-July. Males follow two weeks later, with juveniles departing two weeks after that.³ Flocks of as many as 1000 juveniles were noted on large ponds near Churchill in August 1966.^{1,5} Migrants in southern Manitoba follow a more easterly route in fall than in spring, being more common east of the Red River but less numerous in the southwest.^{6,7} The first migrants pass through the south in July, the peak movement (mostly juveniles) is between mid-August and early September, and the last stragglers occur in mid-October. Fall concentrations typically number 5–50 birds, but occasionally many more; for example, 450 were counted on 27 August 1982 at Winnipeg's West End Water Pollution Control Centre.⁸

¹ Jehl, *in preparation*; ² Reynolds *et al.* 1986; ³ Reynolds 1987; ⁴ Jehl & Lin 2001; ⁵ Jehl & Smith 1970; ⁶ Taylor 1983; ⁷ Knapton 1979a; ⁸ Commonly known as the Charleswood sewage lagoons.

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