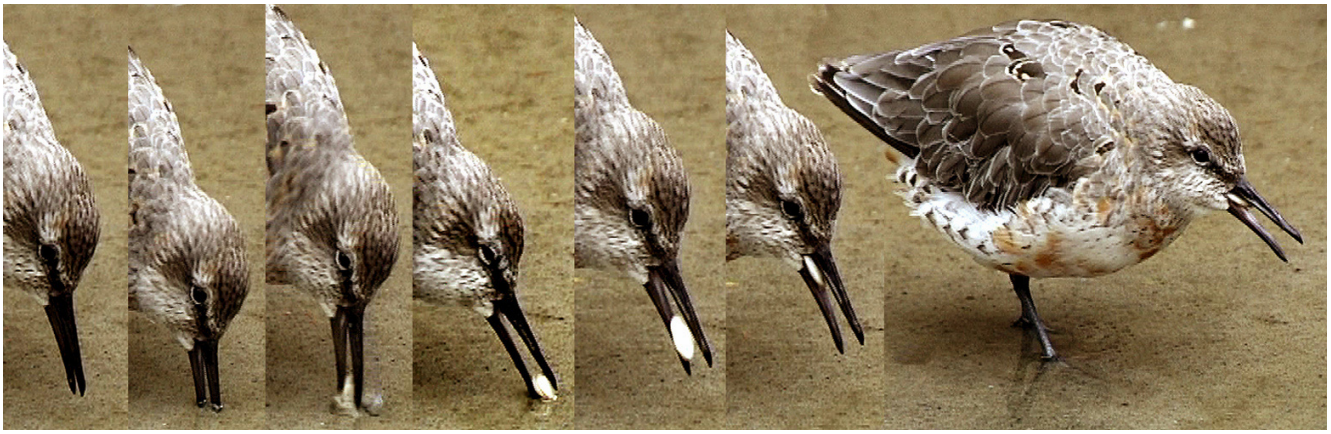
HIGHLY SOCIAL FORAGER



Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*) mainly feed on hard-shelled bivalves, which they ingest whole. As bivalves live buried in the sediment, knots need to actually feed in order to "get a feel" for prey density. Nevertheless, as can be derived from the birds' foraging behavior (patch selection, foraging intensity, and energy stores), the study shows that knots are very well informed about the spatial distribution of their food. As a highly social forager, these birds may have access to many forms of public information. However, knots do not always occupy the best patches, since, like all animals, they must bear the cost of traveling. We therefore conclude that Red Knots can be characterized as "ideal, nonfree foragers." (Photo copyright Jan van de Kam, used by permission, all rights reserved.)

For more details see the paper "Foraging in a tidally structured environment by Red Knots (*Calidris canutus*): ideal, but not free," by J. A. van Gils, B. Spaans, A. Dekinga, and T. Piersma, to be published in *Ecology* **87**(5), May 2006.