



## Ruddy Turnstone – The Seaweed Bird

### What are they?

Ruddy turnstones are smaller shore birds that are related to sandpipers. Like all other birds, their bodies are covered with feathers. They also have wings and a tail, and a beak. Turnstones also have hollow bones, making them weigh less than a creature their same size that has more solid bones.

### What do they look like?

Adult turnstones are about seven inches long, although some can be up to ten inches. They were named for their summer color. “Ruddy” means red. Its orange legs are short but sturdy.

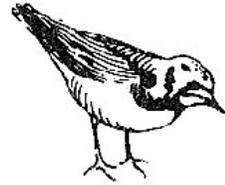


Photo Source: fws.gov

### Where can you find them?

Small groups of ruddy turnstones scurry along the water’s edge at sandy beaches. You can also find them patrolling for food in mudflats and on jetties.

However, ruddy turnstones are really Bay visitors. In the summer, they nest on the Arctic tundra, returning to the Bay area in spring, summer, and fall.

### How do they behave?

The ruddy turnstone got its name because of the way it looks for food. It uses its bill to turn over pebbles, small stones, and seaweed, searching for food. People sometimes call these shore creatures seaweed birds because they hunt for food that might be hiding in seaweed.

These shorebirds also dig holes—sometimes larger than they are—looking for one of their favorite foods—crustaceans such as small crabs.

Ruddy turnstones can fly at speeds of up to 40 miles per hour.

### What do they eat?

Ruddy turnstones feed on barnacles, crustaceans such as crabs, and insects that they uncover on the beach. They also eat other birds’ eggs, especially tern and gull eggs, and love to feast on horseshoe crab eggs.

### What eats them?

Predators such as small mammals and other birds often attack and eat ruddy turnstones and their eggs.

### Creature Feature

Like many birds, the ruddy turnstone looks different in the winter than it does in the summer.

In the winter, the upper part of its body is a grayish-brown. The lower part is white, with a black ring beneath its neck. In the summer, its colors deepen. Its upper parts become a rusty red, and its black markings darken.

