

AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM



10th MEETING OF THE AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

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REPORT ON THE COORDINATION OF OFFTAKE OF THE EAST GREENLAND/ SCOTLAND & IRELAND POPULATION OF BARNACLE GOOSE IN AUTUMN/WINTER 2024/2025

Prepared and submitted to the AEWA Secretariat by the United Kingdom and Iceland based on the decision of the 9th Meeting of the European Goose Management International Working Group (EGM IWG9)

Summary:

The results from the integrated population model indicated a 24% probability that the March 2024 East Greenland/Scotland & Ireland population of Barnacle Goose was below the Favourable Reference Population (FRP) of 54,000. The EGM IWG agreed that it was necessary for Iceland and the United Kingdom to implement measures to reduce levels of offtake to as close as possible to zero. It was further agreed that Iceland and the United Kingdom would: seek agreement on the maximum level of offtake to be permitted (if any) and the split between the two Range States; develop and implement a coordination mechanism to ensure adherence to these limits; inform the EGM IWG of the agreed level of offtake and coordination mechanism; and submit a written report to EGM IWG10 on the implementation of the coordination mechanism and adherence to the agreed level of offtake. This report provides an overview of the measures taken to coordinate the offtake.

Action requested from the EGM IWG:

The EGM IWG is requested to take note of the report and provide advice, as necessary.

1. Introduction

The EGM IWG in Tromsø, in June 2024, agreed that it is necessary for Iceland and the United Kingdom to implement measures to reduce levels of offtake of the East Greenland/Scotland & Ireland population of Barnacle Goose to as close as possible to zero.

To this end, it was further agreed that:

- i. Iceland and the United Kingdom will seek agreement on the maximum level of offtake to be permitted (if any) and the split between the two Range States (taking into consideration the projections of the EGMP Data Centre). Such agreement will be concluded before the start of Iceland's 2024/2025 hunting season.
- ii. Iceland and the United Kingdom will develop and implement a coordination mechanism to ensure adherence to these limits.
- iii. Iceland and the United Kingdom will inform the EGM IWG in writing on both the agreed level of offtake (if any) and the agreed coordination mechanism immediately after these arrangements have been agreed.

2. Actions

Iceland and Scotland, on behalf of the UK, met in August 2024 and reached agreements on the points i-iii listed above. The details of that agreement are set out below:

- i. Iceland and the United Kingdom agreed on the maximum level of offtake to be 600 birds total and the split between the two Range States as follows: Iceland 500 birds and Scotland 100 birds

Greenland barnacle geese are fully protected in the United Kingdom and, as such, any derogation shooting can only be done under licence for the purpose of preventing serious agricultural damage. To ensure that Scotland can address issues of localised serious agricultural damage, it is proposed to issue licences where necessary, but with limited bag numbers. The total bag across Scotland (and therefore the UK as a whole) will not exceed 100 birds over the winter of 2024-2025. In reference to Table 3.5.1 of the [Doc.AEWA/EGMIWG/9.8](#), EGMP Population Status and Offtake Assessment Report 2024, the modelled probability that the population size would fall below the FRP, for offtake scenarios in 2024 and 2025, projected to 2026, shows that the maximum offtake that is being proposed for the UK is only marginally greater than 0.12. This is practically identical to the 0.12 probability under a scenario of zero offtake. We also note that even with a total offtake of 629 (2nd line down in Table 3.5.1) that this probability rises only modestly to 0.16. We therefore maintain that the maximum offtake being proposed by the UK meets the requirement of the IWG to “reduce levels of offtake to as close as possible to zero”. We would reiterate that the figure of 100 is a maximum, and that in recent years considerably smaller offtake has actually been realised in Scotland. We would be happy to provide further justification — should you require it — of the need to retain the option of very low levels of offtake for the purposes of preventing localised but serious agricultural damage.

When working on the measures, Iceland had two main objectives: i) to reduce the catch of barnacle geese to as close to 500 birds as possible and ii) to accommodate stakeholders, especially farmers who have suffered agricultural damage from the species. The measures that Iceland will implement are as follows:

1. Shortening the hunting season

2. Imposing a sales ban on barnacle geese products
3. Cooperation with hunters in data gathering

The hunting season for barnacle geese in Iceland starts on 1 September island wide, except in the East and West Skaftafellssýsla counties where it starts on 10 September. It is important to note that the entire Icelandic breeding population of barnacle geese resides in these two counties, which has led to conflicts with agriculture. While the opening date for the hunting season remained unchanged in 2024, it ended on 25 September. This adjustment reduced the active hunting season for barnacle geese down to 15 days, aligning it with the arrival of birds from Greenland. Based on available, albeit limited, data on the recovery of tagged birds from hunting and GPS data, Iceland believed that these measures, would reduce the catch to approximately 500 birds. Additionally, Iceland also imposed a ban on the sale of barnacle geese products and sought cooperation with hunters on increased data collection and launched an incentive campaign for moderate hunting. Stakeholders expressed concerns that they had not been briefed on the international cooperation with AEWA that has taken place, and decisions on a shorter season have caused surprise and anger. For next year, the aim will be to increase cooperation with stakeholders within Iceland and analyse the monitoring data that has been collected in order to better understand how to implement targeted measures in hunting management. Finally, improved data collection on hunting distribution within the season is necessary, which can only be achieved through better cooperation with hunters.

- ii. Iceland and the United Kingdom will develop and implement a coordination mechanism to ensure adherence to these limits.

Because any offtake of Greenland barnacle goose in the UK is undertaken under strictly licensed control in Scotland, the UK has complete control of the maximum numbers taken. Discussions with Iceland have resulted in proposals for a coordination mechanism that would involve a) a summer meeting (August at latest) between the two Range States at which the latest evidence, including that from the Data Centre, is evaluated and offtake levels accordingly set for the forthcoming season; b) a post-season evaluation meeting between the two Range States to assess the bag returns as part of the evidence for adherence to the established bag-limits or, if adherence is insufficient, recommendations for future improvements, to be discussed with the relevant Task Force and subsequently with IWG.

- iii. Notification of decisions and actions in writing to EGMP

A joint letter was sent to the EGMP Secretariat on 2 September 2024, setting out the information requested on offtake and the proposal for ongoing co-ordination between Iceland and the UK. Receipt of this was acknowledged on 26 September 2024.

3. Implementation

Iceland and the UK have remained in regular contact over the season to keep each other informed of progress with the agreed actions. A meeting was held on 10 April 2025 to discuss the latest data and the report required for EGMP.

Final bag returns in both countries are still to be collected but current information is as follows:

- i. The final offtake in Scotland will be a maximum of 60 birds.

- ii. The most recent data in Iceland from the end of March is that just under 70% of hunters have submitted returns and the offtake from these is 2,563 birds. It is estimated that the total offtake will approach 3000 birds.

A meeting of the Task Force is planned in early May to discuss the data and to consider recommendations for future improvements.