

## Barnacle Goose

The Barnacle Goose is a medium-sized goose, 55–70 cm (22–28 in) long and a wingspan of 130–145 cm (51–57 in). It has a white face and black head, neck, and upper breast. Its belly is white. The wings and its back are silver-grey with black-and-white bars that look like they are shining when the light reflects on it. During flight a V-shaped white rump patch and the silver-grey underwing linings are visible.

Barnacle geese breed mainly on the Arctic islands of the North Atlantic. There are three main populations, with separate breeding and wintering ranges; from west to east:- Eastern Greenland population, wintering on the Hebrides of western Scotland and in western Ireland. Population c40,000. Svalbard population, wintering on the Solway Firth in south west Scotland. Population c24,000.



Novaya Zemlya population, wintering in the Netherlands. Population c130,000. A new fourth population, derived from the Novaya Zemlya population, has become established since 1975 breeding on the islands and coasts of the Baltic Sea (Estonia, Finland, Denmark, and Sweden), and wintering in the Netherlands. Population c8,000.

Barnacle geese frequently build their nests high on mountain cliffs, away from predators (primarily Arctic Foxes and Polar Bears) but also away from food. Like all geese, the goslings are not fed by the adults. Instead of bringing food to the newly hatched goslings, the goslings are brought to the ground. Unable to fly, the three-day-old goslings jump off the cliff and fall, their small size, feathery down, and very light weight helps to protect some of them from serious injury

when they hit the rocks below, but many die from the impact. Arctic Foxes are attracted by the noise made by the parent geese during this time and capture many dead or injured goslings. The foxes also stalk the young as they are led by the parents to wetland feeding areas.

**Photograph by J. Anderson**