

# Anser albifrons



# White-fronted Goose

CZ	Husa běločelá	I	Oca lombardella
D	Bläßgans	NL	Kolgans
E	Ansar Careto	P	Ganso-grande-de-testa-branca
F	Oie rieuse	PL	Gęś białoczelna
FIN	Tundrahanhi	R	Белолобый гусь
G	Ασπροκέφαλη	S	Bläßgås
H	Nagy lilik		

The White-fronted Goose breeds in the Eurasian tundra from the Kanin Peninsula in the W to the Kolyma tundra in the E. Its distribution is limited roughly between the July 4°C and 10°C isotherms.

Although the species' habitat preferences in the Bol'shezemel'skaya tundra are broadly comparable with those of the Tundra Bean Goose *Anser fabalis rossicus*, long-term research has shown they are confined to only 6 of the 15 tundra habitat types against the latter's 14 (Mineyev 1987). In particular, the White-fronted Goose is not found along the slopes bordering large lakes, whereas almost one sixth of all observations of Tundra Bean Geese occur in this habitat. Other principal breeding habitats of White-fronted Goose are seacoasts (23.3% of observations), tundras along rivers (22.2%), bogs (16.5%) and small temporary lakes (15.9%). Bird summer density per km<sup>2</sup> varies from 1.7 to 5.7 (1986–93) for the whole of the Malozemel'skaya tundra, and from 2.1 to 7.3 (1981–87) for the whole of the Yugorskiy Peninsula. From 1973 to 1993, the mean density averaged lowest (0.1–0.2 birds/km<sup>2</sup>) in the Kanin Peninsula, the coastal area along the Chëshskaya Gulf, and the subarctic belt between the towns of Nar'yan

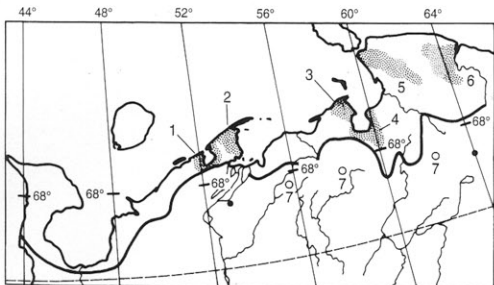
Mar and Vorkuta. The island of Kolguyev yielded about 13 birds/km<sup>2</sup> and the southern part of Vaygach Island, 8 birds/km<sup>2</sup>. The highest density of breeding birds was noted along Kolokolkova Bay (c90 birds/km<sup>2</sup>).

The White-fronted Goose nests in several types of tundra; *Carex*-grassy areas in hilly tundras, seacoast meadows, along river coasts, in hummock grassy and hummock moss–shrubby tundras, stone fields with sparse shrubby and grassy vegetation, and on *Carex–Eriophorum* bogs. Breeding densities vary from very low in the southernmost shrub tundra to very high in coastal areas, principally at lakes 0.1–0.5km<sup>2</sup> in area.

In the European tundras, Mineyev (1987) found large annual fluctuations. Nesting densities may reach 15–20 bp/km<sup>2</sup> in good ecological conditions. The species nests especially densely near breeding Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Merlin *Falco columbarius* and Peregrine *F. peregrinus*. The diagram indicates mass breeding areas.

Among the six subpopulations wintering in the W Palearctic, that in the Baltic/North Sea area comprises birds originating mainly from European breeding grounds (Perdeck & Speek 1964, Lebedeva 1979). Their number has grown from 55 000 to 80 000 in the 1960s to nearly 480 000 by January 1986. Subsequent winter counts estimate a slightly lower total (1988/89, 400 000–410 000; Kuyken & Meire 1990). These data suggest a marked increase of the breeding population in European Russia since 1965. However, ringing recoveries show that exchanges occur of wintering birds between the Baltic/North Sea population and the eastern Europe population (Lebedeva 1979). Because the latter group consists mainly of birds breeding in W and C Siberian tundras (Ptushenko 1952, Lebedeva 1979), the suggested increase of the European breeding population cannot yet be confirmed.

Comparative long-term studies of the Asian populations of the Taymyr Peninsula and the Anadyr River show that the latter's population is relict (Krechmar 1986). This accentuates the importance of protection of the westernmost breeding grounds, especially in the light of recent large-scale development of mineral extraction (Mineyev 1982a).



Map showing the distribution of the White-fronted Goose in Europe, in the far NE part of European Russia. Dotted areas indicate the breeding areas with highest densities. The drawn line indicates the distribution limit. The dots below the line (marked 7) indicate erratic breeding. The important areas are: (1) Kolokolkova Bay tundra; (2) Russki Zavorot Peninsula; (3) Medynski Zavorot Peninsula; (4) Khaypudir Bay coast; (5) Lymbadaykha-Bolshaya Oy interfluvium; (6) Tabyu and Putyu interfluvium. (After Y. Mineyev, March 1994).