

National Parks and Wildlife Service

Conservation Objectives Series

Bellanagare Bog SPA 004105



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife
Service

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Introduction

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Notes/Guidelines:

1. The targets given in these conservation objectives are based on best available information at the time of writing. As more information becomes available, targets for attributes may change. These will be updated periodically, as necessary.
2. An appropriate assessment based on these conservation objectives will remain valid even if the targets are subsequently updated, providing they were the most recent objectives available when the assessment was carried out. It is essential that the date and version are included when objectives are cited.
3. Assessments cannot consider an attribute in isolation from the others listed for that habitat or species, or for other habitats and species listed for that site. A plan or project with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another.
4. Please note that the maps included in this document do not necessarily show the entire extent of the habitats and species for which the site is listed. This should be borne in mind when appropriate assessments are being carried out.
5. When using these objectives, it is essential that the relevant backing/supporting documents are consulted, particularly where instructed in the targets or notes for a particular attribute.

Qualifying Interests

** indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive*

004105	Bellanagare Bog SPA
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A395	Greenland White-fronted Goose <i>Anser albifrons flavirostris</i>
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Please note that this SPA overlaps with Bellanagare Bog SAC (000592). See map 2. The conservation objectives for this site should be used in conjunction with those for the overlapping site as appropriate.

Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications

Supporting documents, NPWS reports and publications are available for download from: www.npws.ie/Publications

NPWS Documents

Year : 2025
Title : Conservation Objectives: Lough Gara SPA 004048. Version 1
Author : NPWS
Series : Conservation Objectives: Lough Gara SPA 004048. Version 1

Other References

Year : 1995
Title : Impacts of hunting disturbance on waterbirds - a review
Author : Madsen, J.; Fox, A.D.
Series : Wildlife Biology 1(4):193-207

Year : 2014
Title : A review of Greenland white-fronted geese in Ireland 1982/83 – 2011/12
Author : Burke, B.; Egan, F.; Norriss, D.; Wilson, H.J.; Walsh, A.J.
Series : Unpublished report

Year : 2016
Title : Assessing connectivity with Special Protection Areas (SPAs)
Author : Scottish Natural Heritage
Series : Guidance Series Version 3 - June 2016

Year : 2019
Title : Report under Article 12 of the Birds Directive Period 2013-2018
Author : EEA
Series : European Environment Agency. European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity. Pp 1-9.
https://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/Converters/run_conversion?file=ie/eu/art12/envxztxxq/IE_birds_reports_20191031-130157.xml&conv=612&source=remote

Year : 2024
Title : Differential responses to weather and land-cover conditions explain spatial variation in winter abundance trends in a migratory bird of conservation concern
Author : Schindler, A.R.; Fox, A.D.; Wickle, C.K.; Ballard, B.M.; Walsh, A.J.; Kelly, S.B.A.; Weegman, M.D.
Series : Journal of Applied Ecology. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.14804>

Conservation Objectives for : Bellanagare Bog SPA [004105]

A395 Greenland White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons flavirostris*

To restore the Favourable conservation condition of Greenland White-fronted Goose in Bellanagare Bog SPA, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Winter population trend	Percentage change in number of individuals	Long term winter population trend is stable or increasing	The national population of wintering Greenland White-fronted Goose in Ireland has declined by 13% from 1985 - 2018 (EEA, 2019). It is understood that the Bellanagare Bog SPA was used by birds from the Lough Gara flock of Greenland White-fronted Goose (see Burke et al., 2014), which declined by 77% in population size between 1994/95 - 2022/23 (NPWS, 2025). Greenland White-fronted Goose has not been recorded using the SPA in recent decades, which coincides with a general shift by this species from foraging on peatland sites to grassland sites (Burke et al., 2014; NPWS internal files). The Lough Gara flock now primarily uses Lough Gara and its adjacent agricultural grasslands. The noted population trend and shift in habitat use may be related to weather and/or land-cover conditions (Schindler et al., 2024)
Winter spatial distribution	Hectares, time and intensity of use	Sufficient number of locations, area, and availability (in terms of timing and intensity of use) of suitable habitat to support the population target	Distribution encapsulates the number of locations and area of potentially suitable habitat for the species and its availability for use. The suitability and availability of habitat areas are likely to vary throughout the season, for example, due to variation in land management practices or the abundance of resources available (due to natural variation and other factors). This will affect the spatio-temporal patterns of use of the habitats by the species. The species has not been recorded using the SPA in recent decades (Burke et al., 2014; NPWS internal files)
Disturbance at wintering site	Intensity, frequency, timing and duration	Disturbance occurs at levels that do not significantly impact the achievement of targets for population trend and distribution	The impact of any significant disturbance (direct or indirect) to the species will ultimately affect the achievement of targets for population trend and/or spatial distribution. Disturbance contributes to increased energetic expenditure which can result in increased likelihood of winter mortality or reduced fitness (if energy expenditure is greater than energy gain) and, in turn, negatively impact population trends (see, for example, Madsen and Fox, 1995). Factors such as intensity, frequency, timing and duration of a (direct or indirect) disturbance source must be taken into account to determine the potential impact upon the targets for population trend and spatial distribution
Barriers to connectivity and site use	Number, location, shape and hectares	Barriers do not significantly impact the wintering population's access to the SPA or other ecologically important sites outside the SPA	Barriers limiting the species' access to this SPA or ecologically important sites outside the SPA will ultimately affect the achievement of targets for population trend and/or spatial distribution. Factors such as the number, location, shape and area of potential barriers must be taken into account to determine their potential impact. Access to ecologically important sites outside the SPA must also be considered as a single SPA may not satisfy all the ecological requirements of the species, and it may require access to other SPAs or sites for certain activities, such as foraging when preferred foraging areas are unavailable due to disturbance, extensive flooding, or other factors

Forage spatial distribution, extent and abundance	Location, hectares, and forage biomass	Sufficient number of locations, area of suitable habitat and available forage biomass to support the population target	This species is a grazer, feeding on a wide range of vegetation. Key forage materials include roots, tubers (such as potatoes), shoots (such as winter wheat), stolons, rhizomes, leaves (such as grasses), and seed such as (spilled) grain. Key habitats include peat bogs (including raised bogs and blanket bogs), grasslands (such as wet grassland, callows, semi-improved grassland, and intensive grassland), arable stubble, winter cereal fields, coastal grasslands, and occasionally salt marsh. In general, the foraging distance of wintering Greenland White-fronted Goose from night roosts is estimated at 5km to 8km (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2016), although this will vary depending on site and landscape
Roost spatial distribution and extent	Location and hectares of roosting habitat	Sufficient number of locations, area and availability of suitable roosting habitat to support the population target	Roosting is a critical ecological requirement for the wintering population. Overnight roosting habitat mainly consists of permanent waterbodies, such as lakes, estuaries, bays, and other open waterbodies. When roosting in waterbodies, this species can roost on above-water features such as sandbanks. Daytime roosting is also a common behaviour, where birds minimise activity levels to conserve energy, while benefitting from the vigilance of other flock members. A lack of sufficient and suitable roosting habitats can result in increased mortality risk, whether indirectly (e.g. via increased energy expenditure travelling to/from roost sites) or directly (e.g. via increased predation risk), or reduction in site use; this would ultimately affect the achievement of targets for population trend and/or spatial distribution
Supporting habitat: area and quality	Hectares and quality	Sufficient area of utilisable habitat available in ecologically important sites outside the SPA	The species can make extensive use of suitable habitats in important areas outside the SPA for foraging and roosting. The extent, availability and quality of these supporting habitats may be of importance for the restoration of the SPA population. Suitable supporting habitats include those highlighted in the attributes for foraging and roosting habitat

