

New report reveals dramatic changes in the UK's waterbirds

Title

Millions of ducks, geese, swans and wading birds are currently escaping arctic conditions in northern Europe, Asia, Greenland and Arctic Canada, and are coming to the UK for the winter, making the country one of the most important European areas for wetland wintering birds.

However, *The State of the UK's Birds 2011 report*, recently produced by the RSPB (BirdLife in the UK), in coalition with other British Environmental NGOs, highlights signs of dramatic changes for some wetland birds that have reached their lowest but also highest population levels in the UK in winter. One of the greatest losses recorded has been reached by the Mallard. At their most important UK strongholds, the species population levels are the smaller among the wintering bird populations in the country.

Since 1998, basis year for the census, other important declines have been censused for the Pochard (-46%); the Dunlin (-39%); Bar-tailed Godwit (-29%); and the Ringed Plover (-26%). At the opposite, the Whooper Swan, wintering from Iceland, has reached its highest levels (increasing by 122% in the last 10 years). The same success-story has happened to the Avocet and for the Pink-footed Goose that have both reached their highest population levels since records began (respectively +95% and +27% since 1998).

The reasons for the changes are not sure, but results from waterbird monitoring schemes in other parts of Europe have shown that they might be partly explained by some birds not migrating as far because of milder conditions elsewhere. Martin Harper, Conservation Director at the RSPB commented, "The UK has some of the best sites in the world for wetland birds and the sight and sounds of tens of thousands of birds wheeling around these wetlands ranks among the best natural history experiences that our islands have to offer. Although the numbers of birds visiting these sites may fluctuate, they are incredibly important and should be protected."

Please click [here](#) to read the *The State of the UK's Birds 2011 report*
