



## News item

### **Wounding of pink-footed geese: the downturn is maintained!**

In late April, a Danish-Norwegian research team collaborated to catch, ring, neckband and X-ray pink-footed geese in Nord-Trøndelag in Norway. The majority of the population gather here on their way to breeding grounds in Svalbard. Pink-footed geese overwinter in Denmark, Holland and Belgium and migrate through Norway in the autumn and spring. The population has been selected as the first example to implement a European adaptive management plan for a migratory waterbird species. One of the plan's objectives is to reduce the wounding of birds caused by hunting. Pink-footed geese are hunted in both Denmark and Norway. It is the shared responsibility of Danish and Norwegian hunters to ensure that hunting is carried out with the least possible risk of wounding.

In April 2016, over three days 351 pink-footed geese were caught using a cannon-net. X-ray images, revealing whether birds had shotgun pellets in their bodies, showed that among young birds, those having only experienced one hunting season, 4 out of 100 individuals (4%) had pellets in their bodies. Among older birds 45 out of 251 (18%) had pellets in their bodies. This was a slight decrease in comparison to 2015, when pellets were found in 6% of young and 19% of older birds caught during a similar catch (the differences are not statistically significant). However, compared to the 1990s this is a significant decline. During this period pellets were found in 25% of young and 36% of older birds.

Furthermore, this steady decline in wounding is a positive result as hunting pressure on pink-footed geese and the number of geese shot has increased significantly in recent years. This is in accordance with measures to reach the population level target of about 60,000 individuals, as agreed by the countries behind the management plan. An

increase in wounding could have been expected but that has not happened. On the contrary, whilst in the 1990s one goose was wounded for every goose shot the ratio is now about 1:7.

The reason for this marked drop in wounding can be attributed to changing hunting practices amongst hunters. The main reason for geese being wounded is shooting them from too far away. Denmark initiated a national action plan to reduce wounding in 1997. The plan included training of hunters in judging distances, practising shooting under realistic conditions and stricter hunting test requirements, as well as a targeted awareness campaign. This initiative quickly delivered positive results. In recent years, both Denmark and Norway have experienced increased interest amongst hunters in developing more effective goose hunting practices e.g. using goose decoys and lure calls. In addition goose hunters often work in hunting teams, so can encourage each other. These developments have promoted shooting at shorter distances, safer and more accurate shots and, hence, better chances of shooting birds without wounding.

However, there is still room for improvement and it is important to maintain these positive results. Both the Norwegian Association of Hunters and Anglers (NJFF) and the Danish Hunters' Association (DJ) will for the forthcoming hunting season run awareness campaigns, as well as hold specific courses in how to hunt geese effectively and minimize wounding.

In case of the pink-footed geese it has been shown that information and training of hunters can have a positive effect, which has led to greater accountability. This learning can be favourably applied to other game species.

Additional information:

To learn more about the AEWA International Species Management Plan for the pink-footed goose, please visit its website. There is also a page about wounding in the activities/projects section of the website: <http://pinkfootedgoose.aewa.info/>.

A technical note detailing the data and analysis of x-rays carried out in 2016 can be found at:  
[http://dce.au.dk/fileadmin/dce.au.dk/Udgivelser/Notater\\_2016/Anskydning\\_af\\_kortna\\_ebbet\\_gaas.pdf](http://dce.au.dk/fileadmin/dce.au.dk/Udgivelser/Notater_2016/Anskydning_af_kortna_ebbet_gaas.pdf)

Previous results of research concerning wounding can be found in the Technical Report no. 70 from DCE / Aarhus University (in Danish only): <http://dce2.au.dk/pub/TR70.pdf>

To learn more about the Danish campaign to reduce wounding, visit the Danish Nature Agency's website (in Danish only): <http://naturstyrelsen.dk/naturoplevelser/jagt/om-at-gaa-paa-jagt/jagtformer/vejledningtraekjagt/>

To see NRK's (Norwegian Television) report of the goose catch in Nord-Trøndelag in April 2016 please see: <https://tv.nrk.no/serie/distriktsnyheter-midtnytt#t=8m14s> (2<sup>nd</sup> May)

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Poster from the Danish awareness campaign to reduce wounding; produced in collaboration between the Danish Nature Agency and the Danish Hunters' Association.



Pink-footed goose wounded with 12 shotgun pellets (x-rayed April 30, 2016, Nord-Trøndelag, Norway). A steel ring marker can also be seen on one leg. Photo: Department of Bioscience, Aarhus University, Denmark