

## SPECIES INFORMATION SHEET

*Limosa limosa*

English name: <b>Black-tailed godwit</b>	Scientific name: <b><i>Limosa limosa</i></b>	
Taxonomical group: Class: Aves Order: Charadriiformes Family: Scolopacidae	Species authority: Linnaeus, 1758	
Subspecies, Variations, Synonyms: –	Generation length: 6 years	
Past and current threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): Overgrowth of open areas (A04.03), Construction (reclamation of land; J02.01), Competition and predation (I02), Alien species (I01), Extra-regional threat (hunting; XE)	Future threats (Habitats Directive article 17 codes): Overgrowth of open areas (A04.03), Competition and predation (I02), Alien species (I01), Extra-regional threat (hunting; XE)	
IUCN Criteria: <b>A2ac</b>	<b>HELCOM Red List Category:</b>	<b>NT Near Threatened</b>
Global / European IUCN Red List Category NT / VU (A2b)	Annex I EU Birds Directive -no Annex II EU Birds Directive -II B (DK, FR)	
Red List status in HELCOM countries: Denmark: VU, Estonia: NT, Finland: EN, Germany: 1 (Critically endangered), Latvia: –, Lithuania: 2 (V, Vulnerable), Poland: –, Russia: –, Sweden: CR		

### Range description and general trends

The black-tailed godwit is a widespread, but patchily distributed breeder in whole Europe. Most of the European breeding population belongs to the nominate race *L. limosa limosa*. The northern populations in Norway, Iceland and Scotland are of the form *islandica*. The key populations of the nominate form are found in the Wadden Sea (Netherlands, Germany), Russia, Belarus and Poland. The entire European population counts >99 000 bp; the population in the Baltic Sea area represents <10% of the European total.

The nominate black-tailed godwit has undergone a considerable decline across much of its European range, and this trend is also true for most parts of the Baltic Sea area. However, in the northern parts of the Baltic range (Finland, Russia/PET) it seems to be slowly increasing.



*Limosa limosa*. Photos by Andrei Frenkel (left) and Karauda Lech (right).

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### Distribution and status in the Baltic Sea region

In **Sweden**, the black-tailed godwit breeds only in the southern parts of the country, namely on Gotland, Öland and in Scania, but also on the west coast (Halland). First breedings were recorded in 1835 on Gotland and in 1856 on Öland. On these islands, the species gained a stronghold for a short period at the end of the 19th century, being seemingly abundant at that time. However, short time later a rapid decline took place and at the beginning of the 1900s only a few pairs had remained on Öland. Gotland was reoccupied in 1933 and the species started to expand. The Swedish breeding population was still low in the 1960s (150–175 bp), but then increased to 350–375 bp in 1980 and was about 350 bp during the 1990s (50 bp on Gotland, 50–60 in Scania, 240 on Öland). Since then, it has decreased rapidly to 250 bp in 2000 and to less than 100 bp at present.

**In Finland**, the species is rare, but slowly increasing. The main breeding sites are found in the Oulu area; some sites are scattered over southern Finland. The species does not breed in northern Finland. In Russia/PET the population is characterised by considerable fluctuations, however, the short term trend seems to be increasing. During the breeding season, the species may be found all over the region, but there are only few places with confirmed breeding records.

**Poland** hosts by far the largest breeding population of the black-tailed godwit in the Baltic Sea area. The species is a widespread breeder in the lowland with a highly patchy distribution. Important breeding areas are mainly found in the central and eastern provinces; the species is scarce in other regions. The largest breeding populations are found in Tyśmienica valley (630–670 bp), the Biebrza Marshes (600 bp), and the Bug valley (490–560 bp; Sikora *et al.* 2007). There is a slight expansion towards the south (Tomiałojć & Stawarczyk 2003). During the last 20 years, the population has strongly declined. In western Poland, surveys during the periods 1980–1990 and 2000–2010 revealed a decrease of 84.6% (Ławicki *et al.* 2011)! Previous estimates of 6 500–7 000 bp for the entire Polish breeding population are probably too high, the number of 5 000–6 000 bp seems to be more realistic (Sikora *et al.* 2007; Wilk *et al.* 2010).

At the **German** Baltic coast the breeding population of the black-tailed godwit currently counts about 60 bp in Mecklenburg-Western-Pomerania and only 2 bp in Schleswig-Holstein. The long-term population development has been characterised by strong fluctuations, which are well documented for Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (Prill 1972). There are only few reported breeding records for this region from the 19th century; the species obviously was not a regular breeder at that time. The population increased rapidly at the beginning of the 20th century to >100 bp around 1910, but then declined again to a few breeding pairs during the 1940s. The development starting at the end of the 1950s until 2011 is shown in Figure 1.

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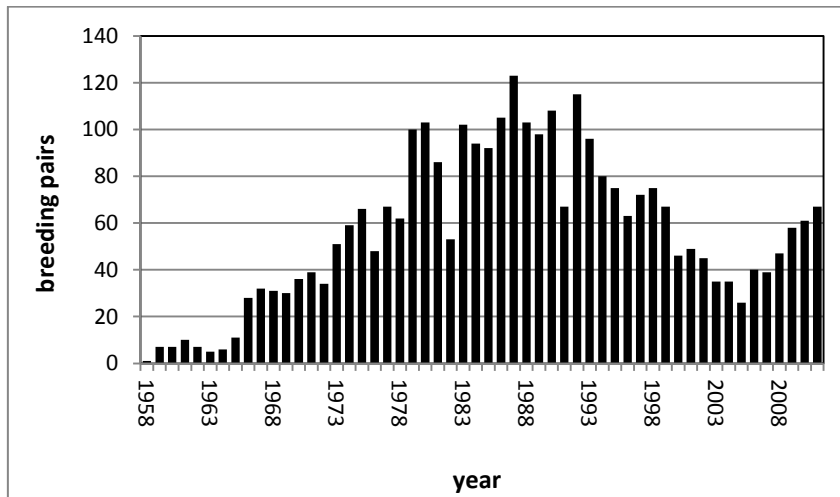
*Limosa limosa*

Figure 1: Long-term development of the breeding population of the black-tailed godwit in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, illustrating considerable fluctuations.

The Baltic Danish population of black-tailed godwit has never been very large (Clausen 2011, Thorup 2004 and unpublished):

Table 1: The population development of the black-tailed godwit in Denmark.

	1970 (1964–1972)	1980 (1977–1982)	2009/10 (2006–2010)
<b>Baltic</b>	135	198	150
<b>North Sea</b>	512	727	393
<b>Denmark total</b>	647	925	543

A few sites lost their black-tailed godwits during pump-drainage projects. Improved management with extensive hay making on the island of Saltholm was followed by a marked increase of the population. Also at Borreby Mose an improved management resulted in more breeding black-tailed godwits.

Table 2: Population numbers of the black-tailed godwit in the Baltic Sea area. For population trends - =decreasing, +=increasing, F=fluctuating, ?=unknown.

Country	Population size		Short-term population trend (10 years)	Long-term population trend (50 years)
	Breeding pairs	Year		
Sweden	50–100	2010	-	F
Finland	70–90	2009	+	+
Russia, PET	100–200	2009	+(F)	+(F)
Russia, KAL	15–20	2003–2009	-	-
Estonia	500–700	2003–2008	-	-
Latvia	80–100	1990–2000	?	-
Lithuania	300–450	1999–2001	-	-
Poland	5 000–6 000	1990–2004	-	-
Germany - SH	2	2010	-	-
Germany - MV	67	2011	+	F
Denmark	150	2009–2010	0	-
<b>Baltic Sea</b>	<b>6 330–7 870</b>			

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## Distribution map



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### Habitat and ecology

The original breeding habitats are river valley fens, floods at the edges of large lakes, raised bogs and moorlands. The majority of the European population now uses habitats such as wet grasslands, coastal salt marshes, pastures, or wet areas near fishponds. Cropland may also be used for breeding (Tucker & Heath 1995).

### Description of major threats

In Poland, which hosts by far the largest proportion of the Baltic breeding population, drainage, land reclamation, river regulation and low breeding success due to high predation pressure by Red Foxes and corvids are seen as the main factors for the decline of the species (Ławicki *et al.* 2011).

Habitat changes and increased predation by predatory mammals, especially Foxes, are the reasons for the abandonment of breeding sites in Germany. However, management of predatory mammals on coastal islands resulted in an increase of breeding pair numbers in recent times. The black-tailed godwit is hunted in France, with a total bag of 6 000–8 000 birds. Though hunting is not the main factor for the decline, it probably puts an additional pressure on a population which is already weakened by other factors (EU Commission 2007b).

### Assessment justification

The observed decline over 3 generations (18 years) exceeds, for the whole Baltic, >15%, but does not reach 30%. The species meets the criteria A2a and probably also A2c under *Near Threatened* (NT).

### Recommendations for actions to conserve the species

The main measures to conserve the species are a grazing and water management at the breeding existing sites directed to the habitat requirements of the species. Habitat restoration (restoration of the natural flood regime of coastal and riverine polders; establishment of appropriate grazing regimes) of former or potential breeding sites is also recommended. Control of predatory mammals is essential for many breeding sites. Though hunting is probably not the main factor for the decline, it poses an additional pressure and should be banned. The species should be deleted from Annex II of the EU Birds Directive.

### Common names

Denmark: Stor Kobbernespe, Estonia: Mustsaba-vigle, Finland: mustapyrstökuiiri, Germany: Uferschnepfe, Latvia: Melnā puskuitala, Lithuania: Griciukas, Poland: rycyk, Russia: Большой веретенник, Sweden: Rödspov

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