

# Barnacle Goose

*Branta leucopsis*

Bird · Winter visitor · Oct–Apr



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A small, sharply marked black-and-white goose: creamy-white face, black neck and breast, and a silver-grey barred back. Barnacle geese are the defining winter bird of the Solway. The whole Svalbard breeding population — tens of thousands of birds — winters on this estuary, concentrated around Caerlaverock and the merse east of Dumfries, arriving in late September and October and leaving in April.

## BEHAVIOUR

Barnacle geese graze the merse and improved grassland in dense, tightly packed flocks, keeping up a continuous yapping chatter that carries a long way — often likened to a pack of small dogs. They roost on the sandflats. The recovery of this population from a few hundred birds in the 1940s to tens of thousands today is one of the clearest conservation successes anywhere on the Scottish coast.

## WHEN TO SEE IT

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## QUICK FACTS

|           |                                   |
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| FAMILY    | Ducks, geese and swans (Anatidae) |
| SIZE      | 58–70 cm                          |
| UK STATUS | Amber-listed                      |

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