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RUSSIAN POPULATION OF THE BARNACLE GOOSE: MODERN CONDITION AND TRENDS

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The Russian population of the Barnacle Goose started growing in 1980-s. The population size has increased from 10 000 birds up to 1200 000 in last 50 years. The population growth led to the expansion of the species from the native breeding range on Vaygach Island and Novaya Zemlya to other coastal areas of the Russian Arctic and even to the Baltic Sea. The main colonies established on Kolguev Island and the Kanin Peninsula. In last three years isolated cases of the Barnacle Goose nesting were observed on the Western Taimyr Peninsula.

The number of Barnacle geese on Kolguev was estimated at 70 000 – 80 000 breeding pairs, on Vaygach – 9000 pairs, on the Kanin Peninsula – 10 000 pairs. In total, the number of the breeding birds in Nenets District was estimated at 200 000 – 210 000 individuals. Taking into account that every season 25-30% of the population do not breed, the total number of birds by the end of breeding season (together with juveniles) is about 500 000 – 600 000. The whole population size was estimated at more than 1000 000 in wintering grounds, therefore we could suggest that the greatest colonies of Barnacle geese are located in Novaya Zemlya. Data from satellite transmitted birds support this assumption.

Whereas in the native breeding area Barnacle geese nested on cliffs and small islands, new colonies were formed mainly on salt marshes and sandy dunes. Extremely high ecological plasticity of Barnacle geese allows them to occupy very different nesting habitats.