

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

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

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