Threatened Birds of Asia:
The BirdLife International Red Data Book

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RED-BREASTED GOOSE  
*Branta ruficollis*

Critical —  
Endangered —  
Vulnerable B1 + 2c

This species has a small wintering range with 80–90% of the population concentrated in just five roost sites and the remainder occurring in a few other areas. This range continues to decline as a result of land-use changes to nearby feeding areas. It therefore qualifies as Vulnerable. If additional wintering grounds are discovered or the number of winter feeding sites stabilises, the species may be downlisted to Near Threatened.

**DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION**  
The Red-breasted Goose breeds on the Taimyr, Gydan and Yamal peninsulas (therefore marginally inside the Asian region), Russia. Prior to the 1950s, most birds wintered in Azerbaijan; however, 80–90% of birds now congregate at five roost sites on the Black Sea at Shabla and Durankulak in Bulgaria and Razelm–Sinoe lagoons and Techirghiol in Romania (Tucker and Heath 1994, Heath and Evans 2000). Smaller numbers winter in Ukraine (A. Mikityuk in litt. 1999). There are five known staging areas in Russia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine; maximum population counts were 60,000 between 1967–1970, 25,907 between 1976–1990, 75,879 between 1991–1995 and 88,000 in 1996 (Aarvak et al. 1996). It is unclear whether these counts represent genuine population fluctuations.

**ECOLOGY**  
It nests in tundra, where breeding success may depend on nesting Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* and Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* providing protection from predators (Quinn et al. 1996). Wintering geese feed on winter wheat, barley, maize, pasture grasses and, in Greece, natural grassland (Tucker and Heath 1994, Hunter and Black 1996). Birds arrive on the breeding grounds in early June and leave from mid-September, reaching the main wintering areas by October–November and leaving in February–March (Dereliev 1997).

**THREATS**  
Following land privatisation in winter feeding areas, reductions in the land area under wheat cultivation and the intensification of agriculture are potential threats and some key feeding sites have been lost in Bulgaria (S. Dereliev in litt. 1999). Pressure exists to allow shooting and scaring of geese in Bulgaria and Romania, and disturbance is caused by hunting (Dereliev 1997). Tourist hunting in Ukraine poses an increasing threat (*WT WSG News* 10 [1997]) and other threats include industrial developments at breeding sites in Gydan and Yamal and the use of rodenticides in the wintering grounds (Tucker and Heath 1994, Hunter and Black 1996).

**MEASURES TAKEN**  
It is legally protected in key states (Hunter et al. 1999). Parts of its breeding range and principal wintering roost sites are protected, but hunting occurs in feeding areas (Hunter and Black 1996). A management plan is being implemented for roosting lakes in Bulgaria (S. Dereliev in litt. 1999). Wintering sites in Bulgaria and Romania are monitored and research and public awareness projects are ongoing (S. Dereliev in litt. 1999, Hunter et al. 1999, D. Hulea in litt. 1999). It is listed on CITES Appendix II.

**MEASURES PROPOSED**  
• Monitor and control hunting disturbance and illegal hunting.  
• Expand monitoring and research programmes.  
• Identify and protect important staging areas.  
• Protect key sites.  
• Monitor changes in agriculture.  
• Promote beneficial agricultural policies.  
• Continue public awareness initiatives.