

Conflict with farmers threaten geese

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A Netherlands Institute of Ecology scientist in Yerseke says the survival of pink-footed geese is being endangered by a conflict with farmers.

Thousands of the geese are preparing for their spring migration north to breeding grounds in the Arctic. But Norwegian farmers are threatening to increase efforts to frighten the birds from fields the geese use as a migration staging post. The farmers are demanding compensation for damage to crops and grassland caused by the geese.

Writing in the *British Journal of Applied Ecology*, Professor Marcel Klaassen says international action is urgently needed.

Together with colleagues in Denmark and Norway, Klaassen used data from ringed geese collected between 1991 and 2003 to model the impact of organized scaring of pink-footed geese. They found any rapid escalation of bird scaring could be catastrophic for the birds, especially for less experienced individuals.

Populations of the geese have nearly doubled, from between 23,000 and 30,000 in the 1980s to 45,000 today.

As well as helping develop strategies to manage the conflict between farmers and geese, Klaassen says his model could help ecologists predict how other species might respond to climate change.

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