



Identification of Tundra and Taiga Bean Goose

The **Taiga Bean Goose** (*Anser fabalis fabalis*) and **Tundra Bean Goose** (*Anser fabalis rossicus*) are difficult to separate in the field, and some individuals will always be impossible to assign to subspecies based on visual characteristics alone.

Separation between subspecies is mainly based on the colouration and shape of the head and bill. Good views of foraging or resting flocks and inspection of shot birds will usually allow for subspecies identification. In field conditions the bill of Taiga Bean Goose usually looks rather orange-yellow and low-lined, and the head-bill combination thus long and low-lined.

The head of Tundra Bean Goose looks rounder and darker than the neck, while the bill looks dark and heavy. In field counts the longer neck and more elegant characteristics of Taiga Bean Goose are also good to look for.

The Challenge: Correctly Identifying Bean Goose Subspecies

Taiga Bean Goose



Tundra Bean Goose



young

adult

Beaks of Taiga and Tundra Bean Goose juvenile and adult birds. © Antti Piironen

Bill shape and **colouration** are often the most useful characters to study and may be used for identification of both live and dead birds.

In **Taiga Bean Goose**, the bill is rather long and slim, with a straight or slightly concave lower mandible. Often a large part of the bill is orange-yellow, with a varying amount of black extending from the base.

In **Tundra Bean Goose**, the orange-yellow part of the bill is usually restricted to a narrow band across the bill, and the bill is shorter and heavier.

Size and **shape** may also help identification, as Taiga Bean Goose is often larger and longer necked, almost similar in size to Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*). Tundra Bean Goose is smaller and comparable in size to Pink-footed Goose (*Anser brachyrhynchus*). Pink-coloured legs of the Pink-footed Goose helps to tell the difference from orange-legged Tundra Bean Goose.

Collecting Vital Information: Monitoring of Bean Geese

Collection of necessary harvest bag statistics requires differentiation between subspecies of Bean Goose. When collecting subspecies information on hunted birds, range states are encouraged to age the birds to generate age-ratio of harvest.

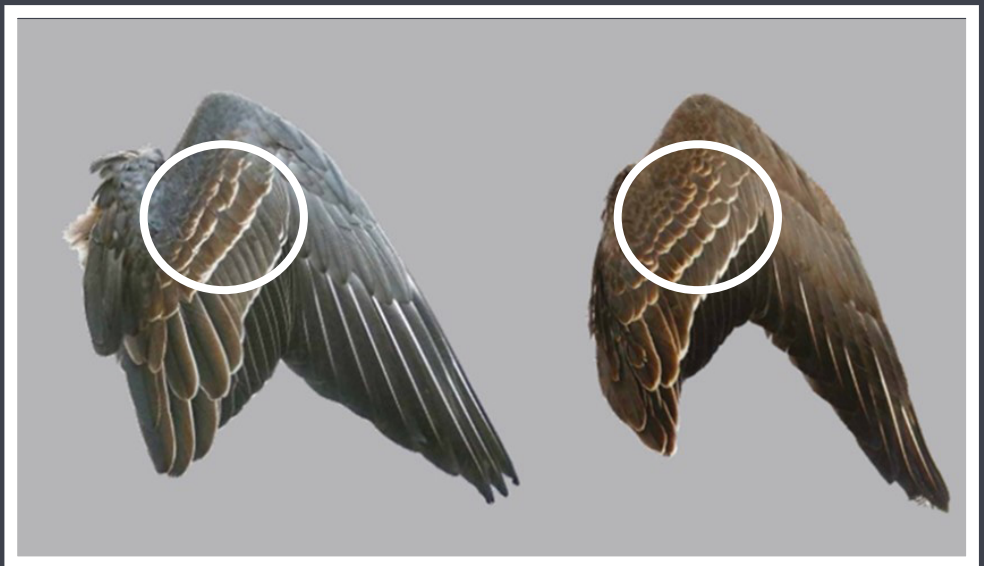
When observing Bean Geese, please note the most important information:

Most geese can be aged by the shape and colour of the bill and the wing coverts. The bill of adult birds is generally brighter and the orange-yellow area is rather well defined.

Aging from wing: In young birds (below right), wing coverts are typically fresh, narrow and rounded, whereas adult wing coverts (below left) appear worn and have a more rectangular shape.

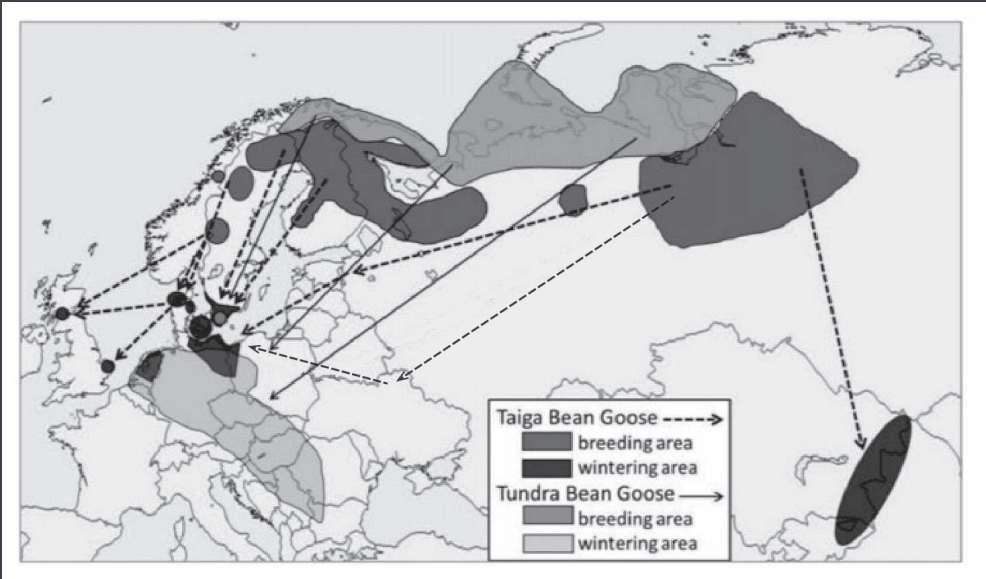
adult

young



Wing covert feather's shape and appearance are important characteristics in aging birds. © Veli-Matti Väänänen

Having declined from around 100.000 individuals in the 1990s to around 63.000 by 2009, the Taiga Bean Goose has been one of the few declining goose populations in the Western Palearctic. Tundra Bean Goose is stable, or increasing, and numbers around 600.000 individuals. Since Taiga and Tundra Bean Geese have different population status and management objectives while having overlapping ranges, particularly in wintering areas, the separation of subspecies in bag records, as well as in bird counts, is of great importance.



An International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Taiga Bean Goose was adopted in 2015.

This is the first species action plan under the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) for a declining population with an Adaptive Harvest Management framework.

Currently the Taiga Bean Goose is recovering while under the AEWA European Goose Management Platform (EGMP) process it remains huntable only in the Central Management unit, covering North-West Russia, Finland, Sweden and Denmark, with annual harvest quotas set by the EGMP. A temporary hunting moratorium and conservation measures are proposed for the rest of the Taiga Bean Goose range.

