

PROPOSAL FOR INCLUSION OF SPECIES ON THE APPENDICES OF THE CONVENTION
ON THE CONSERVATION OF MIGRATORY SPECIES OF WILD ANIMALS

A. **PROPOSAL:** Inclusion of Larus argentatus argentatus and Larus argentatus argenteus in Appendix II.

B. **PROPONENT:** Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

C. **SUPPORTING STATEMENT**

1. **Taxon**

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1.1. Classis | Aves |
| 1.2. Ordo | Charadriiformes |
| 1.3. Familia | Laridae |
| 1.4. Genus/Species/Subspecies | <u>Larus argentatus</u> Pontoppidan 1763 ssp. <u>argentatus</u> and <u>argenteus</u> |
| 1.5. Common names | |
| English: | Herring Gull |
| Spanish: | Gaviota Argentea |
| French: | Goeland argente |

2. **Biological data**

2.1. Distribution

Larus argentatus is here considered to comprise only the pink-legged forms of the argentatus/cachinnans/fuscus group: L. a. argentatus and L. a. argenteus in the Western Palearctic. The nominate race breeds from Denmark and Scandinavia east to the Kola Peninsula, and winters south to the North Sea and British Isles. L. a. argenteus breeds in Iceland, the Faeroes, the British Isles and on the coast of continental Europe from Germany to western France. Most populations of argenteus are sedentary or dispersive, although some birds move southwest to Iberia in winter.

2.2. Population

Only two populations are recognized.

- Entire population of argentatus: 1,500,000; increasing (Rose & Scott 1993).

- Entire population of argenteus: 1,500,000; increasing (Rose & Scott 1993).

Unpublished data suggest that the total breeding population of L. a. argentatus is between 350,000 and 475,000 pairs, and that of L. a. argenteus between 410,000 and 430,000 pairs. The species has increased and expanded over much of Northwest Europe this century, colonizing Iceland (in 1920-30), Bear Island (1932) and probably Svalbard (1950). Substantial increases have been noted during the last 50 years in the British Isles, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Finland. In Denmark, the population increased from 3,000 pairs in 1920 to 62,300 pairs in 1974, but has declined since then, while in Sweden the population increased to 66,000 pairs in 1975 but has remained stable since (Evans 1984). The increases in L. argentatus in Northwest Europe

have generally been attributed to increases in food supply in the form of fish-waste and garbage provided by man.

2.3. Habitat

Primarily marine, but does not normally range beyond the offshore zone. Breeds on marine coasts, preferring rocky coasts with cliffs and outlying stacks, skerries or islets, but will also nest on sand-dunes, shingle banks or beaches, and occasionally even salt-marshes and reclaimed polders. In recent years, colonies have become established on buildings, not only at coastal sites but also inland. Outside the breeding season, occurs widely along marine coasts, including low shallow coastlines and estuaries, and also on agricultural land. Follows ships at all seasons, and frequently scavenges around harbours and fishing villages, and at refuse tips and sewage outfalls (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

2.4. Migrations

Mainly migratory in northern Norway and northern Russia; elsewhere in the Western Palearctic either resident or dispersive to a varying degree. In all populations, immatures remain widely distributed throughout the summer, although there is some evidence of a partial return movement towards the breeding areas which is most marked in long-distance migrants. Nominate argentatus from northern Norway and Russia winter from western and southern Norway to the English Channel and commonly also inland in southeastern England. Other populations of argentatus and all populations of argenteus are mainly sedentary or dispersive, although some argenteus from Iceland and the Faeroes reach Britain and Ireland during immaturity, while atypically British birds have been recovered in Iceland, the Faeroes, southern Scandinavia, the eastern North Sea and northern France (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

3. Threat data

3.1. Direct threats to the population

Breeding colonies are extensively disturbed by visits from tourists, fishermen and scientists (Vermeer & Rankin 1984). The numbers of Larus argentatus have been controlled in the British Isles, the Netherlands and Germany, and the species is classified as a pest in Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

3.2. Habitat destruction

None known.

3.3. Indirect threats

Permanently at risk from floating and beached oil, especially in the heavily polluted North Sea.

3.4. Threats connected especially with migrations

None known.

3.5. National and international utilization

The species may be legally hunted in Denmark, Germany and Spain, and possibly also in parts of Central and Eastern Europe.

4. **Protection status and needs**

4.1. National protection status

Within the EEC, Larus argentatus is protected under national legislation in France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg and Portugal, and is classified as a game species for which a hunting season is established in Denmark, Germany and Spain. In Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, it is classified as a pest species and may be controlled under specific conditions.

4.2. International protection status

Larus argentatus is listed in Annex II/2 of the EEC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC).

4.3. Additional protection needs

The populations in question are considered to have a favourable conservation status, and are not in need of any additional special protection measures at the present time.

5. **Range States**

See attached table.

6. **Comments from Range States**

7. **Additional remarks**

8. **References**

- Cramp, S. & Simmons, K.E.L. (eds). (1983). Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Vol.3: Waders to Gulls. Oxford University Press. Oxford, London and New York.
- Evans, P.G.H. (1984). Status and Conservation of Seabirds in Northwest Europe (excluding Norway and the USSR). In: Croxall, J.P., Evans, P.G.H. & Schreiber, R.W. (eds), Status and Conservation of the World's Seabirds: 293-321. ICBP Tech. Publ. No.2. Cambridge, UK.
- Harrison, P. (1983). Seabirds: an identification guide. Croom Helm Ltd., Beckenham, U.K.
- Rose, P.M. & Scott, D.A. (1993). Waterfowl Population Estimates. Draft report presented at the Fifth Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention, 9-16 June 1993, Kushiro, Japan. IWRB, Slimbridge.
- Vermeer, K. & Rankin, L. (1984). Influence of Habitat Destruction and Disturbance on Nesting Seabirds. In: Croxall, J.P., Evans, P.G.H. & Schreiber, R.W. (eds), Status and Conservation of the World's Seabirds: 723-736. ICBP Tech. Publ. No.2. Cambridge, UK.

| Taxon: <i>Larus argentatus</i> (ssp <i>argentatus</i> & <i>argenteus</i>) | | |
|--|------|--------|
| Population | | |
| (a) Entire population of <i>argentatus</i> | | |
| (b) Entire population of <i>argenteus</i> | | |
| State | Pop. | Status |
| Belgium | a | W |
| " | b | Rs |
| Denmark | a | Wsr |
| Faroese | b | Rsw |
| Estonia | a | Swr |
| Finland | a | Swr |
| France | b | Rsw |
| Germany | a | Wrs |
| " | b | Rs |
| Iceland | b | Rs |
| Ireland | b | Rsw |
| Latvia | a | Sw |
| Lithuania | a | Sw |
| Netherlands | a | W |
| " | b | Rs |
| Norway | a | Swr |
| Svalbard | a | V |
| Poland | a | Wsr |
| Portugal | b | W |
| Russian Federation | a | Swr |
| Spain | b | W |
| Sweden | a | Swr |
| United Kingdom | a | W |
| " | b | Rsw |

| Key to Status | |
|---|--------------------|
| S/s Breeding summer visitor | R/r Resident |
| W/w Winter visitor | V Vagrant |
| P/p Passage migrant | ? Status uncertain |
| Upper case = primary status Lower case = secondary status | |