

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 fuscus 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 fuscus</u> Linnaeus 1758 ssp. <u>fuscus</u> and <u>graellsii</u>
1.5. Common names	
English:	Lesser Black-backed Gull
Spanish:	Gaviota Sombria
French:	Goeland brun

2. Biological data

2.1. Distribution

Larus fuscus is here considered to comprise only the two very dark-backed forms of the argentatus/cachinnans/fuscus group breeding in northern Europe, L. f. fuscus and L. f. graellsii. The nominate race breeds in north continental Europe from northern Norway and Sweden east to the Kola Peninsula and White Sea (35°E), and winters in the Red Sea and Central and Eastern Africa. L. f. graellsii breeds from Iceland, the British Isles and southern Norway south to northwest Spain, and winters along the Atlantic seaboard from the British Isles and West Mediterranean south to West Africa. Some authors give subspecific status to the populations breeding in the Netherlands, Denmark and southern Norway (L. f. intermedius).

2.2. Population

Only two populations are recognized.

- L. f. fuscus (entire population): 200,000 (Rose & Scott 1993).

- L. f. graellsii (entire population): 400,000; increasing (Rose & Scott 1993).

Unpublished data suggest that the total breeding population of L. f. fuscus is between 50,000 and 60,000 pairs, and that of L. f. graellsii (including intermedius) between 170,000 and 190,000 pairs. The total of 400,000 birds for graellsii includes an estimated 75,000 'intermedius'. Perennou (1992) gives a combined total for fuscus and graellsii in the East Atlantic at about 1,000,000, i.e. considerably higher than the present estimates. L. f. graellsii (including intermedius) has increased and spread during the last century, with substantial increases noted in Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. These increases have generally been attributed to increases in food supply in the form of fish-waste and

garbage provided by man (Evans 1984). Little information is available on trends in L. f. fuscus; there were large increases in Finland until the 1960s, since when there has been an accelerating decline with the population in the Gulf of Finland halved since 1981 (Evans 1984).

### 2.3. Habitat

Breeds mainly within the oceanic fringe of Northwest Europe, often in very large colonies in relatively accessible sites where it depends on strength of numbers for security. Nesting sites include the grassy summits of offshore islands and islets, coastal sand-dunes, remote areas of moorland, and islets in freshwater lakes. In recent years, has taken to nesting on flat roofs of buildings within cities. Outside the breeding season, spreads much more widely over inland and marine habitats, chiefly in inshore and offshore seas south to tropical waters where it frequents lagoons, estuaries, harbours and the seashore. In Africa, occurs far inland along the Niger and the Nile, and at large lakes, especially the East African Rift Valley Lakes and Lake Victoria. Birds wintering in Northwest Europe frequent estuaries, wet arable land, reservoirs and gravel pits. Less of a scavenger than L. marinus or L. argentatus, feeding more at sea or on arable land, and less frequently visiting fishing harbours and refuse tips (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Urban *et al.* 1986).

### 2.4. Migrations

The nominate race migrates south across eastern Europe, the Black Sea and the East Mediterranean to winter in the Red Sea and Central and Eastern Africa (east to the Gulf of Guinea and south to Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi). It is an uncommon migrant in the Caspian Sea and rather scarce winter visitor to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. L. f. graellsii winters along the Atlantic seaboard from the British Isles south to West Africa (commonly to Guinea and Nigeria). A few birds winter in the West Mediterranean east to Tunisia. Most old reports of L. fuscus in the Arabian Peninsula and further east in Asia are now believed to refer to one or other subspecies of Larus cachinnans. Thus, for example, Roberts (1991) concluded that there were no fully authenticated records of L. f. fuscus in Pakistan, and that this species should be deleted from the Pakistan list.

## 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 species is classified as a pest in Ireland and the United Kingdom, and may be controlled under specific conditions. It is legally hunted in Denmark, Germany, Spain and possibly in parts of Eastern Europe, but the numbers taken are likely to be insignificant.

### 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 Eastern Europe.

4. **Protection status and needs**

4.1. National protection status

Within the EEC, Larus fuscus is protected under national legislation in Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Portugal, and is classified as a game species for which a hunting season is established in Denmark, Germany and Spain. In Ireland and the United Kingdom, it is classified as a pest species and may be controlled under specific conditions. In Africa, it is fully protected under national legislation in Benin, Ethiopia, Gambia, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia and Tunisia.

4.2. International protection status

Larus fuscus 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.
- Perennou, C. (1992). African Waterfowl Census 1992. IWRB, Slimbridge, U.K.
- Roberts, T.J. (1991). The Birds of Pakistan. Vol.1 Non-Passeriformes. Oxford University Press, Karachi.
- 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.
- Urban, E.K., Fry, C.H. & Keith, S. (1986). The Birds of Africa. Volume II. Academic Press, London & Orlando.
- 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 fuscus</i> (ssp <i>fuscus</i> & <i>graellsii</i> )		
Population		
(a) Entire population of <i>fuscus</i>		
(b) Entire population of <i>graellsii</i>		
State	Pop.	Status
Algeria	b	W
Bahrain	a	Pw
Belgium	b	Swr
Benin	b	W
Burundi	a	W
Comoros	a	Wp
Cote d'Ivoire	b	W
Denmark	b	Swr
Djibouti	a	W
Egypt	a	W
Ethiopia	a	W
Finland	a	S
France	b	Wsr
Gambia	b	W
Germany	b	Swr
Ghana	b	W
Guinea	b	W
Guinea-Bissau	b	W
Iceland	b	Sr
Iran	a	Pw
Ireland	b	Swr
Kenya	a	W
Kuwait	a	Pw
Liberia	b	W
Malawi	a	W
Malta	a	W
Mauritania	b	W
Morocco	b	S
Mozambique	a	W
Netherlands	b	Swr
Nigeria	b	W
Norway	a	S

Norway	b	Sr
Oman	a	Pw
Portugal	b	Wsr
Qatar	a	Pw
Russian Federation	a	S
Rwanda	a	W
Saudi Arabia	a	Wp
Senegal	b	W
Seychelles	a	Wp
Sierra Leone	b	W
Somalia	a	W
Spain	b	Wsr
Sudan	a	W
Sweden	a	S
Tanzania	a	W
Togo	b	W
Tunisia	b	W
Uganda	a	W
United Arab Emirates	a	Pw
United Kingdom	b	Swr
Gibraltar	b	P
Yemen	a	W
Zaire	a	W
Zambia	a	W
Zimbabwe	a	W

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	