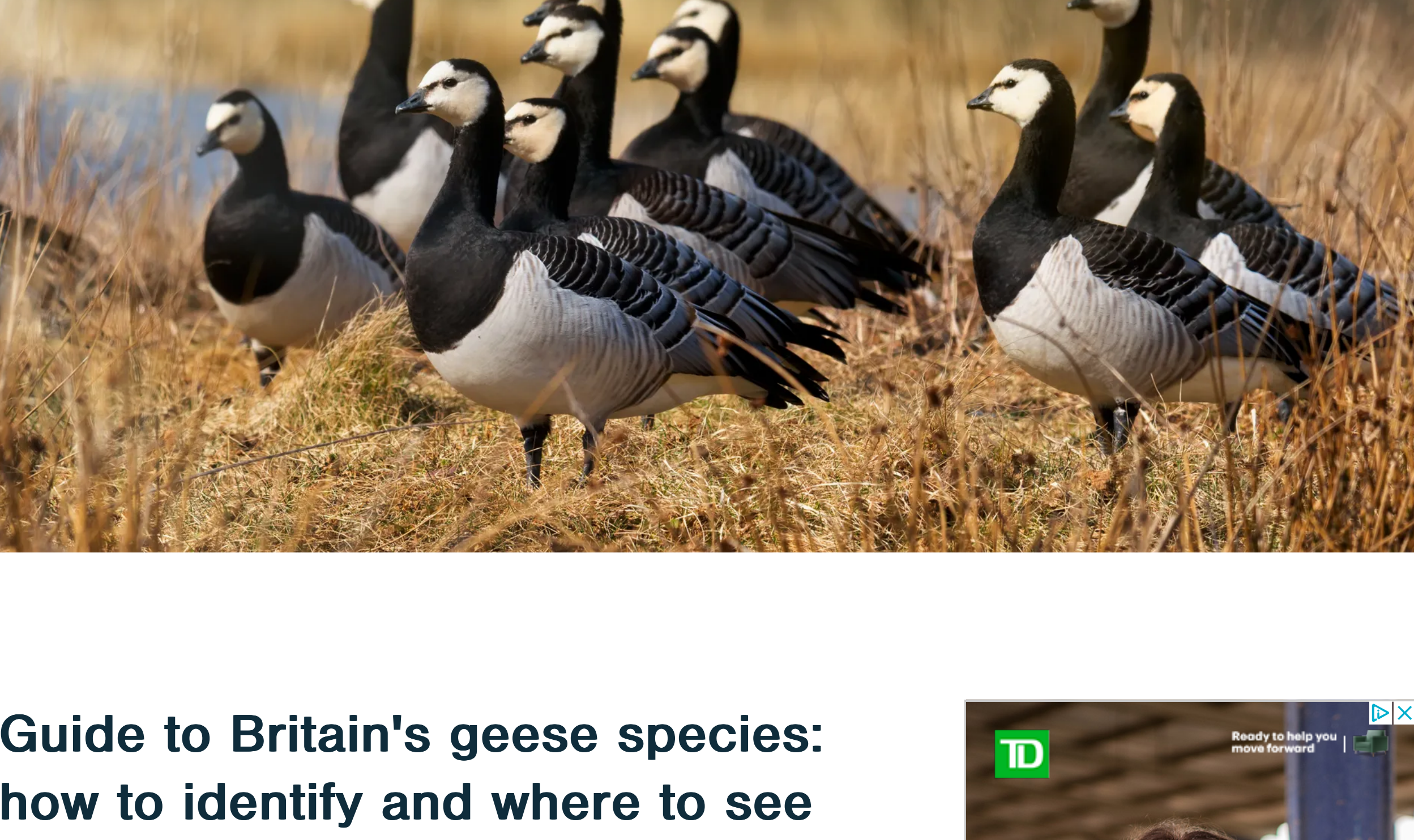




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## Guide to Britain's geese species: how to identify and where to see

In autumn and winter, geese are a familiar sight in the UK's estuaries, marshes and wetlands. Learn all about these majestic birds, including identification, migration patterns and the best places to see them in the UK.

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By [Daniel Graham](#)  
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As [autumn](#) progresses, the last stragglers of the summer visitors leave British shores while winter migrants arrive to feed in our estuaries, marshes and reservoirs.

The most impressive – and vocal – are geese, which mingle with resident species to create an impressive spectacle as they gather to feed on [seeds](#), grass, potatoes and small invertebrates.

Visit a marsh or estuary near you this winter for a chance of spotting Canada geese/Credit: Getty

Learn more about the UK's geese species with our simple identification guide, including population numbers, migration routes and favourite habitats.

### What is a group of geese called?

A group of geese on the ground is known as a gaggle. During flight a group of geese is called a skein.

### When do geese migrate from the UK?

Geese migrate to Britain in autumn, overwintering on our shores before leaving once more in spring.

### How to identify geese species found in the UK

#### White-fronted goose

White-fronted goose, Anser albifrons/Credit: Getty

Some 15,000 white-fronts visit our coasts from Scotland to southern England, having summered in Greenland and Siberia. Siberian birds have pink bills, Greenland birds' bills are orange. The 'white-fronted' refers to the forehead and base of the bill.

#### Barnacle goose

Barnacle goose, Branta leucopsis/Credit: Getty

This small goose has a creamy face, short bill and black neck and winters in Scotland, Ireland and northern England after breeding in Greenland and Svalbard. There's a small resident breeding group of 1,000 pairs. Winter population is 90,000.

You may also like:

- [Guide to Britain's seabirds](#)
- [Britain's best nature reserves](#)
- [Guide to Britain's birds of prey](#)

#### Brent goose

Brent goose, Branta bernicla/Credit: Getty

Little bigger than a mallard, this dark-plumaged goose is most concentrated along the east coast, especially East Anglia. Over 90–100,000 arrive in winter from their nesting grounds in Siberia, feeding noisily on coastal marshes.

#### Greylag goose

Greylag goose, Anser anser/Credit: Getty

Our largest and most common resident goose has grey plumage and an orange bill; 140,000 resident birds are bolstered by 90,000 winter arrivals from Iceland. The core breeding population of 'wild geese' is in Scotland.

#### Canada goose

Canada goose, Branta canadensis/Credit: Getty

Introduced from North America, there are now 62,000 pairs in the UK and the number is growing. Large and with a brown body and black neck, it has become the UK's most familiar goose of park lakes. It is seen as a pest in some areas.

#### Bean goose

Bean goose/Credit: Getty

Two similar species, the taiga and the tundra bean goose winter in Scotland and Eastern England, in small numbers (fewer than 500 individuals of each species). Both species are dark grey-brown with orange legs and bills.

#### Pink-footed goose

Pink-footed goose, Anser brachyrhynchus/Credit: Getty

This medium-sized goose resembles the white-fronted but has a dark face and bill and pink legs. Arriving from Greenland and Iceland, around 300,000 winter on the east coast, especially Norfolk, though some 50,000 choose Lancashire's coast.

#### Egyptian goose

Egyptian goose, Alopochen aegyptiaca/Credit: Getty

This exotic-looking species has a brown eye patch and a blend of pale, brown and grey plumage. An escapee from ornamental collections, there are now 1,100 breeding pairs across the UK.

### Where do geese migrate to from the UK?

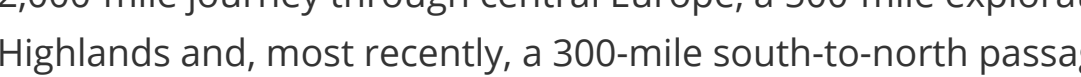
The different species migrate to different locations, including Greenland, Iceland and Svalbard.

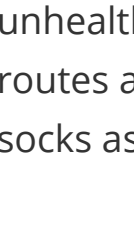
[Learn more about Britain's migratory species](#)

### What do geese eat?

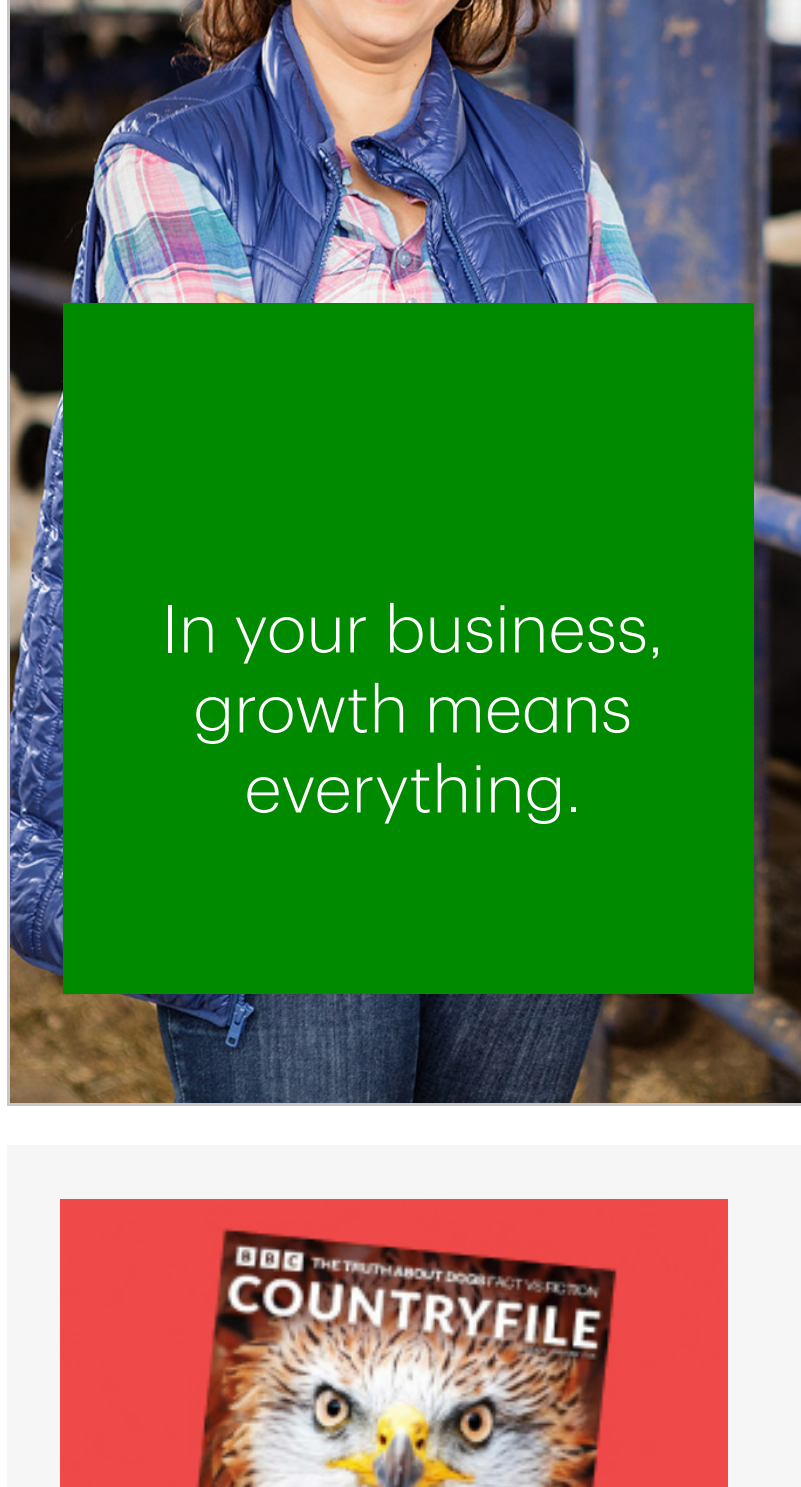
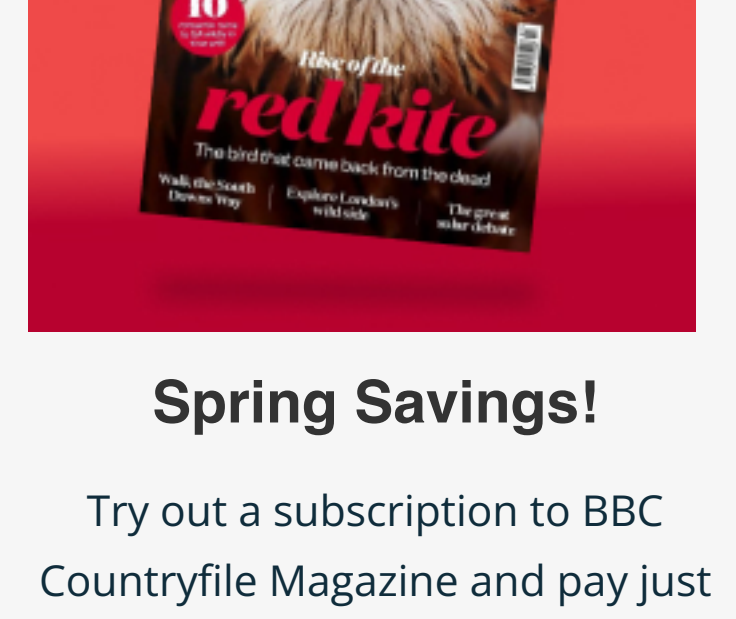
As grazing birds, geese eat a variety of plants and seeds, including grass and roots found along the water's edge.

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 **Daniel Graham**  
*Outdoors editor, BBC Countryfile Magazine*

Danny is the outdoors editor of BBC Countryfile Magazine, responsible for commissioning, editing and writing articles for the Great Days Out section, which offers ideas and inspiration for exploring the UK countryside. After completing Dartmoor's Ten Tors challenge as a teenager, walking has shaped Danny's life. Over the past 15 years he has wandered many great trails, short and long, including a 2,000-mile journey through central Europe, a 500-mile exploration of the Scottish Highlands and, most recently, a 300-mile south-to-north passage through the beautiful mountains and valleys of Wales along the Cambrian Way. He has an unhealthy obsession with maps and has tested hundreds of Ordnance Survey walking routes around the UK, sampling and reviewing boots, rain jackets and the odd pair of socks as he goes.

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