



# Egyptian goose

(*Alopochen aegyptiaca*)

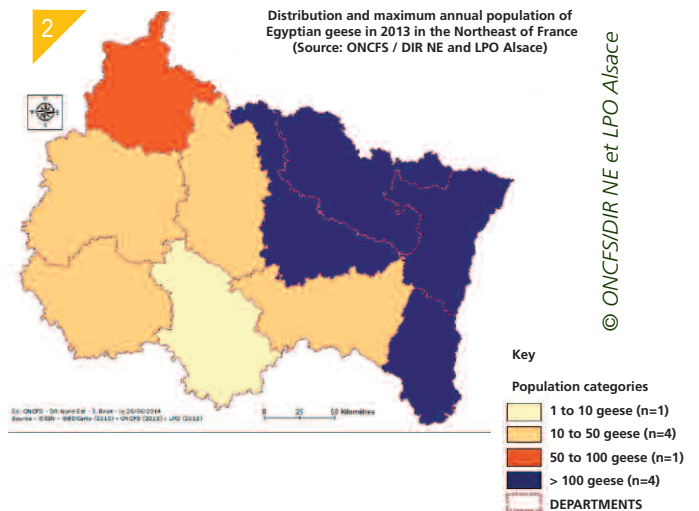
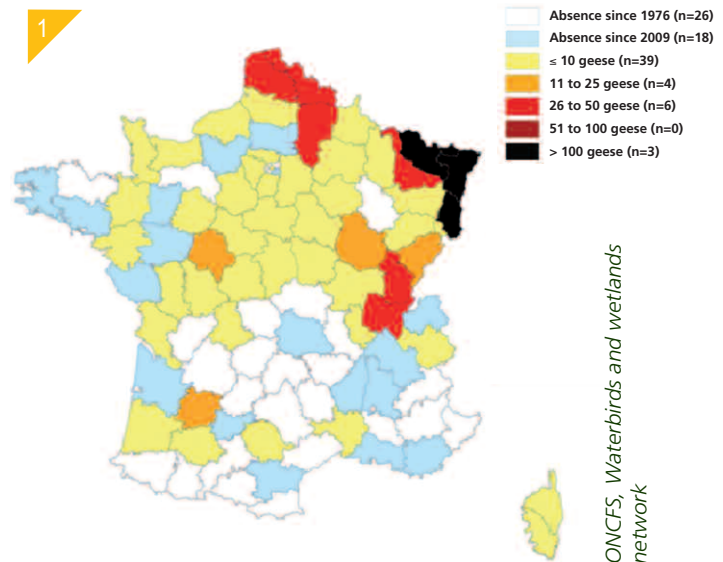
## Managing Egyptian geese in Eastern France

### National agency for hunting and wildlife (ONCFS), Northeast regional office

- ONCFS is a public agency placed under the supervision of the Ecology and Agriculture ministries.
- Its missions correspond to the guidelines contained in the Grenelle environmental agreement, including general surveillance of rural areas and policing activities for the environment and hunting, and research on wildlife and its habitats.
- The Northeast regional office covers ten departments and three administrative regions (Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne) with a workforce of over 100 in the local offices and 16 for administrative and technical tasks.
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### Situation in the Northeast of France

- Most of the Egyptian geese observed in the Northeast of France come from neighbouring countries. Large populations exist in Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium. The three countries are in direct contact with the three regions that make up the Northeast regional office, namely Alsace, Lorraine and Champagne-Ardenne. An increase in the home range and in the numbers of the population in Northeast France are due to the influx from the neighbouring countries.
- The initial observations were undertaken by ONCFS in 1988 in the Moselle department and the first brood was discovered in 1996 in the town of Bousse (Moselle department).
- Today, colonisation of the territory continues with increasingly large populations along the Moselle and Rhine Rivers which act as incoming corridors for the species from the neighbouring countries. It follows that the departments bordering the rivers, namely Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, are the most affected. However, increasing numbers of breeding couples have been observed in the neighbouring departments, namely Meuse, Vosges, Aube and Ardennes. The species is clearly in an expansion phase and the entire territory of the Northeast regional office is likely to be affected by the spread of the Egyptian goose.



1. Distribution and maximum annual population of Egyptian geese in France during the period 2009 to 2011.
2. Distribution and maximum annual population of Egyptian geese in the Northeast of France.

### Disturbances and issues involved

#### ■ Impacts on native species

- The observations carried out in the field by ONCFS personnel or by naturalists revealed aggressive behaviour of the species during the reproductive season toward protected, native species such as the great crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*).

## Monitoring the populations

- Following numerous observations of the species, a regional survey was launched in 2008 via the departmental offices to determine the status of the species. The survey consisted of collecting information on nesting, on the numbers of nesting couples and on their location.
- In 2009, the national survey managed by the *Oiseaux d'eau et zones humides* network replaced the regional survey.
- Then in 2010, the regional survey was reactivated and a map was drawn up indicating the towns where the species nested.
- This monitoring work made it possible to precisely locate the nesting couples and to determine the departments where populations were growing rapidly. In compliance with the precautionary principle, it was decided to launch an operation to control the species and to limit its expansion.

## Shooting

### ■ Obtaining the prefectural orders

- Starting in 2009 with a request by the Moselle departmental office, prefectural orders authorising the shooting of Egyptian geese were progressively issued in several departments covered by the NE regional office on the basis of regulations concerning pests. The orders stipulated the conditions under which the Egyptian geese were to be controlled. Generally speaking, they authorised the holders of hunting rights, their beneficiaries and official personnel in charge of enforcing hunting regulations to shoot the species.
- In order to monitor implementation of the measure and assess its effectiveness, each bird shot must be reported at the end of the month or the end of the hunting season to the departmental territorial agency, to the ONCFS departmental office or to the local hunting federation. Certain orders include models of shooting reports indicating the place and date, the number of birds eliminated and their estimated age (juvenile or adult).
- Two periods would appear to be particularly suitable for control operations, namely March-April when the couples have formed on the nesting sites and July-August when the young birds are present. The results of operations are better when the participants have in-depth knowledge of the habits and needs of the species, and of the area where the operation takes place.

### ■ Example of shooting techniques used in the Bas-Rhin department

- The use of both shotguns and rifles was found to be advantageous in eliminating the birds.
- Number 2 steel shot was used successfully in shooting Egyptian geese.
- In terms of rifles, the .17 HMR (1-gram projectiles) and .22 Hornet calibres produced good results.
- In step with the repetition of operations, the geese became increasingly wary to the point that the approaches in open terrain became impossible. Surprise is of the essence.
- Approaches using a vehicle often produced better results than on foot. However, the use of a vehicle must be explicitly mentioned among the equipment listed in the prefectural order.
- The partnership with the river police made it possible to use a patrol boat for one operation and to eliminate a few birds that were too far from the banks.



3. Egyptian geese.  
4. 5. 6. Shooting operations.



- Dogs were used to retrieve the dead birds and avoid them being seen by the public.
- Given public sensitivities, birds inhabiting certain sectors cannot be eliminated. These sectors effectively become refuge zones for the species.

## Results and assessment

### ■ Results

- The tables below list the prefectural orders issued in the three regions and present the results of the control operations over the years.

*Results of control operations for the Egyptian goose in the Lorraine region.*

Lorraine	Prefectoral order	Period	Authorised persons	Conditions	Birds eliminated
Moselle (57)	Annual order since 2009	23 August to 1 February	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries Hunting police	Shooting as per hunting rules  On or near water bodies  Report at end of season to federation 77	2009-2010 = 29 (DO) 2010-2011 = 11 (DO) 2011-2012 = 34 (DO) / 100 (hunters) 2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 137 (hunters)
Meurthe-et-Moselle (54)	Order dated 5 July 2012	Same dates as geese listed as game (21 August to 10 February)	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries ONCFS personnel	Shooting under same conditions as goose hunting throughout the department  Report at end of February to DO 54 by ONCFS personnel	2011-2012 = 27 (hunters) 2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 12 (hunters)
Vosges (88)	Annual order since 2011	21 August to 10 February	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries Hunting police	Shooting as per hunting rules  On or near water bodies  Report by end of February to DO 88	2011-2012 = 2 (hunters) 2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 1 (hunters)
Meuse (55)	Order dated 18 July 2012	21 August to 10 February All year for authorised personnel and game wardens	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries Hunting police Authorised game wardens	Shooting as per hunting rules  Authorised sites for hunters  Entire department for the hunting police  Report by 15 March to DDT 55	2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 3 (DO) / 3 (hunters)

*DO = departmental office, NI = no information*

*Results of control operations for the Egyptian goose in the Alsace region.*

Alsace	Prefectoral order	Period	Authorised persons	Conditions	Birds eliminated
Haut-Rhin (68)	Permanent order since 2010	1 October to 1 February	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries Hunting police	Shooting as per hunting rules On open waters and restricted waters for hunters Entire department for the hunting police Report by 10 February to DDT 68	2010-2011 = 7 (DO) / 10 (hunters) 2011-2012 = 21 (DO) 2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 34 (DO) / 5 (hunters)
Bas-Rhin (67)	Permanent order since 2011	15 April to last day of February All year for authorised personnel and game wardens	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries Hunting police Authorised game wardens	Shooting as per hunting rules On open waters and restricted waters for hunters All areas where game wardens are authorised Entire department for the hunting police Report by 15 March to DDT 67	2011-2012 = 18 (DO) / 7 (wolf-hunting officers) / 36 (hunters) 2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 57 (DO in 2013) / 161 (hunters)

Results of control operations for the Egyptian goose in the Champagne-Ardenne region.

Champagne-Ardennes	Prefectoral order	Period	Authorised persons	Conditions	Birds eliminated
Aube (10)	Order dated 17 June 2012	Same dates as geese listed as game (21 August to 10 February) All year for authorised personnel and game wardens	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries Hunting police Authorised game wardens	Shooting as per hunting rules Entire department for the hunting police Report within 48 hours to ONCFS which produces final report at end of April	2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 0
Ardennes (08)	Order dated 26 December 2012	Same dates as geese listed as game (21 August to 10 February) All year for authorised personnel and game wardens	Holders of hunting rights and their beneficiaries Hunting police Authorised game wardens	Shooting as per hunting rules On open waters and restricted waters for hunters Entire department for the hunting police Report within 1 week and final report by end of February to DDT 08	2012-2013 = NI 2013-2014 = 3 (hunters)

■ Total :

- 2009-2010: 29 (department 57);
- 2010-2011: 28 (departments 57 and 68);
- 2011-2012: 245 (departments 54, 57, 67, 68, 88);
- 2012-2013: no information;
- 2013-2014: 416 (departments 57, 68, 67, 54, 55, 88, 08, 10);
- Total for the four seasons: 718

## Information on the project

- Articles were published in the *Faune Sauvage* journal.
- Annual reports and maps.

## Outlook

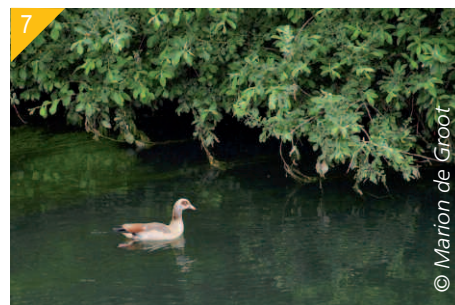
■ When a biological invasion occurs, it is imperative to act quickly. Prevention is the name of the game. In spite of early observations of Egyptian geese, it was not clear that the species was invasive and control measures were not implemented immediately, thus enabling the species to establish in the region. Today, the species is clearly an invasive alien species. Eradication is no longer a realistic option and the objective of the current measures is to contain the species in the north-eastern section of France and avoid colonisation of the rest of the country.

■ In addition to the efforts to limit the populations in the northeastern section of France, it is indispensable that the neighbouring countries take similar measures because the largest feral populations of Egyptian geese are located in those countries. Uniform action by the French regions and the neighbouring countries confronted with the invasion is essential to produce effective results.

■ Under the current conditions, prefectoral orders authorising the shooting of Egyptian geese are the most rapid means of limiting the spread of the species. The species is also highly recognisable which limits the risks of shooting errors. However, this control measure must not be interpreted by hunters as the addition of a new type of game, but as a special effort against an invasive alien species in order to limit the negative impacts.

- Given the results since 2009 (over 700 geese eliminated), efforts to control the species by shooting would appear to be insufficient in light of the overall population and the growth rates of the species.
- This situation suggests that the measure should be expanded to include all of the Moselle and Rhine basins in order to unify management techniques and exert real pressure on the species.
- It is important to continue informing hunters, particularly the waterfowl hunting associations, on the negative aspects of biological invasions and on current regulations in order to expand their role in controlling the species.
- Other measures, such as the creation of an observation network or interventions during the nesting period, should be studied in order to make the management of the IAS more effective.
- Finally, it would be useful to add this species to the “invasive species” category (group 1) in the new regulations concerning animal species listed as pests. The management work could then be conducted on the national scale.

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7. Egyptian goose.

#### For more information

- [www.oncfs.gouv.fr](http://www.oncfs.gouv.fr)
- The initial version of this document was first published in:  
Sarat E. (coord.) 2012. Vertébrés exotiques envahissants du bassin de la Loire (hors poissons) connaissances et expériences de gestion. Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage, Plan Loire Grandeur Nature, 128 pp.
- Fouque C., Benmergui M., Bullifon F., Schricke V. 2012. L'Ouette d'Égypte : une espèce exotique en plein essor en France, Faune Sauvage N°296 ; pp 15-25.
- Benmergui M., Bullifon F., Fouque C. 2011. L'Ouette d'Égypte *Alopochen aegyptiaca*. Synthèse bibliographique et perspectives de gestion pour la France. Office national de la chasse et de la faune sauvage, Station de la Dombes, Birieux. 42 pp.
- Hurel P. 2011. Les espèces exotiques envahissantes animales du Nord-Est de la France. Inventaire, évaluation, hiérarchisation et plan d'action. Application du plan d'action sur le Castor canadien et l'Ouette d'Égypte. Rapport de stage Master Environnement et aménagement. Université Paul Verlaine, Metz, 53 pp + Annexes.