



Sketch © Audrey Murphy

# Brent Goose

**Latin:** *Branta bernicla*

**Irish:** Cadhan

The pale bellied brent goose is a black goose that is often seen around Ireland's estuaries in the winter time. Although it prefers to spend the summer in the Canadian arctic, where it breeds and lays its eggs, it gets too cold and dark to stay there all year round.

Ireland's mild winters and food rich

estuaries provide a perfect habitat for the birds during the colder months of the year. The birds feed on the green seaweeds, eelgrass and coastal grasses that grow in these areas and sometimes, the geese can even be seen grazing on sports fields! The geese are also very noisy when they gather in large flocks and they make a call that

sounds like a throaty 'rroonk.' Up to 20,000 brent geese make the long journey from Canada to Ireland each year in the autumn, stopping off in Iceland for a short break. This is an amazing feat, considering the long journey that the birds have to make. The rich feeding grounds in Ireland's estuaries must certainly be worth it!

## Fact File

**Colour:** Black head, neck and tail, with small white patch on side of neck. Dark grey wings and back and light grey underneath.

**Length:** 55-62 cm

**Diet:** Eelgrass, dry land grasses and seaweed.

**Habitat:** Estuaries and mudflats.

**No. of eggs:** 3-5.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Brent geese can probably make the journey from Ireland to Iceland in about 15 to 20 hours if the weather is good. That's a distance of about 1100km!



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For the winter months, Ireland's Brent Geese travel from the islands of the Canadian high arctic.

Developed by Sarah Varian & Sherkin Island Marine Station for the Living Coasts Living Seas Project.

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