Trends of wintering waterbirds in the European Union

2025 update

Wetlands International Europe

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Recommended citation: Nagy, S. & Langendoen, T. 2025. *Trends of wintering waterbirds in the European Union: 2025 update.* Wetlands International Europe, Ede, The Netherlands and Brussels, Belgium.

The findings presented here are made possible largely through the commitment of volunteer counters and IWC coordinators. Supporting these efforts through the Waterbird Fund (https://waterbird.fund/) helps ensure the continuation of high-quality waterbird monitoring.

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Executive Summary

The European Union (EU) remains a critical wintering area for numerous waterbird species, many of which breed outside the EU. Monitoring these populations is essential for fulfilling obligations under the EU Birds Directive, the Ramsar Convention, and the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA). This 2025 update, based on data from the International Waterbird Census (IWC), provides long- and short-term EU population trends for 33 selected species, including Annex I and Annex II Birds Directive species, as well as non-listed species.

Annex I species

The multi-species index shows a statistically significant increase since 1980, with a 2% annual rise in the past decade. Six of seven Annex I species have increased since the Birds Directive came into force, though three show negative long-term trends. Notable increases include Greater Flamingo (+7.6% annually long-term) and Great White Egret (+8.8% annually long-term). The Bewick's Swan remains the only Annex I species with a long-term decline (-0.4% annually).

Annex II species

The multi-species index has declined significantly since 1980, despite a modest 0.8% annual increase in the past decade. The wintering populations of eight of the 18 assessed Annex II species show long-term declines, and 10 also declined in the short term. Species whose wintering numbers in the EU have decreased both in the long-term and in the short-term include the Tufted Duck, Mallard, Common Moorhen, Eurasian Coot, and Eurasian Oystercatcher (listed as globally Near Threatened since 2019). The EU wintering populations have declined only in the short term for the Northern Shoveler and Pintail, both of which are identified for further study by the EU Task Force for the Recovery of Birds, as well as the Bar-tailed Godwit and Red Knot (both listed as globally Near Threatened since 2015). More positively, the EU wintering populations of the globally Vulnerable Common Pochard and Common Goldeneye have showed some partial recovery over the last decade. Likewise, a recovery was detected in the numbers of the Eurasian Wigeon, a species identified for EU-wide adaptive harvest management, over the last 10 years.

Non-listed species

Trends vary, with some stable populations (e.g., Common Shelduck, Great Crested Grebe) and others facing declines (e.g., Ruddy Turnstone and Dunlin, listed as globally Near Threatened since 2024)

Conservation Implications

Positive trends among Annex I species suggest that EU conservation measures under the Birds Directive are effective for many priority species. Declines in Annex II huntable species highlight urgent concerns for sustainable harvest management and adaptive conservation strategies. Redistribution of wintering ranges is increasingly evident, highlighting implications for adaptive harvest management and site conservation.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 goal—to halt declines and achieve positive trends in at least 30% of species in unfavourable status—remains challenging, particularly for Annex II species.

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) is an important wintering area for many waterbird species. In many cases, the main breeding areas are outside the European Union or even Europe. Nevertheless, Article 4 of the EU Birds Directive requires the protection of key sites for species listed in its Annex I and for other migratory species. Additionally, species listed in Annex II of the Directive can be hunted across the entire EU or within certain Member States. The EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 aims to halt the decline of species in unfavourable conservation status under the Birds or Habitats Directive and to achieve positive trends in the status of at least 30% of such species. Recently, stopping the decline of huntable bird species listed in Annex II of the Birds Directive has become a priority and an EU Task Force on the Recovery of Birds was established in 2022.

Many breeding populations of waterbirds are inadequately monitored for capacity and/or feasibility reasons. Wetlands International and its predecessors have coordinated the International Waterbird Census (IWC) since 1967, and the 60th IWC count will take place in January 2026. This long-term dataset allows for ongoing monitoring of waterbird populations and provides valuable updates on the population trends of key wintering species in the EU.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Data collection

This report is based on data collected through national wintering waterbird monitoring schemes in the European Union that contribute to the International Waterbird Census (IWC). The IWC is a long-term, site-based monitoring scheme that began in Europe in 1967. Originally, the IWC was organised to estimate numbers and track changes in wintering waterbirds in the Northern Hemisphere. As a result, the core IWC counts take place in January across the entire African-Eurasian Flyway. The IWC is also commonly referred to as the midwinter counts, particularly in Europe. It operates through national schemes in each country, organised by national coordinators affiliated with government agencies, scientific institutes, or non-governmental organisations. These coordinators work with a large network of professional and volunteer observers. The national IWC schemes contribute to the monitoring commitments of governments under international treaties such as the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement, and the Birds Directive of the European Union. Support from respective governments varies but is often provided. The coordination of the IWC across the flyway in the AEWA agreement area is supported by the EU LIFE+ NGO Operational Grant to Wetlands International Europe and by the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment.

Species and population nomenclature

Wetlands International Europe follows the taxonomy of the Waterbird Population Estimates, which is aligned with the HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World[1]. The population names are also aligned with Table 1 of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) as adopted at the 9th Meeting of the Parties in 2025[2].

Selection of species

For this report, we have analysed the long- and short-term trends of the wintering populations of seven species listed in Annex I, 18 species listed in Annex II, and eight species not included in any of the annexes of the Birds Directive (Table 1). Bar-tailed Godwit is listed both in Annex I and Annex II of the Birds Directive. Therefore, it forms part of both of the relevant multispecies indices, but a species trend is only described under Annex I. We selected species for which most of at least one population winters mainly in the EU and are mostly associated with inland and coastal wetlands. Geese (primarily associated with

[1] https://datazone.birdlife.org/about-our-science/taxonomy
[2] https://www.unep-aewa.org/document/adoption-amendments-aewa-annexes-8

farmlands), waterbirds that predominantly winter at sea, and gulls were also excluded because the International Waterbird Census is not the most suitable monitoring method in these cases.

*Table 1. Species whose trends were analysed for this report. Non-secure taxa listed in Annex II of the Birds Directive are marked with * in the EU Red List column.*

English name	Scientific name	EU Red List
Species listed in Annex I of the Birds Directive		
White-headed Duck	*Oxyura leucocephala*	VU
Whooper Swan	*Cygnus cygnus*	LC
Tundra Swan (Bewick's Swan)	*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*	VU
Smew	*Mergellus albellus*	LC
Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*	LC
Great White Egret	*Ardea alba*	LC
Bar-tailed Godwit	*Limosa lapponica*	LC
Species listed in Annex II of the Birds Directive		
Common Goldeneye	*Bucephala clangula*	LC
Goosander	*Mergus merganser*	LC
Red-breasted Merganser	*Mergus serrator*	NT*
Common Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	VU*
Tufted Duck	*Aythya fuligula*	VU*
Northern Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*	NT*
Gadwall	*Mareca strepera*	LC
Eurasian Wigeon	*Mareca penelope*	VU*
Mallard	*Anas platyrhynchos*	LC
Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*	EN*
Common Teal	*Anas crecca*	LC*
Common Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	LC
Eurasian Coot	*Fulica atra*	LC*
Eurasian Oystercatcher	*Haematopus ostralegus*	VU*
Grey Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*	LC
Bar-tailed Godwit	*Limosa lapponica*	LC
Red Knot	*Calidris canutus*	LC
Species not listed in any of the annexes of the Birds Directive		
Common Shelduck	*Tadorna tadorna*	LC
Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	LC
Great Creasted Grebe	*Podiceps cristatus*	LC
Black-necked Grebe	*Podiceps nigricollis*	LC
Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax cabo*	LC
Ruddy Turnstone	*Arenaria interpres*	EN
Sanderling	*Calidris alba*	LC
Dunlin	*Calidris alpina*	LC

Trend analyses

In this analysis, we applied the same trend analysis procedure as in the population-level trend analyses (see pages 12-15 in Nagy & Langendoen, 2020).

Multi-species trends

We have calculated multi-species trends based on the species' status in the Birds Directive annexes (Table 1). The multi-species trends were determined using a Monte Carlo method (Soldaat et al., 2017) that can combine trends with different starting years.

Data presentation

The results are presented in a dashboard format on the IWC Online Portal (https://iwc.wetlands.org/index.php/eumsi), updated annually. Multispecies indices are provided, along with stack charts summarising short- and long-term population changes, followed by trend graphs for the species contributing to the multi-species trend.

In this document, we present species accounts grouped by the species' listings in the annexes of the Birds Directive, then in taxonomic order.

RESULTS

Annex I species

The multi-species index for Annex I species has increased slightly but statistically significantly since 1980. In the last 10 years, it has increased by 2% annually (Figure 1).

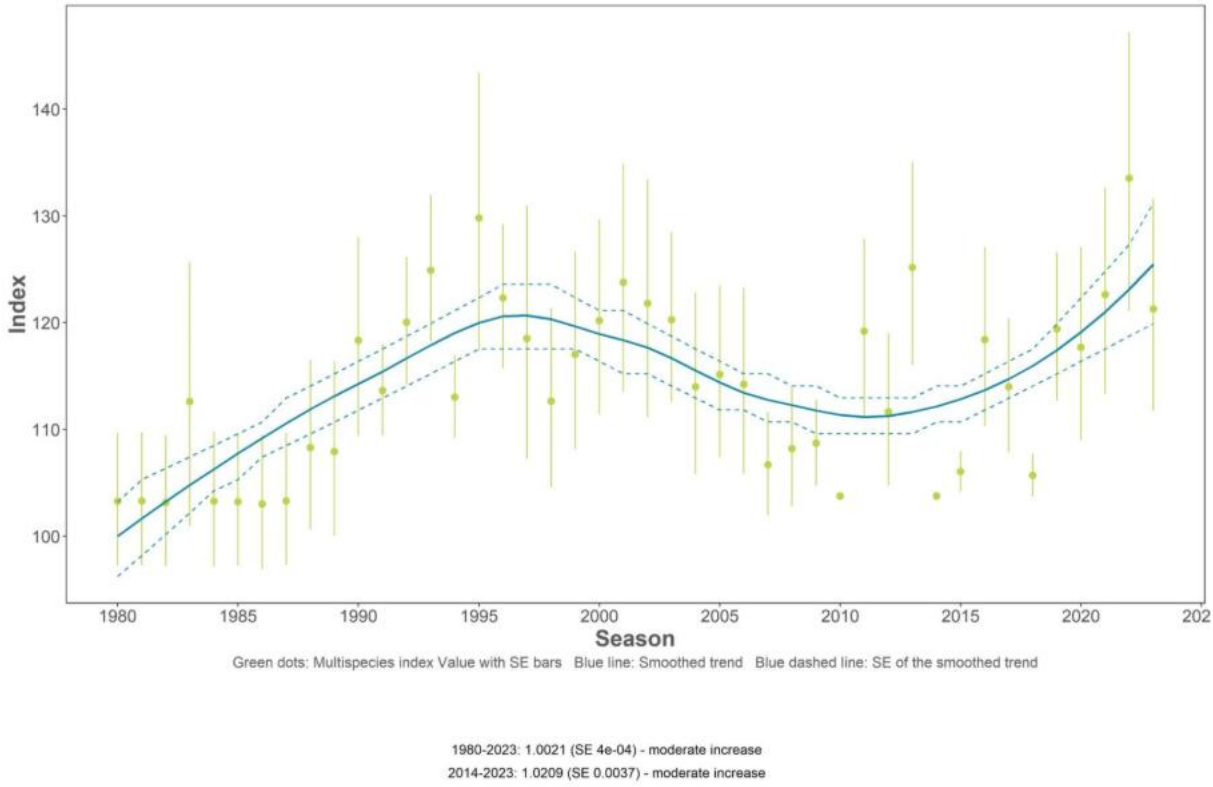

Figure 1. Multispecies trend for wintering Annex I waterbirds in the EU.

Figure 2 shows that six out of seven wintering Annex I waterbird species have increased in the EU since 1980, i.e. roughly since the Birds Directive came into force. The only exception is the Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*). However, three of the seven species show a negative long-term trend (Figure 3).

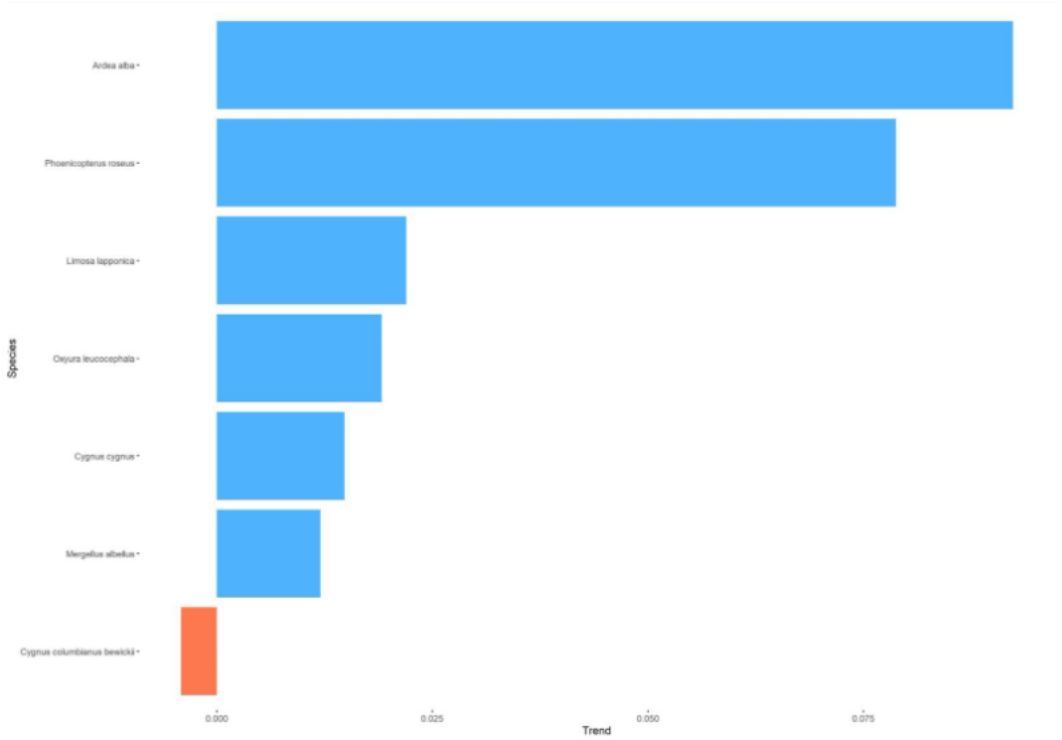

Figure 2. Overview of the long-term trends of the seven wintering Annex I species contributing to the multispecies trend.

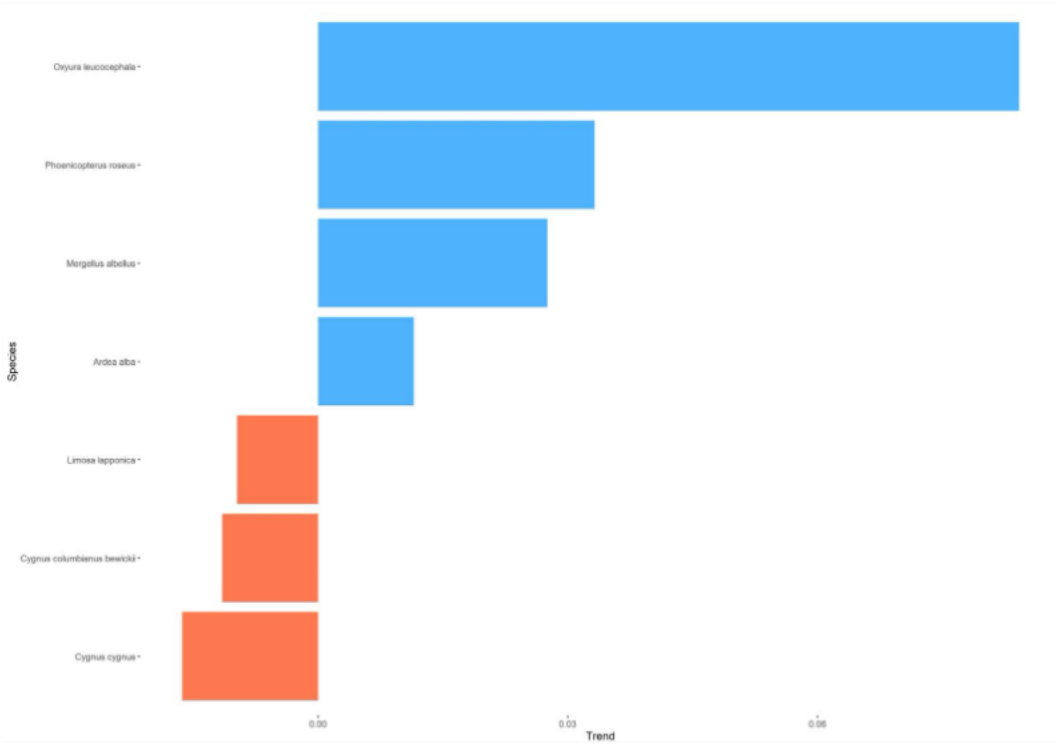

Figure 3. Overview of the short-term trends of the seven wintering Annex I species contributing to the multispecies trend.

White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*)

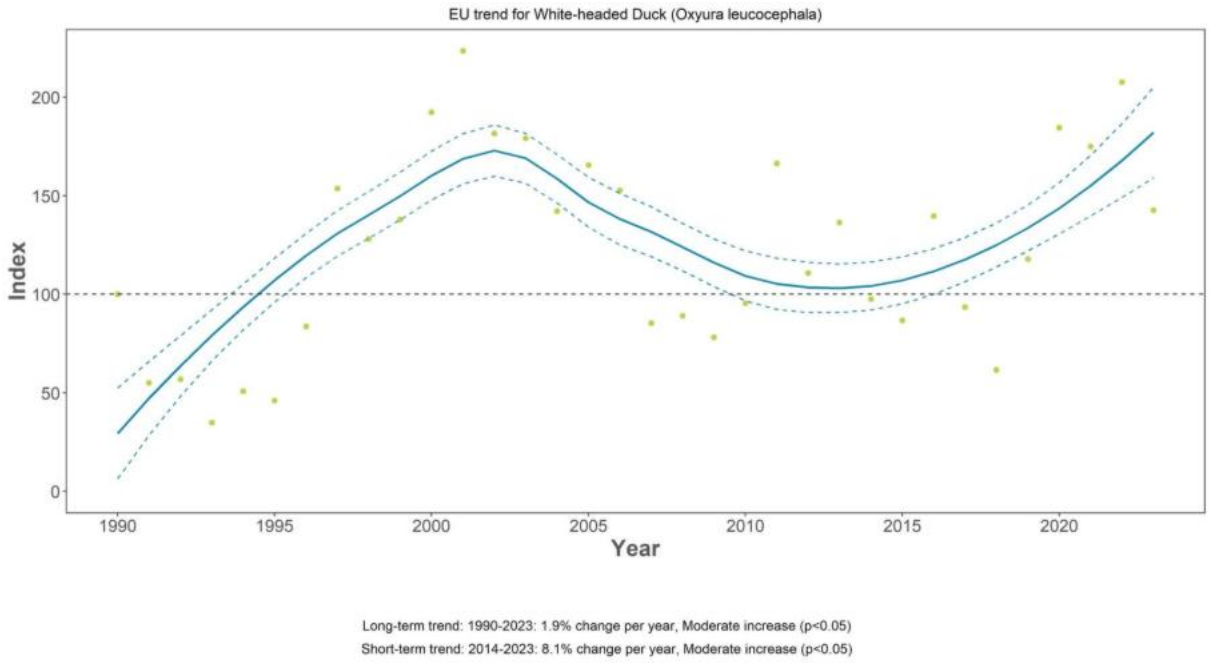

Figure 4. Trend of wintering White-headed Ducks in the EU.

Two populations of the White-headed Duck winter partially in the European Union: the smaller Spain & Morocco population, and the much larger E Mediterranean & SW Asian population (Scott & Rose, 1996). The long-term trend in the EU shows an overall statistically significant moderate increase of 1.9% annually, but this fluctuates strongly. The short-term trend is classified as a statistically significant moderate increase with a 8.1% annual growth rate (Figure 4). The short-term increase is driven by the strong short-term increases in Bulgaria and Greece since the mid-2010s, while the wintering population in Spain has apparently been decreasing since 2000.

Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*)

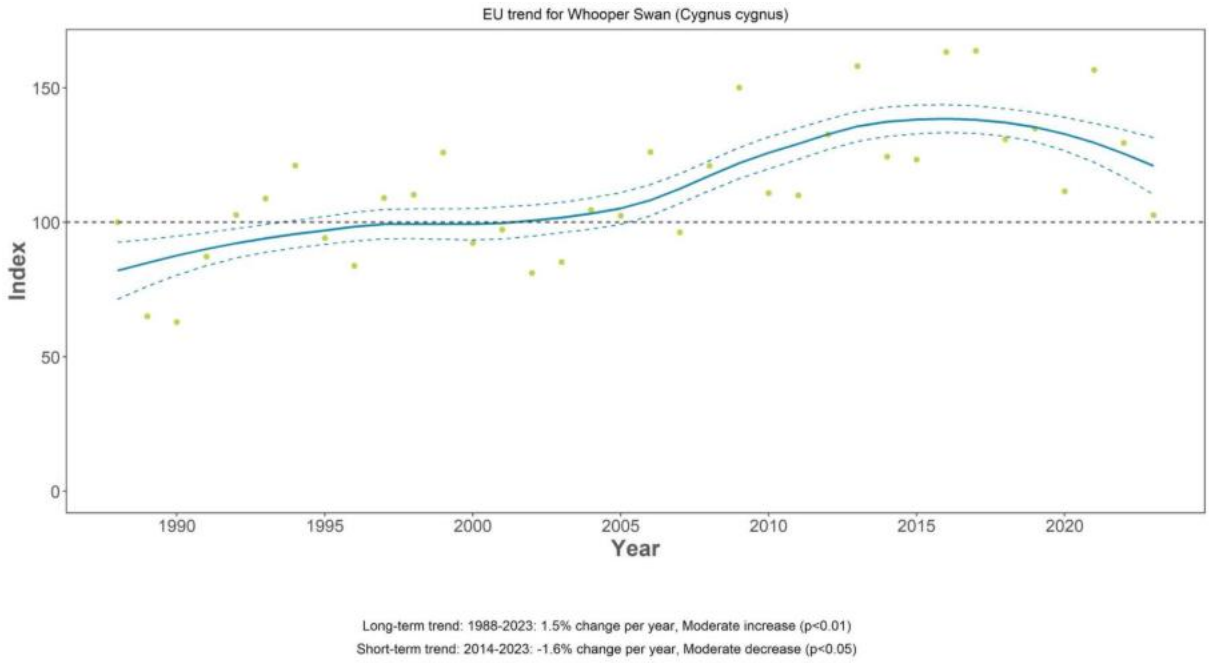

Figure 5. Trend of wintering Whooper Swans in the EU.

Three populations of the Whooper Swan are included in the calculation of the EU trend: Iceland (br), the N Mainland Europe (br), and the Black Sea & E Mediterranean (nbr) (Scott & Rose, 1996). The long-term population trend shows a statistically significant increase, with a growth rate of 1.9% per year. The IWC trend analysis indicates a short-term population decline of 2.4% per year (Figure 5). The wintering numbers of Icelandic Whooper Swans in the Republic of Ireland are apparently stable. A short-term decline is evident in the national IWC trends for Denmark, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, as well as in the Black Sea & E Mediterranean wintering areas. Meanwhile, increases are observed in Sweden, Poland, and the Baltic countries. Flyway-level trend analyses (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025) also indicate increases in Ukraine and Russia. Therefore, the apparent decline may merely reflect a shift in the wintering range.

Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*)

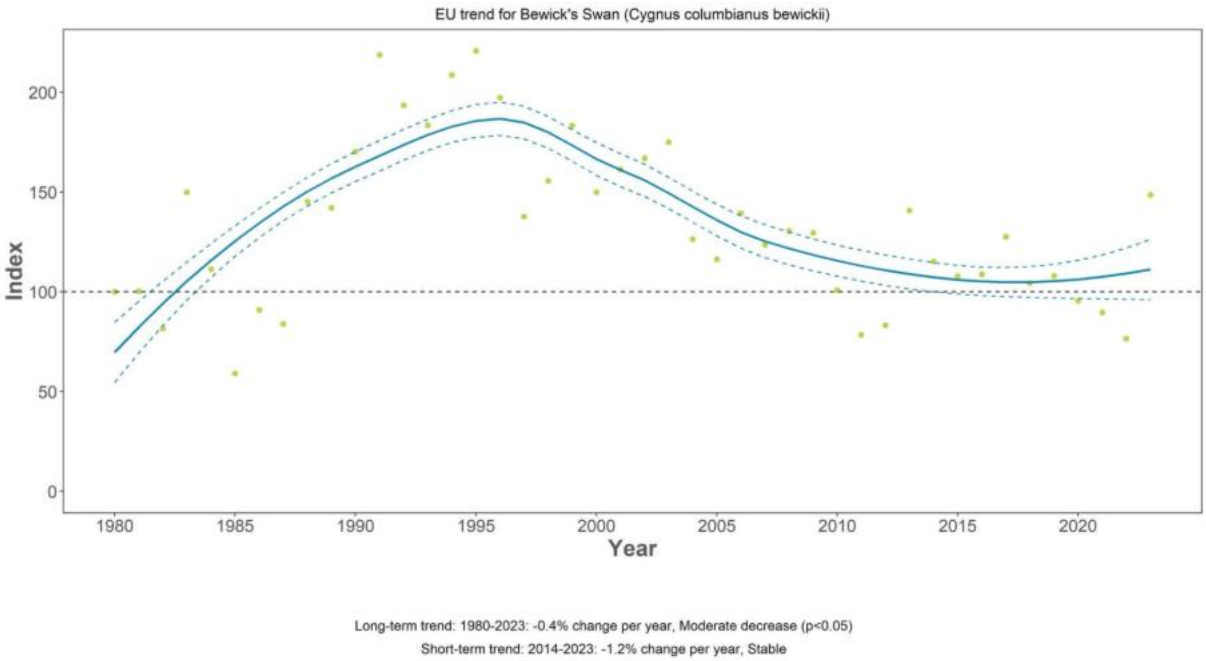

Figure 6. Trend of wintering Bewick's Swans in the EU.

Two populations of the Bewick's Swan contribute to the EU trend: the NW Europe (nbr) and the SE Europe & Caspian (nbr). The definition of the latter follows the boundaries adopted at AEWA Technical Committee in 2023[3]. The population has declined by 0.4% per year since 1980. The short-term trend is assessed as statistically stable, although the rate of decline was -1.1% per year (Figure 6). The NW Europe (nbr) population is declining on the western edge of its distribution area while increasing in Germany and Poland. The SE Europe & Caspian (nbr) population has established a new migration route through the northern coast of the Black Sea to the Evros Delta (Vangeluwe et al., 2018), and the population is rapidly increasing in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania.

[3] https://www.unep-aewa.org/document/delineation-biogeographic-populations-bewick%C2%B4s-swan

Smew (*Mergellus albellus*)

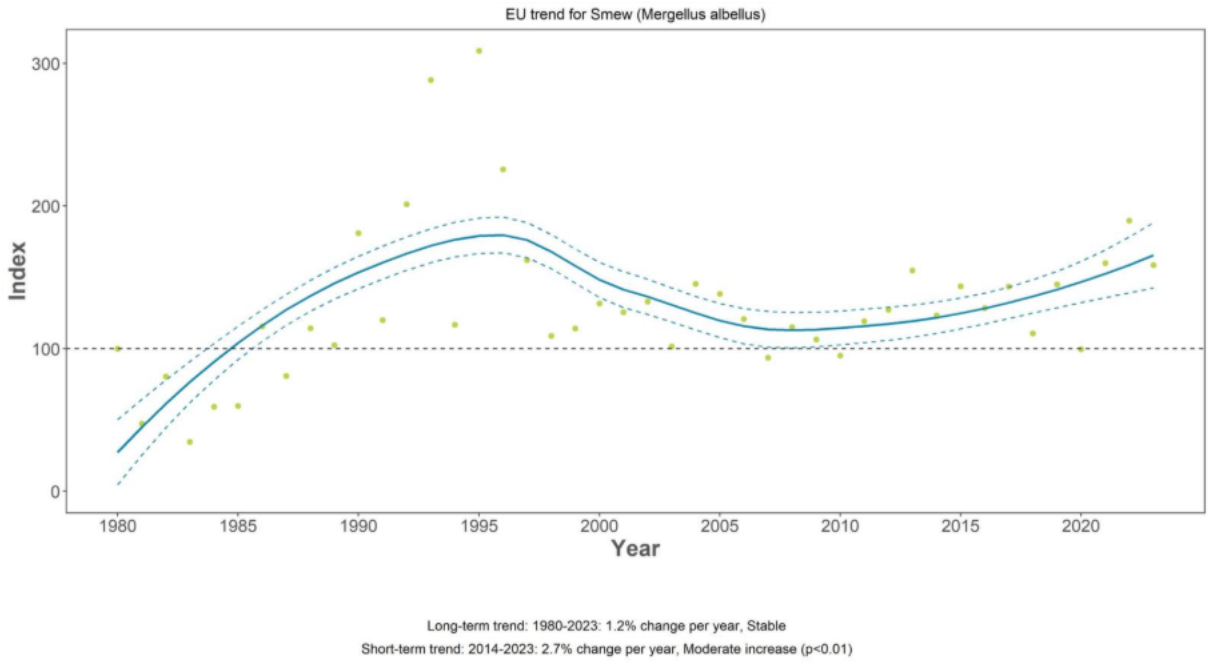

Figure 7. Trend of wintering Smews in the EU.

Two populations of Smew contribute to the EU trend: the NW & C Europe (nbr) and the Black Sea & E Mediterranean (nbr) (Scott & Rose, 1996). The long-term EU trend is increasing by 1.2% and the short-term by 2.7% per year (Figure 7). A strong wintering range shift occurs from NW Europe to the Baltic and from the Balkan countries to Russia.

Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus*)

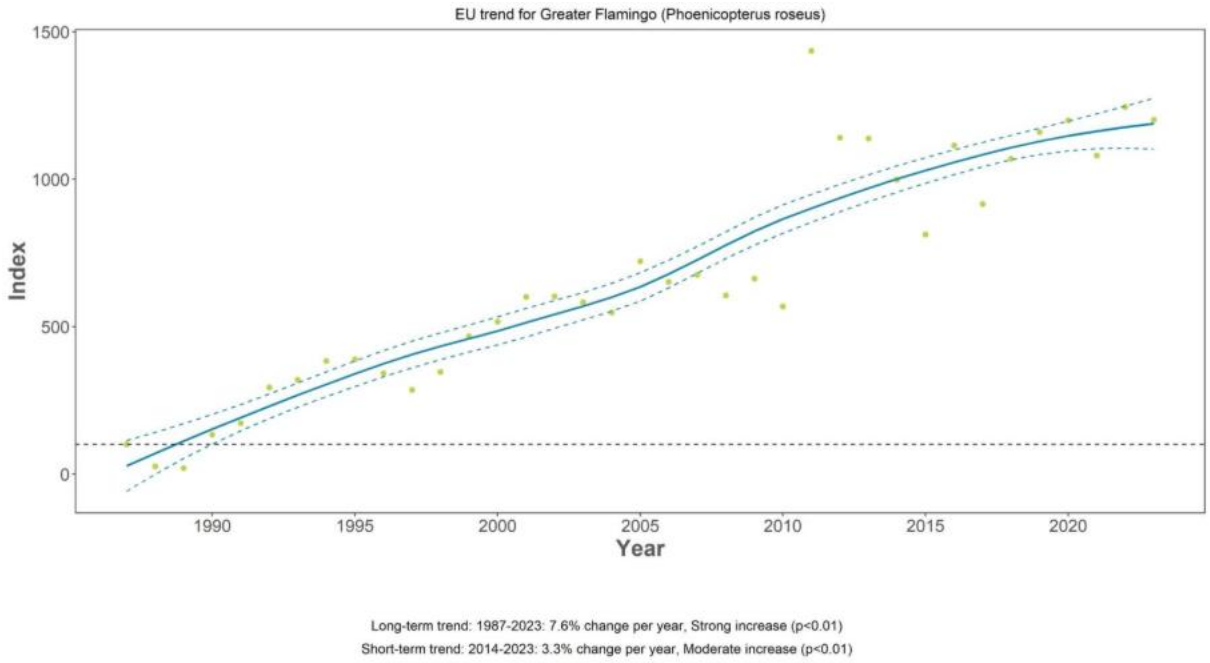

Figure 8. Trend of wintering Greater Flamingos in the EU.

Greater Flamingos in the EU belong to three populations: the W Mediterranean, the E Mediterranean and, to a much lesser extent, the SW & S Asian[4]. The EU numbers have increased annually by 7.6% in the long term, and at a slower rate, by 3.3%, in the short term (Figure 8).

[4] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/22697360

Great White Egret (*Ardea alba*)

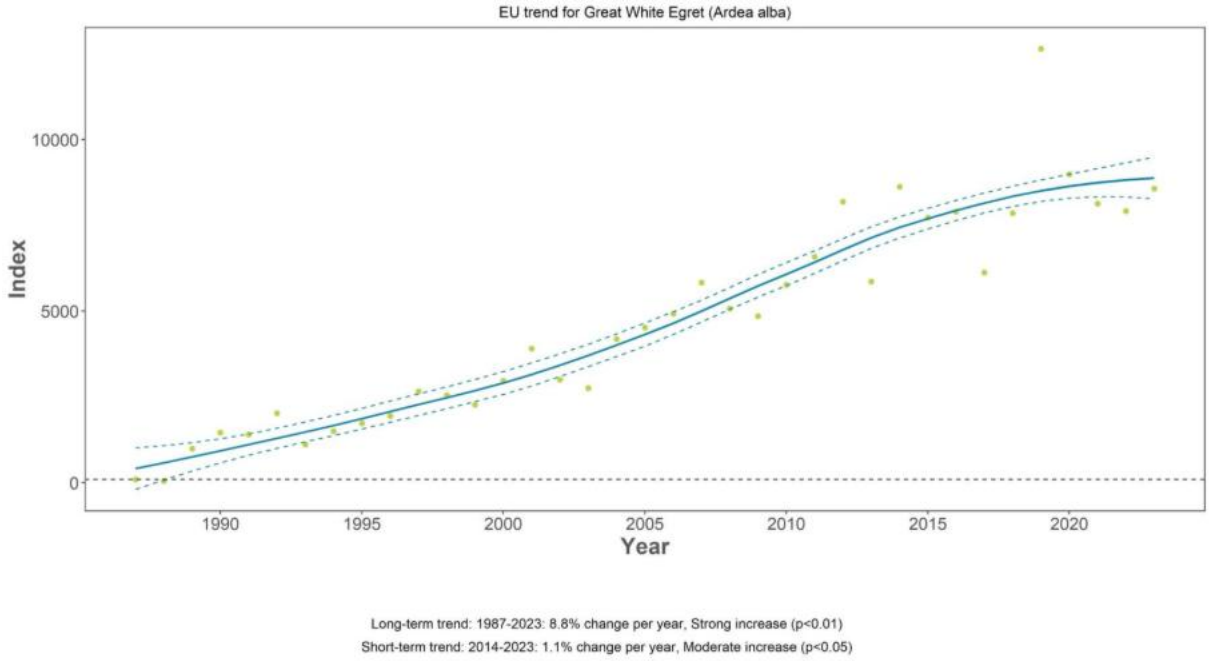

Figure 9. Trend of wintering Great White Egrets in the EU.

There is only one population, the Europe & N Africa (br), occurring in the EU[5]. The wintering numbers of this species have increased by 8.8% annually in the long-term and by 1.1% in the short-term (Figure 9). The wintering area of the species is rapidly expanding in NW Europe while the increase of wintering numbers have levelled off or even declined in the Mediterranean.

[5] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/22697043

Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)

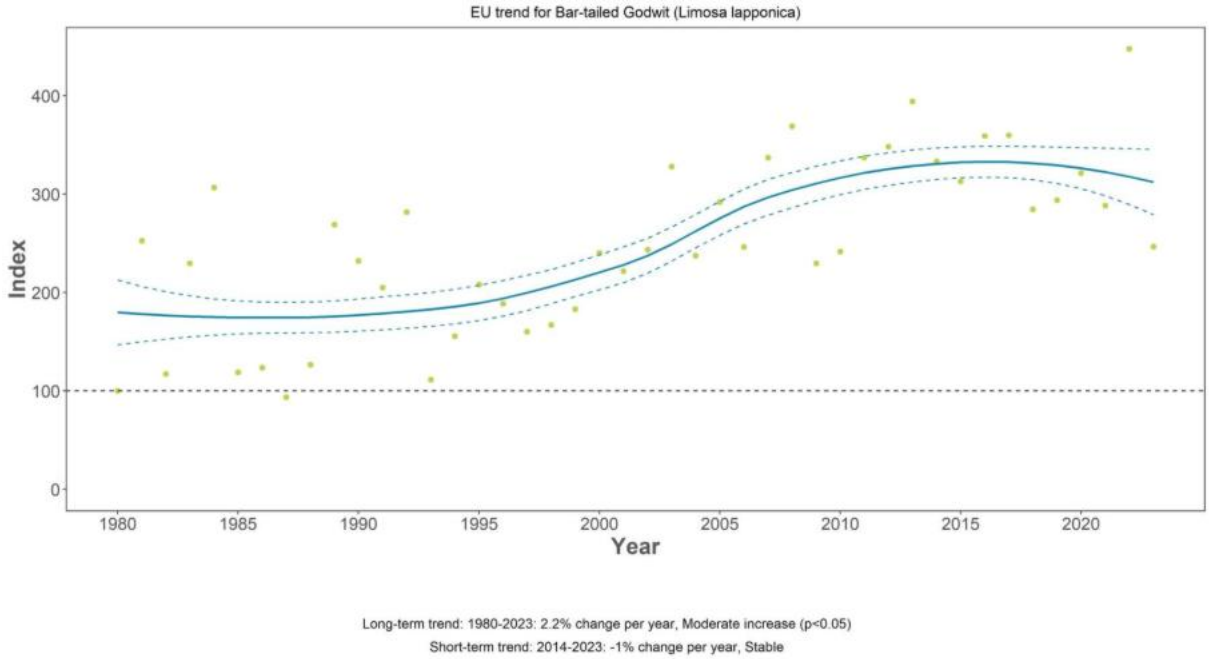

Figure 10. Trend of wintering Bar-tailed Godwits in the EU.

There is only one wintering population recognised in the EU: the *lapponica*, N Europe (br) one (Delany et al., 2009). However, there are indications that a substantial number of individuals from the *taymyrensis*, W & SW Africa (nbr) population also winter in the region (Conklin et al., 2025). The wintering numbers of this species have increased by 2.2% annually in the long-term and changed by -1.0% in the short-term, which is classified statistically as stable (Figure 10).

Annex II species

The multi-species index for Annex II species has decreased slightly but statistically significantly since 1980. The combined population trend of Annex II species has increased by 0.8% annually in the last 10 years, but it is still well below the values in the 1990s or of the 1980 baseline (Figure 11).

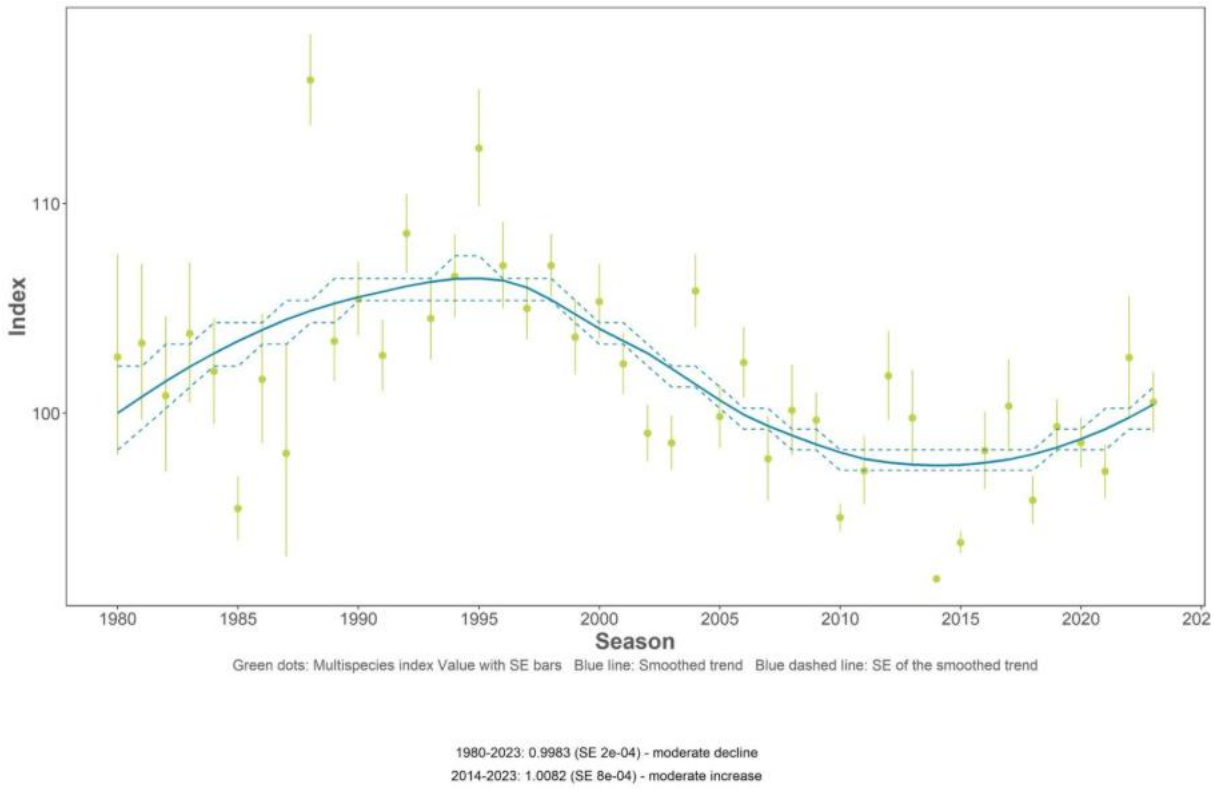

Figure 11. Multispecies trend for wintering Annex II waterbirds in the EU.

Eight of the 18 Annex II species exhibited a long-term population decline since 1980 (Figure 12) and 10 declined in the short-term (Figure 13).

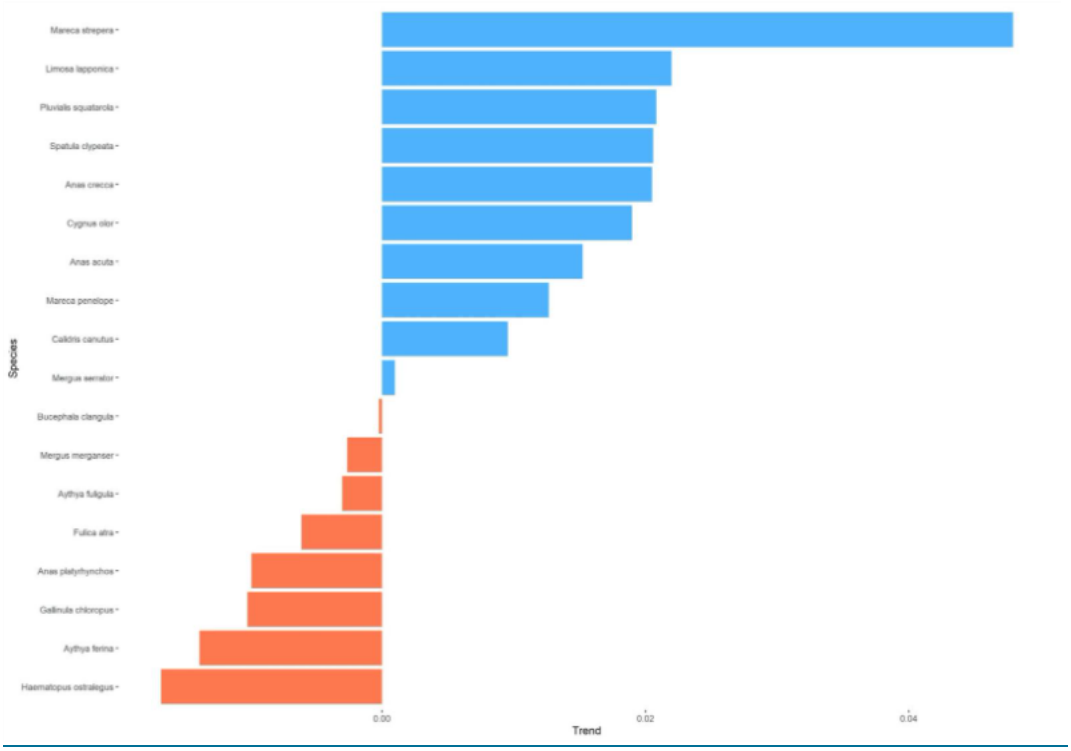

Figure 12. Overview of the long-term trends of the 18 wintering Annex II species contributing to the multispecies trend.

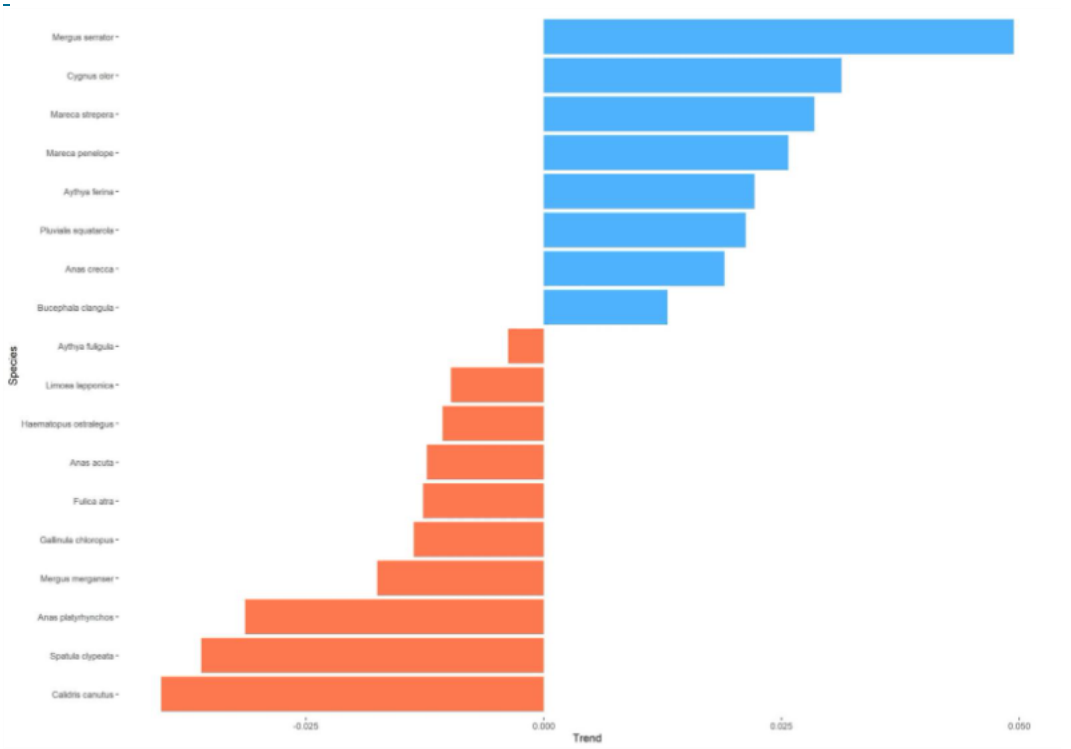

Figure 13. Overview of the short-term trends of the 18 wintering Annex II species contributing to the multispecies trend.

Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*)

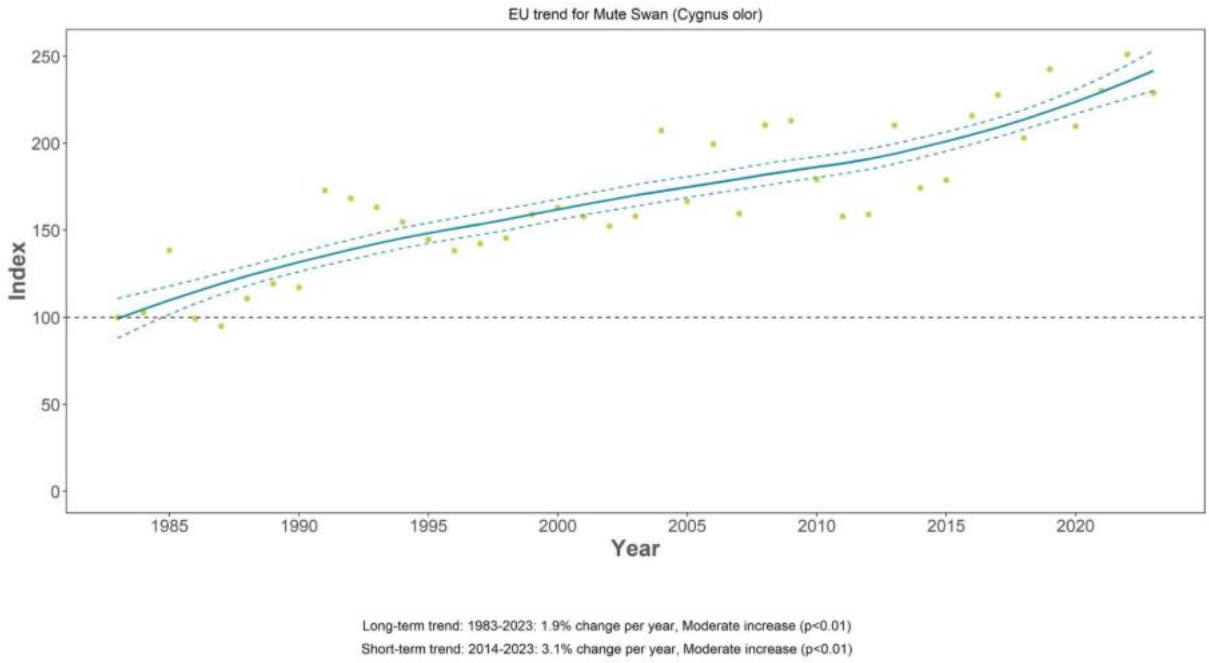

Figure 14. Trend of wintering Mute Swans in the EU.

There are three populations of the Mute Swan in the EU: one in Ireland, the NW & C European population and one in the Black Sea region (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The EU population has increased by 1.9% annually in the long-term with some cold-weather-related fluctuations. In the short term, it has increased more rapidly, by 3.1% annually (Figure 14). Populations in Ireland and the Netherland are stabilising, but more fluctuating in the Baltic states and some Mediterranean countries.

Common Goldeneye (*Bucephala clangula*)

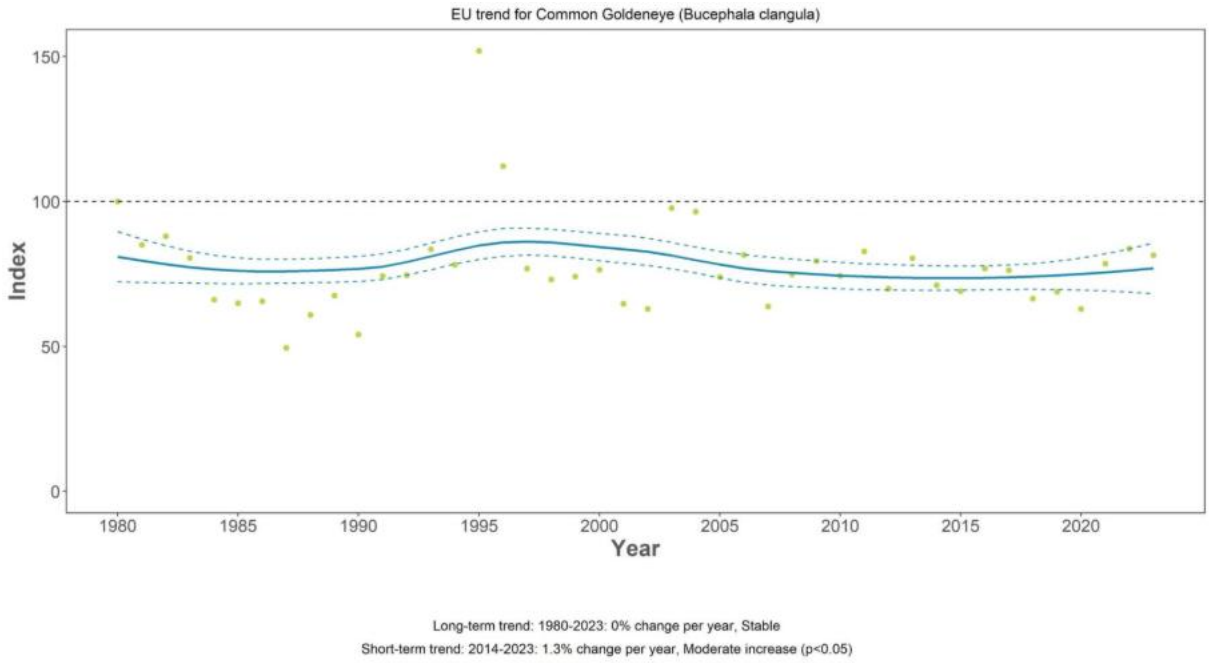

Figure 15. Trend of wintering Common Goldeneyes in the EU.

There are two populations of the Common Goldeneye in the EU: the larger NW & C Europe (nbr), and the smaller SE Europe & Adriatic (nbr) covering Slovakia, Austria, Croatia and Greece and the Black Sea (nbr), including Romania, and Bulgaria (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The combined EU population remained stable in the long term with an annual growth rate of 0%, but it increased moderately during the last 10 years by 1.3% annually (Figure 15).

The overall EU trend is determined by the large (750,000–1,500,000 individuals) NW & C Europe (nbr) population (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). A strong redistribution described earlier (Lehikoinen et al., 2013) still continues according to the IWC data.

The whole SE Europe & Adriatic (nbr) population has suffered a moderate decline both in the long- and short-term. However, it has increased until the late 1990s (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025).

The overall long-term trend of the Black Sea (nbr) is stable, but the trend in the last 10 years was positive although statistically uncertain. The flyway trend is driven by changes in Romania and Ukraine and showing a gradual shift from the western towards the northern part of the Black Sea. A further uncertainty arise from the possibility that a large part of this population may winter in Russia as a single survey in 2013 indicates. (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025).

Goosander (*Mergus merganser*)

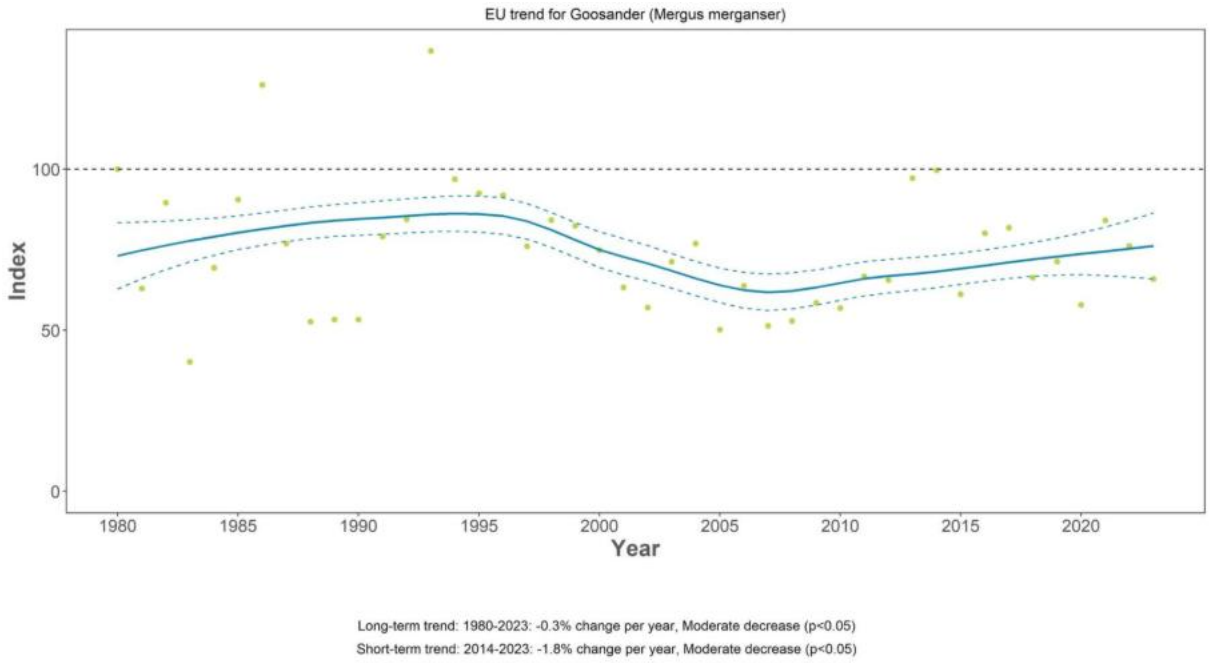

Figure 16. Trend of wintering Goosanders in the EU.

There are four populations of the Red-breasted Merganser in the EU: the NW & C Europe (nbr) covering most of the EU, the Black Sea (nbr) covering Romania and Bulgaria and the two resident populations in Central-Eest Europe (br) incuding breeding areas in Austria, Germany, France, and Italy as well as the Balkans (br) including Slovenia, Croatia and Greece (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The combined EU population declined in the long term with an annual rate of 0.3%, which has accelerated in the last 10 years when the rate of decline has increased to 1.8% annually (Figure 16). However, the overall trend appears to be stable with periodic fluctuations.

The overall trend is influenced by the patterns in the major NW & C Europe (nbr). Wintering populations have decreased in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Romania, while they have increased in Austria, Italy, France, Czechia, and Finland. They fluctuated in Greece, Croatia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Hungary, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, showing a more complex geographic pattern than claimed by Lehikoinen et al. (2013), possibly due to the presence of resident populations.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator*)

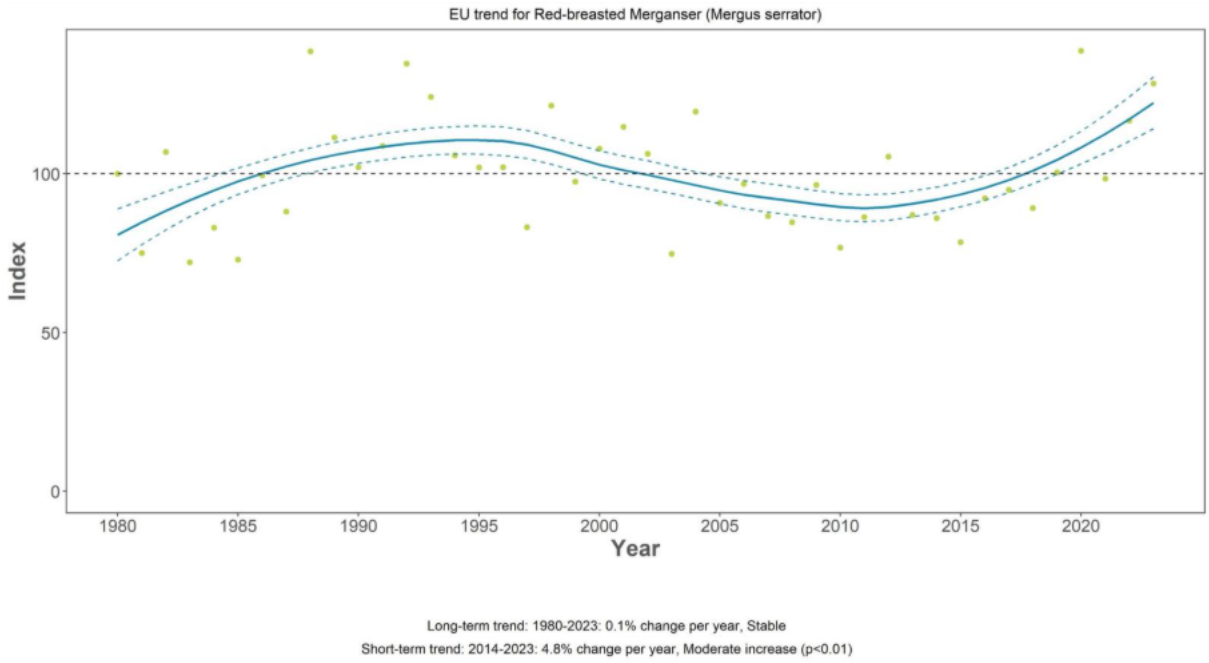

Figure 17. Trend of wintering Red-breasted Mergansers in the EU.

There are two populations of the Red-breasted Merganser in the EU: the NW & C Europe (nbr) covering most of the EU and the Black Sea & E Mediterranean (nbr) covering Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and Cyprus (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The combined EU population remained stable in the long term with an annual growth rate of 0.1%, but it increased strongly over the last 10 years by 4.8% annually (Figure 17). This suggests that the decline reported in BirdLife International (2021) was only a downward phase within a long-term population fluctuation. The pattern of national trends, with declines in southern Member States such as Spain, Portugal, and France, and increases in Germany, Denmark, Estonia, and Latvia, indicates that the wintering population is shifting closer towards the breeding areas.

Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*)

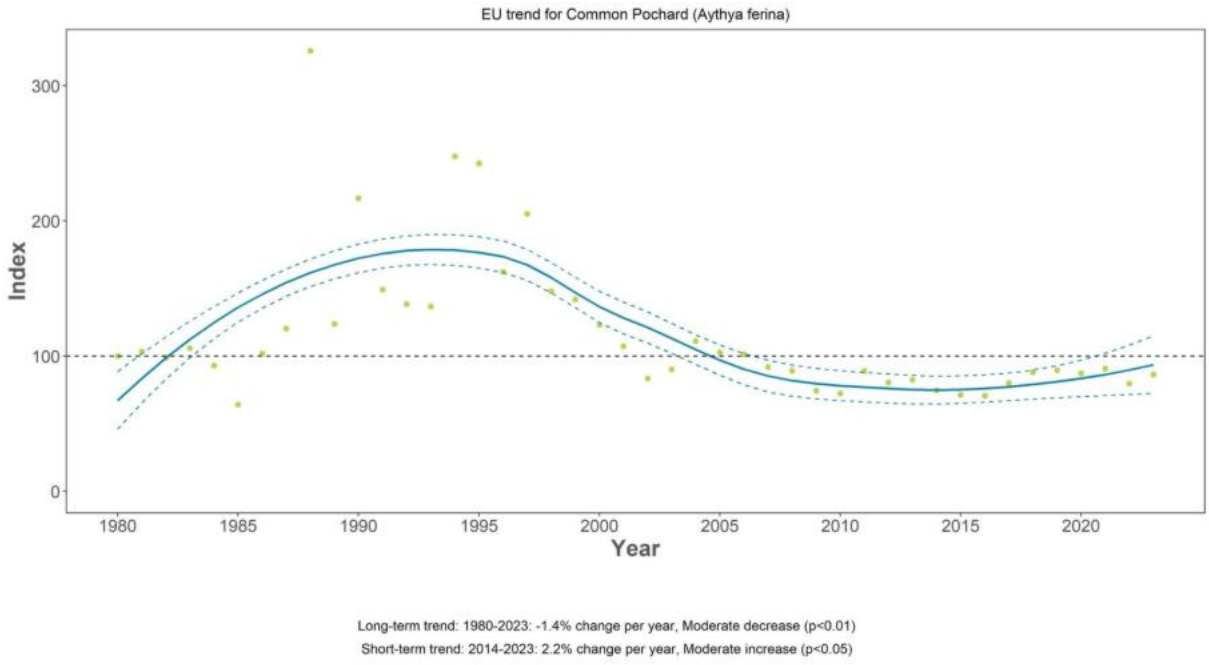

Figure 18. Trend of wintering Common Pochards in the EU.

There are two populations of the Common Pochard in the EU: the NE & NW Europe (nbr) and the C Europe, Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr), with a wide overlap zone from France to the south of Poland (Scott & Rose, 1996), but there is a substantial exchange between these populations often within the same winter (Keller et al., 2009).

The combined EU population has declined at an annual rate of 1.4% over the long-term but increased with an annual growth rate of 2.2% in the last 10 years (Figure 18). Following a population growth until the mid-1990s, the EU wintering population declined until the mid-2010s, but after that, a slow recovery has started. Wintering numbers are still well below the levels when the Birds Directive came into force. Population declines were reported both from the European (BirdLife International, 2015, 2021; Fox et al., 2016) and the West Asian (Mischenko et al., 2020) breeding populations.

At the Member States level, the wintering numbers have declined in Ireland, Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Greece, Cyprus, increased in Italy, Poland and fluctuated in Sweden, Lithuania, Estonia, Germany, Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania.

Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*)

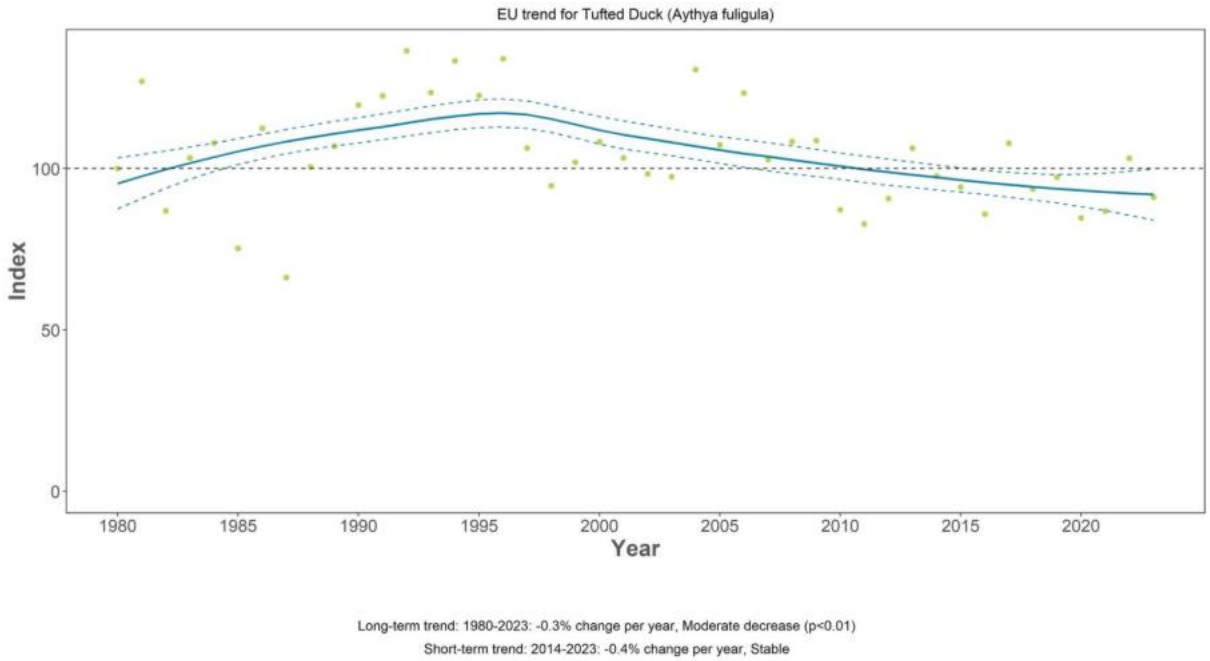

Figure 19. Trend of wintering Tufted Ducks in the EU.

There are two populations of the Tufted Duck in the EU: the NW Europe (nbr) and the C Europe, Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr), with a wide overlap zone from France to the Baltic States (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The combined EU population has declined moderately at an annual rate of 0.3% over the long-term and was classified as stable, with an annual growth rate of -0.4% (Figure 19). Following a population growth until the late 1990s, a continuous, slow decline can be observed. Some authors attribute this apparent decline to a climate-change-driven shift in the wintering range (Lehikoinen et al., 2013). However, BirdLife International (2021) reported a decrease at a rate that justified classifying the EU28 breeding population as Vulnerable and the European population as Near Threatened (which includes the majority of the breeding area of birds wintering in the EU) (Spina et al., 2022). The wintering numbers have declined over the last 10 years in most EU Member States, except Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, and Italy.

Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*)

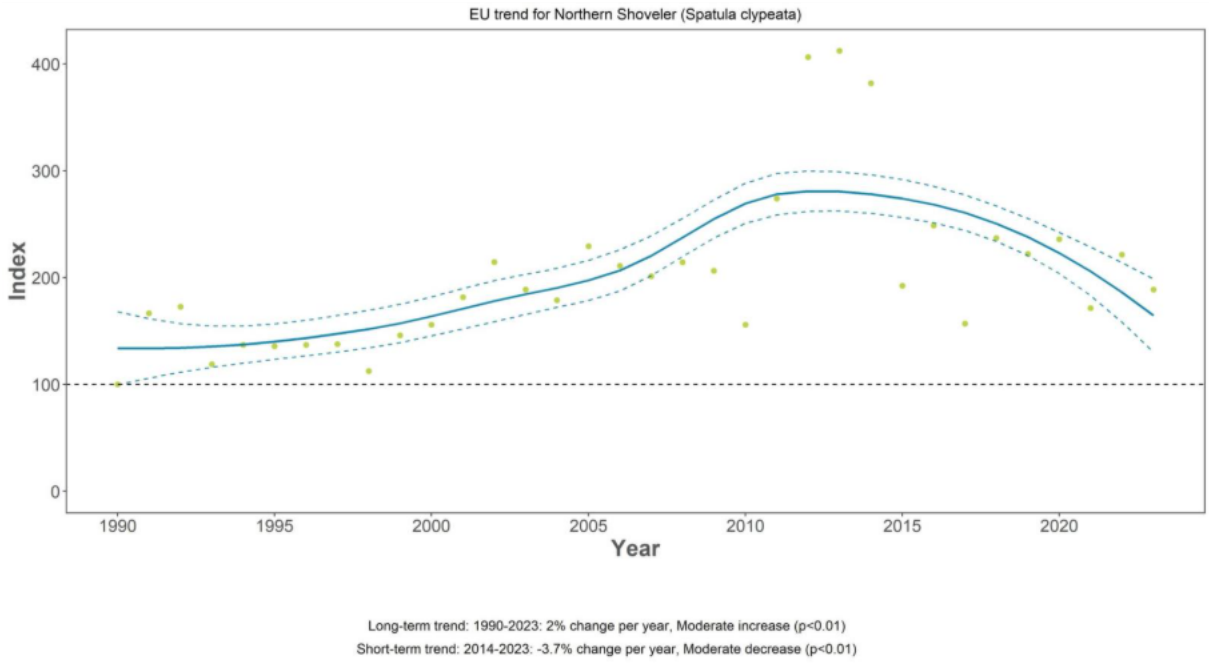

Figure 20. Trend of wintering Northern Shovelers in the EU.

There are two populations of the Northern Shoveler within the EU: one in NW & C Europe (nbr) and another in the Black Sea, Mediterranean & W Africa (nbr) (Scott & Rose, 1996). This species has been identified as potentially requiring adaptive harvest management plans in the European Union, but more information is required to resolve the contradictions between the declining breeding trends and the observed increases in the NW & C Europe (nbr) population (Cruz-Flores et al., 2025).

The long-term wintering numbers in the EU have increased by 2% annually, but declined by 3.7% in the short term (Figure 20). However, the increase was more rapid until the first half of the 2010s. The latest flyway population level IWC trend analyses confirm the continued increase in the smaller (c. 90,000 individuals) NW & C Europe (nbr) population (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025; van Roomen et al., 2025).

However, the much larger (450,000–600,000 individuals) Black Sea, Mediterranean & W Africa (nbr) showed a statistically uncertain negative trend from the beginning of the 2010s (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). The numbers in Spain primarily drive this flyway trend, but wintering numbers also show negative short-term trends in Greece and Croatia. On the other hand, numbers are increasing in Italy and Bulgaria.

Gadwall (*Mareca strepera*)

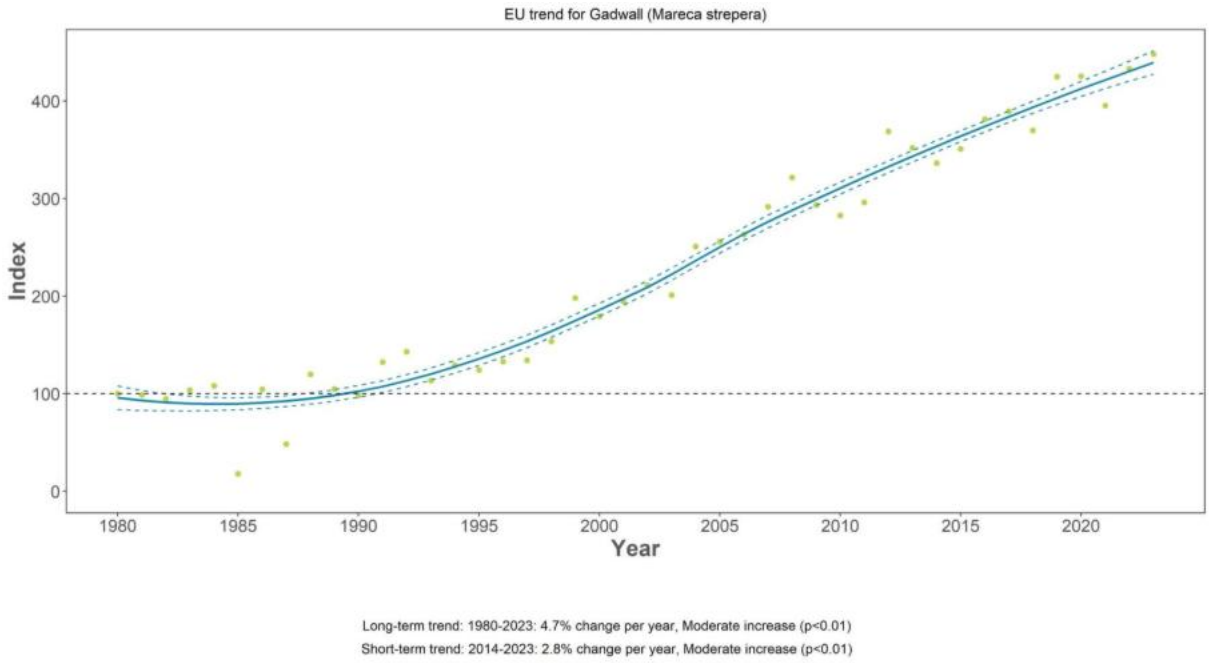

Figure 21. Trend of wintering Gadwalls in the EU.

Two populations of the Gadwall are distinguished in Europe: the NW Europe (br) and the C Europe, Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr) (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The wintering numbers of this species have increased by 4.7% annually in the long-term and by 2.8% in the short-term (Figure 21).

National level trends have increased in all EU Member States in the long-term, but declines are detected in some Mediterranean countries such as Portugal, Spain, France, and Greece.

Eurasian Wigeon (*Mareca penelope*)

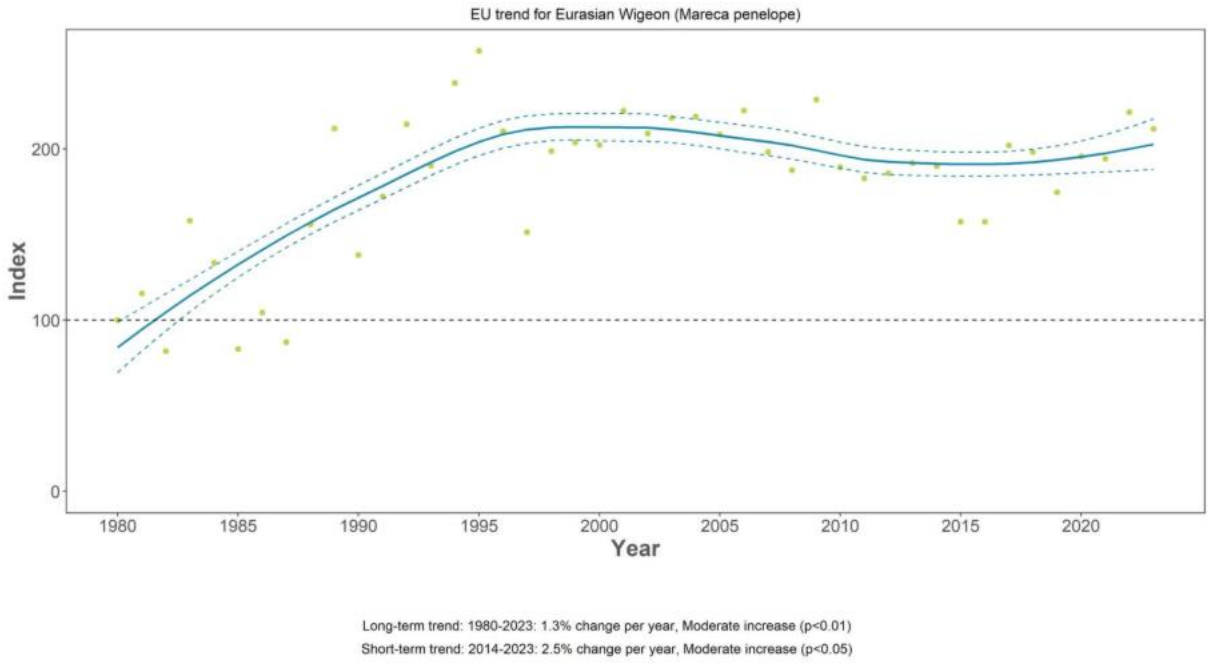

Figure 22. Trend of wintering Eurasian Wigeons in the EU.

Two populations of the Eurasian Wigeon are distinguished in Europe: the NW Europe (nbr) and the Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr) (Scott & Rose, 1996). This species has been identified as one of the priority species for adaptive harvest management in the European Union (Cruz-Flores et al., 2025).

The wintering numbers of this species have increased by 1.3% annually in the long-term and by 2.5% in the short-term (Figure 22). However, the species has experienced a well-documented decline between the second half of the 1990s and the mid-2010s (Fox et al., 2016) though the EU population is recovering from that decline. Population level trend analyses (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025) show that the recovery has happened in the larger NW Europe (nbr) population, while the Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr) declined in the long-term and stabilised in the last 10 years.

National level trends indicate rapid increases in the Nordic, Baltic and Central European countries while stagnation or even decline in Member States in NW Europe, the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions.

Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*)

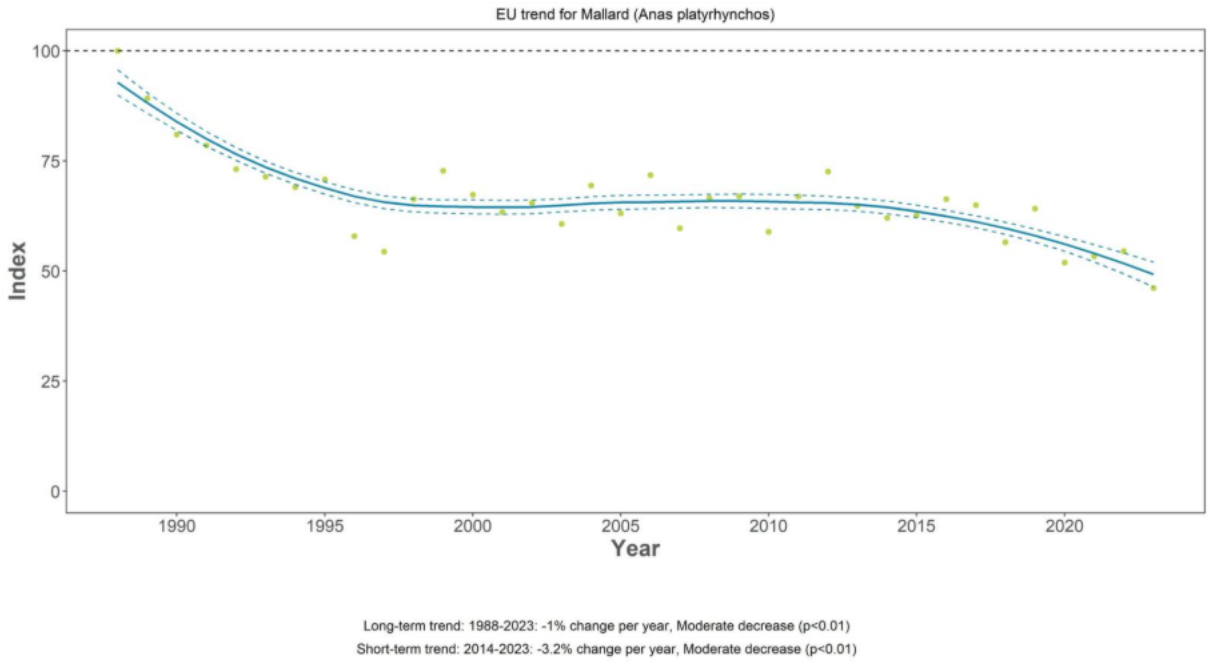

Figure 23. Trend of wintering Mallards in the EU.

Three populations of the Mallard exist in the EU: the NW Europe (nbr), W Mediterranean (nbr), and Black Sea & E Mediterranean (nbr). However, there is significant overlap between these flyway populations from France to Finland and in the Carpathian Basin (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The long-term wintering numbers of this species in the EU have declined by 1% annually, but the rate of decline has increased to 3.2% annually in the last 10 years (Figure 23). The overall EU trend is primarily driven by the NW Europe (nbr) population (4.5–7.1 million individuals), which is much larger than the W Mediterranean (1.0–1.4 million individuals) or the Black Sea & E Mediterranean (c. 1.6 million individuals) including also the population segments outside of the EU.

The NW Europe (nbr) population declined by 0.9% in the long-term and by c. 2% in the last 10 years (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). Continued long-term declines can be observed in the western edge of the range in Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany. Increases are detected in Sweden, and Lithuania. While in other countries characterised by long-term fluctuations.

The W Mediterranean (nbr) population was statistically stable in the long-term, but declined by c. 5% annually in the short-term (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). The long term stability is the result of a slowly increasing trend until the mid-2000s followed by a decline. The population has declined in the short-term in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Czechia, and Austria.

The Black Sea & E Mediterranean (nbr) population declined by c. 2% in the long-term, but statistically is classified as stable with a similar negative growth rate (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). The population declines in Croatia, Hungary in the short-term, but is stable or fluctuating in Bulgaria, Romania and Greece.

Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)

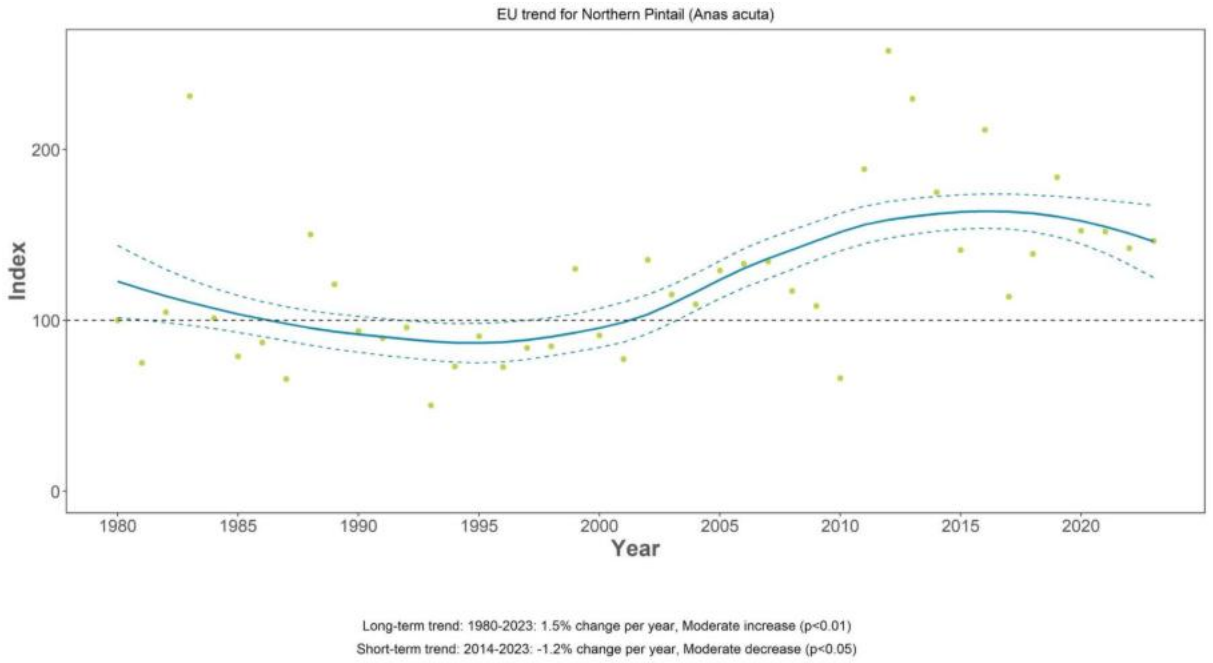

Figure 24. Trend of wintering Northern Pintails in the EU.

Three populations of the Northern Pintail occur in the EU: the NW Europe (nbr), Black Sea, Mediterranean & W Africa (nbr), and overlapping with the population of SW Asia, E & NE Africa (nbr) in Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Cyprus (Scott & Rose, 1996). This species has been identified as potentially requiring adaptive harvest management plans within the European Union, but further information is needed to resolve the contradictions between the declining breeding trends and the observed increases in the NW Europe (nbr) population (Cruz-Flores et al., 2025). The NW Europe (nbr) population is equal to approximately 20% of the Black Sea, Mediterranean & W Africa (nbr).

The long-term wintering numbers of this species in the EU have increased by 1.5% annually, but the short-term numbers have declined by 1.2% annually (Figure 24).

The NW Europe (nbr) population has increased both in the long- and in the short-term. A redistribution from France and Belgium towards Germany and Denmark can be clearly observed in this population (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025).

The majority of the Black Sea, Mediterranean & W Africa (nbr) population winters in Africa, but only the Senegal delta is monitored regularly and contributes to the flyway trend analyses. The EU segment of this population shows declining trends in Spain, Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Cyprus, while some increases are evident in Portugal, Italy, Slovenia and Croatia.

Common Teal (*Anas crecca*)

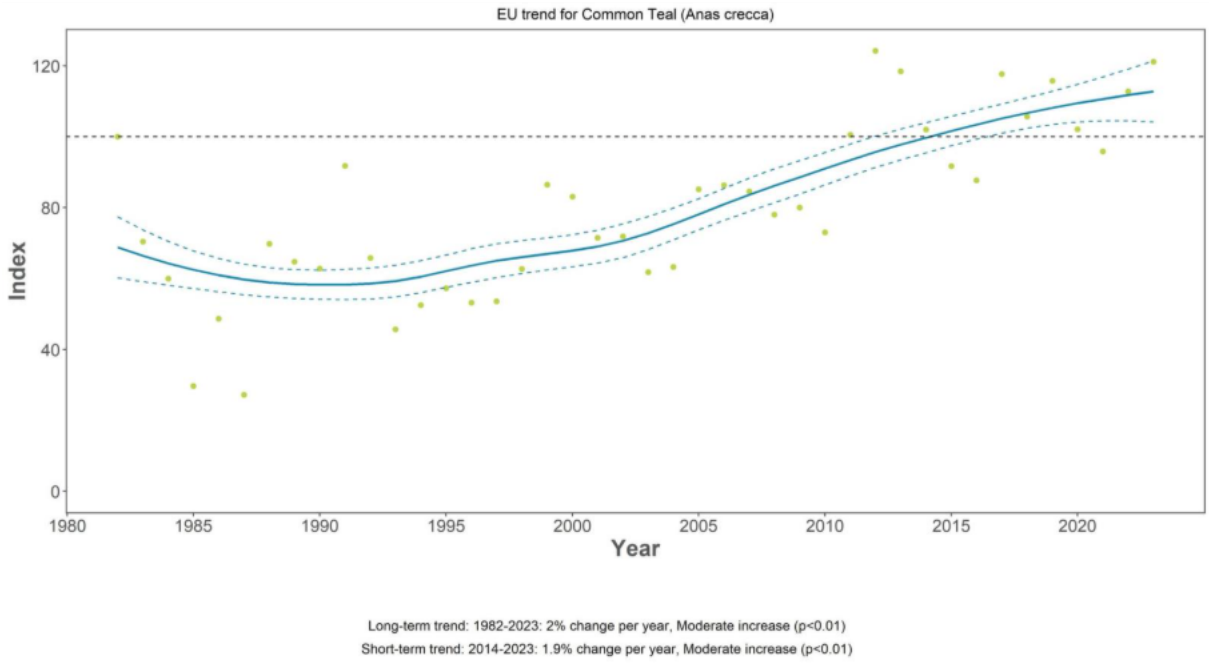

Figure 25. Trend of wintering Common Teals in the EU.

Two populations of the Common Teal are recognised in Europe: the NW Europe (nbr) and the Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr) (Scott & Rose, 1996). This species has been identified as one that might be harvested unsustainably in the European Union, but further work is needed to improve population size estimates (Cruz-Flores et al., 2025).

The wintering numbers of this species have increased in the EU by 2.0% annually in the long-term and by 1.9% in the short-term (Figure 25). However, the trends of the two flyway populations differ markedly.

The smaller NW Europe (nbr) has indeed increased over the long term, but the rate of growth is also slowing down within this population when the analysis covers the entire group. The trend of this population is heavily influenced by changes in the UK, which accounts for more than a third of the total population (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). While the numbers are declining in the UK in the last 10 years (Calbrade et al., 2025), the numbers are increasing in NW Europe and in the Baltic.

The larger Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr) population has also increased in the long-term, but showed a moderate decrease between 2012 and 2023 (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). Strong declines are recorded in Spain, Portugal, and Greece, while there are strong increase in Italy.

Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)

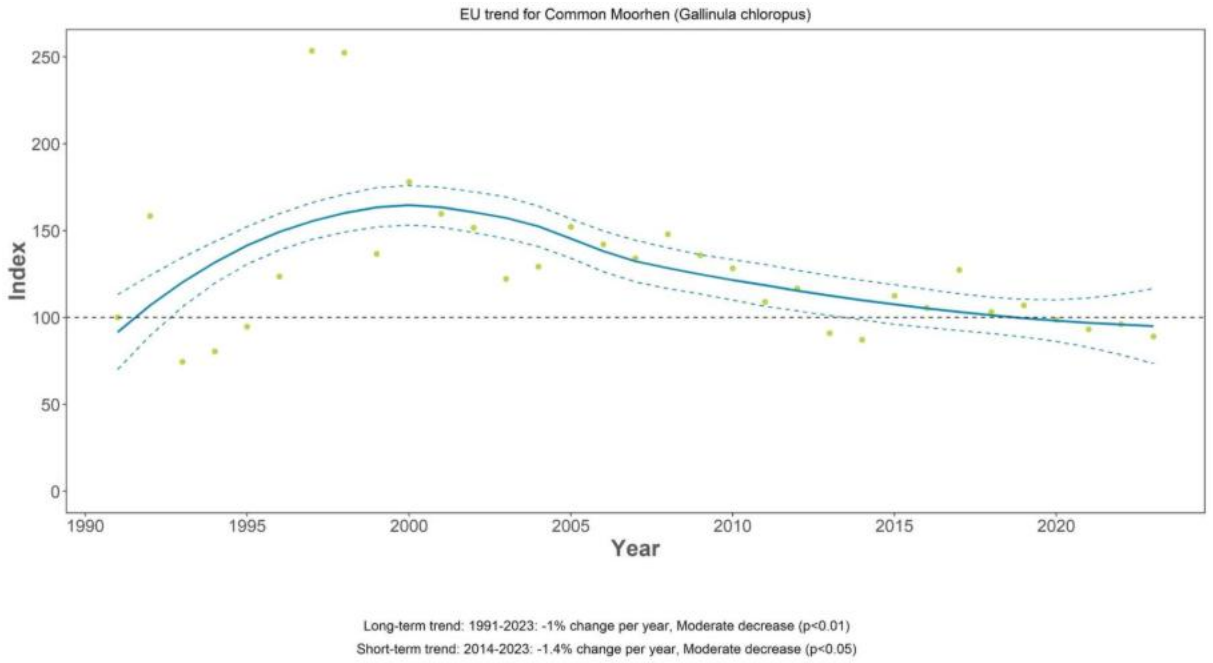

Figure 26. Trend of wintering Common Moorhens in the EU.

There is one population of the Common Moorhen in the EU: the Europe & N Africa (br)[6].

The EU population has decreased by 1.0% annually in the long-term and by 1.4% annually (Figure 26), but this confounds an increase until about 2000 that was followed by a more rapid decline.

In some countries (Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany), the wintering numbers have declined continuously. In others, they show some form of long-term fluctuations. In the last 10 years, the wintering numbers have only increased in Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

[6] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/62120190

Eurasian Coot (*Fulica atra*)

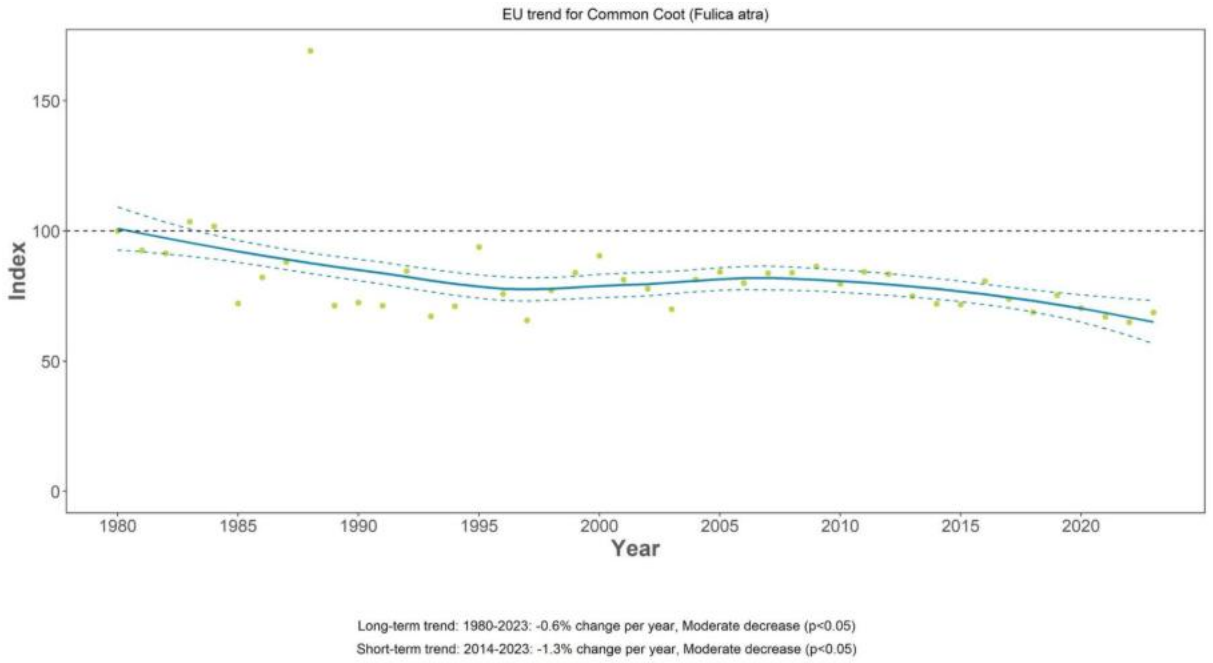

Figure 27. Trend of wintering Eurasian Coots in the EU.

There are two populations of the Eurasian Coot in the EU: those in NW Europe (nbr) and in the Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr)[7].

The EU population has decreased by 0.6% annually in the long term and by 1.3% annually (Figure 27).

The NW Europe (nbr) flyway population has decreased in the long-term by 0.4% annually, but stabilised in the last 10 years (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). In the long-term, the species has declined in Ireland, Belgium, the Netherland, Germany, Denmark, Austria and Czechia. It has rapidly increased in recent years in Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, increased in France until the first half of the 2010s, but has rapidly declined since then.

The long-term trend of the Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr) is stable with a -0.3% annual growth rate, but the short-term trend is a moderate decline at a rate of -3% annually. The population has increased until the late 1990s, but declined since then. It has declined in Spain, Italy, Slovenia and Bulgaria, but is stable in Romania, Greece, and Hungary with relatively large interannual fluctuations.

[7] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/22692913

Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

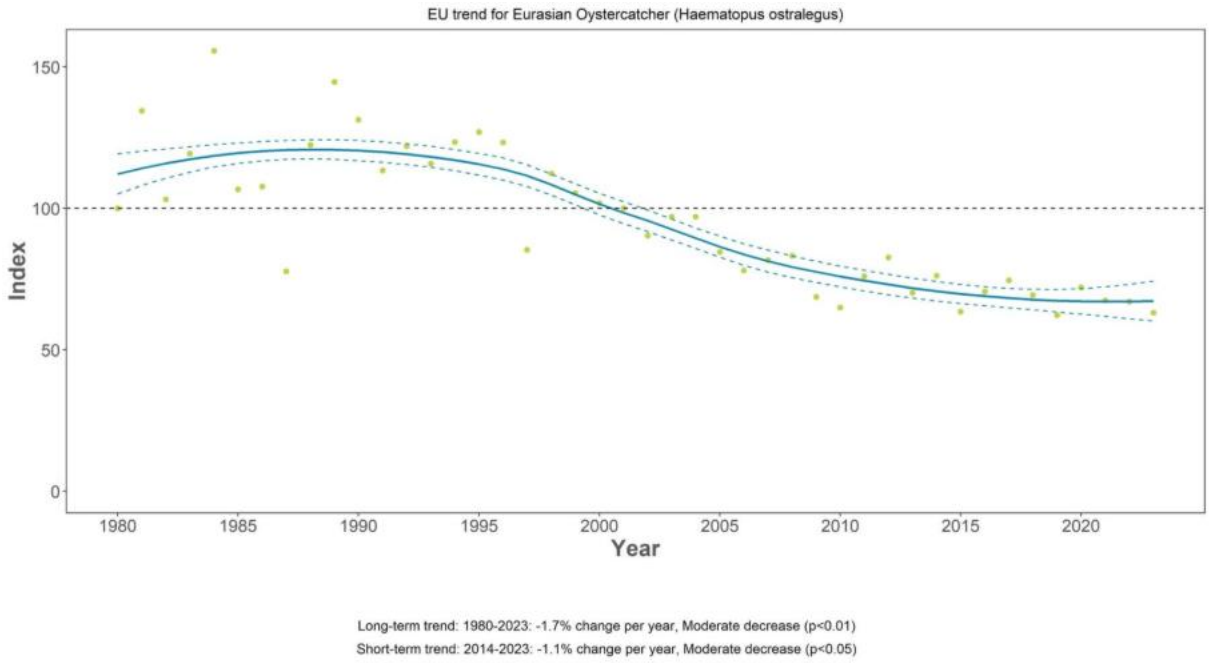

Figure 28. Trend of wintering Eurasian Oystercatchers in the EU.

Two populations of the Eurasian Oystercatcher exist within the EU. All EU Member States except Cyprus are considered part of the nominate subspecies while the latter country is within the range of the *longipes* subspecies (Delany et al., 2009).

The wintering numbers of this species in the EU have declined by 1.7% annually in the long-term and by 1.1% in the short-term (Figure 28). The species was listed as a Near Threatened species on the global Red List in 2019 (BirdLife International, 2019) and it is listed as Vulnerable at the EU28 Red List (BirdLife International, 2021).

Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

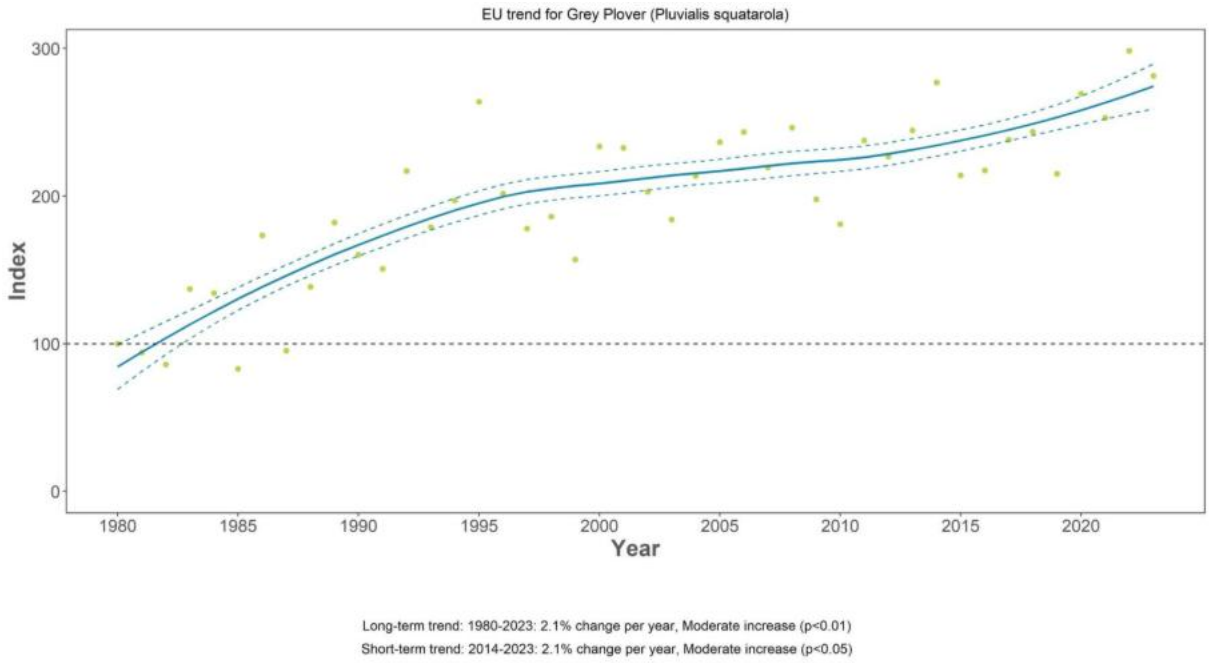

Figure 29. Trend of wintering Grey Plovers in the EU.

Two populations of the Grey Plover exist within the EU. All EU Member States except Cyprus are considered part of the W Europe & W Africa (nbr) flyway population, but this population overlaps with the E Mediterranean, SW Asia, E & S Africa (nbr) population in the region between Italy and the Black Sea (Delany et al., 2009).

The wintering numbers of this species in the EU have increased by 2.1% annually both in the long-term and short-term (Figure 29). However, this does not indicate its improving conservation status. The species was listed as Vulnerable on the global Red List in 2024 (BirdLife International, 2025). IWC trend analyses record a long-term increase in this flyway population, with a decline from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s and just a stable short-term trend (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025; van Roomen et al., 2025). While the numbers are generally decreasing in Tropical Africa, they are increasing in Europe (van Roomen et al., 2025).

Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*)

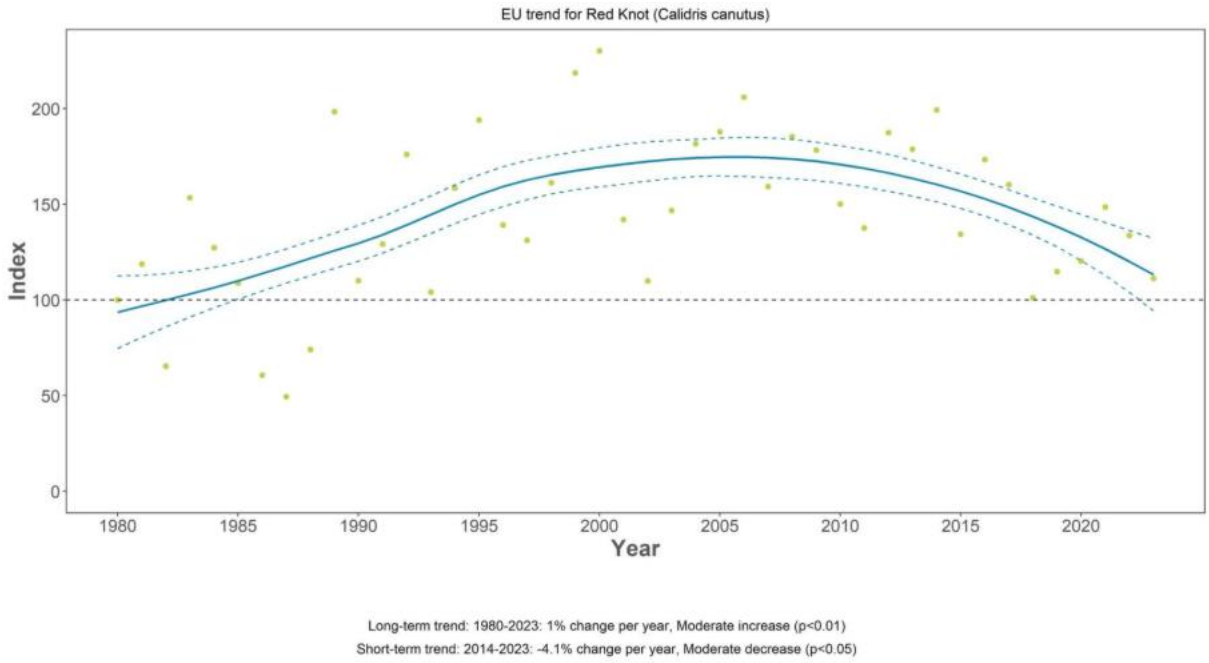

Figure 30. Trend of wintering Red Knots in the EU.

Two populations of Red Knot occur in the EU: the nominate subspecies that mainly winters in W Africa and the *islandica* subspecies, which winters in Europe (Delany et al., 2009). However, recently studies show that some of the Red Knots wintering in Europe belong to the nominate subspecies (Conklin et al., 2022). In addition, a small number of Red Knots are also recorded in Italy and Greece, outside of the traditional wintering areas of the *islandica* subspecies.

The wintering numbers of this species in the EU have increased by 1% annually over the long term, but decreased by 4.1% in the short term (Figure 30). The species has been considered globally Near Threatened since 2015 (BirdLife International, 2024a). The EU trend is primarily driven by the numbers in the Netherlands where the majority of the wintering population occurs, but similar patterns can be observed in Ireland, Germany and Denmark. Spain and France show a more positive trend.

Species not listed in any of the annexes

The multi-species index for species not listed in any of the annexes has increased slightly but statistically significantly since 1980. The combined population trend of these species has increased by 0.1% annually in the long term and by 0.3% in the last 10 years (Figure 31).

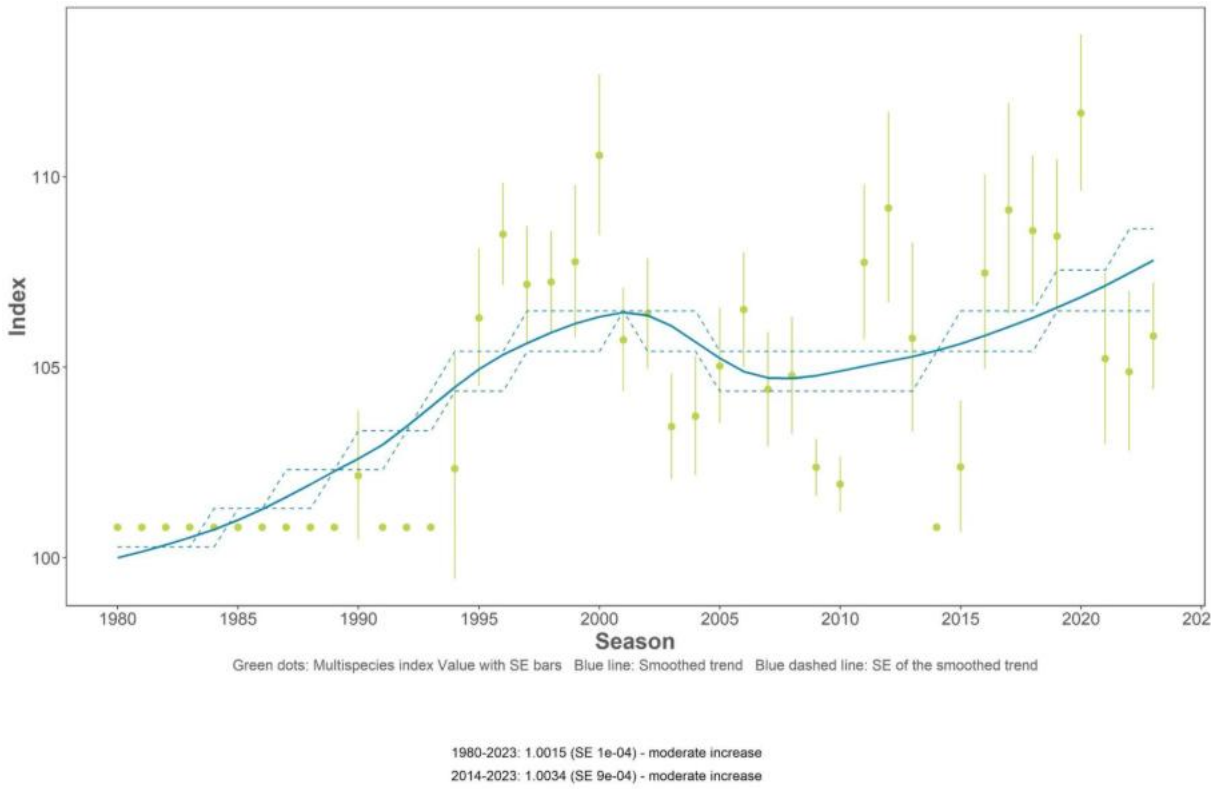

Figure 31. EU-wide multispecies trend for wintering waterbirds not listed in any of the annexes of the Birds Directive.

All eight species have increased in the long term (Figure 32), but half of them declined in the short term (Figure 33).

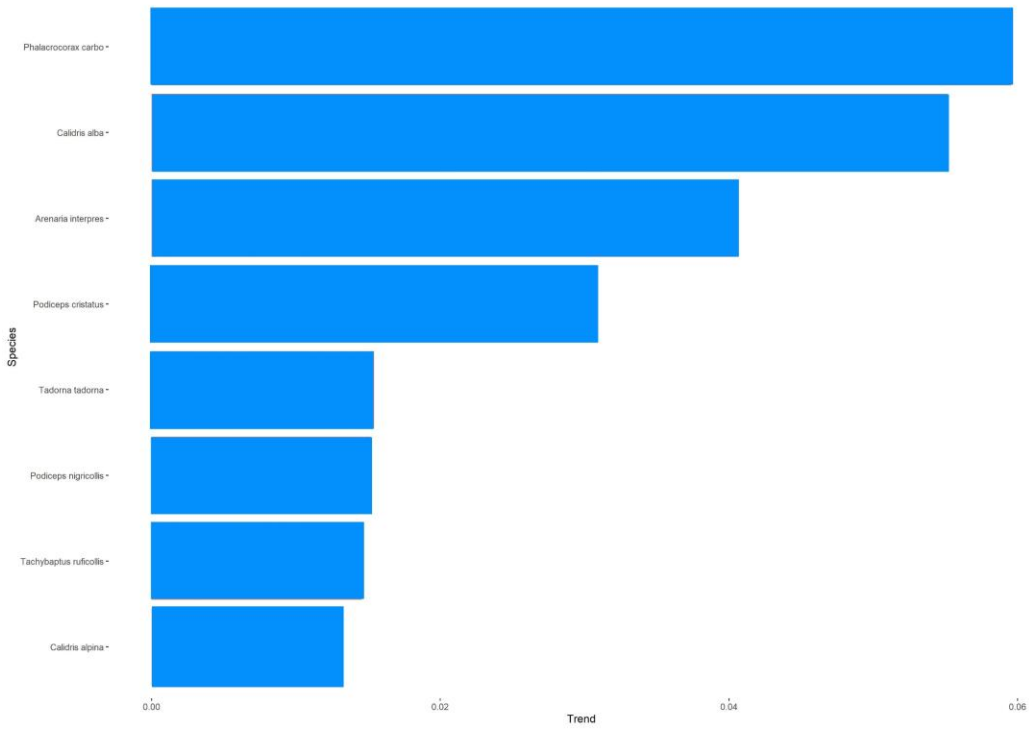

Figure 32. Overview of the long-term trends of the eight wintering species contributing to the multispecies trend for species not listed in the annexes of the Birds Directive.

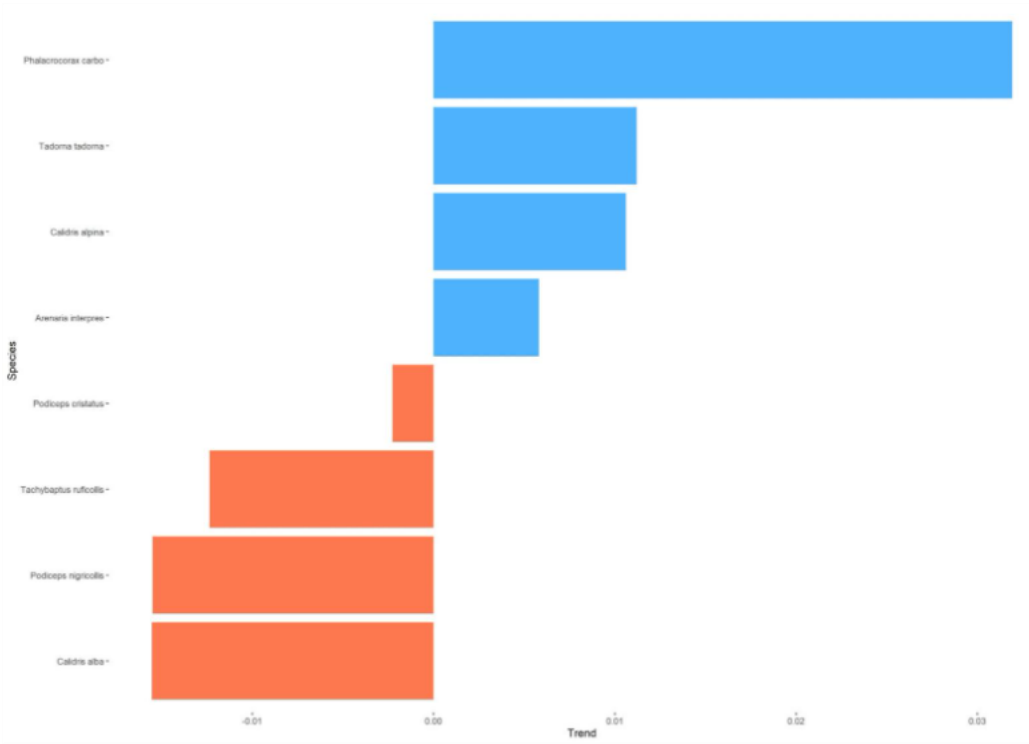

Figure 33. Overview of the short-term trends of the eight wintering species contributing to the multispecies trend for species not listed in the annexes of the Birds Directive

Common Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*)

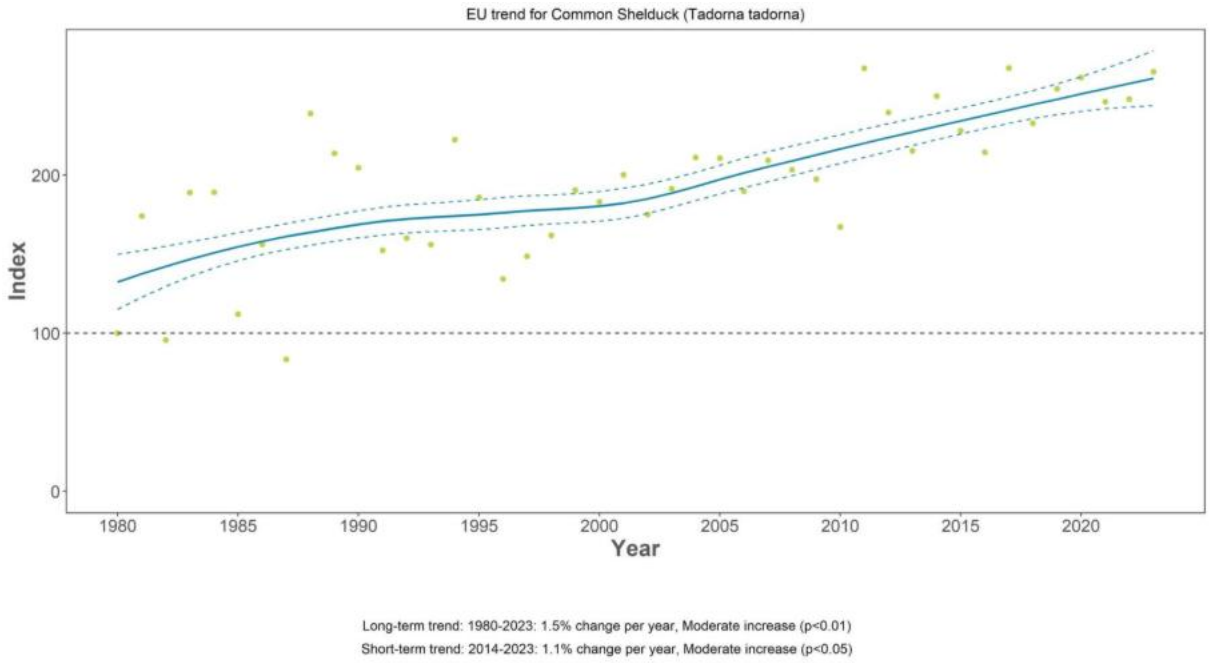

Figure 34. Trend of wintering Common Shelducks in the EU.

Two populations of Common Shelduck are recognised in the EU: the NW Europe (br) and the Black Sea & Mediterranean (Scott & Rose, 1996).

The long-term wintering numbers of this species in the EU have increased by 1.5% annually, and by 1.1% in the short term (Figure 34).

The NW Europe (br) population has declined moderately at a rate of 0.3% per annum since 1996. The rate of decline remained similar in the last 10 years, but it is statistically classified as stable (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025; van Roomen et al., 2025).

The Black Sea & Mediterranean population showed a long term increase, but declined by 1.3% in the last 10 years (Langendoen & Nagy, 2025). However, this was mainly driven by changes in wintering numbers outside of the EU. EU Member States with larger populations, such as Italy, have not declined.

Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)

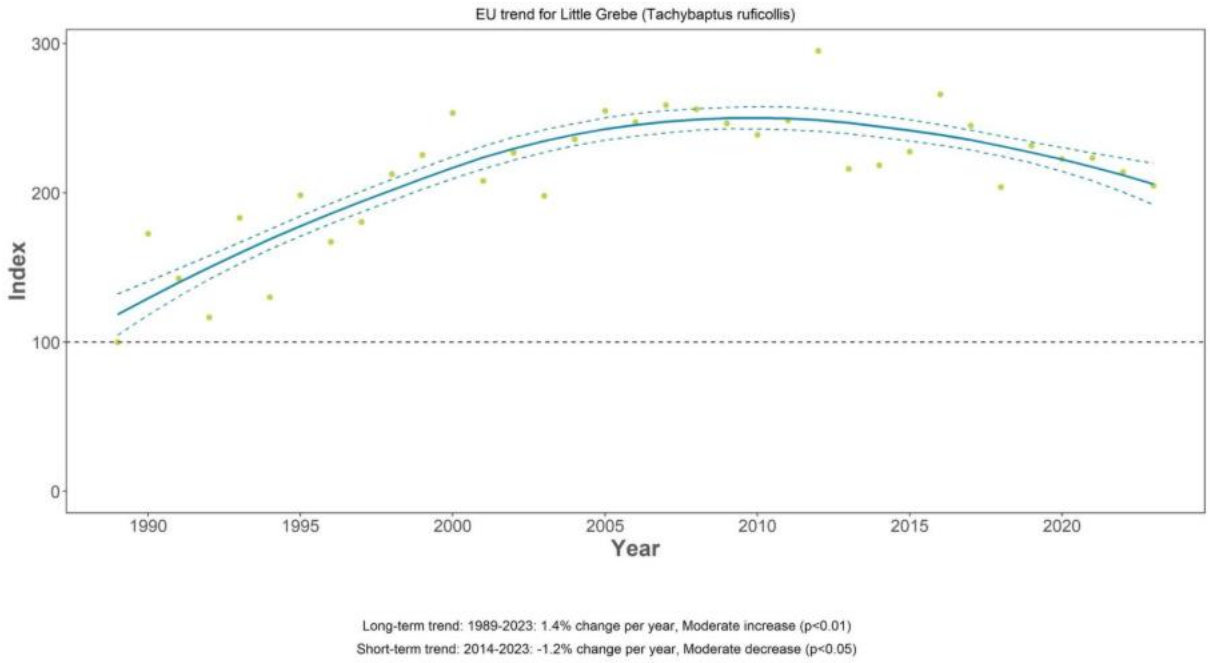

Figure 35. Trend of wintering Little Grebes in the EU.

Only the Europe & NW Africa population of Little Grebe occurs in the EU[8].

The long-term wintering numbers of this species in the EU have increased by 1.4% annually, but declined by 1.2% in the short term (Figure 35).

The wintering numbers have decreased mainly in the southern countries such as Portugal, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Slovakia, and Hungary, but also in Lithuania and the Netherlands.

[8] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/22696545

Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*)

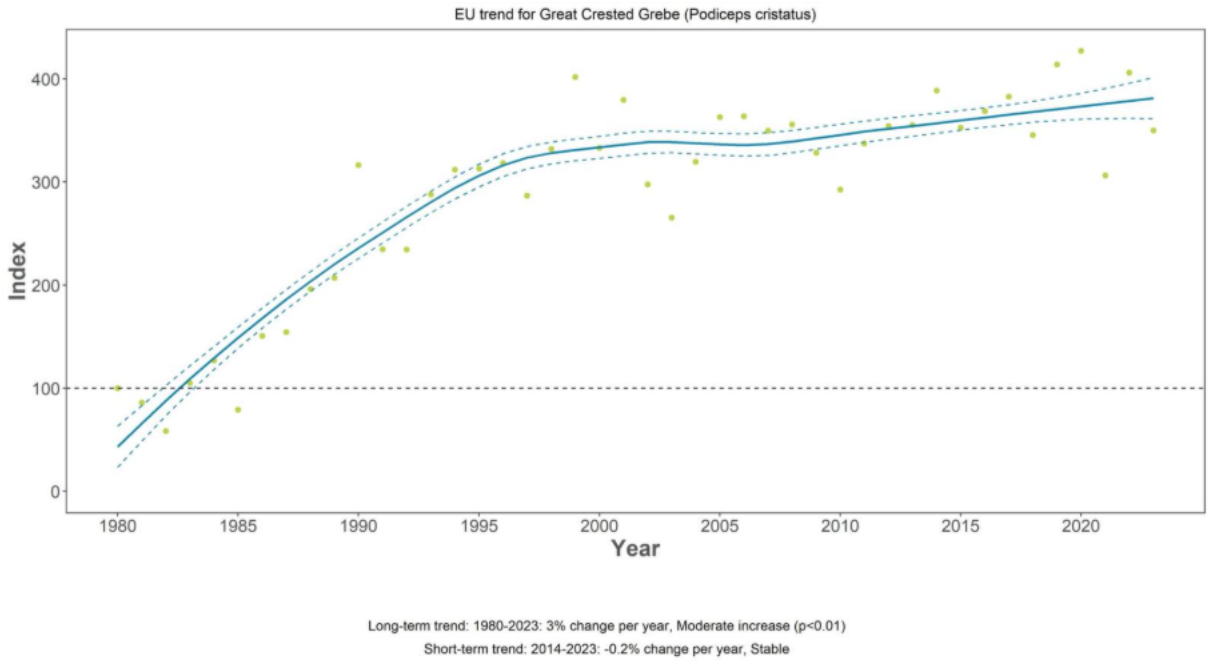

Figure 36. Trend of wintering Great Creasted Grebes in the EU.

Two populations exists in the EU: the N & W Europe (nbr) and the Black Sea & Mediterranean (nbr)[9].

The long-term wintering numbers of this species in the EU have increased by 3.0% annually, but stabilised with an annual growth rate of -0.2% in the last 10 years (Figure 36). No particular geographic patterns can be observed amongst the Member States.

[9] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/22696602

Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*)

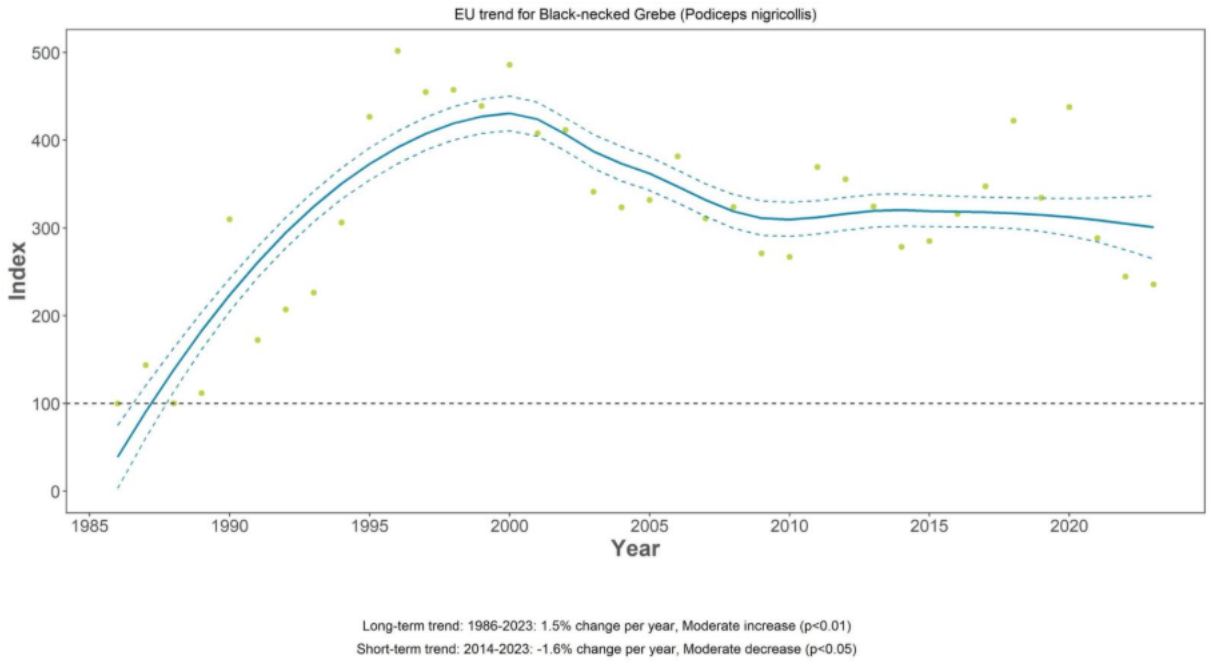

Figure 37. Trend of wintering Black-necked Grebes in the EU.

Only the Europe & N Africa population occurs in the EU[10].

The long-term wintering numbers of this species in the EU have increased by 1.6% annually, but declined by an annual rate of 1.6% in the last 10 years (Figure 37). The national wintering populations have declined in Portugal, France, Greece, and the Netherlands over the last 10 years.

[10] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/22696610

Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

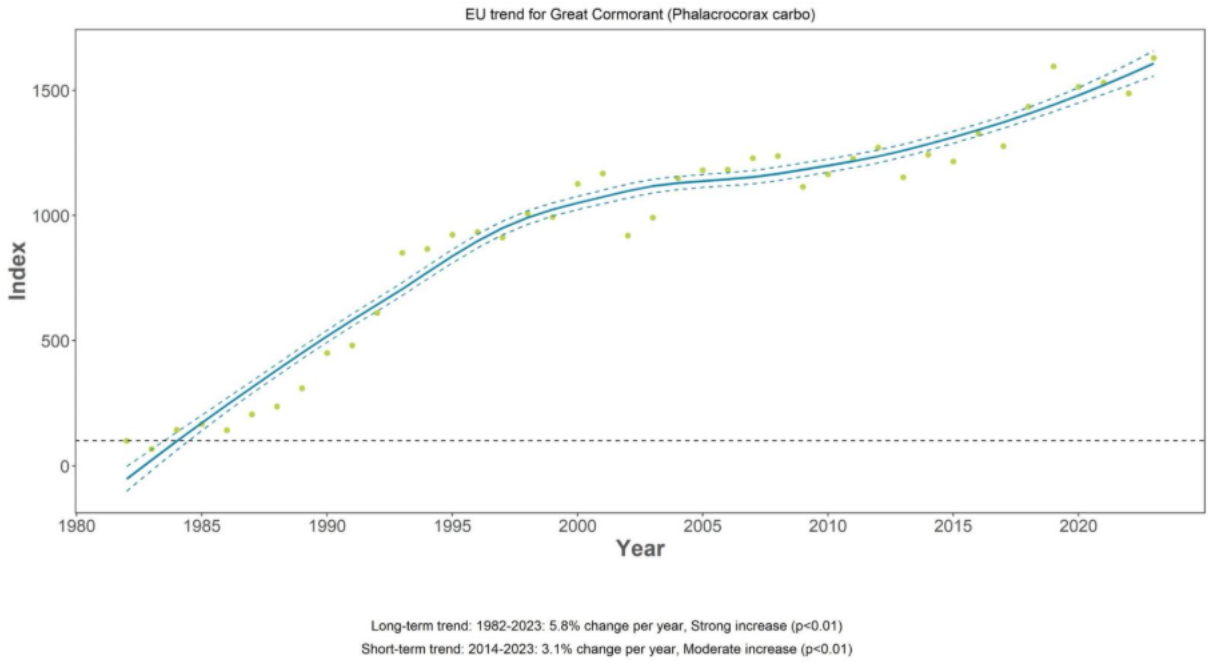

Figure 38. Trend of wintering Great Cormorants in the EU.

There are three populations of the Great Cormorant in the EU. The NW Europe subspecies of the nominate race occurs along the Atlantic coast. Two populations of the *sinensis* subspecies are recognised under AEWA: one in N & C Europe and one in the Black Sea & Mediterranean[11], but there are strong overlaps between these in winter (Bregnballe et al., 2015).

The wintering numbers in the EU have increased by 5.8% annually over the long term, but this growth slowed to 3.1% in the last decade (Figure 38). Mid-winter numbers have continued rising in Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. They have largely stabilised in Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Slovenia, Austria, Czechia, and Slovakia, while declining in Finland, Portugal, Croatia, and Greece.

[11] https://criticalsites.wetlands.org/en/species/22696792

Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

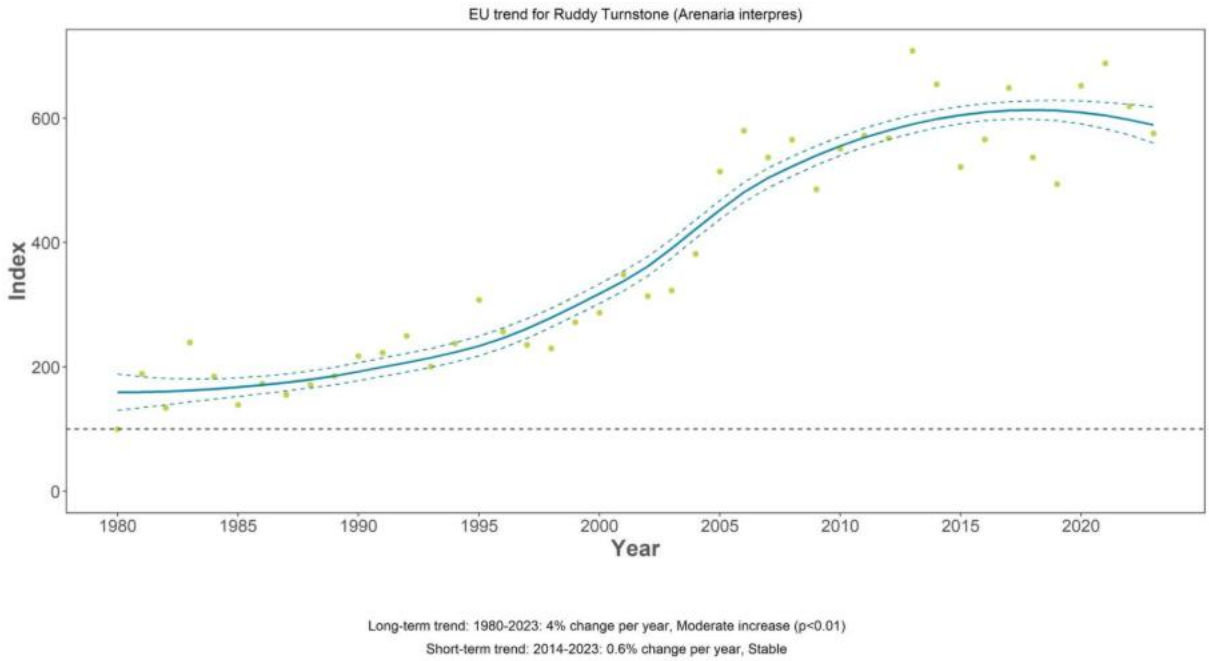

Figure 39. Trend of wintering Ruddy Turnstones in the EU.

Most of the Ruddy Turnstones wintering in the EU belong to the NE Canada & Greenland (br) population. However, some of birds from the N Europe (br) also winter in southern Europe and some from the SW Asia, E & S Africa (nbr) population in the Balkan (Delany et al., 2009)

The wintering numbers have increased in the EU over the long-term by 4% annually, but the population was statistically stable in the short-term with a 0.6% annual growth rate (Figure 39). The species is listed as globally Near Threatened since 2024 (BirdLife International, 2024b).

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

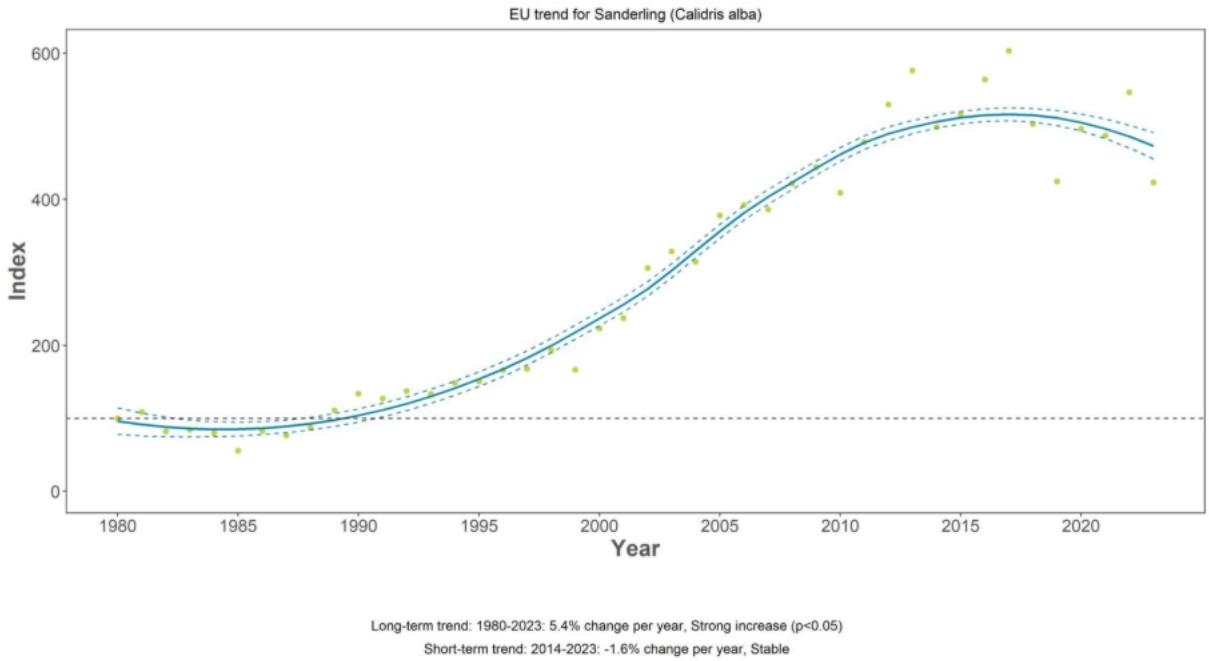

Figure 40. Trend of wintering Sanderlings in the EU.

Most Sanderlings in the EU belong to the E Atlantic (nbr) flyway population, but the Balkan countries are part of the SW Asia, E & S Africa (nbr) population (Delany et al., 2009).

The wintering numbers in the EU have increased over the long term at an annual rate of 5.4%, but have stabilised since 2010 with an annual growth rate of -1.6% over the last 10 years (Figure 40).

The E Atlantic (nbr) population has declined in the short-term mainly due to the declines in Africa (van Roomen et al., 2025). However, wintering numbers have started also declining in some European countries such as Portugal, France, Ireland in recent years, while increasing in Germany and Denmark.

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

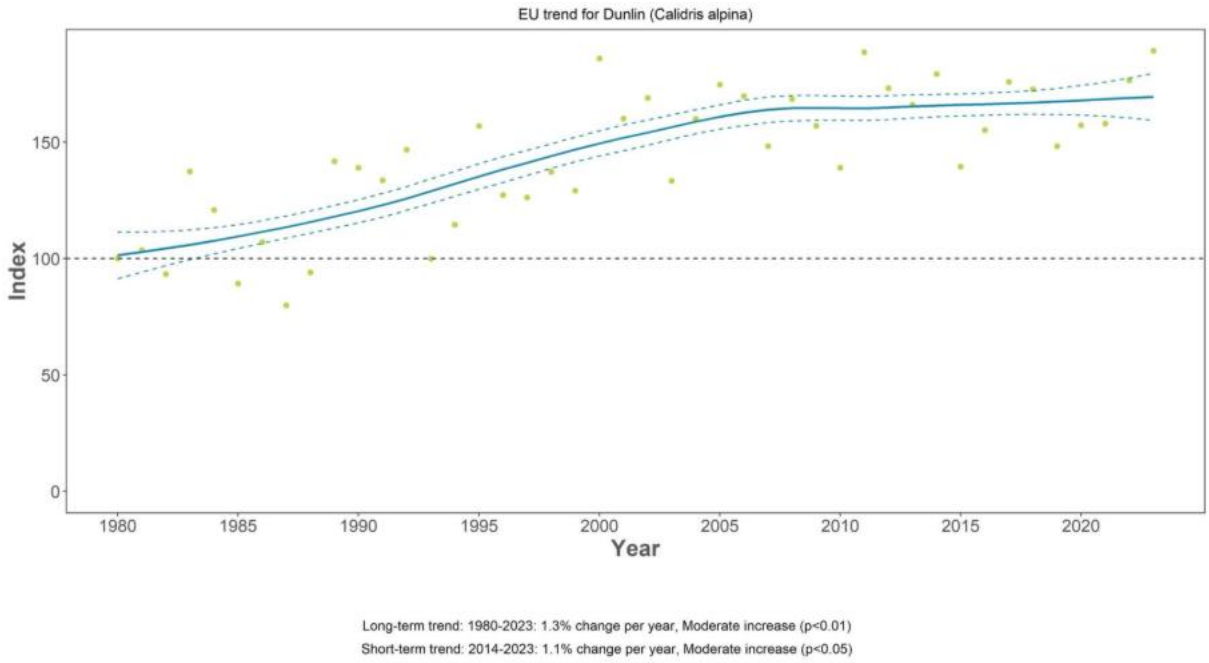

Figure 41. Trend of wintering Dunlins in the EU.

Dunlins wintering in the EU belong to the following populations: the nominate subspecies wintering mainly in Western Europe, the *centralis* subspecies wintering also in the Mediterranean basin, the Baltic breeding population of the *schinzii* subspecies wintering wintering in Western Europe, the Britain and Ireland breeding *schinzii* partly remaining in southwest Europe (Delany et al., 2009).

The combined trend of Dunlins wintering in the EU has increased by 1.3% per annum over the long term and by 1.1% annually over the last 10 years (Figure 41). In 2024, the species was listed as Near Threatened mainly because of the declines in the American populations, but *schinzii* populations in Europe are also declining or depleted. No clear geographic pattern can be observed in the national trends.

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