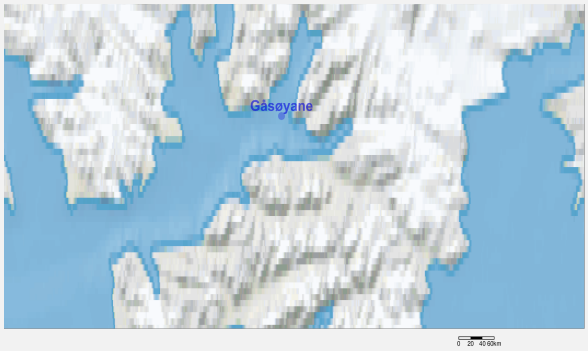
Ramsar Information Sheet

Published on 23 June 2023
Update version, previously published on : 21 December 2017

Norway

Gåsøyane



Designation date	24 July 1985
Site number	317
Coordinates	78°27'16"N 16°13'02"E
Area	236,00 ha

Color codes

Fields back-shaded in light blue relate to data and information required only for RIS updates.

Note that some fields concerning aspects of Part 3, the Ecological Character Description of the RIS (tinted in purple), are not expected to be completed as part of a standard RIS, but are included for completeness so as to provide the requested consistency between the RIS and the format of a 'full' Ecological Character Description, as adopted in Resolution X.15 (2008). If a Contracting Party does have information available that is relevant to these fields (for example from a national format Ecological Character Description) it may, if it wishes to, include information in these additional fields.

1 - Summary

Summary

Gåsøyane is located in the Svalbard archipelago in the inner part of Isfjorden. The site includes two separate small islands, where the western island is covered with rich, grassy vegetation, and small freshwater ponds. The eastern island supports less-developed vegetation. The surrounding sea is shallow, and the shoreline around the islands consists partly of cliffs and partly of sandy shores. The site is among the more important localities on Spitsbergen for the nesting barnacle goose (Branta leucopsis) and the common eider (Somateria mollissima) . Polar bears (Ursus maritimus) regularly visit the site. In addition, there is approximately 1000 pairs of the Atlantic puffin (Fratercula arctica, IUCN: VU) breeding here. Apart from the occasionally permitted traditional collection of eider down and eggs, human activities are restricted to research and monitoring.

2 - Data & location

2.1 - Formal data

2.1.1 - Name and address of the compiler of this RIS

Responsible compiler

Institution/agency	Norwegian Environment Agency
Postal address	Post box 5672 Torgarden, N-7485 Trondheim, Norway

National Ramsar Administrative Authority

Postal address	Postboks 5672 Sluppen Trondheim Norway

2.1.2 - Period of collection of data and information used to compile the RIS

From year	1984
To year	2021

2.1.3 - Name of the Ramsar Site

Official name (in English, French or Spanish)	Gåsøyane

2.1.4 - Changes to the boundaries and area of the Site since its designation or earlier update

(Update) A. Changes to Site boundary	Yes ○ No ◉
(Update) B. Changes to Site area	No change to area
(Update) For secretariat only: This update is an extension	☐

2.1.5 - Changes to the ecological character of the Site

(Update) 6b i. Has the ecological character of the Ramsar Site (including applicable Criteria) changed since the previous RIS?	No

2.2 - Site location

2.2.1 - Defining the Site boundaries

b) Digital map/image
<1 file(s) uploaded>

Former maps	0

Boundaries description

The boundary is the same as the Gåsøyane Nature Reserve established July 1th 1973.

The site is composed of two separate islands. Sea areas in a distance of 300 m from the islands at lowest tide are enclosed in the site.

2.2.2 - General location

a) In which large administrative region does the site lie?	Svalbard
b) What is the nearest town or population centre?	Longyearbyen, approx pop. est. 2 300 (2019)

2.2.3 - For wetlands on national boundaries only

a) Does the wetland extend onto the territory of one or more other countries?	Yes ○ No ◉
b) Is the site adjacent to another designated Ramsar Site on the territory of another Contracting Party?	Yes ○ No ◉

2.2.4 - Area of the Site

Official area, in hectares (ha): 236

Area, in hectares (ha) as calculated from GIS boundaries: 236.565

2.2.5 - Biogeography

Biogeographic regions

Regionalisation scheme(s)	Biogeographic region
Other scheme (provide name below)	1. MATZ – middle arctic tundra zone
EU biogeographic regionalization	2. Arctic

Other biogeographic regionalisation scheme

1. Zonal division based on the distribution of thermophilius vascular plant species. Vascular plants abundant on Svalbard are divided into five groups based on temperature demands and the distribution of these groups of species have been surveyed in 163 areas (In: Elvebakk, A. (1997): Tundra diversity and ecological characteristics of Svalbard. In: Wiegolaski, F.E. (ed.): Polar and alpine tundra. Ecosystems of the world 3: 347-359. Elsevier.

2. Biogeographical regions, Europe 2005, European Environment Agency, (http://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/biogeographical-regions-europe-2005-with-national- boundaries)

3 - Why is the Site important?

3.1 - Ramsar Criteria and their justification

<no data available>

☑ Criterion 2 : Rare species and threatened ecological communities

Optional text box to provide further information: The area hosts threatened species such as the Polar bear (NRL 2021: VU), which regularly visits the site. Additionally, it is a breeding site for approximately 1000 pairs of the Atlantic puffin (IUCN: VU).

☑ Criterion 3 : Biological diversity

Justification: This group of islands are traditional breeding sites for Brent geese, Barnacle geese, Pink-footed geese and Common eiders. Such species are characteristic for this kind of archipelago in this biogeographic region.

☑ Criterion 4 : Support during critical life cycle stage or in adverse conditions

Optional text box to provide further information: The area is among the more important localities on Spitsbergen for nesting Barnacle geese and Common eider.

☑ Criterion 6 : >1% waterbird population

Optional text box to provide further information: This site host 2.6% of the Barnacle goose population for this biogeographic region (Svalbard/South-west Scotland) and 3.0% of the Common eider population (Svalbard & Franz Joseph (bre)). These estimates are based on bird counts from 1996. As there is little research activity at the site and accessibiliy is difficult, more recent counts than this does not exists. However, it is assumed that the ecological community have not changed much in the time period.

3.2 - Plant species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

<no data available>

3.3 - Animal species whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

Phylum	Scientific name	Species qualifies under criterion				Species contributes under criterion				Pop. Size	Period of pop. Est.	% occurrence 1)	IUCN Red List	CITES Appendix I	CMS Appendix I	Other Status	Justification
		2	4	6	9	3	5	7	8								
Others																	
CHORDATA / MAMMALIA	*Ursus maritimus*	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐				VU	☐	☐	Svalbard Red List: Considered as VU	
Birds																	
CHORDATA / AVES	*Anser brachyrhynchus*	☐	☑	☐	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	46	1996		LC	☐	☐		23 pairs (1996). No population estimates exist for more recent years. Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species
CHORDATA / AVES	*Branta bernicla hrota*	☐	☑	☐	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐					☐	☐	Svalbard Red List: Considered as NT	Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species. Breeding occationally in small numbers.
CHORDATA / AVES	*Branta leucopsis*	☐	☑	☑	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	1400	2011	4	LC	☐	☐		Observed min. 1400 individuals breeding in the area in year 2011. Estimates from later years does not exist for this area. Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species Criterion 6: Biogeographic Region - Svalbard/South-West Scotland
CHORDATA / AVES	*Cepphus grylle*	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	60			LC	☐	☐		60 ind. (2011) Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species
CHORDATA / AVES	*Fratercula arctica*	☑	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	2000			VU	☐	☐		Approximately 1000 breeding pairs. Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species
CHORDATA / AVES	*Larus hyperboreus*	☑	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	12	2021		LC	☐	☐	Svalbard Red List: Considered as VU	6 pairs (2021) Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species
CHORDATA / AVES	*Larus marinus*	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐				LC	☐	☐		Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species
CHORDATA / AVES	*Phalaropus fulicarius*	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	6			LC	☐	☐		Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species
CHORDATA / AVES	*Somateria mollissima*	☐	☑	☑	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	1700	1996	3	NT	☐	☐		800-900 pairs, with 912 males registered (1996). No estimates for later years. Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species Criterion 6: Biogeographic Region - borealis, Svalbard & Franz Joseph (bre)
CHORDATA / AVES	*Stercorarius skua*	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	6				☐	☐		1-5 pairs Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species
CHORDATA / AVES	*Sterna paradisaea*	☐	☑	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐				LC	☐	☐		Criterion 4: The archipelago provides breeding sites for this species

1) Percentage of the total biogeographic population at the site

Capitalized letters shows the species' status on the Svalbard Red List 2021.

3.4 - Ecological communities whose presence relates to the international importance of the site

<no data available>

4 - What is the Site like? (Ecological character description)

4.1 - Ecological character

Situated in the Arctic and characterized by:
• Group of islands in the fjord with rock or sand/gravel dominated shores.
• No or sparse grass vegetation and some small ponds. All vegetation on the islands are influenced by seawater.
• The islands are normally icebound during winter and spring.

4.2 - What wetland type(s) are in the site?

Marine or coastal wetlands

Wetland types (code and name)	Local name	Ranking of extent (1: greatest - 4: least)	Area (ha) of wetland type	Justification of Criterion 1
A: Permanent shallow marine waters		1		
D: Rocky marine shores		2		
E: Sand, shingle or pebble shores		3		

4.3 - Biological components

4.3.1 - Plant species

Other noteworthy plant species

Phylum	Scientific name	Position in range / endemism / other
TRACHEOPHYTA/LILIOPSIDA	*Puccinellia vahliana*	Svalbard Red List: Considered as VU

Optional text box to provide further information

Capitalized letters shows the species' status on the Svalbard Red List 2021.

4.3.2 - Animal species

<no data available>

4.4 - Physical components

4.4.1 - Climate

Climatic region	Subregion
E: Polar climate with extremely cold winters and summers	ET: Tundra (Polar tundra, no true summer)

The climate is characterised by low temperatures and low precipitation. Average temperature is 5,9°C in July. Annual average temperature is -6,7°C and annual precipitation is 190 mm. All fresh water on the islands originates from precipitation.

4.4.2 - Geomorphic setting

a) Minimum elevation above sea level (in metres): 0

a) Maximum elevation above sea level (in metres): 4

- [ ] Entire river basin
- [ ] Upper part of river basin
- [ ] Middle part of river basin
- [x] Lower part of river basin
- [ ] More than one river basin
- [ ] Not in river basin
- [x] Coastal

Please name the river basin or basins. If the site lies in a sub-basin, please also name the larger river basin. For a coastal/marine site, please name the sea or ocean.

The islands consist of dolerite from the Jurassic-Cretaceous age. The surrounding sea areas are shallow. The shoreline around the islands consists partly of cliffs and partly of sandy shores. The islands are partly covered with vegetation and have a some small ponds. Middle tidal amplitude is approx. 1,5 m (Longyearbyen harbour).

4.4.3 - Soil

Mineral ☑

(Update) Changes at RIS update: No change ◉ Increase ○ Decrease ○ Unknown ○

No available information ☐

Are soil types subject to change as a result of changing hydrological conditions (e.g., increased salinity or acidification)? Yes ○ No ◉

Please provide further information on the soil (optional)

The land areas consist of bare rock and some areas covered with marine deposits.

4.4.4 - Water regime

Water permanence

Presence?	Changes at RIS update
Usually permanent water present	

Source of water that maintains character of the site

Presence?	Predominant water source	Changes at RIS update
Marine water	☐	No change

Please add any comments on the water regime and its determinants (if relevant). Use this box to explain sites with complex hydrology:

All fresh water on the islands originates from precipitation.

4.4.5 - Sediment regime

Sediment regime unknown ☑

Please provide further information on sediment (optional):

Natural erosion processes occur on sandy shores and hard rock shoreline due to a very harsh climate with waves and sea ice. The site has some value for shoreline stabilization.

4.4.6 - Water pH

Unknown ☑

4.4.7 - Water salinity

Euhaline/Eusaline (30-40 g/l) ☑

(Update) Changes at RIS update: No change ◉ Increase ○ Decrease ○ Unknown ○

Unknown ☐

4.4.8 - Dissolved or suspended nutrients in water

Unknown ☑

4.4.9 - Features of the surrounding area which may affect the Site

Please describe whether, and if so how, the landscape and ecological characteristics in the area surrounding the Ramsar Site differ from the site itself: i) broadly similar ○ ii) significantly different ◉

Surrounding area has greater urbanisation or development ☐

Surrounding area has higher human population density ☐

Surrounding area has more intensive agricultural use ☐

Surrounding area has significantly different land cover or habitat types ☑

Please describe other ways in which the surrounding area is different:

Shallow marine waters mostly less than six metres deep at low tide, includes sea bays and straits. There is also some deeper areas.

Ships and smaller boats passing, also in the narrow strait between the islands and the mainland.

4.5 - Ecosystem services

4.5.1 - Ecosystem services/benefits

Provisioning Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Wetland non-food products	Reeds and fibre	Medium

Regulating Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Hazard reduction	Coastal shoreline and river bank stabilization and storm protection	Medium

Cultural Services

Ecosystem service	Examples	Importance/Extent/Significance
Spiritual and inspirational	Cultural heritage (historical and archaeological)	Medium
Scientific and educational	Major scientific study site	Medium
Scientific and educational	Important knowledge systems, importance for research (scientific reference area or site)	Medium

Other ecosystem service(s) not included above:

Within the Ramsar site:
Trappers living in the Isfjorden area have occasionally been given permission to collect eider down after nesting birds have left the islands. Harvest of eggs and eider down has been performed with various intensity in Svalbard from the 18th century and until today. Trappers using this part of Isfjorden as hunting grounds have collected eggs and eider down also in this archipelago in the past.
There is no use of the Ramsar site for recreation/tourism. The regulations for the nature reserve ban visits from May 15th to August 15th because of the birds breeding season.

In the surroundings/catchment:
Ships and smaller boats passing, also in the narrow strait between the islands and the mainland.

Have studies or assessments been made of the economic valuation of ecosystem services provided by this Ramsar Site? Yes ○ No ○ Unknown ◉

4.5.2 - Social and cultural values

i) the site provides a model of wetland wise use, demonstrating the application of traditional knowledge and methods of management and use that maintain the ecological character of the wetland ☐

ii) the site has exceptional cultural traditions or records of former civilizations that have influenced the ecological character of the wetland ☐

iii) the ecological character of the wetland depends on its interaction with local communities or indigenous peoples ☐

iv) relevant non-material values such as sacred sites are present and their existence is strongly linked with the maintenance of the ecological character of the wetland ☐

<no data available>

4.6 - Ecological processes

(ECD) Nutrient cycling: Vegetation infuenced by bird guano

5 - How is the Site managed? (Conservation and management)

5.1 - Land tenure and responsibilities (Managers)

5.1.1 - Land tenure/ownership

Public ownership

Category	Within the Ramsar Site	In the surrounding area
National/Federal government	☑	☑

5.1.2 - Management authority

Please list the local office / offices of any agency or organization responsible for managing the site: Governor of Svalbard

Postal address: Governor of Svalbard
Pb. 633
N-9171 LONGYEARBYEN.

E-mail address: firmapost@sysselmesteren.no

5.2 - Ecological character threats and responses (Management)

5.2.1 - Factors (actual or likely) adversely affecting the Site's ecological character

Human intrusions and disturbance

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Recreational and tourism activities		Medium impact	☐	No change	☑	No change

Pollution

Factors adversely affecting site	Actual threat	Potential threat	Within the site	Changes	In the surrounding area	Changes
Unspecified		Medium impact	☐	No change	☑	No change
Industrial and military effluents		Medium impact	☐	No change	☑	No change

Please describe any other threats (optional):

Within the Ramsar site:
Harvest of eggs and eider down are performed with various intensity. The harvest is strictly regulated and is not considered to have negative impact to the population of eider.

In the surrounding area:
Increasing tourism and oil spill from ships is a possible threat.

5.2.2 - Legal conservation status

National legal designations

Designation type	Name of area	Online information url	Overlap with Ramsar Site
National Park	Sassen-Bünsow National Park		partly
Nature Reserve			whole

5.2.3 - IUCN protected areas categories (2008)

Ia Strict Nature Reserve ☑

Ib Wilderness Area: protected area managed mainly for wilderness protection ☐

II National Park: protected area managed mainly for ecosystem protection and recreation ☑

III Natural Monument: protected area managed mainly for conservation of specific natural features ☐

IV Habitat/Species Management Area: protected area managed mainly for conservation through management intervention ☐

V Protected Landscape/Seascape: protected area managed mainly for landscape/seascape conservation and recreation ☐

VI Managed Resource Protected Area: protected area managed mainly for the sustainable use of natural ecosystems ☐

5.2.4 - Key conservation measures

Legal protection

Measures	Status
Legal protection	Implemented

Other:

There is an ambition to present a management plan in near future.

5.2.5 - Management planning

Is there a site-specific management plan for the site? No

Has a management effectiveness assessment been undertaken for the site? Yes ○ No ◉

If the site is a formal transboundary site as indicated in section Data and location > Site location, are there shared management planning processes with another Contracting Party? Yes ○ No ◉

Please indicate if a Ramsar centre, other educational or visitor facility, or an educational or visitor programme is associated with the site:

No such activities have been conducted, mainly because of the remoteness of the area and difficult access.

5.2.6 - Planning for restoration

Is there a site-specific restoration plan? No need identified

5.2.7 - Monitoring implemented or proposed

Some research and biodiversity monitoring have been conducted in the area. No field research stations in this part of Svalbard.

6 - Additional material

6.1 - Additional reports and documents

6.1.1 - Bibliographical references

Artsdatabanken (2021, 24. november). Norsk rødliste for arter 2021. https://www.artsdatabanken.no/lister/rodlisteforarter/2021/

Bangjord, G., 1996, Pattedyr- og fugleregistreringer på Svalbard i 1996. Norsk polarinstitutt 1996.

Prestrud, P. and Børset, A. 1984. Status of the goose populations in the bird sanctuaries in Svalbard.
Norsk Polarinsitutt Skr. 181: 129-133.

Prestrud, P. and Mehlum, F. 1991: Population size and summer distribution of the Common Eider Somateria melissima in Svalbard 1981-1985. Norsk Polarinsitutt Skrifter 195. 9-20.

The Governor of Svalbard – unpublished material from surveys in 1987 and 1992.

6.1.2 - Additional reports and documents

i. taxonomic lists of plant and animal species occurring in the site (see section 4.3)
<no file available>

ii. a detailed Ecological Character Description (ECD) (in a national format)
<no file available>

iii. a description of the site in a national or regional wetland inventory
<no file available>

iv. relevant Article 3.2 reports
<no file available>

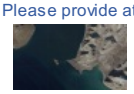
v. site management plan
<no file available>

vi. other published literature
<no file available>

<no data available>

6.1.3 - Photograph(s) of the Site

Please provide at least one photograph of the site:



Aerial view of Gåsøyane (
Norwegian Polar Institute, 26-10-2017
)

6.1.4 - Designation letter and related data

Designation letter
<1 file(s) uploaded>

Date of Designation: 1985-07-24