

Location



Introduction

The Kingdom of Norway is situated on the western side of the Scandinavian Peninsula, is bordered by the North Atlantic Ocean and Norwegian Sea to the west, the Arctic Ocean/Barents Sea to the north, Finland and Russia to the northeast, Sweden to the east and the North Sea to the south and west. The country's northern most region, the Svalbard Archipelago, lies within the Arctic Circle, close to the North Pole. The island of Jan Mayen is situated in the North Atlantic near Greenland.

The country's approximately 92,400 km of coastline includes some 83,300 km along the mainland, 9,000 km surrounding the Svalbard Archipelago, and another 120 km surrounding Jan Mayen. The coast is characterised by rocky mountainous land with numerous islands, peninsulas, skerries, and fjords.

Norway's climate varies. Along the west coast, the Gulf Stream tempers the winter cold but keeps the weather cool in summer and provides significant rain throughout the year. The north coast has a subpolar oceanic climate. Polar winds there can be very strong in winter and spring. On the east coast within the fjords, temperatures are much colder and many freeze during the winter. The southeast coast is drier with colder winters and warmer summers.

Norway claims the Queen Maud Land and its continental shelf in Antarctica and maintains an ongoing dispute with Russia over maritime limits in the Barents Sea and Russia's fishing rights within the Svalbard Treaty Zone. Norway and Denmark (Greenland) have made submissions to the UNCLOS's Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf which may impact offshore areas.

Regional Seas and Biogeography

North Atlantic Ocean
Arctic Ocean/Barents Sea
Norwegian Sea
North Sea/Kattegat Sea/Skagerrak Strait

LMEs:

- Barents Sea
- Norwegian sea
- North Sea.

Habitats

The Norwegian coast is characterised by numerous fjords and deep bays, islands and archipelagos and steep rocky cliffs.

- *Seagrasses* are found in the largest concentration along the central Atlantic and southern coasts, with a more sporadic distribution along southwest coast.
- *Cold-water corals* are evenly distributed along the west coast and sporadic on the north coast, with another area of concentration in the waters near Oslo.
- *Saltmarshes* are rare on the Norwegian coast, with the greatest concentration near Trondheim and a few more sparsely distributed on the north coast
- *Kelp beds* are found along much of the coast.

Biodiversity Hotspots

Norway's coast is largely protected through a series of national parks, national reserves, Ramsar sites, and bird sanctuaries. More than half of Svalbard's land is protected with seven national parks and 22 special protected areas, much of which is coastal or marine area hosting a great number of marine and coastal species. Below are some of the protected sites of significant value to marine wildlife.

→ Ramsar sites

Norway hosts 63 Ramsar sites, many of them located on the west coast, covering much of the offshore islands and fjords of that region. Below are some key coastal sites.

Sorkapp, at the southern tip of Spitsbergen, includes islands, ponds and lakes, streams and small rivers. The site hosts migratory waterbirds including geese, waders, seabirds and Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula Hyemalis*, VU). 19 Species of mammals including Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*, V), Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*, V) and Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*), may be found here.

Froan Nature Reserve and Landscape Protection Area (also an IBA) consists of hundreds of islands, skerries, and shallow marine waters in the outermost coastal zone. It is an important site for wintering, moulting and breeding birds, including Long-tailed Duck (*Clangula Hyemalis*, VU) and Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*, V). The site has, however, become a victim of ocean plastics carried on currents. Efforts are on-going to control this problem.

Orland Wetland System is made up of four separate areas forming part of a large system of shallow marine waters, intertidal zones and mudflats. Its location on the East Atlantic Flyway, it is the most important wetland system in central Norway for resting and feeding migratory waterbirds, particularly ducks and waders. Harbour Seals (*Phoca vitulina*) are regular visitors.

Sandblåst-/Gaustadvågen Nature Reserve is a well-developed estuary where three small rivers converge, forming a system of sheltered brackish lagoons and extensive intertidal mudflats with wet meadows. Salinity varies from freshwater to brackish and finally salt water. A total of 250 different bird species have been recorded. The high biological production, extensive beds of aquatic vegetation, and invertebrate populations support large numbers of migrating birds and numerous wintering swans, geese, ducks and waders. Particularly high numbers of birds gather here during the autumn migration, with regular counts of several hundred whooper swans and various ducks and waders. Several waterbird species as well as the Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) breed at the site.

Runde consists of several protected areas on the island of Runde, the neighbouring islands Skjervøya and Grasøya and surrounding islets, which support nationally endangered bird species such as the Black-legged Kittiwake (VU) and the Common Murre (*Uria aalge*). Runde regularly supports more than 120,000 breeding pairs of cliff-nesting birds. The vegetation on the hillsides and the plateau of Runde is dominated by open heathland, small freshwater ponds and grassland, as well as mires which are important nesting sites for species such as the Great Skua (*Cartharacta skua*).

Øra is an extensive estuarine area at the mouth of Norway's largest river, Glomma, characterized by shallow areas of brackish water with numerous small islands and skerries surrounded by sediments deposited by the river. It is an important area for nesting, passage, moulting and wintering waterbirds, including swans and large numbers of ducks in autumn. In total, around 250 bird species have been recorded in the area, with 90 known to have bred.

Mellandsvågen is a system of intertidal shallow waters, including a sheltered bay (*Mellandsvågen*) and mussel and seaweed beds; extensive mudflats; salt marshes, wet meadows and mires; and rocky outcrops bordering a 1,000-hectare wildlife protection area. The Site's location makes it important for migrating birds, in particular geese, ducks and waders that feed, rest, moult or winter there. Various nationally threatened species are present, such as Atlantic Puffin (VU) and Velvet Scoter (VU).

Nordenskiöldkysten consists of a coastal plain with many freshwater pools and, in its south-eastern part, Ingeborgfjellet, a mountain with steep cliffs harbouring breeding seabird colonies. During the breeding season some 55,000 Little Auks (*Alle alle*), 21,600 Thick-billed Murres (*Uria lomvia*) and 6,000 Black-legged Kittiwakes (VU) nest there. The Site is also an important staging, moulting, feeding and resting area during the migration seasons. The Site also supports more than 13% (4,000 mature individuals) of the Svalbard population of Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*). It is important for mammals such as Reindeer (VU) and Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*), and is visited by Polar Bears (VU), as well as seals and Atlantic Walrus (VU).

Hopen is an arctic island, mostly covered by rocks and continuous permafrost, with a very narrow beach from which the landscape rises sharply. In the north of the island there are steep cliffs with horizontal shelves which are ideal for breeding seabird species, including Atlantic Puffin (VU). The Site also supports 40,000 breeding pairs of the Black-legged Kittiwake (VU), over 1% of the breeding population. Polar Bears (VU) use the site for denning and migration, and the shallow waters surrounding Hopen (which make up most of the Ramsar Site) are important for Atlantic Walrus (VU), with the south of the island being a traditional resting place for the species.

Måstadjellet, situated on the southern part of Værøy Island between the Lofotodden peninsula and Røst Island, is an important breeding area for pelagic seabirds. It supports large colonies of nationally red-listed species such as the Atlantic Puffin (VU) and the Black-legged Kittiwake (VU). The western part of the site is a steep area rising from the sea up to a mountain plateau at 400m; it is covered by rich vegetation due to the nutrients

brought by the large colonies of seabirds. Vital populations of Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*), Mew Gull (*Larus canus*), Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis*) and Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) are found, while Harbour Seal (*Phoca vitulina*) and Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) occasionally visit.

Risøysundet consists of shallow marine areas within a complex of flat grassy islets, lagoons and brackish swamps. In the west, there is a 15-hectare lake surrounded by a large beach meadow complex. There are also exposed bays, isolated freshwater ponds, sheltered salt marshes and exposed seaweed meadows. The site supports one of the few, intact large mud/sand flats in northern Norway. Many waterbirds depend on these rich areas for food and rest during their spring and autumn migration. More than 50 species of waterfowl have been recorded here, mainly ducks and waders, with some species reaching several thousand individuals. The site is a particularly important staging area for Pink-footed Geese (*Anser brachyrhynchus*) during their spring migration. It is also an important breeding site. The Site regularly supports a stable population of the European Otter (*Lutra lutra*).

Stabbursneset is a part of a river delta including shallow marine waters, sandbanks which are exposed at low tide, saltmarshes and wet mires, as well as large well-developed salt meadows. The Valdak marshes at the southern end of the Site are internationally important staging, feeding and moulting areas for several species of waterfowl. Many migrating species of ducks, geese and waders stage here, and it is the most important staging site in northern Europe for the Lesser White-fronted Goose (VU). The most numerous bird species at the site are the Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*) (up to 20,000 individuals) and the Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*) (up to 5,600 individuals).

Bear Island, locally known as Bjørnøya, is an isolated island situated halfway between the Svalbard archipelago and the Norwegian mainland. The Site, which also covers the surrounding waters, is one of Europe's few remaining intact ecosystems. The northern and western parts of the island are covered with lakes and small ponds, and the south and east are dominated by tall mountain formations and some steep sea cliffs. 126 different bird species have been observed, of which 33 breed on the Site. The seabird colonies in southern Bjørnøya are among the largest in the northern hemisphere: it is estimated that over one million seabirds gather here during the breeding season. The site supports over 1% of a population of the Black-legged Kittiwake (VU), with an estimated 135,000 breeding pairs. It is also an important resting and foraging site for migrating birds such as Pink-footed Geese (*Anser branchyrhynchus*), Barnacle Geese (*Branta leucopsis*) and Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla*).

→ **National Parks**

Faerder National Park (a Marine National Park), includes some islands and coastal areas as well as open waters. Seabirds, whales, seals are present throughout the park.

Forlandet National Park, on the Svalbard Archipelago, which includes an IBA/Ramsar Site (*Forlandsoyane Bird Sanctuary*), is located in the Svalbard Archipelago. The site hosts important populations of geese and seabirds, as well as Polar Bear (V), Atlantic Walrus (V) and fifteen species of seals and cetaceans.

Jomfruland Marine National Park hosts one of the widest varieties of birds species in Norway and mairne mammals are be found in its waters.

Raet National Park, also on the south coast, includes a marine protected area hosting breeding seabirds and other marine and coastal wildlife.

Seiland National Park, located on the northwest coast, hosts many species of seabirds, raptors and waders, as well as Reindeer (VU).

→ **IBAs**

There are 80 IBAs listed for Norway, at least one-third of which are coastal and cover much of the country's coastline, however details on species and habitat are not provided in most cases. Some are within other types of protected areas.

At risk Wildlife

In this section, some individual wildlife species are mentioned followed by a letter in parentheses. These are species included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species within the top three categories of risk - Vulnerable to extinction (VU), Endangered (EN) or Critically Endangered (CR). A more complete list of IUCN listed species is found in Appendix 1.

→ **At risk birds**

Norway is situated on the East Atlantic Flyway, and hosts internationally important breeding populations of auks,

divers cormorants and sea ducks. The largest colonies are found in the northern half of the country, however, Runde Bird Island off of Alesund in the south, hosts more than 500,000 birds during nesting season. The marine and coastal areas of Norway are among the world's most nourishing habitats for birds, especially in the north where bird life is particularly rich and diverse. Offshore islands, coastal cliffs and shorelines are important nesting sites for a number of species. Eleven IUCN listed Vulnerable species are found in coastal or nearshore areas.

➔ **At risk reptiles**

There are no marine reptiles in Norway.

➔ **At risk mammals**

There are sixteen species of cetacean found in Norwegian waters, of which four are IUCN listed as Endangered or Vulnerable. Of the seven species of pinniped in Norway, three are IUCN listed as Vulnerable. In addition, Eurasian Otter (*Lutra lutra*) and Arctic Fox (*Vulpes lagopus*) forage along the shoreline in many places, putting them at risk of oiling. Reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus*, V) may be at risk while migrating between islands and across fjords or foraging nearshore.

Past experience with oil spill and potential risks

Between 2004 and 2011, Norway experienced quite a few spills impacting wildlife, including the *Rockness* (2004), *Glomma* (2006), *Server* (2007), *Statfjord* (2007), *Full City* (2009) and *Godafoss* (2011).

An international response was launched after the *Server* and *Full City* spills, with experienced personnel from Belgium, Germany, and the UK providing assistance to Norwegian government agencies and NGOs. Thirty-four avian species were affected by the *Server* spill and 181 birds were brought into a temporary wildlife hospital, of which 96 were rehabilitated and released.

In both cases, delays in setting up the response reduced the numbers of animals rescued and released. Extreme cold and ice hampered efforts to respond when the *Godafoss* ran aground in winter. A small number of swans were rescued and rehabilitated but the majority of affected birds found were euthanised.

A few larger offshore spills have occurred during white-out conditions, preventing any response or impact assessment from taking place at all.

Both shipping and offshore petroleum activities create risks for this region and the harsh climate and rugged shoreline often makes response difficult.

International and Regional Treaties and Agreements

➔ **Oil spill and HNS Response**

d CLC Convention 69

CLC Protocol 76

CLC Protocol 92

FUND Protocol 76

FUND Protocol 92

FUND Protocol 2003

d LLMC Convention 76

LLMC Protocol 96

OPRC Convention 90

HNS Convention 96

HNS PROT 2010

OPRC_HNS 2000

BUNKERS CONVENTION 01

➔ **Marine Biodiversity Protection**

- Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response in the Arctic (MOSPA)
- Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA)
- Bonn Agreement for Cooperation in dealing with pollution of the North Sea by oil and other harmful substances
- Copenhagen Agreement
- North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission

Oil Spill Response and HNS Spill Response

→ National Contingency Plan?

Under the Pollution Control Act (1981) the Norwegian Coastal Administration (NCA), in cooperation with the Royal Norwegian Navy (Kystvakten), has primary responsibility for responding to oil spills. The NCA has some response expertise and equipment, including booms, skimmers and vessels, and can also utilise Coast Guard resources if available.

However, responsibilities are divided into private, municipal and governmental contingency areas with the Norwegian Environment Agency overseeing all contingency plans and the NCA coordinating integrated response.

→ Role of Competent National Authorities

The 430 coastal municipalities are divided into 34 intermunicipal preparedness areas, each with its own approved contingency plan, including sensitivity maps.

In addition, private companies, especially the oil and gas industry, also have responsibilities for response preparedness. All companies active in the Norwegian offshore oil and gas sector are members of the Norwegian Clean Seas Association for Operating Companies (NOFO), through which they cooperate to meet the government's requirements.

The North Atlantic Sensitivity and Response Map (NASARM), developed with Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands will guide large response and prevention activities based on knowledge of natural areas at risk, types of risk present and location of response personnel and equipment.

Oiled Wildlife Preparedness and Response**→ Formal guidelines?**

There are no formal guidelines for oiled wildlife response and, at present, rescue and rehabilitation organisations may only get permission in the case of single animals.

→ Response objectives and strategy

Individual animals may be rescued, however, at this time, Norway does not allow larger responses to occur, as there is some concern that response to wildlife is not effective.

→ Euthanasia or rehabilitation?

Neither rescue and rehabilitation nor euthanasia, except on an individual animal basis, is allowed.

→ Impact assessment

The Norwegian Environment Agency (NEA) would likely lead any impact assessment. The Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), the Norwegian Food Safety Authority and the Norsk Natur Informasjon (NNI) may be called on to assist.

→ Notification and early response

The NCA would notify the NEA which would oversee any wildlife activities.

→ Wildlife responders

At this time there are few organisations involved in wildlife conservation in Norway. In addition to NNI, Norges Naturvernforbund (Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature/Friends of the Earth Norway) remains active but is focused on conservation.

→ Cooperation between stakeholders

During the Server and Godafoss responses there was good cooperation among the responders.

→ Permanent facilities

There are no permanent facilities for wildlife rehabilitation in Norway.

→ Current processes

Efforts are being made to engage relevant government agencies in discussions regarding appropriate oiled wildlife response.

Documentation and references

ITOPF Country Profile 2018: <https://www.itopf.org/knowledge-resources/countries-territories-regions/norway/>
Sea Alarm Country Wildlife Profile 2010: <https://www.sea-alarm.org/publications/country-wildlife-response-profiles/>
Ramsar: <https://www.ramsar.org/wetland/norway>
Birdlife Datazone: <http://datazone.birdlife.org/country>
Norwegian National Parks: <https://www.visitnorway.com/things-to-do/nature-attractions/national-parks>
Coastline length: <https://www.citypopulation.de/en/world/bymap/coastlines/>
Norway Climate: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Norway/Climate>
UNCLOS Convention on the Limits of the Continental Shelf: https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/clcs_home.htm
IUCN Red List of Threatened Species: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species>
Large Marine Ecosystem Hub: <https://www.lmehub.net>
CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/norway/#transnational-issues>
North Atlantic Sensitivity and Response Map: <https://vdocument.in/north-atlantic-sensitivity-and-response-map-nasarm-project-funded-by-the-nordic.html>
Pollution Control Act.1981: https://dsa.no/en/legislation/_attachment/download/a02a9488-0256-42da-b564-bb1a51161cfc:323fbbcd30579360c39ba3d492d634a2f52c56d5/Pollution%20Control%20Act%20-%20regjeringen.no.pdf
Marine and coastal birds impacted by tourism: <https://partner.sciencenorway.no/birds-forskningno-nature-conservation/tourists-cause-seabirds-to-abandon-nests/1405357>
Ocean Dataviewer: <https://data.unep-wcmc.org/datasets>
Norwegian Clean Seas Association for Operating Companies: <https://www.nofo.no/en/>
North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission: www.nammco.no

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Appendix 1

→ At risk birds

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Lesser White-fronted Goose / *Anser erythropus* / VU / Migratory (spring/summer) / Breeding/Nesting (summer)

Long-tailed Duck / *Clangula hyemalis* / VU / Resident / Breeding/Nesting (summer)

Steller's Eider / *Polysticta stelleri* / VU / Migratory (autumn/winter) / Non-breeding

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Velvet Scoter / *Melanitta fusca* / VU / Resident / Breeding/Nesting (summer)
Common Pochard / *Aythya ferina* / VU / Migratory (autumn/winter) / Non-breeding
Horned Grebe / *Podiceps auritus* / VU / Resident / Breeding/Nesting (summer)
Leach's Storm-petrel / *Hydrobates leucorhous* / VU / Resident / Breeding/Nesting (summer)
Black-legged Kittiwake / *Rissa tridactyla* / VU / Resident / Breeding/Nesting (summer)
Atlantic Puffin / *Fratuercula arctica* / VU / Resident / Breeding/Nesting (summer)
Snowy Owl / *Bubo scandiacus* / VU / Resident / Breeding/Nesting (summer) (Jan Mayen & Svalbard only)
Rustic Bunting / *Emberiza rustica* / VU / Migratory (winter) / Breeding/Nesting (summer)(Coastal wetland)

➔ **At risk reptiles**

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

There are no marine reptiles in Norwegian waters. / / / /

➔ **At risk mammals**

Common name / Latin name / IUCN Red List Category (CR,EN,VU) / Resident-Migratory (season) / Breeding-Nesting-Pupping (season)

Blue Whale / *Balaenoptera musculus* / EN / some resident/some migratory populations / Calving during warm seasons

Sei Whale / *Balaenoptera borealis* / EN / Migratory (seasonality not well documented) / Unknown

Atlantic Walrus / *Odobenus rosmarus* / VU / Vagrant in Arctic region / Non-breeding

Hooded Seal / *Cystophora cristata* / VU / Resident / Breeding/pupping (spring)

Fin Whale / *Balaenoptera physalus* / VU / Migratory (seasonality not well documented) / Unknown

Sperm Whale / *Physeter macrocephalus* / VU / Migratory (seasonality not well documented) / Unknown

Polar Bear / *Ursus maritimus* / VU / Migratory (varies) / Breeding (Mar-Jun)/pupping (Dec-Jan)

Reindeer / *Rangifer tarandus* / VU / Migratory (within country) / Breeding (Sept-Oct), calving (June)