



15th MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
09–11 April 2019, Bonn, Germany

DELINEATION OF BIOGEOGRAPHIC POPULATIONS OF THE LITTLE AUK
(*ALLE ALLE*)

PROPOSAL TO CHANGE POPULATION DELINEATIONS

Compiled by Szabolcs Nagy (representative of Wetlands International to the Technical Committee)

Name of population(s):

Alle alle alle (Little Auk), High Arctic, Baffin Is – Novaya Zemlya
Alle alle polaris (Little Auk), Franz Josef Land & Severnaya Zemlya

Current status on AEWA Table 1:

Alle alle alle: Category 1 of Column C,
Alle alle polaris: not yet listed on Table 1.

What is the issue?

[1] *Alle alle alle* is proposed to be split into two (possibly even more) populations:
[1a] East Atlantic (bre): Novaya Zemlya, Svalbard, Jan Mayen and East Greenland and;
[1b] West Atlantic: Baffin Island and in NW Greenland (bre).

The wintering ranges of these populations would overlap.

[2] *A. a. polaris* was not listed on AEWA Table 1 because only 20% of its range was thought to be in the Agreement area (see AEWA/MOP 3.16). However, this seems to be an erroneous assumption in the light of the latest treatment of the subspecies (see below).

The proposed delineations of the biogeographic populations are presented in **Error! Reference source not found.**

What is the evidence supporting the proposal?

[1] According to the Handbook of the Birds of the World ([HBW](#)) “Two principal migratory patterns are known: NW Greenland birds winter off Newfoundland; many from European Arctic winter off SW & (less frequently) SE Greenland, with a massive westerly movement past NW Russia in October and return in April, presumably of birds from Novaya Zemlya, possibly from Severnaya Zemlya”. These two migratory routes are also confirmed by geolocator studies ([Fort et al. 2013](#), [SEATRACK](#)). There is no evidence of exchange of individuals between the breeding colonies of W Greenland and the birds of E Greenland and further east ([EURING](#)).

[2] According to the [HBW](#) the breeding range includes Franz Josef Land and possibly this race occurs also in the region from Severnaya Zemlya to the Bering Sea with a clear gap in the Laptev Sea and further east that separates

western and eastern birds. According to the Birds of North America (BNA), however, the breeding range of this subspecies is restricted to Franz Jozef Land and perhaps Severnaya Zemlya and all birds in the Bering Strait are now thought to belong to the nominate race and numbers in the Bering Sea are tiny in comparison to Greenland and Europe. All breeding colonies of *A. a. polaris* are situated in the Agreement Area (see map in Wojczulanis-Jakubas et al. 2014). In addition, birds equipped with geolocators on Franz Josef Land, i.e. representing individuals that are assigned to *A. a. polaris*, also turned up in the Greenland Sea based on SEATRACK data **Error! Reference source not found.**), where the distribution of *A. a. polaris* has overlapped with *A. a. alle* from Bjornoya, Hornsund, Kongsfjorden and Isfjorden.

What are the implications of the proposal including any changes in status on AEWA Table 1?

[1a] *A. a. alle*, East Atlantic (bre): The population size on Svalbard is estimated at around 1,000,000 individuals (BirdLife International 2015). There might be 3.5 million (possibly exceeding 10 million) pairs in E Greenland (Kampp et al 1987), c. 50,000 pairs on Jan Mayen and c. 50,000 pairs on Novaya Zemlya (HBW). Trends are unknown (BirdLife International 2015). Therefore, the population should be listed in Category 1 of Column C.

[1b] *A. a. alle*, Baffin Island, NW Greenland (bre): This population is estimated at 8,000,000 – 80,000,000 individuals (BirdLife International 2015). From this about 1,000 pairs are estimated to breed in North America and 15-20 million pairs in NW Greenland (BNA). The population trend is unknown (BNA). Therefore, the population should be listed in Category 1 of Column C. As *Alle alle alle* was listed in Category 1 of Column C, the split will not lead to a change in status on AEWA Table 1.

[2] *A. a. polaris*, Franz Josef Land & Severnaya Zemlya (bre) – As outlined above, the entire breeding population does occur within the AEWA Agreement area, which warrants listing this population on Table 1 of the Agreement.

The population breeding on Franz Josef Land is estimated over 500,000 pairs (Strom et al. 2016) and 10,000 – 80,000 pairs on Severnaya Zemlya (de Korte et al. 1995). Thus, the population size exceeds the threshold of 100,000 individuals. The population trend is unknown. Therefore, the population should be listed in Category 1 of Column C.

Figure 1. Proposed delineation of the populations of *A. alle* in the Agreement area. (Note: the range map produced by BirdLife International is only to provide a backdrop for the flyway delineation. It will require update at a later stage to incorporate the correction proposed by experts during the consultation process).

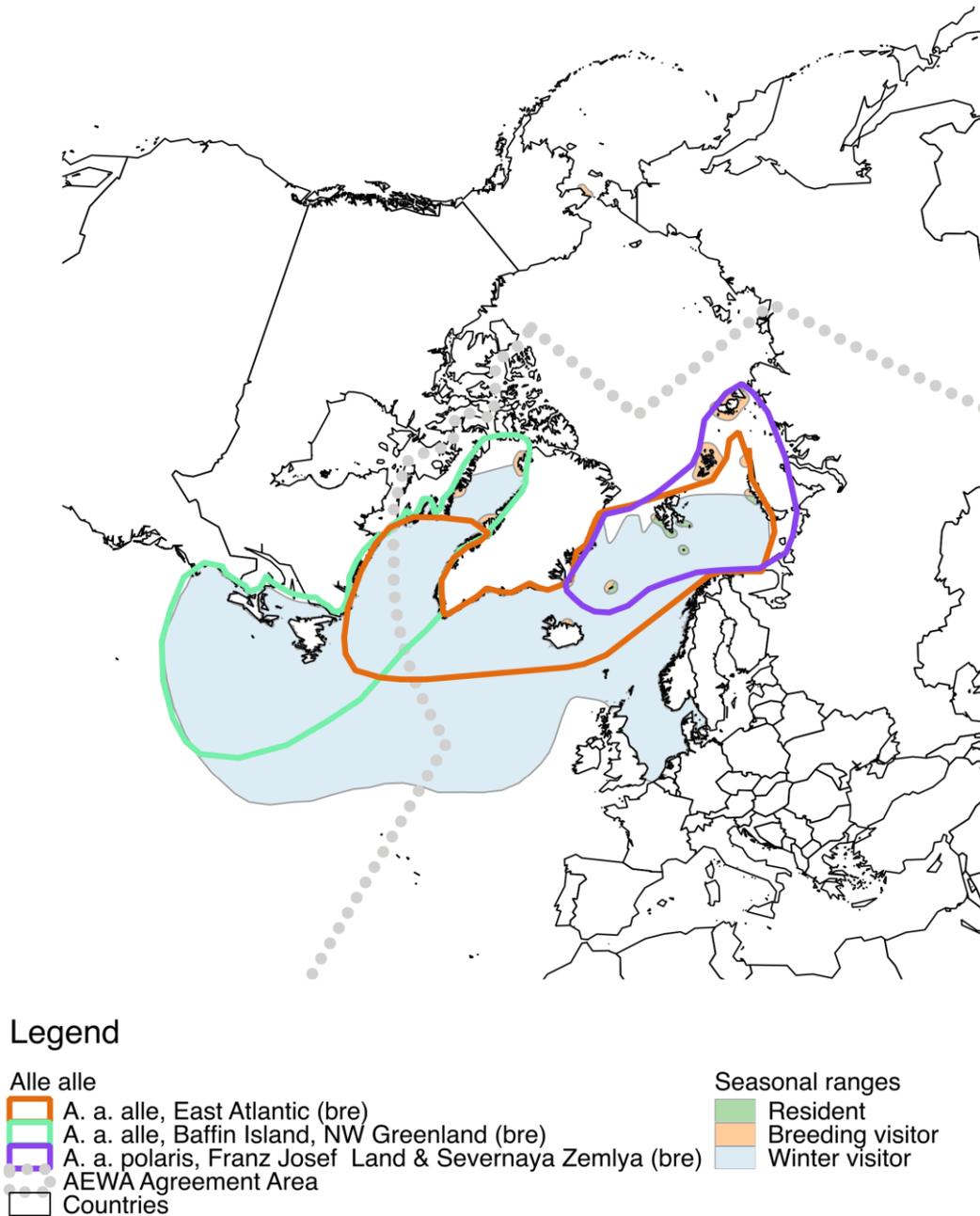
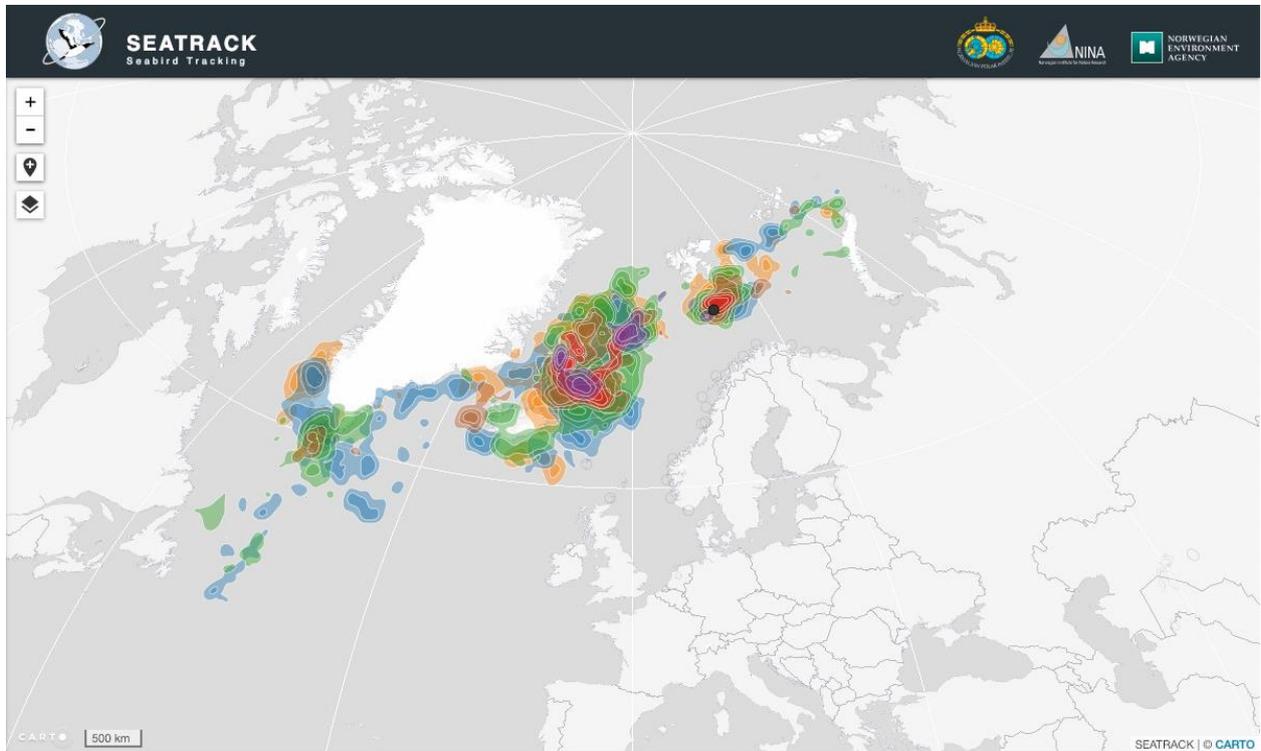
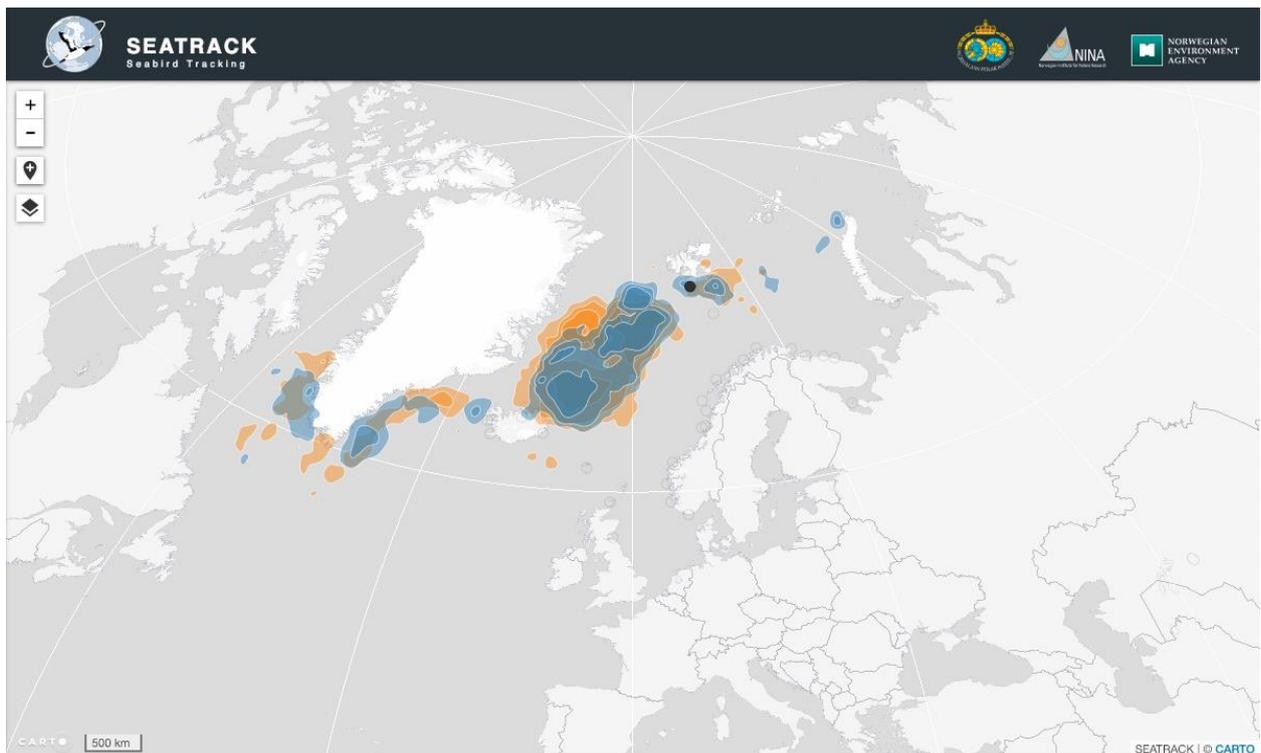


Figure 2. Distribution of *A. a. alle* based on geolocator data from birds caught on Bjornoya (a) and Svalbard (b – d) and *A. a. polaris* caught on Franz Josef Land (e). (Source: [SEATRACK](#))

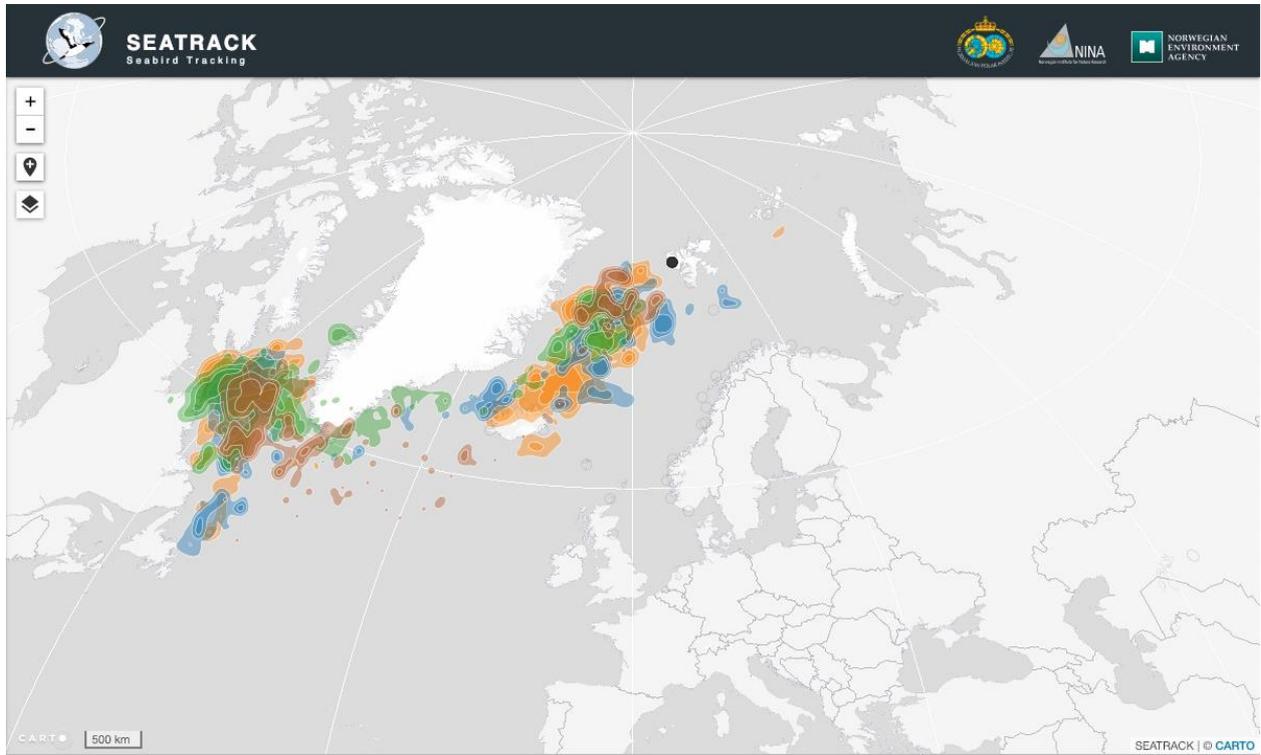
(a)



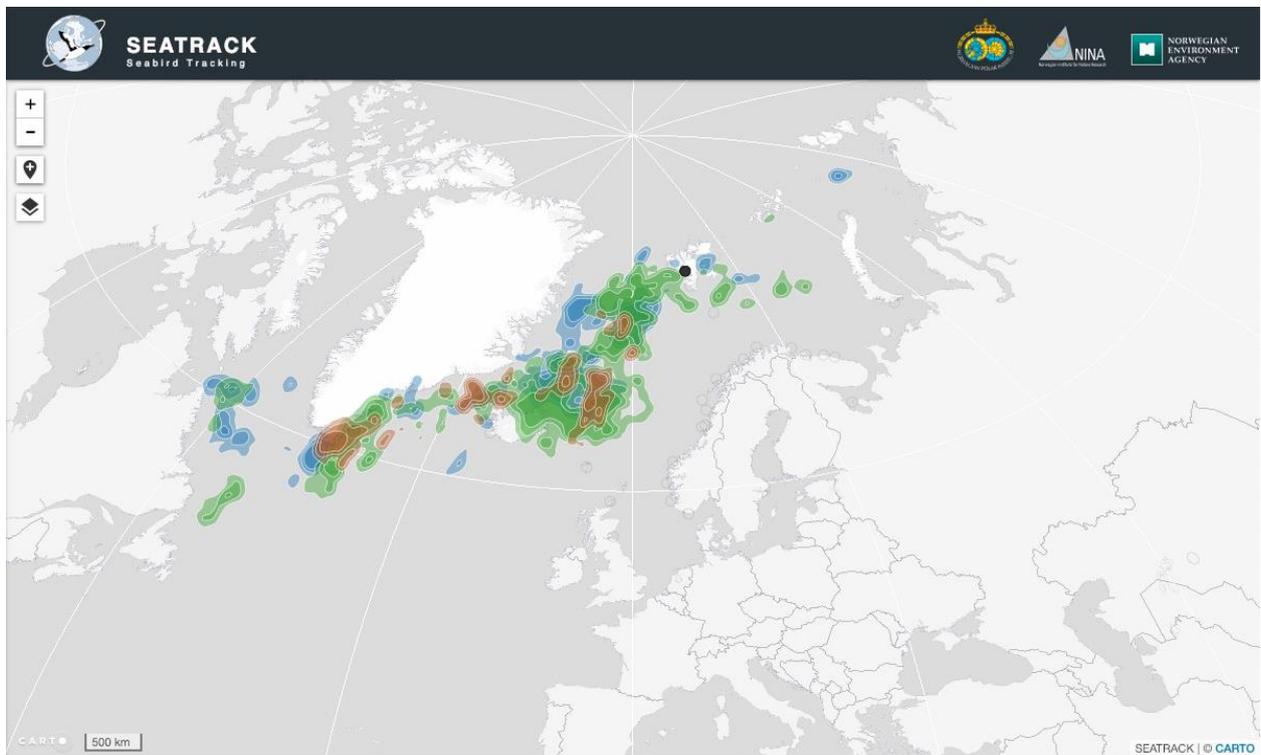
(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)

