

# ON FRACKING AND WILDLIFE

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Pink-footed goose [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)

Most articles about the myriad ill effects of hydraulic fracturing for gas ("fracking") focus on the harm to humans and the general environment. Although less has been written on the damage to wildlife, there is plenty of data documenting the deadly consequences for every species that lives in the area being fracked. Toxic chemicals used in the process, the contamination of water, destruction of habitat – it is all bad news for wildlife.

Campaigns against fracking have been mounted in many states where it is taking place, but it is usually a case of David against Goliath – two Goliaths, actually, because the giant oil-and-gas industry is abetted by governmental bodies in most instances. There is simply too much money and vested interest involved

to make it a fair fight.

It was a pleasant change, therefore, to learn that in Great Britain a fracking company has been forced to close one of its exploration sites, due to concern about the safety of wintering birds. We feel that this is a good example to cite, and forecast that it will be replicated here.

The oil exploration company Cuadrilla has abandoned a site in Lancashire, and will have to restore the fields in which they have been digging since 2011. Their permission to drill hinged on there not being any threat to migrating bird species, including pink-footed geese and whooper swans, who spend their winters in the area. But an environmental impact assessment paid for by Cuadrilla found significant concerns.

Cuadrilla is the sole company in Britain using current hydraulic fracturing technology. The technique is widely used in the U.S., with terrible results for wildlife and human residents wherever it is employed, but fortunately for British animals, the environmental laws there are stricter.

The forecast for British wildlife is not all rosy, though, as Cuadrilla may yet be permitted to drill elsewhere in the country. A representative of Friends of the Earth said: "Cuadrilla may have pulled the plug on one of its Lancashire sites, but the fracking threat has not gone away. The firm still plans to drill shale gas wells at other sites across the country."

In spite of spending at least £100m (approx. \$160 million) on the enterprise, Cuadrilla has not yet provided any gas or oil in the UK. Their drilling is known to have caused two small earthquakes in England already. Sufficient oversight has been sorely lacking – a charge frequently leveled at government officials and operators of fracking sites in the U.S., as well.

Nonetheless, this small victory for migrating birds does show that it is *possible* to get a fracking operation to close down. This may be only one minor instance, but it is an example that should be emulated. Citing the welfare of wildlife brought success in Lancashire. Losing



whooper swans [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk)

their fracking permission was specifically motivated by concern for wildlife, and not solely the welfare of humans.

Read full story in the Guardian:

<http://tinyurl.com/pybcdce>

## How you can help:

Some state legislatures are considering requiring companies to disclose the list of chemicals used in fracking; to institute stronger safeguards; and to test water in fracking areas. Numerous towns in NYS have banned fracking within their borders. New Jersey's State Senate has passed a ban on processing and treatment of hydraulic fracturing waste. Many municipalities and states have activist groups that are trying to prevent fracking operations from setting up in their area. Consider joining a grass-roots organization that is fighting fracking, and let your local and state representatives know that you are opposed to the practice.