

WWT / JNCC / SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

Notes for the 20th Steering Group meeting

Held 5th September 2014 at WWT Caerlaverock

1. Minutes of previous meeting / outstanding actions

The minutes / notes of the previous meeting were approved for uploading to the GSMP web pages (available here <http://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/our-work/goose-swan-monitoring-programme/partnership-documents/>). The following updates on outstanding actions were provided:

AP18/2: WWT to include an article on the new GSMP web pages in the next issue of *GooseNews* (2014).

Update: Discharged by WWT; regular references are made to the web site in GooseNews, both as standalone boxes or within articles.

AP18/3: WWT to explore with co-authors whether it was possible to publish a paper on the whole census in Irish Birds.

Update: Ongoing; WWT have contacted Alyn Walsh but has, so far, had no response. WWT to try again in the next two weeks.

WWT queried whether there is a need for a standalone report on the Scottish population. JNCC said that a combined report is obviously the best route. SNH suggested that there may be a possibility of producing the report as an SNH commissioned report in order to ensure it is more widely available, should all other options fail.

AP18/4: WWT to review the issues surrounding the status of Irish Greylag Geese in the forthcoming review of Greylag Goose monitoring needs (see AP17/4).

Update: Ongoing; WWT are in the process of reviewing this.

AP18/6: WWT to arrange demonstration of GSMP online at the next GSMP SG meeting [September 2014].

Update: Ongoing; as JNCC were unable to attend the meeting at WWT Caerlaverock it was suggested that WWT demonstrates the online system following the WeBS Steering Group meeting, which is in November 2014.

AP18/7: WWT to put together an overview of what is needed to complete historical data compilation.

Update: Ongoing; work in progress (see previous meeting notes).

JNCC suggested that it is worth checking whether there are any data in the WeBS database, particularly as BTO have been entering data from the old ledgers provided by WWT.

AP18/8: All to send comments on the draft population estimation methods paper to WWT by the end of December 2013.

Update: Ongoing; see previous meeting note. Waiting for comments from JNCC.

JNCC suggested the possibility of having a combined report with BTO's WeBS review and that, if possible, it would be preferable to put the report through a peer review process as it would

produce a more defensible product. WWT suggested that perhaps the report could still be sent to the appropriate people for review even if it is not possible to produce a peer reviewed paper. SNH suggested possibly using SNH's Scientific Review Council for QA system for the report.

AP19/1: WWT to continue to produce an annual IGC report in e-format and continue to make available as a PDF download.

Update: Discharged by WWT. This has been done for the 2014/15 reporting season; however, an opt in/opt out process for receipt of a paper copy of the IGC report was not initiated at the recent mailing but will be undertaken in due course.

AP19/2: JNCC to ask Defra to formally ask the Iceland (and other country) authorities to share in this collective monitoring.

Update: Ongoing.

WWT mentioned that Arnor Sigfusson's work on ageing wing samples was being reduced and that some of the work there was being completed through Arnor's goodwill. It would appear that commitments to goose surveillance made at the Hvanneyri meeting in 2001, by Iceland, had not been translated into work on the ground. WWT suggested the possibility of the appropriate people meeting in Hvanneyri, Iceland, as per previous meeting and the possibility of discussing other species at this meeting. SNH mentioned that as part of SNH's adaptive management plan on Islay, there is a plan to talk to other countries across the flyway.

AP19/3: JNCC and SNH to provide comments of IGC surveillance review by 18 April 2014.

Update: Ongoing; JNCC have provided comments. WWT to send out revised version.

AP19/4: WWT to provide JNCC with annual contractual progress report for FY 2013/14 and, in future, ensure that each quarterly invoice is accompanied by a quarterly review.

Update: Discharged by WWT. Completed by WWT for 2013/14.

WWT asked whether what had been provided was suitable for JNCC and SNH. They both agreed that what had been provided was enough.

2. Update on surveys & projects

2a) Review of 2014 outputs

Mailing of *GooseNews*, Autumn 2014 edition, to the GSMP network had successfully taken place last week [week beginning 25 August]. A news item was added to WWT's Waterbird Monitoring website; however a WWT press release was not issued. Message about *GooseNews* posted on WWT's Twitter account, which has since been 'retweeted' by others. Comments received from participants so far were good.

JNCC queried the cost of hiring a designer to layout the newsletter compared to undertaking it in house. WWT confirmed there is extra cost involved in hiring the designer but it saves WWT time and the cost is within budget.

WWT will be encouraging the GSMP network to opt for downloading a copy of the newsletter rather than receiving a hard copy; this will reduce costs further. WWT will be working towards encouraging contributions for the network as well as other sources. JNCC suggested that perhaps asking the network and others to contribute news items rather than full articles, as people may be more willing to write shorter pieces.

Use of Social media was discussed. This could be a useful method of asking counters/network for updates/news.

Suggestions for future articles:

JNCC: Bonn Convention and lead shot issues; AEWA MoP Nov 15; Bean Goose Action Plan; Article 12; Birds of Europe 3

SNH: adaptive management plan for Islay.

The 2013 IGC report had been completed and distributed to the network with *GooseNews*. WWT has had internal discussions regarding the current format of the report and the possibility of trimming it down, and adding more information to the species account pages on WWT's Waterbird Monitoring website.

JNCC suggested using the web pages for updates each year, to provide the numbers etc, and then look for headline messages to report elsewhere. WWT suggested the possibly of incorporating the report into *GooseNews*, by extending the current IGC article. JNCC/SNH agreed.

AP20/1: WWT to re-format IGC report from summer 2015.

The GSMP online species accounts had been updated on WWT's Waterbird Monitoring website the previous week; with the exception of the Greenland White-fronted account which will be updated on the receipt of the next report. Only headline figures were reported in *GooseNews*, whilst the full details of the survey results were reported on the website. WWT can analyse use of the website and it will be useful to look at how much use is being made of the site. JNCC suggested that it would be useful to look at where users are located.

AP20/2: WWT to determine the number of pdf downloads from the GSMP web pages.

AP20/3: WWT to undertake an analysis of web page use and also assess whether the web pages provide all the information needed. To be prepared for the next meeting (21st) SG meeting.

WWT gave an update on the mailing undertaken the previous week to the GSMP network, carried out with help from WWT's CPD Admin team. All had gone well though there were internal mumblings about the amount of paper being used [required for printing the IGC report, recording forms and accompanying letters] but hopefully the new online recording system will reduce the number of forms required.

WWT are planning to contact the network to ask whether they would like to 'opt out' of the pdf/download option. JNCC suggested monitoring the uptake of the pdf option as we need to ensure that we don't lose contact with the network if there are those who don't actually look at pdfs. JNCC indicated that they liked the idea of heading towards fewer paper copies and that combining *GooseNews* and the IGC report will also reduce paper use.

2b) IGC in Orkney and Caithness

WWT gave an update on the status of IGC counts in Orkney and Caithness and how it is becoming increasingly difficult to find coverage.

Caithness

Following the passing of the previous Local Organiser, Stan Laybourne, RSPB took over the counts but will no longer do so as of the 2014/15 season. There are eight roost sites to cover. WWT are currently trying to find more help through the SOC to see if anyone would be interested in helping. In the long-term, there is a need to find a replacement Local Organiser.

JNCC said that this is an example of how do you build capacity. SNH said there are active bird watchers who may be worth contacting – a separate group to the SOC. WWT said roost counts were undertaken during the recent seasons; fewer birds are picked up from field counts than roosts. Time and funding is an issue for volunteers undertaking field counts; covering roosts are quicker and cheaper however this needs more people; roost counts relate to SPA designations where as field counts do not.

Orkney

There are enough counters in Orkney, with the exception of Mainland. Previously, RSPB have arranged and carried out the counts on Mainland but as of 2014/15 they will no longer do so. This means there will potentially be incomplete counts from Orkney which will have a large impact on the total count and hence the flyway population estimate for Greylag Goose. WWT is working with SNH locally to try to sort out the issue. WWT is undertaking age counts on Orkney this autumn so they may be able to carry out a count.

WWT: the situation may impact future counts too, and the main concern is that it becomes a long-term problem.

JNCC: perhaps try to ensure that counts are carried out e.g. every two years. Maybe use modelling to calculate totals.

WWT: 50% or more of the geese are on Orkney, which will likely affect any possible modelling.

JNCC: there is no statutory obligation to report on total population; perhaps it is a more of an SNH issue?

SNH: there are no SPAs on Orkney for Icelandic Greylag Geese; the problems are related to the summering birds and the cull.

JNCC: Would it be possible to sample the birds e.g. 1km squares?

WWT: have looked into this approach and will be investigating further; however it's uncertain that this approach will be suitable due to the clumping of geese – the confidence intervals produced were big.

JNCC: What about remote sensing?

WWT: possible but the cost will be an issue.

JNCC: possibility of a getting a student to look at potential monitoring methods. Suggested including other organisations logos on GSMP outputs, along with listing them in the acknowledgments to show that they support the projects, may encourage more support.

SNH: Would it be possible to have a census every e.g. five years? Possibly ask counters to pay to take part, e.g. such as EarthWatch do?

WWT: suggested asking wildfowlers for help.

AP20/4: WWT to look ways of improving how participating and contributing organisations are acknowledged in any GSMP outputs.

3. GSMP Counters' Conference

The first GSMP Counters' Conference is due to take place on 6 September at WWT Caerlaverock. Guest speakers include Arnór Þórir Sigfússon from Iceland and Helen Boland from BirdWatch Ireland. The conference will consist of a number of talks, followed by workshops on various aspects of the GSMP. Approximately 20 people have registered.

JNCC suggested asking counters whether they feel they are getting enough feedback about how data collected through the GSMP are used, and that perhaps JNCC and SNH need to provide more information.

WWT suggested articles in *GooseNews* could be one way for JNCC and SNH to provide feedback. JNCC asked whether a 'risk assessment' has been done for what happens when key counters are lost i.e. where are the key sites, where we are reliant on one or two key counters and what happens if we lose them? They also suggested the possibility of having discussions with Local Organisers and counters about succession and training for helping LOs with capacity building, and having internal discussions about capacity building.

AP20/5: WWT to hold an internal discussion about capacity building for GSMP.

4. International Swan Census – January 2015

WWT gave an update on the organisation of the January 2015 ISC. The national organisers in Ireland and Iceland have been contacted and are in the process of organising the census in their respective countries. All WeBS Local Organisers have been contacted to ask for their help in organising the census in their areas - about half have responded so far and WWT will look to fill any gaps in coverage in due course. An article about the census will appear in the next edition of the WeBS newsletter and a piece was also included in *GooseNews*. The development of an online recording form is underway, with an aim of being made live in November.

Suggestion was made to ask the BirdTrack network for help. The question was raised of how and when a report on Bewick's Swan results would happen this time.

AP20/6: WWT to check with Eileen Rees regarding reporting on the Bewick's Swan results for the 2015 census.

5. AOB

5a) Barnacle Geese in Iceland

WWT had recently been contacted by Jóhann Helgi Stefánsson from the South East Iceland Nature Centre regarding Barnacle Geese. A survey had been undertaken in summer 2014 to map new Barnacle Goose nests on the SE coast of Iceland. Prior to the work only around 40 nests were officially known about; however the survey had resulted in over 500 nests being mapped. Jóhann is in the process of writing a report and has asked WWT if he can use a graph from the 2013 Greenland Barnacle Goose census report in his report.

6. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that there is no need or requirement to meet every six months. All agreed that an end of [financial] year review can be done in April instead. Date of the next meeting to be arranged for September 2015.