

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme
Notes for the 22nd Steering Group meeting
Held 2 November 2016 at JNCC Peterborough

Attending: Simon Cohen (SNH)¹, Richard Hearn (WWT), Carl Mitchell (WWT)¹, Amy McDougall (JNCC) and David Stroud (JNCC)

1 Apologies for absence / introductions

Apologies: Anna Robinson with Amy McDougall (Terrestrial evidence team, JNCC) as stand-in.

2 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/>).

It should be noted that there is a desire to start the new contract round with no outstanding actions. The following updates on outstanding actions were provided:

AP18/3: WWT to explore with co-authors whether it was possible to publish a paper on the whole 2013 census in Irish Birds.

Update: Discharged. Irish co-authors have already published a paper in Irish Birds on the results of the 2013 survey in Ireland only. Need to discuss with Irish collaborators in advance of the spring 2018 flyway survey the best outlet for combined results.

AP22/1: WWT to discuss in advance the best way of publishing the combined results as Alyn Walsh (principal Irish author) is keen to get the next census results published in *Irish Birds*. The next survey is 18 months away and the conversation should start now to agree outputs with Irish collaborators.

AP18/4: WWT to review the issues surrounding the status of Irish Greylag Geese in the review of Greylag Goose monitoring needs (see SG21 minutes AP17/4).

Ongoing. WWT to meet with Birdwatch Ireland in spring 2016 to discuss monitoring needs.

In process of writing a joint paper on Greylag goose status in Ireland with a focus on definition of 'summering birds' with Helen Boland (BirdWatch Ireland). This will complement a previous paper published in *Irish Birds* a few years ago. This paper will also cover monitoring needs to drive more effective monitoring of Irish wintering and summering birds.

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

Ongoing. there were some discussions about JNCC capacity to scan documents.

There are quite a number of important regional surveys which aren't archived yet, it would be good to find a secure home for those, some are already hosted on the GWGS website which could go onto GSMP. For those reports not written by WWT there is a need to contact the author, for example the reports on Perth and Kinross, Lancashire, and the Moray Firth.

¹ Via video link, SNH (Aviemore)

AP22/2: To find out whether there is an opportunity for costing/ listing as an activity the digitisation of reports through JNCC contract.

AP22/3: WWT to contact authors of papers for digitisation where not authored by WWT.

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

Update. There was discussion on how to overcome the delay

There are two things here; firstly, a methods review for WeBS (checks and evidential support for methodology, BTO is picking that up), this relates to the second, a review by WWT on goose and swan populations for deriving national assessments and method for production.

The WeBS product is becoming very large, so addition of the goose and swan compounds the problem for getting the document through review. Is it possible for this to be published as a JNCC report? This could address the peer review aspect. A joint report is preferred.

It would be helpful to have a statement on what is holding up publication of the paper and be transparent about it, this report should be treated as a statement of the status quo and add recommendations for perfecting methodology. This underpins important policy processes.

Is there opportunity for examining the development of statistical rigour/ analytical products under the new JNCC MOA contracting agreement?

AP22/4: JNCC to investigate capacity to publish as a JNCC report.

AP22/5: All steering group to refresh themselves on the publication.

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

Ongoing. JNCC to raise with Defra, in addition to raising the idea of a joint meeting between flyway countries.

There is an increasingly pressing need to set up a workshop with representatives from Iceland, UK, Greenland and Ireland. This is good timing as there are multiple opportunities aligning.

AP22/6: JNCC to raise with Defra potential for joint meeting with Iceland and other country authorities.

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

Update. All comments have been received, the next step is to consider placing this on to the website. This could require formatting and creation of the cover note.

AP22/7: To decide on whether the IGC surveillance review should be published on the GSMP website.

AP20/2: WWT to determine whether the number of PDF downloads from the GSMP web-pages can be assessed

Ongoing. WWT to provide data at end September 2015. WWT to circulate to SG.

This assessment has been completed and provides interesting headline messages on access.

AP22/8: WWT to circulate future periodic GSMP download assessments to the Steering Group.

AP20/3: WWT to undertake an analysis of GSMP webpage use and also assess whether the web pages provide all the information needed. To be prepared for the next (21st) SG meeting
Ongoing. WWT will provide these data for the next (22nd) SG meeting in autumn 2016.

These data could be collected once every six months. Is there a need to survey counters to ask them about their use of the website? There is also some consideration needed on what to do with these reports further down the line e.g. using them to structure the website.

AP22/9: WWT to give some consideration on how to use information from the website analytics and whether a survey of counter needs should be undertaken.

AP20/6: WWT to check internally on reporting timetable for the 2015 Bewick's Swan census.
Ongoing. Data collation nearly complete. Data still need from WeBS. Draft report due by end of March 2016 and to be published by mid-summer 2016.

There is a delay as WWT are still waiting for data from Germany.

AP21/1: WWT to liaise with IBGRG to see if WWT can help resolve logistical issues and discuss a more formal arrangement for reporting results of surveillance.
WWT would like to have a formal arrangement with IBGRG in a similar way in which GWGS is supported.

Coverage in Iceland is no longer an issue. Last year Icelandic Institute for Natural History (IINH) paid for aerial monitoring indicating Iceland are getting more engaged.

3 SNH Short Update

SNH provided a short update on ongoing goose and swan related activities.

There was an internal meeting to discuss SNH's relationship to GSMP, goose schemes and how they're managed. In particular discussing whether financing of monitoring should be moved into the main agricultural support system. And, further their future post-Brexit.

There was discussion on whether Canada Goose numbers should be assessed and whether these should be monitored as invasive non-natives? The last national count was in 2000. If there is a decision to monitor, should this be contracted under WeBS and what in addition will it deliver? Notably, small inland water bodies/ agricultural fields are not counted by WeBS. This needs further consideration: i) What the conservation priority for this is? ii) Where does funding come from? iii) What is the most efficient and effective methodology? *i.e.* a total headcount is unrealistic; would formal stratified sampling be more appropriate? The BTO Atlas data is currently unanalysed; should look at that first. BTO should be able to do that by extrapolation.

There is a new five year strategy about to be released by SNH. How does this influence GSMP and contract negotiations? SNH is writing a review which should be completed by year end. Barnacle Geese are the major priority for goose policy, but Greenland White-fronted Geese are also a priority. The contract for monitoring Bean Geese is coming to an end. This needs to be reviewed with regards to whether this is still fit for purpose? Bean Geese have been observed changing their feeding and roosting behaviour on Slamannan.

4 Update on surveys, projects and annuals outputs

4a) Review of 2016 outputs

WWT reported that 2016 has been a normal year in terms of outputs (products and timings). There has been a re-organisation of responsibility at WWT to streamline the GSMP reporting process.

GooseNews was published on time, this was generally well received with some positive feedback. It has now moved to a digital product (unless a hard copy is requested which means the print run has reduced to around 500, and this number is likely to reduce further to 300–400), however, there are still costs associated with design and layout.

The web updates were all produced on time. Internally, WWT give ownership to individuals for populations, these are updated periodically. WWT are keen to assess which pages were being accessed over time, this has now been addressed to some extent (with an update once every six months on page access data). Where pages are not accessed do these pages need promoting? WWT created and circulated a summary pdf, this captures basics *i.e.* top ten pages, visitations. There is a September spike in visitation. The most frequently visited (apart from homepage) is reports and newsletters page.

4b) Surveys Update

Pink-footed Goose: Numbers were found to have increased dramatically, although it was an average breeding year. Therefore, it seems that there may have been some undercounting in the previous 2–4 years. Counting of Pink-footed Goose in Iceland is not possible due to the huge area involved. Numbers are dependent on when survey occurs; for example, this could depress annual counts if the birds are still in Iceland. In October 2015, most sites had a record count and this is likely the most accurate population estimate for about four or five years. This needs to be addressed going forward, is there a change in phenology (as seen in Greylag Geese)?

Greenland White-fronted Goose: There was a low count of Greenland White-fronted Geese, which further bolsters the needs for a meeting on goose and swan monitoring with Iceland and Greenland. Summer 2015 was pretty poor in terms of numbers, but the 2016 counts in Iceland indicate a fairly reasonable breeding year. The Greenland White-fronted Goose reporting schedule has been slightly later than other GSMP reporting, arriving in October each year; two months after the main reporting period for the remainder of populations covered by the GSMP

Svalbard Barnacle Goose and Whooper Swan: The counts for both species were high.

4c) Other areas for feedback

JNCC indicated that smooth management of the GSMP has meant JNCC input has been less which is positive. The GSMP team have been getting interesting stories out and are encouraged to do more of the same.

GSMP should now look for other opportunities to raise the profile of the work to disseminate beyond the usual audiences. The *State of the UK's Birds* is a useful platform to highlight key messages. Is this a way of attracting new audiences? Are there other opportunities for novel outputs? How do we get to decision makers in the world of conservation? There seems to be a general move away from single species conservation, which could be a long threat, tactically quite helpful to engage? GSMP has used *Twitter* to engage with new counters, a good way of quickly engaging with new counters could be through the other bird networks. But what about for decision makers? What sort of products do they need? Something which assimilates populations? Could this take the form of key messages to government/users in other agencies *i.e.* EA/SEPA? Is there another scheme which successfully engages with policy makers specific to GSMP or is there something which already exists? This needs careful targeting.

AP22/10: There is a need for a review of potential outputs for targeting i) new counters/ audiences, and ii) decision makers.

4d) Review of key elements of work programme 2013-2016 and new developments (e.g. online data capture/ monitoring)

This section was aimed at highlighting key things out-with standard routine reporting results.

There is a need for the scheme to do some horizon scanning with regards to future action plans. What are the expected new developments? Is there a need for different types of data? Novel uses? For example, the AEWA goose management platform; this will have data needs in order to populate models. Is this a possible new policy driver? Are there Country Agency requirements for data?

Where there are new potential drivers for data needs there needs to be consideration of those when considering what surveys need to be implemented.

WWT presented recommendations and priorities from WWT's perspective.

2013–2016 Key Elements and Experiences

Basic routine surveillance has continued. There has been one significant change, a change to the survey frequency for Iceland Greylag Geese reducing to one count. This was driven by December counts always being lower than November counts and reduced counter capacity on Orkney.

There are expected changes in local organisers, and other various elements of the counter network. This means the GSMP ought to be thinking about greater effort of recruitment for counters and local organisers. Are there local organiser vacancies coming up? GSMP need to look ahead to build more interest in continuing these counts; what are the best ways to engage?

There have been some reporting issues; still struggling with getting information on Canadian Light-bellied Brent Geese (WWT have been liaising with IBGRG), although this is not as problematic as first thought as coverage in Iceland is again happening. The census is still robust but there are delays in reporting, this needs to be addressed with sub-contractual negotiations in the next round. Bewick's Swans also a bit slow, this is more about data flows than unwillingness. There is a bottleneck regarding data from Germany.

Development of the online database (ISC Jan 2015) continues with one year's worth of those systems being in place now. There was 55% IGC data submitted via the online system, 40% submitting age assessments (constituting 82% of the total submitted data). It would be good to try to increase IGC submissions. This would reduce the amount of time WWT need to manually input data; it has already reduced it by 75%. This currently only able to collect structured survey data but not ad-hoc records.

Online schemes are now in place; the plan for next winter is to complete mapping count boundaries. The outsourcing of the layout of *GooseNews* has sharpened the product and freed up WWT staff time. The online recording system saves costs/time and this will be reflected in costings for next tender - this has not been fully costed but less staff time is required for processing individual surveys. Another advantage of the online system is much better validation. Counters can access data from previous years, which is an added benefit; without an online system it would be increasingly a struggle to attract new counters. There was a question about the potential for overseas counters to put data straight into the ISC? In theory that could happen, main question is it this politically ok? GSMP doesn't want to undermine the German recording scheme. Is there a wider way of dealing with counts from Germany? It is suspected that it's a Landau (county) issue? In future setting up individual contacts with Landau rather than at the federal level. The data portal 'Observado', can do automatic translation. This particularly affects the ISC; the next survey is in three years so there is time to do a forward look.

Recent observations indicate that Bewick's Swans overwintering in Greece are increasing; speculation that this may contribute to the observed declines in northern Europe as the swans' shift distributions into southern Europe. There is some flexibility in flyways; although the increase in Greece does not fully account

for previous numbers in Northwest Europe. There is not a lot of information on known individuals. Does this relate to differential survival of different sub-populations?

Work continues to get historic census count data and reports onto the website; is important to make these available and has already been useful. This should be flagged as a source to counters.

Next year is the 70th anniversary of WeBS, this could be an opportunity to gather personal interest stories?

AP22/11: To decide on plans to feed into the celebration of the 70th anniversary of WeBS.

5 GSMP Contract renegotiation

5a) Update on funding situation/ schedule

Chris Cheffings (JNCC) provided an update on the process and progress of contract renegotiations. Chris outlined the new contract model which consists of two parts: i) Contracts to continue the core work of running surveillance schemes ii) A cross cutting contract to carry out development and analysis across schemes.

JNCC are also intending to set up a Memorandum of Understanding *i.e.* a high level document stating out its intention to work together. JNCC are hoping that all our partners from across the suite of surveillance schemes will want to join, and would aim to have an annual meeting/workshop to share best practice and identify areas that would be of mutual benefit/interest to explore. This would feed into the cross cutting development and analysis contract.

JNCC see this plan as a good opportunity to consolidate collaborative working amongst its partners, and is keen to even out research across taxa (as currently it is not very consistent across our schemes as to whether we fund any analysis in addition to the routine work).

JNCC have been undertaking a series of bilaterals with Country Nature Conservation Bodies and scheme partners. Important points for GSMP are that:

- funding for GSMP will likely remain the same level for its core activities although the contract will be for five years (this change in timescale will affect budgeting of surveys with regards to annual work planning).
- the contract model for the 'development' activities will increase access for GSMP to the development of novel methods/ analysis *etc.*
- although it is a choice for partners to participate in the collaborative 'development' MoU; it is a good opportunity to influence and access novel developments.
- development on aspects such as database management *etc* will seek to complement existing structures/ practices rather than pushing for wholesale change.
- the long-term ambition is to harmonise some approaches across the schemes (*i.e.* governance).

5b) Monitoring priorities for 2017/18

Those present reviewed the Summary of Recommendations for GSMP 2017/18 to 2019/20, discussing the level of priority, resource requirement and identifying the drivers.

5c) Data Access

As part of the new contract model and tendering process JNCC will require that all partnership data be shared under Open Government Licence (OGL). This is in line with government open data strategies. Any exceptions to this must be justified in tender responses and will be discussed in post-tender negotiations with the successful contractors.

6 AOB

7 Date of next meeting

WWT to organise next date.