

WWT / JNCC / SNH GOOSE & SWAN MONITORING

Notes of 12th Steering Group Meeting

7th October 2010: 11:30

JNCC, Peterborough (with VC to SNH Battleby)

- 1) **Apologies for absence:** None
- 2) **Chairing and note taking of meeting:** It was agreed that the chair for the Steering Group would rotate annually with WWT chairing in 2011/12 and SNH chairing in 2012/13. SNH agreed to take notes for this meeting.
- 3) **Update on survey & projects:**

Winter 2009/10 - The results from 2009/2010 have been published on the GSMP web site, relevant census (e.g. IGC) and in GooseNews. It was noted that

- a. The Greenland white-fronted goose count totals are not yet final.
- b. Apparent declines in Greenland barnacle geese were discussed. There is no evidence of geese from Islay moving to Ireland, the Solway or elsewhere, which would suggest a real decline in numbers. Possible causes discussed were lower productivity in the last decade and the commencement of lethal scaring of Greenland barnacle geese on Islay. SNH advised that these issues had been discussed in the 2010 review of goose policy in Scotland, which is currently being finalised. In relation to this, WWT will produce a short overview of existing data and whether any demographic explanation can be made for this apparent decline on Islay so we may consider this issue in more detail at the next SG meeting wrt whether additional data collection is needed in order to explain this situation.
 - i. **AP1: SNH to circulate review when finalised.**
 - ii. **AP2: WWT to summarise existing data for this population and determine whether demographic explanation for Islay decline is possible.**

The accessibility of returns from licences to shoot Greenland barnacle geese on Islay and other bag data from licensed shooting was discussed, and it was generally agreed that this information should be published on the web (for example the GSMP website).

AP3: WWT to draft short paper proposing the archiving of licence returns on the web, for circulation to the group for comment.

AP4: SNH to take paper to GSAG, hopefully for forward transmission to NGMRG.

AP5: JNCC to pursue the publishing of licence returns in England and Wales.

AP6: WWT to clarify whether it is considered appropriate to publish such data on the GSMP web site.

WWT presented a paper on coverage of SPAs by IGC, including summary information on trends in numbers of geese in SPA suites and survey coverage of individual sites. Indications were that survey coverage of SPAs was very good (with a number of apparent gaps due to the fact that geese no longer used the site). This was part of a larger project which also looks at trends on individual SPAs. It was agreed that this information would be particularly useful for the 2010 SPA Review.

AP7: WWT to draft a paper for SPARSWG (identifying level of data required), and disseminate to group

AP8: JNCC to take paper to December meeting of SPARSWG

JNCC asked if WWT could provide an assessment of the amount of volunteer time that went into the GSMP. WWT recalled that this had already been undertaken.

AP9: WWT to provide JNCC with assessment of volunteer time in GSMP.

Swan Census: January 2010. Despite the cold weather survey coverage was good, although the impact on swan distribution is, as yet, unknown. Data is currently being inputted and additional WeBS data will be added in April. There will be an international report for whooper swan, however a UK report will be produced for Bewick's swan, due to uncertainties about the timing of the international report by the survey organiser.

Upcoming season 2010/11:

Over the last 2 winters some Icelandic greylag geese have remained in Iceland throughout the winter. Previously, aerial surveys of southern Iceland have been undertaken in November to assess numbers of geese remaining there at the time of the IGC. However, counts are crude and in some years prevent accurate estimation of population size. This winter WWT will visit Iceland and work with colleagues there to develop an improved counter network in Iceland and undertake ground counts, rather than funding an aerial survey. This was agreed to be a priority as the likelihood of geese remaining in Iceland through the winter will only increase in future.

WWT highlighted that they would be producing a short note for British Birds recommending that greylag geese breeding in Britain be considered as a single population British greylag geese, following on from the results of the Scottish Greylag goose census 2008-09, funded by SNH. JNCC noted that in future WeBS would also be reporting resident greylag geese at this level.

4) Contract renegotiations:

Partnership logo / strap line: It was agreed that the wording for acknowledgements in the MoA (Schedule 7.4) should be adopted and the SNH logo incorporated in GooseNews and the GSMP web pages.

AP10: SNH to forward most appropriate SNH logo to WWT.

Annual financial statement: WWT queried the level of detail required in the annual financial reporting.

AP11: JNCC to clarify level of detail required in financial reporting and inform WWT.

MoA amendments & VAT rise: VAT will rise to 20% in January 2010. As VAT levels are not explicitly stated in the MoA there is no need for amendment here, however the total funds available to JNCC for funding the partnership will not increase in line with VAT increases. For Q4 of this year the difference will be small. WWT will investigate whether they can invoice JNCC for the amount already agreed, if not JNCC can probably cover the small additional cost.

AP12: WWT to check that they can invoice JNCC for the amount already agreed.

In future years the additional VAT costs will be more significant.

AP13: JNCC to check whether alterations to the MoA are required.

JNCC informed the group that they are anticipating significant cuts in funding and there may be a need to reassess budgets for next FY. This year an exemption from the communications freeze was required from DEFRA for JNCC to fund GooseNews, in future years there may be pressure to reduce communications costs and a move towards electronic data dissemination is likely.

It was acknowledged that the primary purpose of GooseNews was to encourage and provide feed-back to volunteer counters. As such an electronic newsletter may not do the same job.

AP14: WWT to canvas counter opinion on making GooseNews an electronic document.

In January BTO / JNCC are organising a workshop looking at how to expand the Birds in the Wider Countryside website, and consider using the site to bring together data from a number of different surveys (including GSMP) in one place.

AP15: JNCC to include WWT on invitation list for workshop

5) AOB

Reporting levels: WWT noted that para. 4.2 of the MoA required reporting at a country / regional level. This is not currently undertaken and WWT queried what was required. JNCC suggested that this was a rather general clause, and that regions were not relevant in England at present as they are in the process of changing. Country populations are important to devolved agencies in general; however reporting at this level may not be appropriate some goose populations. It was considered that country level reporting was not appropriate for pink-footed and Icelandic greylag geese (as these populations are very mobile and

distribution will differ through the season). For other goose populations reporting at a country level should be undertaken.

Data security policy: WWT queried whether JNCC needed to see the WWT data security policy as required in 10.1 and 10.2 of the MoA. JNCC confirmed that this was not necessary, as by signing the MoA WWT had agreed to implement this requirement.

Greenland barnacle goose review: WWT reported that the contents of this review are 80% complete, however accessing data for Islay has proved difficult. This is not a straightforward issue as SNH count units have to be matched with functional units identified by other researchers that have worked there.

AP16: JNCC to find a list of actions following a meeting with JNCC, SNH and other experts some time back and forward to WWT.

AP17: SNH to request that BTO provide the Islay database to WWT.

AP18: JNCC and WWT to meet in 3rd week of December to audit data from Islay.

6) Date of next meeting: Wednesday 16th March 2011 [*subsequently changed to 10th March 2011*]