

JNCC / WWT / SNH GOOSE & SWAN MONITORING

Notes of 16th Steering Group Meeting

17th September 2012: 10:30

JNCC, Peterborough (with tele-conference link to SNH)

1) Apologies for absence: Deborah Procter

2) Minutes of previous meeting / outstanding actions:

A brief review of previous minutes was undertaken; all were signed off. Follow up outcomes from previous Action Points were as follows:

AP15/2 – Tony Fox (ADF), on behalf of the Wetlands International (WI) Goose Specialist Group (GSG) had applied for EU funding to coordinate goose counting – but this had been unsuccessful. GSMP goal is now simply to keep a watching brief.

AP16/1: WWT to contact ADF/GSG to find out what their new plans are for funding coordinated goose counts in Europe.

AP15/3 – Closer contact with Iceland. JNCC indicated that this may be an opportune time because Iceland has expressed an intention to join AEWA. WWT suggested that areas for closer collaboration with Iceland could be identified in the GSMP review currently being undertaken, although there needs to be clarity in what working arrangement is being sought from both sides.

AP16/2: WWT to ensure some follow up based on review recommendations occurs (coming from partnership). Draft letter to be circulated and sent round to partners.

3) Update on surveys & projects

a) Winter 2011/12 – final results and issues

WWT gave a brief overview, including discussion of an apparent decline in Pink-footed Goose numbers (of c. 100,000 birds in the last two years). There is a need to identify in the strategic review the uncertainty associated with the magnitude of the decline, and what data are needed in order to address this. The lack of recent demographic data (other than breeding success estimates) and harvest rate estimates was highlighted and accepted as a significant omission that could help to explain the observed decline. JNCC said there is a research interest (in what is driving this) and also, if we are moving to an Adaptive Harvest Management (AHM) approach to goose management in the UK then these data are critical to understanding what is driving observed trends. However, JNCC also indicated that there would be no extra funding available for new projects (e.g. ringing for survival) in the near future. WWT therefore suggested that checks on the accuracy of current abundance

monitoring need to be undertaken and, if found to be inaccurate, other methods need to be explored.

JNCC mentioned that there were no breeding success graphs for Svalbard and Greenland Barnacle Goose in the latest *GooseNews* and asked if these could be included annually? WWT explained that there is more information in the online species accounts, but that it was possible to include these each year.

AP16/3: WWT to ensure summary graphs of breeding success are included in each *GooseNews*.

b) Goose feeding distribution in Scotland

WWT said that the project report is currently with SNH Quality Assurance and should be available shortly. Data are also being handed over to SNH shortly. Once this is complete the report will be available online (probably on the WWT website).

c) Orkney British Greylag Goose survey – August 2012

A survey was carried out by WWT, under contract to SNH, in late August 2012. A total of 21,367 birds were counted and their distribution was widespread throughout the archipelago. There were differences in the percentage young encountered in different areas, suggesting that some late summer flocks comprised mainly non-breeders, whereas others comprised mainly successful families. Overall the breeding success was 25% young. A report on this census will be available before the end of 2012.

d) International Swan Census 2010.

WWT said that the Whooper Swan paper had been accepted by *Wildfowl* and would be published before the end of 2012. Progress on the paper detailing the results of the Bewick's Swan counts had stalled due a delay in receiving data from Germany.

e) Website & data management development update

The new data management system being developed using the Indicia model is progressing – the colour marking website is now out for testing, and the next phase (delivered over next 4-6 months) will cover online IGC data submission and count boundary mapping (CUDI), and possibly breeding success data.

4) Data ownership and associated issues

SNH had raised this issue with respect to goose feeding distribution data that WWT have recently compiled under contract to SNH. SNH would like to present the summary data (sensitivity index only) on its website, and thus may receive requests for raw data. It was agreed that a similar process as carried out for WeBS data should occur, namely that SNH can present summary data online, but if more detailed data are requesting then these should be provided by WWT. However, some data incorporated into the sensitivity index do not

belong to WWT, and so this process also needs to be agreed with other data providers outside the GSMP partnership.

AP16/4: CU to draft a short note clarifying this issue for the SG: sensitivity data are based on a number of data sources and these may not be publicly available.

AP16/5: WWT to contact other data owners who provided data incorporated into the sensitivity index regarding possible ways of making data available if requested.

AP16/6: WWT to check whether wording on all GSMP forms and other relevant documents states that all data collected are shared and available publicly.

AP16/7: WWT to talk to DP about the issue given her particular expertise in this area.

5) Strategic development work 2012/13

WWT said that a first stage draft had been circulated last week. Comments needed sooner rather than later on both content and, particularly, whether the overall structure is suitable.

JNCC suggested that an annex was needed that outlined GSMP stakeholders and contacts with other external organisations/individuals, and the nature of these relationships (e.g. formal, informal or contractual) and where are responsibilities for specific datasets, funding, and other aspects.

WWT asked about the timetable for this and how it should dovetail into the partnership renegotiation. JNCC needs to move on renegotiation soon, so finishing the strategic review should be completed in the coming weeks.

JNCC suggested that it needed to be kept lean and stick to priorities for GSMP. WWT suggested that aspirational developments could be split into two areas - things for which there is a clear need, and genuine aspirational things (that won't get picked up by GSMP).

JNCC also felt that actions in AEWA action plans (Bewick's Swan & Greenland White-fronted Goose) are important drivers for action. They also indicated that there were a number of SPA issues related to annual reporting (see AOB).

SNH suggested that the review should clearly explain what is currently monitored and if there are any issues, but also what could be undertaken in the future that is essential for our understanding of demography of winter goose and swan populations.

AP16/8: All to provide any further comments on first draft of review by 16 October.

AP16/9: WWT to discuss timetable and how the review informs the next partnership with JNCC.

AP16/10: WWT to produce final draft for circulation to agreed schedule.

There is also a need to take into account the aims and data needs of GSAG within the GSMP review. CU offered to review the current GSAG priorities and see how that can match GSMP, as well as table a summary of the review at the next GSAG meeting.

AP16/11: CU to discuss the next three years of GSMP with GSAG at the September 2012 meeting.

AP16/12: WWT to draft a brief introduction document for CU/GSAG giving background to the GSMP strategic review that will enable GSAG to identify how their data needs can be met through GSMP.

6) GSMP partnership – next contract

JNCC suggested that it was best to pick this up at an extra meeting at the end of November, after completion of the strategic review. SNH were keen to participate in a similar arrangement to the current partnership from 2013/14.

AP 16/13: WWT to clarify process and timetable with JNCC.

7) Goose management policy update in Scotland

SNH said that this was currently a busy time for goose management issues in Scotland. Funding for the main goose schemes over the next three years is currently being organised; a much more modest cut in funding had been approved for this next year. An economic review had indicated that the cost of accommodating geese had been under-calculated in the past. Some additional funding had been offered to farmers but a settlement had not been agreed (one of the grievances being that the prices of diesel and fertiliser have gone up).

Adaptive management is being trialled involving British Greylag Geese - community stakeholder groups had been invited to provide bids to pay for management. Pilots are to be implemented on Islay, Orkney, Uists and Tiree. Orkney stakeholders are enthusiastic, but on Tiree there had been less enthusiasm because it potentially means shooting fewer birds. Target population sizes have not been set for Uists and Tiree.

Greenland White-fronted Geese. Following the small flocks project, SNH want to introduce management at these sites, but not much has happened recently because the above LGMS funding issues have taken priority.

8) AOB

a) Special Protection Areas

JNCC said that they were working on improving future SPA reporting, and as part of this it would be good if this had greater prominence within annual GSMP reporting. There is an identified need to be more proactive with reporting on SPAs on an annual basis, identify where there are gaps in coverage, e.g. there has been no monitoring of the main Greenland White-fronted Goose or Greenland Barnacle Goose roosts on Islay (although overall numbers are counted for population estimation purposes). Recommendations in the ongoing SPA review may provide issues for GSMP to follow up on.

AP16/14: WWT to ensure reporting needs for SPAs are considered in the strategic review.

Furthermore, for Greenland Barnacle Geese, counts from the last international census (2008) are currently being used to describe distribution for the ongoing SPA review. The next census is due in March 2013, and there is now a need for individual SPA data to be provided more consistently. Information on other possible roosts outwith SPAs is also lacking (as most birds are counted during the daytime in feeding areas).

AP16/15: WWT to ensure information on number of birds present within individual SPAs is gathered as part of the next census in March 2013, and other methodological improvements are also considered.

b) Population estimation methods

It was noted that a variety of different methods are used for various population estimates, such as spring counts, autumn counts, and so on, each with their own assumptions. It is important to document these in the strategic review.

AP16/16: WWT to clearly document how individual population estimates are produced, and the reasons for this and any associated assumptions.

9) Date of next meeting

A standard SG meeting should take place in early March 2013, but there is also likely to be a need to meet around late November 2012 regarding the partnership renegotiation (see above). Chairing of the SG meeting will pass to SNH.