



WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

Minutes for the 25th Steering Group meeting

Held 24 September 2019 at JNCC Peterborough

Attending: Simon Cohen¹ (SNH), Colette Hall (WWT), Richard Hearn (WWT), Danny Heptinstall¹ (JNCC), Kirsi Peck (JNCC), Anna Robinson (JNCC) and Helen Rowell¹ (NE)

1. Apologies for absence / introductions

- In light of staff changes in JNCC, representatives from the statutory country agencies have been asked by JNCC to join the Steering Group meetings to ensure their views are adequately represented. For this meeting, the group was joined by Helen Rowell from Natural England (NE). JNCC are waiting to hear from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Northern Ireland (DAERA) regarding who will represent these agencies. Danny Heptinstall, JNCC Adviser on the African-Eurasian Flyway, will attend meetings to inform his advisory work and to provide wider information on related international matters.

2. Operations report

The attendees were invited to ask specific questions about the survey, reporting, project and other updates presented in the 2019 GSMP operations report.

- JNCC had a query regarding the project “Developing a statistical basis for the evaluation and co-ordination of the GSMP”.
 - JNCC queried whether calculating confidence intervals for the population estimates was definitely a non-starter? WWT stated that whilst it is looking likely, there are still a few assessments of the data to be completed in order to confirm.
 - JNCC asked whether WWT would be liaising with the WeBS team at BTO who are carrying out a similar assessment of the WeBS data. WWT said this would be done in due course as part of the project.
 - WWT suggested looking into the possibility of using other reliability assessments if confidence intervals are not an option; and will ask this of their colleague who is undertaking the review.
 - JNCC requested that WWT ensure that the assessment of the survey methods being carried out as part of the project is not forgotten; and remarked that an appraisal of the methods is good to have for quality assurance.
- SNH raised a concern regarding the item in the operations report that mentions the difficulty in obtaining a good assessment of Icelandic Greylag Goose breeding success, and asked whether the survey might benefit from some capacity building.
 - WWT highlighted that, as we all know, it has become difficult to undertake age assessments due to the mixing of the two populations in Britain, and there is now only one area where we can monitor the Icelandic birds; and suggested that one possibility would be to work with colleagues in Iceland to see if there is an option of ageing the geese in Iceland before they migrate.
- WWT noted that in recent years there has been a need to cover fuel and ferry expenses for the volunteer Icelandic-breeding Goose Census (IGC) counters on Orkney. Without this support, it is unlikely that a complete count would be undertaken in Orkney. As this expenditure had not been set

¹ Via phone link.

out in the 2017/8 – 2021/22 GSMP budget, WWT has had to cover the cost separately. Therefore, WWT asked JNCC/SNH whether it would be acceptable to re-allocate underspend from the GSMP budget to cover the additional expenditure. All agreed.

- JNCC had a query relating to the 2019 edition of *GooseNews*, asking why an article about the use of GSMP data (an idea that had been put forward at the previous steering group meeting) had not been included. WWT responded to say that articles had been received from the volunteer network and there wasn't enough space for another; so given it is good to have as much network input into the newsletter as possible, it did not seem appropriate to drop one in favour of the data use article, which would have been written by WWT.
 - JNCC requested that the article be a priority for the next edition as such articles have been shown to encourage observer networks to allow their data to be openly used. WWT agreed and asked whether JNCC would be happy to lead in writing the article. JNCC agreed. JNCC will ask the country agencies if there have been any case studies where GSMP data were used, which could be included in the article as examples of data use.
- ❖ **AP25/1: JNCC to write an article for the 2020 edition of *GooseNews* which explains how GSMP data are used.**
- WWT highlighted that they have produced a set of aging guides for two of the goose populations [Dark-bellied Brent Goose and Pink-footed Goose] and asked JNCC and SNH if they would like to comment on the documents before they are published. JNCC said that it would be nice to have a look at them, though they may not be able to comment on the method, but may have other suggestions.
- ❖ **AP25/2: WWT to circulate the aging guides for Dark-bellied Brent Goose and Pink-footed Goose to JNCC and SNH for comment.**

3. GSMP administrative items / management

a) Data access documentation

JNCC and WWT discussed a few of the remaining issues surrounding the completion of the GSMP data access policy.

- Still outstanding in the draft policy is the timescale for making the International Greenland Barnacle Goose data available.
 - SNH noted that the data are collected by a mix of volunteers and others who are organised in an 'informal' manner.
 - SNH agreed that the data could be made available under an OGL.
 - There was a similar discussion regarding the annual counts of Greenland Barnacle Geese.
 - JNCC suggested altering the draft policy to identify SNH led surveys as GSMP surveys in Table 1, rather than third party surveys, because SNH is a GSMP partner.
 - JNCC encouraged SNH to liaise with their counter network regarding making their data available under an OGL; and suggested WWT forward a copy of their data agreement for participants in WWT organised surveys to SNH.
- ❖ **AP25/3: SNH to liaise with regional office(s) to suggest that counters involved in surveys organised under the GSMP need to be made aware that the records they provide will be made available under an OGL.**
- ❖ **AP25/4: WWT to send SNH a copy of the data agreement for GSMP participants.**
- Still outstanding in the draft policy was agreeing the text regarding how summary GSMP data will be made available. JNCC asked WWT whether there had been any progress in contacting third parties regarding the use of the data they supply to the GSMP.
 - WWT said that this was still in progress, and the delay was due to the policy not having been wholly agreed [at the time of this Steering Group meeting]: the agreement details needed to be

confirmed before WWT could talk to third parties about what the Partnership would be asking of them.

- JNCC requested that WWT make it a priority to contact the third parties in the weeks following the meeting; however, JNCC will adapt the text to account for third party agreement not being obtained in the near future, so that the policy could be finalised and signed off.

❖ **AP25/5: WWT to contact third parties within the three weeks following the Steering Group meeting to discuss the possibility of making the summary data they provide to GSMP available under an OGL.**

❖ **AP25/6: JNCC to circulate a revised version of the GSMP data access policy document.**

4. Update on Local Goose Management Schemes

SNH gave a brief update on the Local Goose Management Schemes (LGMS) in Scotland.

- There are a few goose management schemes in place that help land managers support populations of wintering geese on their land. These schemes run in parallel to the agri-environment schemes. The goose management scheme around Loch of Strathbeg has now closed. The other schemes continue but are under review, and will be considered alongside any future changes to the agri-environment schemes.
- Pilot adaptive management schemes for Greylag Geese were set up on Orkney, Tiree and the Outer Hebrides. The schemes ran for three years [until 2017] with the idea that local goose management groups (LGMG) would subsequently continue to run the schemes without SNH support. This initially did not happen. There is a fund to help LGMGs develop a sustainable approach to goose management; however, the fund only runs until March 2020. The LGMGs will then need to be self-sustaining, for example, by selling goose meat. Permission has recently been granted by SNH to allow goose meat to be sold across Scotland, whereas it was initially only permitted on the islands. It is unclear whether SNH will continue to pay for goose monitoring in the management areas and there is no requirement for local groups to monitor the geese.
- A new two-year scheme [2019 – 2021] designed to help land managers support Barnacle Geese at suitable sites on Tiree, Coll and the Uists has now been rolled-out by SNH.

5. Update on EGMP

JNCC gave a brief update on the AEWA European Goose Management Platform (EGMP).

- The outcomes of the EGMP became more relevant to the UK when the management of Barnacle Geese across all flyways was agreed at the AEWA MOP in December 2018. Management plans are being developed but the content has yet to be agreed.
- The priority population is the Greenland Barnacle Goose; therefore, JNCC and SNH representatives will be attending a governmental meeting in Iceland [in October 2019] to discuss how to take forward the development of a management plan. The discussion will likely include the need for population and site level monitoring data. How feedback from the meeting will be disseminated will also be agreed at the meeting, but the intention is to be as open as possible about the outcomes.

6. Status and monitoring of goose populations

a) Greylag Geese

WWT raised the subject of monitoring Iceland Greylag Geese in the UK, and the difficulties that this now presents due to the mixing with the British population; and to raise greater awareness that there is an urgent need to develop other monitoring projects for the Iceland population.

- Following on from the update on monitoring of geese in goose management areas, it was highlighted that Orkney is a key region for GSMP in terms of understanding the number of birds present from both populations [Icelandic and British], with Caithness being another key area. A lack of sufficiently-

frequent monitoring of the British population on Orkney makes it difficult to accurately assess the size of Icelandic population.

- It was noted that SNH had undertaken a late-summer survey of Greylag Geese on Orkney in 2019, with an estimated c. 23,000 counted. Indications from the 2019 survey suggest that the majority of Greylags were located on the outer islands with fewer on Mainland, which is the opposite of the distribution observed during the IGC, when Icelandic birds are also present. Given Mainland is the island where culling of geese occurs, this could be one reason why the number of British birds has stabilised and the number of Icelandic birds has apparently decreased substantially.
 - One suggestion to strengthen future monitoring could be to use colour-marking of geese so that it was possible to estimate proportions of the two populations in the field. It was also suggested that, ideally, there is a need to understand what level of involvement Icelandic colleagues would like to have/are able to have in future monitoring.
 - JNCC suggested that there may be an opportunity to talk to Icelandic representatives at the Barnacle Goose management plan meeting in October, to discuss possible collaborations to improve Greylag Goose monitoring: the key point to raise would be the need to hold a workshop between experts in Iceland and Britain to talk about shared population monitoring is important so we can get an understanding of the level of involvement Iceland is willing to take. If the opportunity does arise, JNCC will provide feedback to the steering group.
- ❖ **AP25/7: JNCC to provide feedback from any discussions with Icelandic colleagues regarding monitoring of Greylag Geese held at the October goose management plan meeting.**

b) Other populations

The attendees were invited to raise any issues regarding monitoring of other goose populations.

- WWT mentioned that there are some growing challenges in monitoring Pink-footed Geese. A WWT tracking project has shown that geese are starting to use what may potentially be new roost sites, which aren't currently monitored for the IGC. WWT have asked the network to help cover any accessible sites that have been identified. However, there may also be other sites that we do not know about, particularly with the increasing size of the population. WWT will continue to monitor the situation.

7. Progress against actions of 24th meeting

Actions from previous Steering Group meetings were reviewed.

Reference number	Action	Progress	Status
AP23/3	WWT to contact Orkney IGC network to ask for information on Greylag Goose roost sites in the islands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This was put on hold whilst a new Local Organiser was sought for the site. As of 2019, this is looking more likely to have been solved, and the action can potentially be taken forward. Suggestions on what is required include: assess what knowledge exists; carry out a project to assess the accuracy of the information [note, this latter point would not be expected of the volunteers]. 	Carried over
AP23/11	WWT to map the current GSMP data flow and circulate to the Steering Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is in progress and is being carried out as part of a wider review of GSMP processes that are being documented. JNCC noted that this information will be useful as part of their QA process, and seeing a draft copy would also be useful at this stage. <p>❖ AP25/8: WWT to send JNCC a copy of the draft version of the GSMP data flow documentation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a side note, JNCC suggested that it would be useful to have a 1-2 page summary describing GSMP and the benefits of the scheme, which could be disseminated to any relevant policy people, stakeholders <i>etc.</i> All agreed. <p>❖ AP25/9: WWT to draft a summary of the GSMP and the benefits of the scheme.</p>	Carried over
AP24/1	WWT to produce a variant of the GSMP Operations Report for circulation within the country agencies. JNCC and SNH to circulate as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was agreed that the report should continue to be circulated within the agencies and JNCC offered to circulate future reports to the appropriate people. 	Discharged

Reference number	Action	Progress	Status
AP24/2	SNH to investigate the agency's potential involvement in organising the IGC in Orkney and whether some funds may be available for expenses for the Orkney counter network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNH stated that it is uncertain whether funding will be possible but will look into whether there are any options. 	Carried over
AP24/3	SNH to provide an update to the Steering Group on the outcomes of the National Goose Group meeting [taking place in October 2018]. [Refers to National Goose Forum].	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still to be followed up. 	Carried over
AP24/4	SNH to review the draft 2018 International Greenland Barnacle Goose Census report and provide comments to WWT as soon as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNH explained that the report is sitting with the SNH review group, but it should be ready for publication in October 2019. 	Discharged
AP24/5	WWT to contact NPWS and the IGBGC census coordinators in Ireland regarding the possibility of a joint scientific paper.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The initial contact with NPWS suggested that a separate paper would be preferable. The action was then put on hold when the publication of the paper reporting on the Scottish results was delayed; and given the length of the delay, it was uncertain whether a joint paper would be now be worth taking forward. JNCC stated that NPWS now have more capacity with the appointment of a new member of staff. All agreed that it would now be worth following up with NPWS, both to ask on the status of the Irish paper and the idea of a joint paper to report on the overall results for Scotland and Ireland. <p>❖ AP25/10: WWT to contact NPWS to ask about the status of the report on the Irish results of the International Greenland Barnacle Goose Census, and discuss the possibility of a joint report describing the overall results for Scotland and Ireland.</p>	Replaced with AP25/10
AP24/6	WWT to review the feasibility of ceasing the print run of <i>GooseNews</i> : including looking into the practicalities of printing the newsletter internally and asking for participant feedback in the 2019 edition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWT have asked for feedback from the network regarding ceasing the print run – included in the annual feedback to the network in September 2019. A review of the sustainability and practicality of printing in-house versus using external printers will be carried out during 2019/20. 	Replaced with AP25/11

Reference number	Action	Progress	Status
		❖ AP25/11: WWT to undertake a review of the sustainability and practicality of printing <i>GooseNews</i> in-house versus using external printers.	
AP24/7	WWT to provide further details about the proposed method(s) for calculating confidence intervals for population estimates derived from GSMP data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An updated version of the project outline was circulated by WWT to the steering group in April 2019. 	Discharged
AP24/8	WWT to provide JNCC with a short brief outlining key message regarding the need for increased collaboration between Iceland and the UK on goose monitoring and management etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWT provided JNCC with the brief in December 2018. 	Discharged
AP24/9	WWT to contact Icelandic colleagues to inform them of the possible discussion between JNCC and representatives from the Icelandic Ministry at the Ramsar COP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the 24th SG meeting, it was determined that the representatives from Iceland would not be attending the Ramsar COP. 	Discharged
AP24/10	WWT to circulate the Hvanneyri 2 workshop proposal to the Steering Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WWT circulated the document to the steering group in December 2018. 	Discharged
AP24/11	SNH to confirm timescales for releasing data from the International Greenland Barnacle Goose Census for distribution as per the GSMP data access agreement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNH agreed at the meeting that the timescales for the release of the census data could follow that of the other censuses i.e. the October following the season in which the data were collected. 	Discharged
AP24/12	WWT to draft text that informs the network about the use of data under the OGL at the point of data submission in order to collate permissions, and circulate to JNCC for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed in November 2018. 	Discharged
AP24/13	WWT to provide a summary of the current data validation process to JNCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is in progress and is being carried out as part of a wider review of GSMP processes that are being documented. 	Carried over
AP24/14	WWT to talk to third party data providers to encourage them to agree to the OGL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See Section 3 above for discussion notes relevant to this action. 	Replaced with AP25/5
AP24/15	WWT to update the terms & conditions for provision and use of GSMP data, which are currently available on WWT's Waterbird Monitoring website (on sign off of data access agreement).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be followed up on completion of data access agreement. 	Carried over

Reference number	Action	Progress	Status
AP24/16	WWT to update the data request process currently shown on WWT's Waterbird Monitoring website, to take into consideration the new data access policy (on sign off of data access agreement).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be followed up on completion of data access agreement. 	Carried over
AP24/17	JNCC/WWT to review the GSMP population estimates method paper: latest version is thought to be with JNCC. WWT to remind JNCC in early 2019.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was agreed at the meeting with JNCC in May 2019 that this would not be taken any further. However, there will be some overlap with the statistical review project currently being undertaken. 	Discharged
AP24/18	WWT to send a copy of the IGC surveillance review to the SG. All to review to assess suitability for public dissemination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was agreed at the meeting with JNCC in May 2019 that the completion of the review was not necessary: given that the review was now dated and that there would be some overlap with the statistical review project currently being undertaken. 	Discharged
AP24/19	JNCC to send WWT a revised copy of the GSMP MOA with any necessary changes to content relating to data protection. WWT to review and return any comments to JNCC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JNCC had informed WWT at the meeting in May 2019 that having reviewed the MOA, JNCC would not be making any changes. JNCC will provide WWT with a statement explaining this decision. <p>❖ AP25/12: JNCC to provide WWT with a statement to explain their decision to not make any changes to the GSMP MOA in relation to data protection.</p>	Discharged

8. AOB

a) Quarterly reports: would SNH be interested in receiving these and, if so, is JNCC happy for the reports to be circulated to all Steering Group members? (WWT)

➤ Although SNH indicated that it was not necessary to forward the report, JNCC suggested that WWT circulate the next report to the Steering Group and associated group (country agency reps) and the individuals could then decide if it was relevant.

b) For information: in October 2019, there is a bilateral meeting between UK and Iceland to discuss goose management (WWT)

➤ This point was picked up in the update on the EGMP (see Section 5 above).

c) Status of the 2018 International Greenland Barnacle Goose Census report (SNH)

➤ This was picked up in the progress against actions (see Section 7 above) under action point AP24/4.

d) Change in nominated officers (WWT)

➤ Due to a change of role for Richard Hearn at WWT, he will be handing over the responsibility of being WWT's nominated officer for the GSMP. A replacement has not yet been appointed; but this will likely be decided in the next few months as other new roles at WWT are filled.

➤ Kirsi took the opportunity to thank Richard on behalf of the rest of the steering group and JNCC for his contribution to the GSMP over the years.

e) EQA audit of GSMP (JNCC)

JNCC explained that an audit log will be undertaken every six months [an internal JNCC process], but it will not require regular input regarding the GSMP. However, JNCC are carrying out a current review of the status of the monitoring schemes in relation to QA and JNCC will send WWT the draft for further discussion (see AP25/8).

f) Habitat recording at count sites (JNCC)

➤ JNCC asked how much habitat data are currently collected through the GSMP surveys and whether there would be any possibility to collect more: it could be useful information for looking at why birds may change sites; and also possibly for a habitat mapping assessment that JNCC are undertaking. WWT stated that apart from habitat type being recorded during age assessments and as part of the ISC, though it is not an absolute requirement of either survey, it is not recorded in any other way; that it is unlikely there would be a need for more habitat data to be collected for GSMP surveys; that if we were to ask the network for additional information it would need some thought on how to approach collecting the data in a standardised way, and not overloading the network by asking them to collect more data; perhaps would need to be a separate exercise; and that the common survey method for the IGC is counts at roost which does not lend itself to habitat mapping as it often dark when counters arrive / leave the site.

9. Date of next meeting

➤ WWT asked if it would be possible to shift future steering group meetings to early October to allow more time between the end of the GSMP reporting period (mid-September) and the meeting in order to prepare and circulate documents. All agreed.

➤ All agreed that the 25th GSMP Steering Group meeting should be held in early October 2020. WWT will circulate proposed dates in due course. JNCC will circulate the list of the country agency representatives who will be invited to future meetings.

Appendix 1: Action points from the 25th GSMP Steering Group meeting

Actions from the 25th meeting and any outstanding actions to be carried from previous meetings.

Reference number	Action	Responsible
AP23/3	Contact Orkney IGC network to ask for information on Greylag Goose roost sites in the islands.	WWT
AP23/11	Map the current GSMP data flow and circulate to the Steering Group.	WWT
AP24/2	Investigate the agency's potential involvement in organising the IGC in Orkney and whether some funds may be available for expenses for the Orkney counter network.	SNH
AP24/3	Provide an update to the Steering Group on the outcomes of the National Goose Group meeting [taking place in October 2018].	SNH
AP24/11	Confirm timescales for releasing data from the International Greenland Barnacle Goose Census for distribution as per the GSMP data access agreement.	SNH
AP24/13	Provide a summary of the current data validation process to JNCC	WWT
AP24/14	Talk to third party data providers to encourage them to agree to the OGL	WWT
AP24/15	Update the terms & conditions for provision and use of GSMP data, which are currently available on WWT's Waterbird Monitoring website (on sign off of data access agreement).	WWT
AP24/16	Update the data request process currently shown on WWT's Waterbird Monitoring website, to take into consideration the new data access policy (on sign off of data access agreement).	WWT
AP25/1	Write an article for the 2020 edition of <i>GooseNews</i> which explains how GSMP data are used.	JNCC
AP25/2	Circulate the ageing guides for Dark-bellied Brent Goose and Pink-footed Goose to JNCC and SNH for comment.	WWT

Reference number	Action	Responsible
AP25/3	Liaise with regional office(s) to check that counters involved in surveys organised under the GSMP are made aware that the records they provide will be made available under an OGL.	SNH
AP25/4	Send SNH a copy of the data agreement for GSMP participants.	WWT
AP25/5	Contact third parties within the three weeks following the Steering Group meeting to discuss the possibility of making the summary data they provide to GSMP available under an OGL.	WWT
AP25/6	Circulate a revised version of the GSMP data access policy document.	JNCC
AP25/7	Provide feedback from any discussions with Icelandic colleagues regarding monitoring of Greylag Geese held at the October goose management plan meeting.	JNCC
AP25/8	Send JNCC a copy of the draft version of the GSMP data flow documentation.	WWT
AP25/9	Draft a summary of the GSMP and the benefits of the scheme.	WWT
AP25/10	Contact NPWS to ask about the status of the report on the Irish results of the International Greenland Barnacle Goose Census, and discuss the possibility of a joint report describing the overall results for Scotland and Ireland.	WWT
AP25/11	Undertake a review of the sustainability and practicality of printing <i>GooseNews</i> in-house versus using external printers.	WWT
AP25/12	Provide WWT with a statement to explain their decision to not make any changes to the GSMP MOA in relation to data protection.	JNCC