



WWT/JNCC/NatureScot Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

Minutes for the 26th Steering Group meeting

Held 12 November 2020, virtual meeting

Attending: Simon Cohen (SNH), Colette Hall (WWT), Danny Heptinstall (JNCC), Geoff Hilton (WWT), Rebecca Laidlaw (NRW), Kirsi Peck (JNCC), Anna Robinson (JNCC) and Helen Rowell (NE).

1. Welcome / apologies for absence / introductions

- KP chaired the meeting. Matt Murphy (NRW), Neil McCulloch (NIEA) and Eileen Rees had sent their apologies for being unable to attend the meeting.
- The group welcomed RL who was standing in for MM, and GH, who had been invited to present a GSMP update but was also standing in for ER.

2. Operations report

WWT repeated a few highlights from the 2020 GSMP operations report and the attendees were invited to ask specific questions about the survey, reporting, project and other updates presented in the report.

- There were very few comments or questions from the group.
- In reference to monitoring the Iceland Greylag Goose population, JNCC communicated some information from recent goose management meetings. The Icelandic government is interested in gathering more data on Icelandic geese. There are currently issues in Iceland surrounding the ways hunting is managed and the laws in Iceland are possibly changing; this may lead to opportunities for collaboration between the UK and Iceland in terms of monitoring Icelandic goose populations.
- In reference to scheme publicity, JNCC noted that an article about the GSMP had been published in the winter 2020 edition of *JNCC Nature News* (<https://jncc.gov.uk/news/winter-2020-nature-news/>).
- JNCC asked if progress had been made in updating the GSMP website to include information about data access and the new terms and conditions for use of data. WWT noted that information had been added to the species account pages to inform on use of summary data; however, the data request page has yet to be changed but will be updated in due course.
- In reference to the project 'Developing a statistical basis for evaluation and coordination of the GSMP', JNCC will comment on the report as soon as possible but it is uncertain when this will be due other work commitments. WWT relayed that BTO has seen the report and would be in touch with WWT in due course to discuss further: a similar project is being considered for WeBS.

3. GSMP administrative items / management

COVID-19 impact on the GSMP

- WWT informed the group that as most of the surveys were complete by March 2020 the restrictions introduced as a result of the pandemic did not greatly affect the scheme: with the exception of the

Svalbard Barnacle Goose Survey (the April and May counts were cancelled), and the Greenland White-fronted Goose Census (organised by the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study) may also have been affected.

- The GSMP team at WWT were furloughed during spring and early summer; however, this only delayed the reporting by a month, as staff returned in July, and contact with the network regarding the 2020/21 survey season took place as usual in September.
- A set of COVID-19 guidance notes was circulated to the network in September/October 2020, and is available on the GSMP website.
- Few members of the network had informed WWT that they would not be able to take part in the October 2020 censuses, though until all the data have all been entered and checked, the extent of gaps in coverage will not be wholly clear.
- Following further changes introduced by the governments in early November 2020, WWT had contacted the network to inform on the situation in terms of taking part in surveys: it had been confirmed that volunteer surveys in England were possible but it was not clear if surveys in Scotland could take place in all areas (due to travel restrictions in/out of certain tiers), and the network should follow the local restrictions in place. WWT were awaiting further guidance on whether traveling between areas in Scotland was permitted for volunteer surveys.

4. Update on Local Goose Management Schemes

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

- The schemes relating to Annex 1 species have been extended to 2023 with the same level of funding. Ways in which to integrate these schemes with post Brexit agri-environment schemes (or equivalent of) will be investigated.
- A management scheme for Bean Geese will hopefully be introduced in 2023.
- The management scheme for Pink-footed Geese at Loch of Strathbeg will come to an end next year: there has been a drop in participants.
- A proposal to extend the funding for Greylag Goose management schemes has not yet been successful. The schemes are now run by the local goose management groups and are meant to be self-sustaining. The local groups undertake the Greylag counts (if any) that take place. Greylag Goose (both populations) is a Schedule 1 species in some parts of Scotland, including in some areas where management schemes are in place; however, this has not yet been fully raised as an issue.
- The objective is for NatureScot to withdraw funding, eventually, from all goose management schemes.
- The Islay management scheme, for Greenland Barnacle and Greenland White-fronted Geese ends in 2021. The next step will then be to fully align the scheme with the EGMP process: in broad terms, how the geese are managed will depend on the impact they have.

5. Update on the EGMP and AEWA

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

EGMP

- The process adopted by the EGMP looks at management and conservation across the entire flyway of a goose population; a management scheme can take place anywhere within the flyway as long as it does not adversely affect the overall outcome of the agreed management plan for the whole population. The EGMP intends to produce a framework for goose management plans that can be used by individual governments to produce their own country specific plans.
- In the UK, the EGMP schemes are primarily related to goose populations that occur in Scotland. The East Greenland Barnacle Goose management plan is almost at the implementation stage. A plan for

the Svalbard Barnacle Goose will follow: a similar approach to that used to develop the Greenland Barnacle Goose plan will be applied.

- WWT noted that the EGMP had requested census data for the Svalbard Barnacle Goose, ideally by the start of March following the count season (e.g. March 2021 for the 2020/21 season). This is earlier than the GSMP reporting process (which is in August) so WWT will need to check if the data collected by end of February are sufficient to meet the needs of the EGMP's reporting. JNCC noted that it is a requirement for reports to be produced by June; hence, the data being needed earlier in the year.
- WWT mentioned that a PhD student has taken some time out of their studies to run models on Barnacle Geese for the EGMP, a project funded by NatueScot.

AEWA

- There is a three-yearly cycle for reporting on the status of AEWA species, with reports needed in time for the AEWA Meeting of Parties: the UK has continued to do this. JNCC is currently in the process of producing the next national report for AEWA, including how geese and swans are monitored, and how GSMP is a source of data for these populations. There is a requirement to report to AEWA at the UK level; however, it is currently uncertain how data could be compiled for each of the four countries individually if needed in the future.

6. GSMP going forward

- WWT gave a brief overview of planned changes in priorities and work programmes within the organisation. [To summarise] Following an internal review, WWT has decided to focus efforts on particular areas of work whilst dialling down others. As a result, WWT will not be tendering for the next GSMP contract: the current contract ends in March 2022.
- WWT presented a set of discussion points to gather thoughts and suggestions about i) the completion of GSMP operations 2020–2022, ii) WWT closing of GSMP operations, iii) a strategic review and iv) handover of GSMP to a new Secretariat. WWT will expand on the discussion points to aid in planning these four areas. A few of the suggestions put forward and discussed are documented below.

Completion of GSMP operations 2020–2022

Considering what is required to complete the current contract.

- Count Unit Definition Inventory (CUDI) – mapping count unit boundaries. It was agreed that this project should be completed if possible: the output will be a useful tool for the next Secretariat and it is important to capture the information held by the network of observers and Local Organisers, who may not continue to take part in the future. There will likely be a need to drop the more complex IT aspect for online capture of information; however, a low tech approach may be possible.
- Historical data input: past data (prior to early 1980s) are not all computerised. A WWT volunteer has started to look in to this; but is it worth completing? Suggestion: review the amount of data, and for which years, have yet to be entered, and also the resources needed so an assessment can be made of whether it is necessary to input all these data prior to a handover of the GSMP.
- It was suggested that perhaps WWT could start discussions with colleagues in Iceland regarding Iceland Greylag Goose monitoring, as WWT already have relations in place. The idea of revisiting the 'Hvanneyri II' workshop proposal (to hold a stakeholder workshop to discuss goose monitoring, particularly Icelandic geese) was put forward, possibly to take place towards the end of 2021: WWT will need to discuss this internally to determine if this will be possible.
- The data access attributes, data use terms and conditions and the revised data request process need to be added to the GSMP website.

WWT closing of GSMP operations

Considering what WWT need to do to close current operations

- Communication with the volunteer network to inform them of WWT's decision to withdraw from the GSMP at the end of the current contract. Suggestions included: emphasise that goose/swan monitoring will continue whatever happens, and that volunteers will still be able to take part; use social media to inform on the changes; approach the communication from a volunteer's perspective, possibly as a set of FAQs e.g. What does this mean for me as a counter?; suggest there is a need to communicate the change soon (possibly before Christmas) so the news comes from WWT rather than through rumours.
- It was noted that reporting for the 2021/22 season falls out with the current contract. JNCC indicated that it would like to see the reporting for the season completed but there will be a need to look at what is possible e.g. extending the current contract to cover the reporting period.
- A query was raised asking JNCC when the contract renewal process might start. JNCC suggested possibly in a year or so. Part of the process will be a stock take of data requirements and the main uses of data, which would involve discussions with the country agencies.

Strategic review

WWT will be undertaking a review of the GSMP, similar to that carried out previously towards the end of a GSMP contract. WWT asked the Steering Group if there is anything in particular they would like the review to include given it will be WWT's final review.

- Few thoughts were put forward during the meeting; however, it was agreed that it should include a suggestion of how WWT would see the GSMP continuing in the future; and also that the review would help provide a framework for what the GSMP could be going forward.
- JNCC noted that the review should complement any review JNCC will be undertaking of the GSMP in preparation for the next contract, which could be similar to a review of WeBS as the contract for that scheme will be ending at the same time.
- It was suggested that, if possible, it would be of benefit to JNCC for WWT to complete the review by spring 2021 so that it could inform discussions around the next contract; however, JNCC will need to discuss timings of contract renewal process with colleagues.

Handover of GSMP to a new Secretariat

- WWT briefly highlighted a few items that need to be considered for handover of the GSMP; there was little for the Steering Group to add at this stage, but discussions will be needed in due course.

7. Progress against actions of 25th 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. [For context – see SG23 minutes, section 4c. Survey updates https://monitoring.wwt.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/GSMP-Steering-Group-minutes-23rd-meeting.pdf]	This had been put on hold until the Local Organiser (LO) position had been filled as WWT does not have contact with all Orkney counters. LO now in place (though may still be temporary). WWT asked if the information is still required. AP26/1: NatureScot / JNCC to consider whether this information will still be useful and worth collating at this point. AP26/2: NatureScot to find out if data already available.	On hold - until further decision made
AP23/11	WWT to map the current GSMP data flow and circulate to the Steering Group.	WWT sent this to JNCC as part of a different exercise but had not circulated to the whole Steering Group. It will now form part of the Strategic Review; however, WWT to circulate current document in the meantime.	Carried over
AP24/2	NatureScot 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.	Funding needed for survey work was included in NatureScot's initial budget plan; however, the final funding for goose work was lower than hoped. However, this can be looked in to again to see what may be possible for 2021. AP26/3: NatureScot to confirm if some funds may be available for Orkney IGC counter network expenses.	Replaced with AP26/3
AP24/3	NatureScot to provide an update to the Steering Group on the outcomes of the National Goose Forum meeting, taking place in October 2018.	The minutes of the Forum meeting are available online at https://www.gov.scot/groups/national-goose-forum/	Discharged
AP24/11	NatureScot to confirm timescales for releasing data from the International Greenland Barnacle Goose Census for distribution as per the GSMP data access agreement.	The data from the 2018 census can now be made available as the report has been published. The data from the 2020 census can be made	Completed

Reference number	Action	Progress	Status
		available once the report has been completed, which is due at the end of 2020	
AP24/13	WWT to provide a summary of the current data validation process to JNCC	This is in progress but had stalled due to other work priorities; however, it will form part of the review process and will also be outlined in more detail in the manuals due to be produced (as part of WWT's closure of the GSMP). WWT will provide summary to JNCC.	Carried over
AP24/14	WWT to talk to third party data providers to encourage them to agree to the OGL	These conversations have begun, with a few contributors agreeing to the OGL; but it is an ongoing process and will ideally also form part of the discussions with third parties when deciding on how GSMP is to continue going forward.	Discharged (but discussions will continue)
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).	Attributes for use of summary data under OGL have been added to the online species accounts. The terms and conditions have been written. The few data requests (<5) that have been received since the data access agreement was signed	Carried over
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).	off have been processed as per the new data access agreement with the T&C supplied. However, the update to the website was delayed due to staff being furloughed – updates to the website were due to take place in the spring. This will be done in due course.	Carried over
AP25/1	JNCC to write an article for the 2020 edition of <i>GooseNews</i> which explains how GSMP data are used.	Article was published in <i>GooseNews</i> 19, autumn 2020	Completed

Reference number	Action	Progress	Status
AP25/2	WWT to circulate the ageing guides for Dark-bellied Brent Goose and Pink-footed Goose to JNCC and SNH for comment.	This was done and the completed guides will be added to the website in due course.	Completed
AP25/3	NatureScot to 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.	This has been raised but need to check on progress. AP26/4 NatureScot to check whether counters for surveys organised/contracted by NatureScot have been made aware that their data will be made available under an OGL.	Replaced by AP26/4
AP25/4	WWT to send NatureScot a copy of the data agreement for GSMP participants.		Completed
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.	As per AP24/14: discussions were started, with a few contributors agreeing, but there are further discussions to be had with other contributors.	Discharged – but discussions will continue
AP25/6	JNCC to circulate a revised version of the GSMP data access policy document.		Completed
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. [Refers to the EGMP Barnacle Goose management plan meeting October 2019.]	See section '2 Operations report' above.	Completed
AP25/8	WWT to send JNCC a copy of the draft version of the GSMP data flow documentation.		Completed
AP25/9	WWT to draft a summary of the GSMP and the benefits of the scheme.	Agreed that this is not a top priority at present, but could be considered again in due course.	Discharged

Reference number	Action	Progress	Status
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.	WWT spoke to NPWS and it was agreed that a joint paper would be a good idea. Due to staff changes, WWT will need to consider whether WWT will be able to lead on producing the paper.	Completed
AP25/11	WWT to undertake a review of the sustainability and practicality of printing <i>GooseNews</i> in-house versus using external printers.	This was started but not completed. However, so few paper copies are now required, and given WWT's withdrawal, the cost-benefit of a review at this stage is low.	Discharged
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.		Completed

8. AOB

- JNCC provided a brief overview of a couple of Terrestrial Evidence Partnership of Partnerships (TEPoP) events.
 - The TEPoP annual meeting was held online and included workshops on diversity within the schemes' volunteer networks and Official Statistics.
 - Following the diversity workshop, JNCC asked for thoughts on whether it might be possible for schemes to adapt their respective databases to collect diversity information in order to better understand volunteer diversity within schemes; and also for suggestions of possible barriers that may prevent people taking part in the schemes. Members of the Steering Group can email JNCC reps with any thoughts and suggestions.
 - For the Official Statistics, results from the GSMP feed into the analysis via WeBS. Going forward, JNCC need to consider if this is still the best approach, whilst taking into consideration whether any changes will conform to the codes of practice, timetables and reporting requirements.
- WWT noted that for the GSMP, a separate exercise would be needed to collect diversity information about the network rather than collecting the data at the point of registration: the majority of current counters have already registered and there is only one recording season left [2021/22] before the end of the current contract so it is unlikely that many new counters will join before WWT handover the scheme. Also, in terms of Official Statistics, it is worth noting that the GSMP reports on the results during the summer following the data collection season and thus puts the scheme almost a year ahead of the WeBS reporting timetable and also potentially ahead of the timetable for reporting on Official Statistics.

9. Date of next meeting

Agreed that next meeting will be held in autumn 2021.

Appendix 1: Action points from the 26th GSMP Steering Group meeting

Actions from the 26th meeting and any outstanding actions carried over from previous meetings.

Reference number	Action	Responsible
AP23/11	Map the current GSMP data flow and circulate to the Steering Group.	WWT
AP24/13	Provide a summary of the current data validation process to JNCC.	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
AP26/1	Regarding contacting Orkney IGC network to ask for information on Greylag Goose roost sites in the islands. NatureScot and JNCC to consider whether this information will still be useful and worth collating at this point. [See section 7, AP23/3 for further detail]	NatureScot/JNCC
AP26/2	Regarding contacting Orkney IGC network to ask for information on Greylag Goose roost sites in the islands. NatureScot to find out if data already available. [See section 7, AP23/3 for further detail]	NatureScot
AP26/3	Confirm if some funds may be available for Orkney IGC counter network expenses.	NatureScot
AP26/4	Check whether counters for surveys organised/contracted by NatureScot have been made aware that their data will be made available under an OGL.	NatureScot