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Chair

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Location/Affiliation

Institute of Geography, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

Number of members

408

Social networks

Facebook: Goose Specialist Group

Website: www.geese.org/gsg/

Mission statement

The Goose Specialist Group (GSG) seeks to strengthen contacts between all researchers on migratory goose populations in the northern hemisphere by organising regular scientific conferences and stimulating research on population dynamics of geese.

Projected impact for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

By the end of 2020, we will make a revision of current IUCN Red List status of goose species of concern in Europe. Addressing the conservation and management of declining, as well as growing, goose populations in Europe calls for a coordinated flyway approach amongst all range states concerned. To facilitate and implement such an approach, a European Goose Management Platform was established under the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA), as called for by the AEWA Parties through Resolution 6.14. By the end of 2020, we expect acceptance of the Platform in most AEWA countries.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Red List: assess global status of Red-breasted Goose (*Branta ruficollis*) through intensive monitoring and satellite tracking at staging and wintering areas.

Research activities: investigate local movement and behaviour of geese wintering in Lower Saxony (Germany) and assess environmental factors affecting local movement and behaviour.

Act

Conservation actions: (1) recovery of the Red-breasted Goose population through reduction and mitigation of poaching and illegal hunting impact at key staging and wintering

areas; (2) investigate changes in migration route and dynamic and search for possible new staging and wintering areas of the Red-breasted Goose through satellite tracking.

Plan

Planning: develop a coordinated flyway monitoring protocol for the Red-breasted Goose.

Policy: development and adoption of a National Species Action Plan for the Red-breasted Goose in Romania and Kazakhstan.

Communicate

Communication: raise awareness about Red-breasted Goose and threatened waterfowl at key staging areas in range countries.

Scientific meetings: organise the 19th Conference of the Goose Specialist Group.

Activities and results 2019

Assess

Research activities

i. Tracking of Red-breasted Geese started with delay of one year due to low numbers in traditional wintering grounds preventing catching attempts in 2018; in January–February 2019 again low numbers in Bulgaria reduced possibilities for catching and the field team of the Bulgarian Society for the Protection Birds (BSPB) was attacked by poachers shooting down the team car. Legal permit problems prevented fitting tags to birds in Kazakhstan in 2018, but in May 2019 eventually 10 birds were fitted with GPS-GSM tags in Kazakhstan, in cooperation with the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK) and North Kazakhstan University. In total at least 20 more tags are to be fitted. One report on winter monitoring 2017–2018 was published. (KSR #1, 12)

ii. A report on the study of geese wintering in Lower Saxony (Germany) was created informing the Ministry of Lower Saxony. The report



is focused on the local movement of three wintering geese species: Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*) and the Barnacle Goose (*Branta leucopsis*). The report shows differences in behaviour during various hunting schemes. (KSR #12)

Act

Conservation actions

i. Spring hunting in 2019 was closed in Kalmykia; the spring hunting ban was extended successfully in Kazakhstan; no mortality of Red-breasted Geese was reported in Bulgaria in all key sites for 2019. There was 80% mortality of tagged birds during autumn migration and wintering by the end of December 2019, with losses in Russia, Kazakhstan and Romania; mortality cases of killed or injured birds from Romania were proven during the hunting period in 2019. At key wintering sites in Romania and Bulgaria, as well as in one nature park in Ukraine, patrols are organised to prevent poaching of Red-breasted Goose. Intensified patrolling is implemented in Chernie Zemly during autumn and spring, as well as in the Kostanay region of Kazakhstan. In 2019, the killing of one of the tagged Red-breasted Goose in Romania became a big case on national scale, where reports of intensive hunting at key wintering sites occurred. (KSR #34, 37)

ii. The process of satellite tracking of the Red-breasted Goose has been delayed as initial catching and tagging was envisaged to happen in Bulgaria in winter in order to follow both spring and autumn migration. However, mild winters and low numbers of geese in Bulgaria since 2018 have prevented successful catching and tagging. In February 2019, the catching team was attacked by poachers shooting down the BSPB team field car, which prevented further catching efforts. In 2018, disorder with the legal permits to catch geese in Kazakhstan prevented the LIFE project team from tagging geese there, but in

May 2019 the international team (BSPB, Wild-fowl & Wetlands Trust–WWT, ACBK, and North Kazakhstan University) successfully tagged 10 Red-breasted Goose in north Kazakhstan. As the AEWA International Working Group (IWG) proposed to ensure tagged Red-breasted Goose are available on an annual base to support on-the-ground monitoring, and given that funds allow it, these efforts will be extended beyond the initially-planned 30 tagged geese. (KSR #12)

Plan

Planning

i. A monitoring protocol for the Red-breasted Goose was developed by an international consultant (AEWA Red-breasted Goose IWG) and adopted in November 2019, based on existing experience and capacity in range countries. The protocol is focused on standardising the methods for counts and assessments in the staging and wintering countries, with a focus on autumn monitoring in Kazakhstan and winter monitoring in Ukraine, Romania and Bulgaria. A further proposal has been adopted to expand monitoring to add a sample section for monitoring at the breeding grounds based on sample plots; this proposal will depend on further funding availability. (KSR #15)

Policy

i. In Kazakhstan, ACBK has initiated a proposal for legislative changes to introduce a National Species Action Plan for the Red-breasted Goose in the law to allow development and implementation of such documents. In Romania, the first meetings to discuss the plan were held at the end of 2019, but the process is delayed by six months. (KSR #26)

Communicate

Communication

i. We raised awareness about Red-breasted Goose and threatened waterfowl in four key range countries by the end of 2019, through a company-designed interactive exhibit, which

has been translated and produced in Bulgaria, Kazakhstan and Russia (Kalmykia). Additional funding was provided to translate and produce the exhibit in Ukrainian. A Romanian version of the exhibit is the last to be produced. In Bulgaria, some 1,500 people visited the exhibit; in Kazakhstan, some 4,000 people; in Kalmykia, over 500 children. During the Tulip Festival, the management of Chernie Zemly Reserve organises nationwide events in Kalmykia with children linked to Red-breasted Goose conservation, including art and drama competitions, a children's painting competition, various quizzes, etc. (KSR #28)

Scientific meetings

i. The organising and programme committees of the 19th conference of Goose Specialist Group were formed, and the guidelines of the conference were determined: setting the scene – various aspects; dynamics of small populations; European Goose Management Platform; goose conflicts and management; hunting and predation; migration issues; migration issues two plus tools; breeding grey geese; and dynamics of breeding geese and disturbance. (KSR #28)

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Summary of activities 2019

Components of Species Conservation Cycle: 4/5

Assess	2	
Plan	2	
Act	2	
Communicate	2	

Main KSRs addressed: 1, 12, 15, 26, 28, 34, 37

KSR: Key Species Result