

13th MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
14 – 17 March 2016, Israel

**DELINeATION OF BIOGEOGRAPHIC POPULATIONS OF THE LESSER
WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*ANSER ERYTHROPU*S)**

Introduction

The Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) is globally threatened and categorized as Vulnerable by the IUCN. The species has been prioritized for conservation action under AEWA and an AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose (Western Palearctic population) was adopted at the 4th Session of the Meeting of the AEWA Parties in 2008. The AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group was subsequently convened by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat in 2009, for which the Secretariat provides coordination supported by funding from Norway.

To ease the continued facilitation of the conservation of the species under AEWA, clarification is required regarding the definition of Lesser White-fronted Goose populations covered by the Agreement.

Current definitions of Lesser White-fronted Goose populations under AEWA

Two populations of Lesser White-fronted Geese are currently listed in Table 1 Column A of the AEWA Action Plan:

- NE Europe & W Siberia/Black Sea & Caspian
- Fennoscandia

Table 1 lists the following geographic definitions regarding the regions mentioned above:

- *North-east Europe*: the northern part of the Russian Federation west of the Urals;
- *Western Siberia*: the Russian Federation east of the Urals to the Yenisey River and south to the Kazakhstan border;
- *Black Sea*: Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine;
- *Caspian*: Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kazakhstan, South-west Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.
- For the term “*Fennoscandia*” no clarification of the geographic extent etc. is provided.

In the AEWA International Action Plan for the species, four sub-populations are recognized globally - three of which are identified as surviving components of the species’ formerly more extensive breeding range:

- *Fennoscandian population* (breeding in the Nordic countries and the Kola Peninsula of north-westernmost Russia);
- *Western main population* (nesting in northern Russia to the west of the Taimyr Peninsula);
- *Eastern main population* (nesting from the Taimyr Peninsula eastwards and wintering in China).

The Action Plan also refers to a fourth sub-population, stated as having been created by the release of captive-bred birds within the former range of the Fennoscandian population in Sweden and by the establishment of a human-modified flyway to the Netherlands. This population is referred to in the Action Plan as the “supplemented/reintroduced” population.

These population definitions are currently adhered to by the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group, as well as the AEWA Agreement bodies and are also – with slight variations – used amongst goose researchers and conservation practitioners¹.

Clarification regarding the definition of the Fennoscandian population

Within the current ongoing process of revising the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Single Species Action Plan as well as during the compilation of the 6th Conservation Status Report to the 6th Session of the Meeting of the AEWA Parties, Sweden has suggested that their supplemented/reintroduced population should be considered as part of the Fennoscandian population.

Although Sweden is geographically part of Fennoscandia, the two Lesser White-fronted Goose populations now breeding in the Nordic countries have thus far been regarded as two different entities with completely differing migratory routes, as well as differing conservation priorities under the Agreement. The current Action Plan deals explicitly with the conservation of the two “wild” populations (i.e. the Fennoscandian and Western main populations) as defined above. Although the so-called supplemented/reintroduced Swedish population is taken into account in the Plan, the agreed focus is on the conservation of the two aforementioned populations. Population size and trend estimates for the Fennoscandian population in Waterbird Population Estimates and the Conservation Status Report do not include the Swedish supplemented/reintroduced population.

As mentioned above, the AEWA Action Plan does not provide further clarification on the definition of “Fennoscandian”. As such, the AEWA Agreement bodies have adhered to the use of the term Fennoscandian as specified in the AEWA Single Species Action Plan for the species.

The ongoing revision of the AEWA Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose coupled with the suggestion from Sweden warrants a better clarification of the definition of Lesser White-fronted Goose populations under the Agreement.

Action Requested from the Technical Committee

The AEWA Technical Committee is requested to review this issue and to make a recommendation regarding the clearer definition of the Lesser White-fronted Goose populations within the Agreement area.

Attachments:

- [AEWA Resolution 6.1 – Adoption of Amendments to the AEWA Annexes](#)
- [AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose \(Western Palearctic population\)](#)
- [AEWA Technical Committee Recommendation regarding the proposal submitted by Sweden to amend the International Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose](#) (Final Meeting Report of the 10th Meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee, 12-16. September 2011, pages 34-36).
- [BTO research report 595: Review of European flyways of the Lesser White-fronted Goose \(*Anser erythropus*\). 2011.](#)

Please note: these documents are not available on the TC documents page – please access and download them via the hyperlinks above.

¹ For example: Fox et al. 2010. Current estimates of goose population sizes in western Europe, a gap analysis and an assessment of trends. *Ornis Svecica* 20: 115-127.