



**5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Committee for Captive Breeding, Reintroduction and  
Supplementation of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Fennoscandia (RECAP 5)**

12<sup>th</sup> February 2013, UN Campus Bonn, Germany

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Guidance concerning the Conservation Translocation Status of the Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) in Sweden – following a request from the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat based on the recommendation of the AEWA Technical Committee

This response relates to the following documents received from the IUCN/SSC Technical Officer, Pritpal Soorae, on 27/09/12, as provided by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat on 18/09/12:

- Questions to the IUCN Reintroduction Specialist Group concerning the definition of the Swedish Lesser White-fronted Goose population [dated 18/09/12]

And the following supplementary documents:

- Agenda item 11 of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee: Swedish proposal to amend the international single species action plan for the conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose [dated 06/09/11]
- Document TC 10.56 examined under agenda item 11 of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AEWA Technical Committee: Proposal from Sweden to amend the international single species action plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose [dated 12-16/09/11]

The primary document poses four “questions for clarification” to the IUCN/SSC RSG. The questions are reproduced below, and after each I have inserted my considered opinion, based on the revised “Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations”, recently presented at the IUCN World Congress in Jeju, Korea. Definitions quoted in my responses are taken from draft versions of the guidelines. My opinion is provided as Chair of the Bird Section of the IUCN/SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group.

- 1. For a conservation project releasing captive bred stock into the wild to be described a ‘re-enforcement/supplementation’, is it a requirement that the released individuals mix with an existing wild population?”**

A reinforcement (note current preferred spelling) aims to enhance the viability of an existing population, inter alia, by increasing population size, genetic diversity, or the representation of specific demographic groups or stages. One might argue that the aim of the original release was not to enhance the viability of an existing population since the presence of conspecifics was not known; nevertheless, because conspecifics were extant in the release area at the time of releases, the translocation was effectively a reinforcement. It is **not** a specific requirement that released individuals are proven to mix (I am assuming that the term “mix” means “interbreed with”) as the addition of new individuals would achieve the result of increasing the wild population size in the release area.

- 2. Can a [waterbird] conservation project which was originally carried out as a reintroduction (release of captive bred individuals into the wild using foster parents of a different species), later be formally described as a ‘supplementation’ on the basis of the discovery of old data indicating that a small number of birds from the former wild population still existed in the general area where the release took place?**

Reclassification of a project is possible on the basis of new information, and is desirable in order to enable current and future understanding of the possible implications of there being wild conspecifics at the release site. Although the intent of the releases may have been to undertake a reintroduction, the project was in effect, a reinforcement. Acknowledging this by reclassifying the type of conservation translocation that was done will be important for management of the current wild population (e.g. possible genetic considerations, etc.), and will inform any future meta-analyses exploring the correlates of translocation success.

**3. *Can a migratory waterbird population which uses a human-modified pathway partially lying outside of its known historical range be defined as ‘supplemented’ or even ‘re-introduced’?***

The release itself took place within the “indigenous range”<sup>\*</sup> of the species, thus meeting the new IUCN definition of a “population restoration”, i.e. “any conservation translocation to within indigenous range”. This means the release can be termed reinforcement or reintroduction, according to the presence or absence of conspecifics in the release area. Subsequent dispersal or migratory movements of free-ranging birds does not alter the nature of the translocation release site lying within the indigenous range.

**4. *What would be the most correct description of such a population which ensued by releasing captive bred young with foster parents from a different species, which then may or may not accidentally have come across remnants of the wild population and which now uses a human modified migration route, most parts of which lie outside the species historical range?***

Because the release was at a site within the indigenous range and in an area where conspecifics were present at the time of release, this project would be best described as a reinforcement.

The release of captive bred young and the use of foster parents are specific technical details that do not alter the nature of this translocation. Reinforcements (and reintroductions) can and do entail the release of wild-caught individuals, and the use of foster parents. Post-release movements must be considered natural, albeit a possible consequence of the translocation techniques. Free-ranging birds are free to disperse, migrate, colonise, or follow other wildlife, to any accessible areas. The use of human-modified areas and a new migration route is a consequence of the translocation, but in itself does not change its fundamental nature as a reinforcement.

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**Associate Professor Philip J. Seddon**

Chair, Bird Section, IUCN SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group

Department of Zoology, PO Box 56, Dunedin, New Zealand

Tel: National 03 479 7029 Int'l +64 3 479 7029 • Fax: National 03 470 7584 Int'l +64 3 479 7584

E-mail: [philip.seddon@otago.ac.nz](mailto:philip.seddon@otago.ac.nz) • Web: [www.otago.ac.nz/Zoology](http://www.otago.ac.nz/Zoology)

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<sup>\*</sup> **Indigenous range:** Conservation Translocations can entail releases either within or outside the species' indigenous range. The indigenous range of a species is the known or inferred distribution prior to intensive human land-use, generated from historical (written or verbal) records, or physical evidence of the species' occurrence. Where direct evidence is inadequate to confirm previous occupancy, the existence of suitable habitat within ecologically appropriate proximity to proven range may be taken as adequate evidence of previous occupation.