



# THE INTERNATIONAL SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLAN FOR THE BEWICK'S SWAN

The Northwest European population of the Bewick's Swan has declined by 40 per cent since the mid-1990s © Paul Marshall

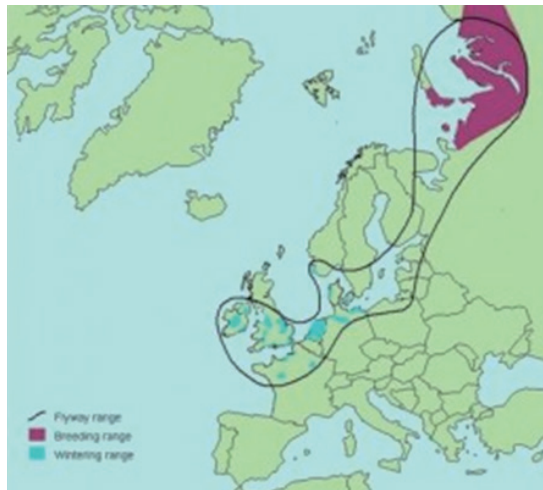
### The International Single Species Action Plan for the Bewick's Swan

The International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Bewick's Swan, which was adopted by AEWA in 2012, aims to reverse the decline of the Northwest European population of these waterbirds and return the species to a favourable conservation status. The conservation strategy, which was agreed by countries that lie along the birds' migration path, identifies threats to the Bewick's swans in different parts of their range, and outlines how each country can play its part in the species' recovery.

### Why do we need an ISSAP Action Plan for the Bewick's Swan?

#### Threats to the Bewick's Swan:

The Northwest European Bewick's Swans are migratory waterbirds, travelling thousands of kilometres each year from their breeding grounds in the Russian Arctic to their wintering quarters in Northern Europe. On their migration route these birds face many threats and challenges through impacts of climate change, illegal and accidental shooting, oils spills, lead poisoning and collision with infrastructure. In 1995, there were around 29,000 Bewick's Swans in Europe; by 2010, the figure had dropped to 18,100 and the numbers have continued to decline.



Migration route of the Northwest European Bewick's Swan © WWT

### INTERNATIONAL SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLANS

International Single and Multi-Species Action Plans (ISSAPs/IMSAPs) are the key instrument developed under the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds Agreement (AEWA) to stimulate and guide coordinated measures for the effective conservation of migratory waterbird populations across their entire range. They give an overview of the current status of a species' population and outline threats as well as the existing legislation for protection and present a framework for action.

### WHY DO WE NEED ISSAPs UNDER AEWA?

Migratory waterbird populations cross national boundaries, so measures for the protection of these species and conservation of their habitats need cooperation at an international scale. International Single Species Action Plans help to achieve this international coordination by involving all Range States along a migratory waterbird flyway and hence to secure a species' long-term future.

## The ISSAP for the Northwest European Population of the Bewick's Swan

**Goal:** The action plan aims to halt the current decline in the short term, and to maintain a population of least at 23,000 birds in the long term.

### Some essential actions outlined:

- Maintaining the protected status of the species across the range of the population;
- Enhancing the protection of areas important for breeding and moulting;
- Developing and implementing emergency plans by companies involved in exploitation and transportation of petrochemicals on the flyway to reduce mortality in case of accidents;
- Infrastructure developments should avoid key sites and flight-lines;
- Manage water levels and water quality at key stop-over and wintering sites;
- Reduce disturbance at key sites from farming, hunting, fishing and recreational activities through zoning, compensatory payments and other site management measures;
- Increased efforts to reduce illegal shooting.

## FACTS ABOUT THE BEWICK'S SWAN

- There are three populations of the Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*), which are distinguished by their winter distribution: the Northwest European, Caspian and East Asian.
- Bewick's Swans are a subspecies of the tundra swan and the smallest swan in Europe.
- Each Bewick's Swan has unique yellow and black beak patterns enabling each individual bird to be identified.
- When migrating these birds can fly at altitudes of 8.000 m.
- The average lifespan of a Bewick's Swan is 5.4 years for both sexes.



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## About AEWa

The Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) is an intergovernmental treaty dedicated to the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitats across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia, Greenland and the Canadian Archipelago.

Developed under the framework of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), AEWa brings together countries and the wider international conservation community in an effort to establish coordinated conservation and management of migratory waterbirds throughout their entire migration range.

All 254 species covered by AEWa cross international boundaries during their migrations. International cooperation across their entire migration range, as provided by AEWa, is therefore essential for the conservation of migratory waterbird populations and their habitats.

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