



**3rd Meeting of the Committee for Captive Breeding, Reintroduction and
Supplementation of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Fennoscandia (RECAP 3)**

7 – 8 October 2010, UN Campus Bonn, Germany

**Implementation of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of
the Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) in 2010**

- Update for the RECAP Committee -

INTRODUCTION

Following the adoption of the Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWfG) in 2008 at the AEWA MOP4 in Madagascar the overall coordination of the implementation of the Action Plan was placed within the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and is in particular the task of the Lesser White-fronted Goose Coordinator.

In general it can be said that the implementation of the Action Plan has been gaining momentum in 2010, with many concrete conservation activities underway as well as the 1st Meeting of the International Working Group scheduled to take place at the end of the year.

THE AEWA LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

The key body through which national conservation efforts in the range states will be coordinated internationally is the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group, convened by the Secretariat in the summer of 2009. The first meeting of the group will take place on the 30th of November and the 1st of December at the Finnish Ministry of the Environment in Helsinki and will hopefully mark the start of coordinated conservation efforts between the 22 range states on governmental level.

The International Working Group will, amongst other things, be in charge of reviewing and updating the International Single Species Action Plan as well as deciding on new priority actions based on the national reports submitted by the range states and other relevant information.

So far 16 of the 22 range states have designated official national LWfG focal points and experts to the Working Group. The Secretariat is working on receiving nominations from the remaining countries (Greece, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkey and Uzbekistan). As Contracting Party to AEWA the European Commission has also been asked to designate a focal point to the group. In addition BirdLife International, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT), Wetlands International, FACE and CIC have been invited to appoint observers to the group. Their statuses as observer organizations still have to be confirmed by the range states.

Range states have been asked to submit up-to-date information on the status of the Lesser White-fronted Goose in their respective countries as well as information on national conservation activities currently being undertaken. A draft reporting format has been designed to this end. A Working Group logo as well as a website with a section for internal use have been commissioned and will be presented at the meeting.

The Working Group meeting is being funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment.

INSTITUTIONALIZING NATIONAL CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

One of the cornerstones of the implementation approach of the Secretariat is to encourage and assist all key range states in establishing National Working Groups and National Action Plans for the species. In addition to the National Action Plans, which in most cases need to be formally adopted, the Secretariat will also encourage National Working Groups to set up Work Plans targeting the activities prioritized in the National Action Plans - such as reducing the threat from hunting - to be implemented immediately.

A workshop to this end will be held on the 12th-14th of October in Kostanay, Kazakhstan bringing together the relevant government authorities from the Committee of Forestry and Hunting, the Kazakhstan Agency for Applied Ecology as well as other key stakeholders including the regional hunting establishment. The workshop will be facilitated by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and also attended by a LWfG expert from the Norwegian Ornithological Society.

The workshop is being funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment.

URGENT CONSERVATION MEASURES TARGETING KEY THREATS

Efforts to institutionalize LWfG conservation in all the key range states is a lengthy process, which makes it crucial to simultaneously back this work with concrete conservation measures targeting key threats to the species. Therefore the Secretariat is assisting in the planning of and fundraising for LWfG conservation projects in accordance with the priorities set out in the SSAP. The focus for these concentrate conservation efforts is currently on those range states where the threats to the species are thought to be most severe.

- Lesser White-fronted Goose monitoring mission in the Syrian Arab Republic

A LWfG monitoring mission to Syria was conducted in February 2010 to identify potential key LWfG wintering sites as well as train local conservationists in identifying LWfG. The mission was organized by the BirdLife Middle East office, the Syrian Society for the Conservation of Wildlife (SSCW), the General Commission for Badia Management and WWF Finland. The monitoring was led by Sami Timonen and Toni Eskelin, both members of the Finnish WWF LWfG task force. Their mission report is being finalized and will include a field report and conservation recommendations for the LWfG in Syria which can be used as a basis for further discussions with the Syrian government. In addition LWfG posters and flyers were printed in Arabic for further awareness-raising on the species in Syria. These can be put to further use in other Arabic speaking countries.

The monitoring mission was funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management and the production of the PR material was funded by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment.

- Regulation of spring and autumn hunting in the Kumo-Manych Depression, Kalmykia, Russia

Transmissions from satellite tagged birds as well as on-site monitoring have shown that the Kuma-Manych Depression in Kalmykia in the south-west of the Russian Federation is an extremely important stop over and staging site for migrating Lesser White-fronted Geese – both for birds belonging to the Fennoscandian and the Western Main population. The biggest threat to the Lesser White-fronted Geese in this area comes from habitat change combined with hunting. A one year project with the aim to stop spring and autumn hunting when LWfG are present was started in the beginning of 2010. Further elements of the project include spring and autumn monitoring of LWfG (and RbG) in the Kumo-Manych Depression and the education of local hunters.

At an interregional meeting with all key authorities held in Elista in June 2010 Rostov oblast and the Republic of Kalmykia both made commitments to ban spring hunting in the area frequented by the LWfG for five years. An interregional working group was founded in order to continue discussions on this issue, including regional cooperation on the education of hunters.

The project is being executed and coordinated by Sonia Rozenfeld from the Geese and Swans Study Group of Eastern Europe and North Asia and is funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

- New LIFE+ project proposal for the LWfG

A new EU LIFE+ project application for LWfG conservation along the European flyway was submitted to the Greek Ministry of the Environment in September 2010 and will be passed on to the European Commission in October 2010. A first preparatory meeting with prospective project partners was arranged in Greece in March 2010 by the Hellenistic Ornithological Society (HOS), WWF Finland and the AEWA Secretariat.

If the proposal is accepted the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat will this time also be a project beneficiary – providing the link between the European flyway and conservation efforts outside of Europe. The Secretariat will also assist key European range states such as Greece in drafting National Action Plans for the LWfG. A request for funding for the 2nd Meeting of the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group has also been included in the proposal. The meeting is proposed be held in Greece in 2012 or 2013.

The workshop and subsequent work on the LIFE+ proposal was funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management. In addition the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management has made a substantial commitment to co-fund the LIFE project for its five year tenure should the proposal be accepted.

- Lesser White-fronted Goose monitoring mission in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan is undoubtedly one of the most important LWfG range states covered by the SSAP. A 10-day LWfG monitoring mission will be undertaken in northern Kazakhstan in early October in order to obtain an up-to-date assessment of the size of the Western main population as well as the key sites being used by the geese. This vital information will feed into the national workshop mentioned above as well as into the International Working Group meeting later this year.

The monitoring will be done in two teams covering known LWfG sites as well as sites that have not been monitored for several years. The mission is being organized by the Kazakhstan Agency for Applied Ecology and the Association for the Conservation of Biology of Kazakhstan (ACBK). The monitoring mission is being funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

Outlook/Conclusion

The main contributing factor to the relatively large number of conservation projects and activities for this species is the generous funding made available on a regular basis by the RECAP Committee countries, in particular the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management. Longer term implementation will in many of the range states (particularly in the non-European countries) depend on whether funds for basic measures crucial for species conservation such as yearly monitoring and surveillance of key sites can be secured nationally or through other channels. This will certainly be one of the key topics at the upcoming meeting of the International Working Group.