



**4th Meeting of the Committee for Captive Breeding, Reintroduction and
Supplementation of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Fennoscandia (RECAP 4)**

16 June 2011, 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 2011**

- Update for the RECAP Committee -

INTRODUCTION

Following the first meeting of the AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group (LWfG IWG) on the 30th of November – 1st of December 2010 in Helsinki, the implementation of the Single Species Action Plan for the Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWfG) has moved into a new phase, which will hopefully be characterized by strengthened government ownership and intergovernmental cooperation in conservation efforts for the species. In general conservation activities across the flyway continue to gain momentum and are more focused on key sites and threats. This will be utilized in the continued efforts of the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat and in particular the LWfG Coordinator to attract outside funding for prioritized conservation measures.

THE AEWA LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP

So far 21 out of 22 range states have designated national LWfG focal points and/or experts to the Working Group. The UNEP/AEWA Secretariat is working on engaging Poland in Working Group activities as well as keeping an up-to-date list on changing representatives.

The activities prioritized by range states for implementation during the next two years at the LWfG IWG meeting in Helsinki have been compiled in a table and countries are expected to report on progress in implementing these activities at the next IWG meeting set for late 2012.

As agreed at the IWG meeting, a small team with representatives from Finland, Norway, Kazakhstan, BirdLife International and WWT are working on putting together a **common monitoring scheme** for both Fennoscandian and Western main populations. Since the meeting, the need for a training module developed specifically for the identification and monitoring of LWfG has also been recognized. Additionally LWfG identification materials currently available only in English should be translated into Russian (at least). Work on both common monitoring scheme and subsequent ideas is on-going, with drafts planned to be ready to present to the IWG in August/September 2011.

In early 2011 the Secretariat designed and launched a **report series** on the Lesser White-fronted Goose under the framework of the LWfG IWG. The reports are meant to showcase results from projects undertaken under the framework of SSAP implementation and to make these results as well as any conclusions for further conservation measures widely available. So far two reports have been published within the series: one on the 2010 monitoring mission to the Syrian Arab Republic to search for possible LWfG wintering sites and one on the Kumo-Manych project aiming at the regulation of spring and autumn

hunting in Kalmykia in the Russian Federation. At present there are no plans to print the reports; they will be made available for download in PDF-format on the AEWA website as well as on the IWG LWfG website.

Work on the **website and internal workspace** for the LWfG IWG is also on-going, with the aim to have it up and running by August 2011. The developed template will then be duplicated for other Species Working Groups under AEWA. The development of the website and workspace as well as the production of usb-sticks featuring the LWfG is being funded by the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. In addition new species stickers have been printed and a poster for the LWfG is being designed, both funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety.

INSTITUTIONALIZING NATIONAL CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat is continuing to encourage and assist all key range states in establishing National Working Groups and National Action Plans for the species. Following the LWfG workshop in Kazakhstan in October last year a national action plan has been drafted and is currently being prepared for adoption, which is planned to happen this year. The Committee for Forestry and Hunting have initially committed to reserve some funds for the implementation of the plan beginning in 2012. The Secretariat organized a similar workshop on the LWfG at the Ministry for Ecology and Natural Resources in Baku, Azerbaijan on the 26th and 27th of May 2011. Drafting of the national action plan will be headed by Elchin Sultanov of the Azerbaijan Ornithological Society, with the aim to adopt the plan by the end of 2011, so that implementation activities can be started in winter 2012 when the LWfG are present. The next workshop of this kind is planned to take place in Iran in the beginning of 2012. The workshop in Kazakhstan was funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety. The two workshops in Azerbaijan and Iran are being funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

Within the framework of the proposed LIFE+ project for the European flyway the Secretariat is foreseen to start similar processes to assist Greece, Hungary and Bulgaria in the drafting of National Action Plans for the species. Further countries prioritized by the Secretariat for such work include Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan (planned for 2012 after the AEWA MOP).

URGENT CONSERVATION MEASURES TARGETING PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

The Secretariat also continues to assist in the planning of and fundraising for LWfG conservation projects in accordance with the priority activities identified by each country at the first Working Group meeting. Projects being implemented in 2011 include:

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

A follow-up LWfG monitoring mission to Syria was conducted in early February 2011 to continue the work to identify potential key LWfG wintering sites as well as train local conservationists in identifying LWfG. The mission was again 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 again led by Sami Timonen and Toni Eskelin, both members of the Finnish WWF LWfG task force. Due to very dry conditions only a very small number of LWfG were sighted, reinforcing suspicions that at present LWfG do not winter regularly in large numbers in Syria. The monitoring mission was funded by the Norwegian Ornithological Society.

*- Regulation of spring and autumn hunting in the **Kumo-Manych Depression, Kalmykia, Russian Federation***

The recently completed project aiming to regulate spring and autumn hunting in the Kuma-Manych Depression near Kalmykia in south-western Russia made very good progress in protecting this key site for the Lesser White-fronted Goose as well as other threatened species.

Following the good progress made it was decided to continue the project for a second year in order to further strengthen the established interregional cooperation as well as the cooperation with the local hunting organizations. This will help to ensure that the drafted Action Plan for the area is duly adopted and that the established hunting bans remain in place and are enforced. In addition, the project will in its second year establish a network of feeding plots for the LWfG and Red-breasted Geese within the protected area at the Manych Nature Reserve through measures such as haying. The project also covers spring and autumn/winter monitoring in the area. The project is being funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

*- Spring and Autumn Monitoring of Lesser White-fronted Geese in **Kazakhstan***

As reconfirmed by the LWfG IWG at its first meeting, autumn monitoring in Kazakhstan is the only viable option for obtaining a sound population estimate for the Western main population. A funded autumn monitoring mission in 2010 will therefore be followed up by a new extensive monitoring mission to be conducted in October 2011. In addition monitoring of LWfG was carried out during this year's spring migration in order to assess hunting pressure and other possible threats to the species.

The project is being organized and carried out by the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity in Kazakhstan (ACBK), in close cooperation with the designated national expert Mr. Sergey Yerokhov, Chief Zoologist at the Kazakhstan Agency for Applied Ecology. In addition two to three international LWfG experts would take part in the mission in order to ensure the standardization of methods used and data collected. Both monitoring missions are being funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

*- Satellite-tagging of Lesser White-fronted Geese in the Eastern European tundra of the **Russian Federation***

Within Russia the Lesser White-fronted Goose population breeding in the European tundra appears to be more vulnerable than LWfG breeding further east. By satellite-tagging LWfG from this region it is hoped to receive more information in their precise stop-over sites and wintering areas. The project will be carried out and coordinated by Mr. Vladimir Morozov, the designated national expert for the LWfG, on behalf of the All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection. The project timetable will cover the breeding period of LWfG in 2011. The project is being funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

*- Monitoring of Lesser White-fronted Goose wintering sites and awareness-raising in **Ukraine***

Lesser White-fronted Geese from the Western Palearctic population are thought to both winter and in smaller numbers migrate through Ukraine. In order to increase knowledge on the occurrence of LWfG in Ukraine – i.e. migrating and wintering birds, key sites and threats – a total of four monitoring missions will be carried out between October 2011 and January 2012 in areas known/thought to be important for the species. An effort will also be made to involve local hunters in this process and to use their information on occurrence and movements of geese whilst simultaneously raising awareness on the species. The project is being funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management.

- Upcoming projects 2011-2012

Implementation projects in the pipeline include monitoring missions to locate key sites and further assess hunting pressure in the Russian Federation (Ob Valley, Volgograd and Dagestan). In addition the Secretariat would urgently like to start work on setting up proper monitoring and protection of LWfG at the key wintering site of Kizil Agach Nature Reserve in Azerbaijan.