



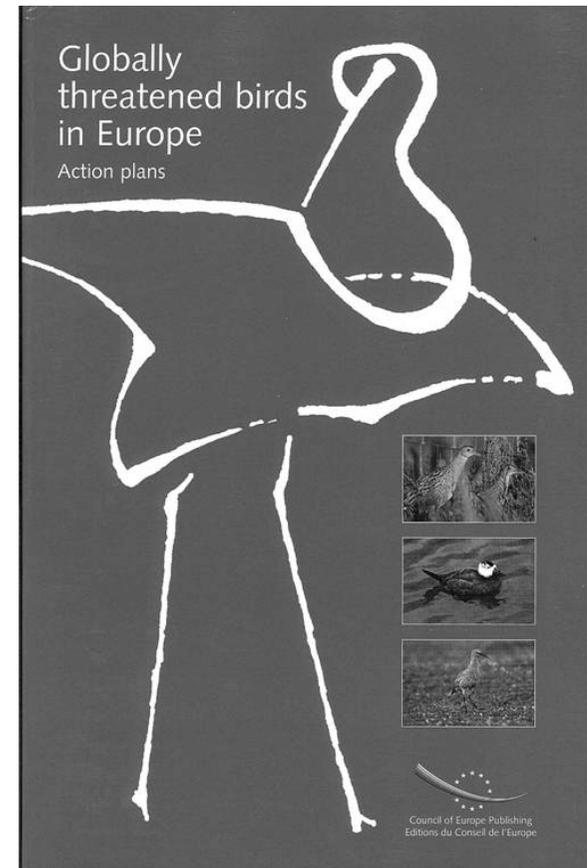
# Lesser White- fronted Goose Species Action Plan

Szabolcs Nagy



# The existing action plan

- ☞ Published in 1996
- ☞ Approved by
  - 1 EU Ornithology Committee
  - 1 Bern Convention Standing Committee
- ☞ Geographic coverage:
  - 1 Europe
  - 1 Kazakhstan



# The AEWA action plan



## FORMAT FOR THE AEWA INTERNATIONAL SINGLE SPECIES ACTION PLANS

### INTRODUCTION

BirdLife International has been contracted by the Agreement Secretariat to develop a format for international single species action plans.

The development of International Single Species Action plans is requested in paragraph 2.2. of the AEWA Action plan for populations listed in Category 1 of column A of Table 1.

So far four AEWA single species action plans have been prepared and their format has been developed during the compilation of the Dark-bellied Brent Goose Action Plan. The others (great Snipe, Sociable lapwing and Black-winged Pratincole) have followed the same format with minor changes and additions.

At international level there is already a number of available action plan formats endorsed and used by different international bodies. This is considered to be a source of confusion and inconsistency since the difference in format is also a result of different methodologies and approaches towards the identification of the most effective and urgent conservation activities and towards the monitoring of their implementation.

Some of the formats have been used since many years now at least in part of the Agreement area and are easily recognised by the target users (governmental and non-governmental bodies).

The aim of the work carried out by BirdLife International was to develop a format which:

- Uses the internationally agreed standards in the definitions of threats, their ranking and in the methodology of identification of the actions;
- Facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation (both in term of results and impact);
- It is not too different from the existing formats so that could be easily understood and used by the target audience;
- Could be adopted as a common format by others international treaties such as EU, Bern Convention, CMS.

As a basis the following formats have been taken into consideration:

- The EU/Bern convention Specie Action Plans<sup>1</sup>.
- The Format developed by BirdLife International African Division.

<sup>1</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/directive/birds/home\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/directive/birds/home_en.htm)

- ☞ Biological assessment
- ☞ Available key knowledge
- ☞ Threats
- ☞ Policies and legislation relevant for management
- ☞ Framework for action
- ☞ Activities by country
- ☞ Implementation
- ☞ References and the most relevant literature
- ☞ Annex 1: key sites
- ☞ Annex 2: Signatory status



# Set up

- ⌘ An action plan review process under the auspices of AEWAs streamlined with the processes under EU Ornithology Committee and the Bern Standing Committee.
- ⌘ The action planning process was funded by Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway.
- ⌘ Contractor: BirdLife International
- ⌘ Compiler: Tim Jones independent consultant
- ⌘ Support team: Gerard Boere (independent consultant) and Szabolcs Nagy (BirdLife International)



# The process

- ç Action Plan Workshop in Lammi, Finland, 31 Mar. —2 Apr. 2005
- ç 1st draft sent out for consultation on 6 May 2005 with deadline 1 June 2005 for comments
- ç Due to the fundamental disagreement amongst the experts the drafting team decided to freeze the drafting and ask a recommendation from the CMS Scientific Council as they indicated it in Lammi.



## The process (ctd.)

- ‡ 15 July an issues paper compiled by Gerard Boere with comments from Tim Jones and Szabolcs Nagy was sent to AEWA
- ‡ 18 Nov. 2005, the 13th CMS Scientific Council discussed and formulated a recommendation considering the issues paper and of the expert advice
- ‡ 30 Aug. 2005 the AEWA Secretariat has asked the chairman of the IUCN Conservation Breeding Specialist Group for an expert opinion on the genetic issues.



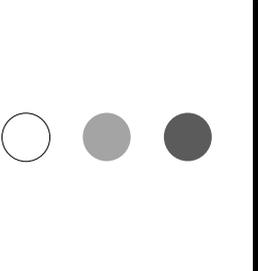
## The process (ctd.)

- ‡ The Chairman of the SC asked the Appointed Councillor for Birds to make a review in particular drawing on the views of Councillors from Range States other than those involved in the discussions about the species. The Recommendation was adopted by the full SC.
- ‡ The drafting process resumed in Dec. 2005
- ‡ A preliminary 2nd draft was sent to the Leading Troika, B. Ebbinge, G. Boere and S. Nagy in Febr. 2006.
- ‡ A revised 2nd Draft was prepared in May 2006.



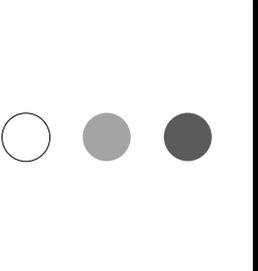
## The process (ctd.)

- ç 17 July 2006 the 2.2 version of the 2nd draft was submitted to the AEWA Secretariat.
- ç The AEWA Secretariat submitted the action plan into a consultative procedure with the EU Ornithology Committee on 13 Sept. 2006
- ç In addition, they sent also all supporting document on 20 Sept.
- ç The action plan was discussed in the Ornithology Committee on 18 Oct. 2006
- ç The AEWA Secretariat just had a mission to consult the governments of the Nordic Countries and find an acceptable compromise
- ç The plan will be finalised based on the results of the consultation conducted by the AEWA Sec.



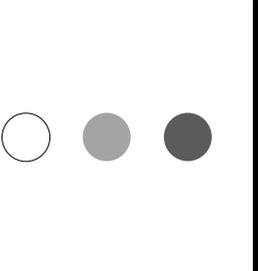
# Recommendations of the CMS Scientific Council

- ☞ It is desirable to have a wide genetic diversity among wild Lesser Whitefronts.
- ☞ There appears to be no undisputed answer at present to the question of whether the Fennoscandian population (as represented by the birds breeding in Norway) is genetically distinct from the nearest breeding birds to the east, in northern Russia. Given the uncertainty, we **take the cautious approach that there might be a potentially valuable genetic distinction**, and that we should not deliberately interfere with it (for instance, by boosting the Fennoscandian population with wild birds from elsewhere), unless or until such interference may become inevitable.
- ☞ Given the small size of the wild Fennoscandian population, if possible, **a captive breeding population of birds from this source should be established and maintained** as a priority. We recognise that there are risks involved in taking eggs and/or young birds from the wild population, but that careful use of a known surplus (that is, those birds that would have died or been killed in their first winter) may be a practical conservation option.



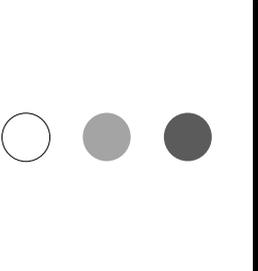
# Recommendations of the CMS Scientific Council

- ☞ We consider that every effort should be made to conserve the Fennoscandian birds down their traditional migration routes into southeastern Europe and the Caspian/Central Asian region. We recognise that this is a major challenge. We endorse the current LIFE project that aims to safeguard the birds and their habitats along the western route. It is our opinion that all appropriate efforts should also be made to conserve the wild populations of the species in its other flyways.
- ☞ We consider that doubts do remain about the genetic make-up of the existing free-flying birds, originally introduced into the wild in Fennoscandia, and which winter in the Netherlands. It does seem to us that not all, but a large part, of the scientific community will never be completely satisfied concerning the level of genetic contamination from the Greater White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* and other species, which many will regard as impossible to eliminate. **Despite genuine efforts to improve the genetic purity of existing captive flocks we consider that these flocks are not to be regarded as potential sources for release to the wild.**



# Recommendations of the CMS Scientific Council

- ☞ Given the possibility that the above-mentioned free-flying birds, or their descendants, may pose a risk to the genetic make-up of the wild Fennoscandian population, the Scientific Council is of the opinion that **these birds should be caught or otherwise removed from the wild.** We do not say this lightly, nor underestimate the practical and other difficulties involved. We recommend that a feasibility study be undertaken as a matter of urgency.
- ☞ We believe that there is nothing against establishing a group in captivity of purebred Lesser Whitefronts from the wild, western Russian stock, and it may well prove valuable to have such a group in the future. However, **we do not believe that it is appropriate to release such birds to the wild now or in the immediate future.**



# Recommendations of the CMS Scientific Council

- ☞ For the present, we do not support the introduction of Lesser Whitefronts into flyways where they do not occur naturally. We have borne in mind the powerful argument concerning the improved safety of birds in these flyways, as well as practical considerations, such as current proposals that could quickly be put into effect. However, we consider that modifying the natural behaviour of Lesser Whitefronts in this respect, as well as unknown ecological effects in the chosen new flyways, and other such considerations, **make this technique inappropriate until such time as it may become essential, particularly when major disruption or destruction occurs of key components of the natural flyways. We do not believe that to be the case at present.** We give due weight to arguments about the continuing decline of the very small Fennoscandian population, and to the estimates of how long it may continue to be viable, but we are not persuaded that such a fact alone is enough to justify radical action.
- ☞ We consider that it would be appropriate to **re-examine the issues once more in five years.**



# Goals and purpose of the action plan

- ¢ **Goal:** To restore the Lesser White-fronted Goose to favourable conservation status within the Agreement Area
- ¢ **Purpose:** To stop and reverse the current population decline and range contraction.



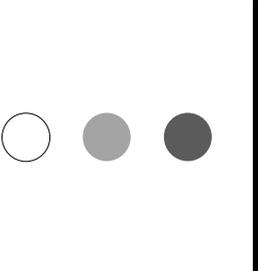
# Results

- ☞ **Result 1:** Mortality rates reduced
- ☞ **Result 2:** Further habitat loss and degradation is prevented
- ☞ **Result 3:** Reproductive success is maximised
- ☞ **Result 4:** No introgression of DNA from other goose species into the wild population occurs as a result of either further releases or already released birds from captive breeding programmes
- ☞ **Result 5:** Key knowledge gaps filled
- ☞ **Result 6:** International cooperation maximised



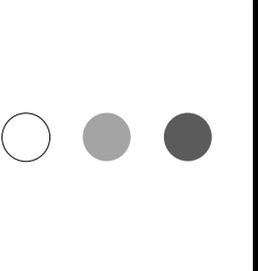
# Result 1: Direct mortality of adults due to hunting is prevented

- ☞ Ensure that, in principle, hunting legislation affords adequate protection to Lesser White-fronted Goose;
- ☞ Ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated for enforcement of hunting legislation and that these resources are deployed to **control hunting effectively**;
- ☞ Ensure that sufficient human and financial resources are allocated for **identifying the traditional flyway and stop-over sites, and making that flyway safe for the geese**.
- ☞ **Ban goose hunting at all key sites for Lesser White-fronted Goose (as listed in Annex 3 to this Action Plan) during the period when Lesser White-fronts are usually present**, given the difficulty of reliably distinguishing goose species in flight (especially the near impossibility of separating Greater and Lesser White-fronts, even from relatively close range and in good light);
- ☞ Plant **lure crops** to direct Lesser White-fronted Goose away from areas where hunting pressure is known to be high and towards refuge zones;
- ☞ **Redirect hunting from adults to juveniles** in areas where Greater White-fronts and Lesser White-fronts occur together **away from key sites**.



## Result 2: Further habitat loss and degradation is prevented

- ☞ Ensure that **all key sites** for Lesser White-fronted Goose (breeding, staging and wintering) are **afforded appropriate protected area status** at national and international levels, including classification as Special Protection Areas in EU Member States;
- ☞ Ensure that all key sites for Lesser White-fronted Goose have a **management plan** that addresses the conservation requirements of Lesser White-fronted Goose and that is resourced, implemented, monitored and periodically updated;
- ☞ **Monitor habitat quality in the breeding range** to ensure that any anthropogenic pressures, including the potential impacts of climate change, are identified as early as possible;
- ☞ Take measures to **restore and/or rehabilitate Lesser White-fronted Goose roosting and feeding habitat** in the staging and/or wintering range.



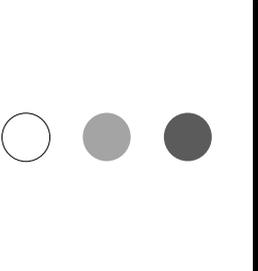
## Result 3: Reproductive success is maximised

- ☞ **Avoid** infrastructure development and other sources of human **disturbance**, including recreation/tourism liable to have an adverse impact on the **know core breeding areas**;
- ☞ Take measures to **avoid overgrazing and nest trampling** if/where this is known to be a problem;
- ☞ Take measures, where feasible, to minimise **predation**, where this is shown to be a significant limiting factor;
- ☞ Take measures to **eliminate waterbird hunting on the breeding grounds** (Russian Federation and Norway) and **in all staging areas close to the breeding grounds** (Fennoscandia, Russian Federation).



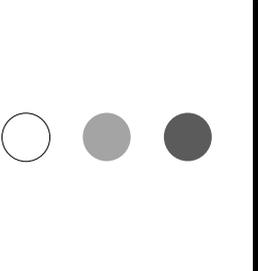
## **Result 4: No introgression of DNA from other goose species into the wild population occurs as a result of either further releases or already released birds from captive breeding programmes.**

- ☞ **existing captive flocks** are not to be regarded as potential sources for release to the wild;
- ☞ **existing free-flying birds of captive-bred origin** and their descendants should be caught or otherwise **removed** from the wild, with a feasibility study undertaken as a matter of urgency;
- ☞ if a captive group of purebred Lesser White-fronts from the wild is established, such birds **should not be released to the wild now or in the immediate future**;
- ☞ Lesser White-fronts should **not be introduced into flyways where they do not occur naturally**;
- ☞ these recommendations should be **reviewed after five years**



## Result 5: Key knowledge gaps filled

- ☞ Locate sources of possible financial support for further conservation-oriented research;
- ☞ Use a combination of satellite tracking and field surveys to **locate the key breeding grounds for the bulk of the Western main population**;
- ☞ Assess the **hunting pressure** at key sites;
- ☞ Use a combination of satellite tracking and field surveys to locate the **key breeding, staging and wintering sites for the Fennoscandian population**;
- ☞ Conduct a **Population Viability Assessment (PVA)** for the remaining wild Fennoscandian population;
- ☞ Undertake further field surveys of suitable breeding habitat and staging areas on the **Kola Peninsula** to update the estimate for the Fennoscandian subpopulation;
- ☞ Establish an effective network of **coordinated counts** in the wintering grounds (or main staging areas if wintering areas are not known), to monitor overall population trends as accurately as possible;



## Result 5: Key knowledge gaps filled (ctd.)

- ☞ Evaluate **spatial use** patterns at the habitat level to identify areas where hunting directly threatens Lesser White-fronts and to direct local conservation efforts (e.g. planting of lure crops) to hunting-free refuges and corridors;
- ☞ Continue to **refine genetic knowledge and techniques for genetic testing**;
- ☞ Develop a **strategy for genetic management of the species** both in the wild and in captivity based on the findings of the CMS Scientific Council;
- ☞ **Assess the current status of key sites** for Lesser White-fronted Goose with regard to the species' ecological requirements, taking into account protected area status, habitat quality, conservation management and active threats.
- ☞ Increase knowledge of **breeding site fidelity** for males and females and **exchange with other populations**;
- ☞ Undertake studies on **predation** by White-tailed Eagle;
- ☞ Investigate the importance of **small mammal cycles** on reproduction of Lesser White-fronted Goose.