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# GOOSE BULLETIN

## ISSUE 9 – NOVEMBER 2009

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**GOOSE BULLETIN** is the official bulletin of the Goose Specialist Group of Wetlands International and IUCN.

**GOOSE BULLETIN** appears as required, but at least once a year in electronic form. The bulletin aims to improve communication and exchange information amongst goose researchers throughout the world. It publishes contributions covering goose research and monitoring projects, project proposals, status and progress reports, information about new literature concerning geese, as well as regular reports and information from the Goose Database.

Contributions for the **GOOSE BULLETIN** are welcomed from all members of the Goose Specialist Group and should be sent as a Word-file to the Editor-in-chief. Authors of named contributions in the **GOOSE BULLETIN** are personally responsible for the contents of their contribution, which do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editorial Board or the Goose Specialist Group.

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## Editorial

Since the 1980s, 14 goose conferences have been organised under the auspices of Wetland International (formerly IWRB). The series started with the “IWRB-Symposium on the population ecology of geese” of October 1981 in Debrecen (Hungary) with a major follow-up in the form of the “IWRB-Symposium on Western Palearctic Geese” held in Kleve (Lower Rhine area, Germany) in February 1989.

At the International Waterbird Conference “Anatidae 2000” in Strasbourg in December 1994, the Goose Specialist Group of Wetlands International (until 1996: IWRB Goose Research Group) decided to organise regular meetings at 1-2 year intervals to maintain contact and co-operation between goose researchers globally. Twelve Goose Specialist Group meetings have been organised since then:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Lower Odra Valley (Poland), November 1995
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Martin Mere (Great Britain), December 1996
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Kavarna (Bulgaria), February 1998
- 4<sup>th</sup> Matsushima (Japan), January 1999
- 5<sup>th</sup> De Haan (Belgium), January 2000
- 6<sup>th</sup> Roosta (Estonia), April/May 2001
- 7<sup>th</sup> Coto Doñana (Spain), December 2002
- 8<sup>th</sup> Odessa (Ukraine), March 2004
- 9<sup>th</sup> Sopron (Hungary), November 2005
- 10<sup>th</sup> Xanten (Germany), January 2007
- 11<sup>th</sup> Leh (Ladakh, India), May 2008
- 12<sup>th</sup> Höllviken (Scania, Sweden), October 2009

The Goose Specialist Group seeks to strengthen contacts between all researchers working on migratory goose populations in the northern hemisphere. One major aim of the Group was to maintain contact between all interested volunteers and researchers working on geese, and to this end, in the early 1990s it was decided to produce a “Goose Bulletin”. Between February 1991 and November 1996 the National Environmental Research Institute at Kalø, Denmark, coordinated by Jesper Madsen, produced the first Goose Bulletin in a printed version. Until Jesper stepped down as coordinator of the Goose Specialist Group, eight issues of the bulletin had been produced.

Bart Ebbinge, succeeded Jesper as Goose Specialist Group coordinator and created a website ([www.geese.org/gsg](http://www.geese.org/gsg)), partly as a successor to the bulletin. In practice few group members used this medium to maintain contact, distribute news and publish reports and results in the way the old bulletin had functioned. Since the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Goose Specialist Group in De Haan (Belgium) in 2000, despite support for restarting the bulletin, all attempts have failed to date, due to two problems: time and money.

With this issue we revive the Goose Bulletin. Because of the costs of production, it only will appear in electronic form as a pdf-file, which can be downloaded from the website of the Goose Specialist Group. Nevertheless, with such broad support, we invite everybody to send in contributions for the bulletin and to circulate the Bulletin in electronic form or as a print-out as widely as they wish.

The editors see the revived **GOOSE BULLETIN** as a means of members communicating their news, reports and views, as well as informing everyone about what they are doing, announcing projects, initiatives and meetings. Furthermore, the editorial board is keen to take short scientific notes and articles that, whilst they might not be quite good enough for submission to major journals, may be of general interest to other group members. Furthermore, it is hoped that it will be possible to collate, edit and publish unpublished presentations/manuscripts from previous Goose Specialist Group meetings, if the authors are still interested to see that their papers are published and externally available.

Currently it is planned to publish the **GOOSE BULLETIN** in the form of at least one issue per year, but ..... if the editorial board should receive enough material to publish two Bulletins per year, we will try to do so. For this reason, it is not the editorial board that decide about the size and the number of issues per year, but **YOU**: the members of the Goose Specialist Group!

**The next issue of the GOOSE BULLETIN is planned to appear in the first half of 2010, which means that material for this issue should have reached the editor-in-chief not later than the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2010.**

The editors hope that the revived **GOOSE BULLETIN** of the Goose Specialist Group will again become an important information and communication tool for all goose specialists and invites all readers to communicate their feedback and views to the editors relating to what they expect from the **GOOSE BULLETIN** and how it could be improved.

The Editorial Board



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## Preface

It is with great pleasure that I write these introductory words for the revived Goose Bulletin. Until now I considered it my main task to make sure that nearly every year the Goose Specialist Group would meet at an interesting site for migratory geese.

However, the last meeting in Höllviken, the XIIth meeting since the first meeting of our group in 1995 in Poland, was a very lively one that gave rise to a board that energetically will support our activities in the future in a much more ambitious way.

This new Bulletin is the first sign of our new ambitions.

Among the 8 members of this board (Tony Fox, Thomas Heinicke, Konstantin Litvin, Jesper Madsen, Johan Mooij, Ingunn Tombre, Berend Voslamber and Bart Ebbing) we still have to discuss “who will do what”, and as soon as this will become more clear, we will inform you through our website ([www.geese.org/gsg](http://www.geese.org/gsg)) and the GOOSE BULLETIN, so that every member knows which person to contact for specific questions

It was great to see 98 members and interested persons gathered together in Höllviken, Sweden during a meeting at a very well chosen venue (Well done, Leif!). It was gratifying to see the lively discussions, new information (who would have thought that the population size of Barnacle Geese wintering in continental Europe would have increased from 20,000 in 1960 till almost 800,000 now), and strengthening of contacts between researchers that often work together in remote arctic places.

Our special guests from China and North America were impressed by the special open and friendly atmosphere during this meeting.

How many people belong to the ‘community’ of the Goose Specialist Group? During our previous meeting in Leh, Ladakh 34 people attended. If we consider these people as a random sample of the GSG population, which we then ‘marked’, we can consider the number of attendants in Höllviken as a second sample from the same population.

How many individuals of the 34 ‘marked’ ones in Ladakh, did show up in this second sample? 13. Simple capture-recapture then tells us that our community numbers well over 250 persons ( $(34 \times 98)/13 = 256$ ). Ingunn Tombre has accepted the task to bring our membership list up-to-date, so that we can find out how accurate this estimate really is.

Our membership is for free and open to anyone, and if you would like to join, please register with Ingunn Tombre ([Ingunn.Tombre@nina.no](mailto:Ingunn.Tombre@nina.no))

To conclude I would like to wish the new Editorial Board of the Goose Bulletin consisting of Johan Mooij, Fred Cottaar, Tony Fox, and Berend Voslamber all the energy it takes to keep this Goose Bulletin alive as a platform of information exchange for goose researchers and those interested in goose management.

Bart Ebbing (chairman)



## 11th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group of Wetlands International “GOOSE 2008“, 21 – 25 May 2008 in Leh (Ladakh, India)

**Bart Ebbinge**

The **11th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group** took place in Leh, Ladakh (India) from 22-25 May 2008. Despite the difficulties in organizing a meeting in such a remote place as the high mountains of Ladakh, in an area where the borders between India, China and Pakistan have not been settled, 34 delegates from 12 different countries managed to attend this meeting. Goose researchers from Belgium, Bulgaria, England, Estonia, France, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ukraine gathered at an altitude of 3,500 metres (11,500 feet).



Participants of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Goose Specialist Group in Leh.

Ladakh is a remote mountain area in the Northern part of India and spans the Himalaya and Karakoram Mountain range as well as the upper Indus River Valley. The region is a high mountain plateau, most of it over 3,000 meters above sea level with mountain peaks between 5,000 and 7,000 meters. The largest town in the region is Leh, which is situated at an altitude of 3,500 metres in the Transhimalayas.

Because of the geographical location beyond the main Himalayan range the Ladakh region has a very low amount of precipitation and a cold desert climate. The main source of water for the rivers is the melting of winter snow from the mountains in summer. Melting water is transported by rivers like the Indus, the Suru and the Shyok. Most of the cultivation is along the streams and rivers but the growing season is short, about two and a half months only. As Ladakh has gained significance politically and as a tourist destination, large supplies of almost everything are transported by road over high passes. There are two large lakes and several smaller ones, the result of flowing streams being blocked by tectonic movements in the past. Bar-headed Geese breed in marshes around these lakes and marshes around streams, at an altitude of over 4,000 metres. A post-conference excursion took place to one of the breeding sites along the lake Tso Moriri at an altitude of 4,200 metres.

In spite of the harsh climatic conditions Ladakh has a high diversity of birds: about 225 bird species have been recorded. Some well-known breeding waterbird species for the region are the Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*), the Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) and the Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*).

The Goose Specialist Group congratulates Prakash Gole and his team from the Ecological Society of Pune, who had already started preparations for this meeting two years before, on their great achievement. The Group also is very grateful for the support from the Ladakh Wildlife Department, who covered the costs for the conference hall and the final banquet, and who helped to organize the magnificent post-conference excursion.

According to the usual formula for the Goose Specialist Group meetings the group members gathered at a time of the year when geese are present near the meeting venue. This time the focus was on Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*), of which Ladakh is the only nesting area within India for no less than 500 pairs. During the post-conference excursion to Tso Moriri (Lake Moriri) some hundred Bar-headed Geese which had just started to lay eggs on 26 May were found. By telescope from a distance the participants could see three nests with one egg, and one with three eggs on a very barren small island in this huge lake, Tso Moriri.



LakeTso Moriri

This meeting was the second meeting of the Goose Specialist Group in Asia and the third scientific meeting on geese ever held in Asia, because in September 1990 Aleksandr Andreev organized the very first Asian goose meeting in Magadan, Russia. Because many members of the Goose Specialist Group had to start their arctic field work already in the end of May as well as the remoteness of the site of the meeting, a considerable number of goose researchers could not attend this meeting. However, the considerable benefit for Indian researchers to have a meeting in India justified the decision to hold this meeting in the Transhimalayas.

Usually the GSG-chairman and the convenor manage to find funding to assist delegates in their travelling expenses, but despite all efforts all applications for funding were turned down. Luckily it was possible to cover the actual costs for staying in Leh and for the post-conference excursion for some delegates, and these costs could be kept extremely low for all other delegates thanks to the help of the Ecological Society and the Ladakh Wildlife Department.

The meeting attracted some people with many years of experience of nature conservation on the high plains of Ladakh and so Herbert Prins, Blaise Humbert-Droz, Tsewang Namgyal, Pankaj Chandan (WWF) informed the participants about the problems that birds nesting in this area face, such as increased number of live-stock (goats and sheep), increased eco-tourism, increased number of stray and feral dogs, but also about solutions to reconcile nature conservation issues with the local economical interests.

As many of the geese wintering in Europe also nest in or perform special moult migrations into Asia (Red-breasted Geese, Dark-bellied Brent, Greater White-fronted and Bean Geese), the importance of Asia for geese stretches well into Europe. Simon Delany presented an overview of the current knowledge on numbers of geese wintering in Asia.

Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) had a high priority with 5 oral presentations and 1 poster. Joost van der Ven presented a tentative overview of the knowledge of the both the winter and nesting distribution of Bar-headed Geese. Thomas Heinicke presented an overview of the current knowledge of the distribution in the past and present of different subspecies of Bean Geese that occur in Asia. Herbert Prins gave an excellent overview of the problems migratory birds face when they have to cross the Himalayas.

All these presentations will appear in print (as full paper or as abstract) in the well-known British journal *Wildfowl*. In reviewing the papers Eileen Rees will be assisted by a special guest editorial board led by Eckhart Kuyken (supported by Bart Ebbinge, Ralf Kurvers, Asad Rehmani, and Gerard Ouweneel).



During the meeting the GSG-Chairman reported about the first ever meeting of chairs of the Specialist Groups of IUCN, to which our specialist group belongs. This meeting was held in Al Ain, Abu Dhabi from 11-14 February 2008. All Chairs were asked to produce a poster about the key activities of each group for this meeting. Also other specialist groups of Wetlands International participated (e.g. Seaducks - Stefan Pihl, Flamingos - Brooks Childress, Herons - Jim Kushlan, Loons - Joe Kerekes).

All of them expressed their great concern about the apparent lack of interest that Wetlands International has recently shown for its specialist groups. Holly Dublin, as chair and driving force behind the IUCN-SSC, has contacted Jane Madgwick, the present director of Wetlands International, and the GSG-Chairman hope that this will lead to improvements in the way Wetlands International will deal with its specialist group coordinators.

During this very stimulating meeting in Al Ain, the GSG-Chairman decided to agree to lead the Goose Specialist Group for another full term of four years.

During the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Goose Specialist Group in Xanten a discussion was started on how to proceed with the Goose Specialist Group (see short report of the Goose 2007 meeting in the proceedings in “Die Vogelwelt”). This discussion was continued in Leh and a small strategic working group, consisting of Herbert Prins, Leif Nilsson, Nicholas Tubbs from Wetlands International, Jesper Madsen, Thomas Heinicke and Eckhart Kuyken was formed to assist the chairman to work out a forward plan, which will be presented during the 12th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group in October 2009 in Sweden. Key items of the plan will be: improved management of the website, the revival of a Goose Bulletin (electronic version), more forward planning for the coming meetings so that the members will be informed beforehand about the coming two meetings (12th and 13th), strengthening the ties with the Russian Swans, Geese and Ducks Working Group, and fundraising to help less wealthy members covering the costs of attending the meetings.

On behalf of the Van Tienhoven Foundation for International Nature Protection, Prof. Herbert Prins awarded Sushil Dorje during the meeting of the Goose Specialist Group with the Golden Medal for his outstanding activities in reconciling the interests of nature conservation and local rural economies in this high altitude range where among others Bar-headed Geese come to nest. Local Indian TV and newspapers paid attention to this special occasion.



Four resolutions were adopted by the meeting, one about reconciling increased human activities and nature conservation on the high altitude plains of Ladakh, one about the worrying goose hunting activities in Bulgaria, one about the decreased level of protection that geese wintering and nesting in the Netherlands are exposed to, and finally one about the worrying low population sizes of geese in East-Asia.

## 12th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group of Wetlands International “GOOSE 2009“, 9 – 14 October 2009 in Höllviken (Sweden)

Thanks to the generous invitation from Leif Nilsson the 12th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group took place in Höllviken in southern Sweden from 9-14 October 2009. Höllviken is situated right at the crossroads of bird migration from Scandinavia in the autumn. Höllviken is situated about 10 km from the famous Falsterbo Bird station and only a few kilometers from Foteviken, the most important goose staging area in Sweden. The main theme of the conference was “The expanding goose populations and their management”. The organizing committee was chaired by Leif Nilsson and further consisted of Bart Ebbinge, Tony Fox, Thomas Heinicke, Konstantin Litvin, Jesper Madsen and Petteri Tolvanen.

The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Goose Specialist Group was attended by 98 participants from 19 countries, viz. Australia (1), Belgium (3), Canada (1), China (1), Czechia (2), Denmark (6), Finland (3), France (2), Germany (15), Hungary (1), India (1), Kazakhstan (1), Latvia (1), Norway (6), Russia (7), Sweden (15), The Netherlands (27), UK (4) and USA (1).



Participants of the 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Goose Specialist Group in Höllviken.

On the evening of arrival, the conference started with an impressive presentation by Prof. Thomas Alerstam about bird migration studies at the Lund University and a brief introduction by Bart Ebbinge on the new website to track marked geese.

On Saturday the chairman opened the meeting with a short memorial for Prof. Rudi Drent, who died in September 2008. The main item on Saturday was population dynamics of geese. A review of the current population estimates of several goose species wintering in Western Europe by Tony Fox and many supporting contributors showed that despite impressive coverage of many populations, considerable knowledge gaps remain making it difficult to assess populations sizes and trends.

While most populations of the Barnacle Goose, Canada Goose, Greylag Goose and Pink-footed Goose showed strong increases in recent decades, the populations of the Lesser White-fronted, Greenland White-fronted, Taiga Bean Geese as well as the Russian population of the Dark-bellied Brent Goose have obviously decreased. It was also apparent that the annual reproductive rates of many arctic goose species have decreased during recent decades. The analysis concluded that without a well-functioning goose database, it is impossible to collate information on population size and trends, nor is it possible to rely on gathering available count data without adequate coordination.

Given these problems, it was agreed that the Goose Specialist Group should take every possible effort to support Wetlands International to fill these gaps and in collaboration reconstruct an effective goose database. For the rest of the morning, a number of authors presented data on the development of regional or national goose populations, followed by a special workshop on Bean Geese. After dinner, participants discussed the Bean Goose situation in Europe, including the major problems associated with ascribing individuals to the two sub-species, as well as the problems associated with goose counts and the goose data base.



Sunday morning the main theme was marking, satellite tracking and other means of studying the migration of geese. The opening plenary was given by John Takekawa from California, who highlighted satellite tracking of geese as well as new ways to analyze the information gathered by applying this technique. In the afternoon followed a session about goose damage and goose management. After dinner the participants discussed the probabilities of the management of goose populations in Europe and Bart Ebbing mediated a discussion on how to proceed the Goose Specialist Group in future. During this discussion it was agreed that a board should be installed, composed of Bart Ebbing (chairman), Tony Fox, Thomas Heinicke, Konstantin Litvin (absent), Jesper Madsen, Johan Mooij, Berend Voslamber and Ingunn Tombre, that would meet during the conference excursion on Monday to develop a dynamic plan of activities for the coming three years.

On Monday, most participants had an early breakfast to go on the conference excursion to Falsterbo to observe migration whilst the freshly appointed board met to discuss the future of the Goose Specialist Group. In the evening, all participants met again to briefly hear about proposals for taking the Goose Specialist Group forward during the next 3 years, before moving on to enjoy the conference dinner, sponsored by the Swedish Hunting Organisation. More concrete information about the future plans and how the various tasks will be shared by the new board members can be found below and on the website [www.geese.org/gsg](http://www.geese.org/gsg).

On Tuesday the Goose Specialist Group members met again in the lecture room and heard interesting talks about the status and distribution of geese as well as the ecology of geese in different parts of Palearctic. For the first time some studies presented on a GSG meeting concentrated on “naturalized”, “exotic” or Neozoan goose populations that are spreading in more and more European countries and locally causing problems. Also our special guests from China, Lei Cao and Mark Barter reported on the studies on wintering geese in eastern China, and the problems geese face in such a densely populated country as China.

After dinner and the last two talks the participants discussed about the EURING guidelines for colour rings chaired by Berend Voslamber and finally about the recommendations of the new GSG board for the future work of the Goose Specialist Group.



As a result of the discussions about the recommendations of the new GSG board for the future work of the Goose Specialist Group the new board was confirmed by the participants.

The meeting decided that a small delegation of the Goose Specialist Group will visit Wetlands International in November 2009 to discuss future collaboration between GSG and WI with respect to the goose database and to discuss how best to develop our partnership.

A small working group consisting of Bart Ebbinge, Tony Fox, Thomas Heinicke, Kees Koffijberg, Eckhart Kuijken, Jesper Madsen, Carl Mitchell, Johan Mooij, Leif Nilsson and Stefan Pihl will prepare for this visit.

The GSG meeting proposed the creation of a Goose Specialist Goose MetaDatabase as an “one-stop-shop” source for all information on goose abundance and distribution in the western Palearctic. This data bank should as a minimum comprise a source of data on:

- Goose counts
- Goose age ratios
- Goose annual survival rates
- Goose breeding distribution, abundance and density
- Goose hunting bags
- Goose published literature, both in scientific journal and the “grey” literature

These data bases should support:

- the reprinting of the goose book in 2014
- the provision of annual population estimates of all goose populations
- the collation of data on annual reproductive success for all goose populations
- the collation of data on year-specific annual adult survival where available
- the collation of data on hunting bags
- the provision of information on breeding, staging and moulting concentrations
- the servicing and coordination of the network
- the provision the Goose Specialist Group with sources of published knowledge.

Furthermore it was decided that

- applications will be written to finance organising a major programme of work and funding the re-establishment of Goose MetaDatabase
- three workshops will be held within the coming three years (for which funding will be sought):
  1. Networking country and populations coordinators to kick-start the Goose MetaDatabase
  2. On the increased Barnacle Goose populations (autumn 2010 in Wadden Sea area) (application to INTERREG March 2010)
  3. On agricultural conflicts (2012 support to be found)
- a written Goose Bulletin will appear at least once per year (PDF-version); Editorial board: Johan Mooij (editor in chief), Fred Cottaar, Tony Fox & Berend Voslamber. Contributions of GSG members are welcome!
- unpublished presentations/manuscripts of previous GSG-meetings will be collated, edited and published in the Bulletin if the authors are still interested (Johan Mooij)
- the GSG membership list will be maintained and updated (Ingunn Tombre)
- the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Goose Specialist Group will take place in Russia, if possible in joint session with the Russian Duck, Goose and Swan group. The GSG wishes to see a closer cooperation with their Russian colleagues and will seek to organise a programme of regular joint events in the future.



It was also proposed to organize extra surveys in the future. Such special surveys for some species should be organized whenever needed and then repeated every 5th year in addition to the existing goose census scheme (Thomas Heinicke). As a start it was proposed to organize a special survey for the Neozoan goose populations in 2012.

After these important decisions had been taken, the Chairman closed the 12<sup>th</sup> GSG meeting and wished all participants a good journey back home or a fine post-conference excursion to the famous goose sites of southern Sweden.

The post-conference excursion was attended by 18 participants and during a three day-bus tour covering well over 1,000 km Leif Nilsson and his wife Christina provided us with an excellent impression of the rich Swedish landscape and of the various goose staging areas in southern Sweden. Apart from the impressive flocks of Taiga Bean Geese near Kvismare, the participants were also impressed by the fact that on all sites we visited Barnacle Geese were present to underline the huge increase in numbers of this species. The northerly winds brought the first snow during the excursion to stress as it were that geese are real winter birds in this part of Europe.



### **Individually marking of geese – EURING guidelines**

For more than one hundred years, birds have been ringed for scientific study using traditional metal leg rings with an engraved number and the name and return address of the ringing centre were used. These rings have been the basis for gathering most of our knowledge about bird ecology and migration. Unfortunately metal rings provide only information about the place where the bird was caught and ringed as well as about the place where it was found – mostly dead - or shot. Amongst wild geese, most of the recovered rings are reported by hunters. In very rare cases the birds could be recaptured or the ring was read by an observer. Most of ringed birds were not reported again.

Because of the low recovery rate of metal rings, individual colour-marks that can be read from a distance by telescope were developed to follow birds without recourse to recapture. In geese coloured leg rings and neck collars with or without engraved numbers have been used. Information about which colours and codes have been used on which species can be found at [www.cr-birding.be](http://www.cr-birding.be).

We are only able to follow the movements of such individually marked birds thanks to the help of many highly motivated and engaged observers. To maintain these high levels of motivation, rapid feedback of information relating to the marked bird is critical for these observers . Recently it has become possible to get online information about marked geese. At [www.geese.org](http://www.geese.org) registered observers of marked birds can now enter their sightings of geese marked with engraved colour-rings or neckbands, and get feedback about where these marked birds were ringed and resighted by other observers.



All these programmes depend on observers to report the recovery or observation of a marked bird, but the number of (potential) observers is very variable depending on where you are throughout the geographical range of most goose species. In the arctic breeding areas, observers are very infrequent, so for this reason, since the 1990s, arctic geese have also been individually marked with satellite transmitters. For the last few years, these transmitters have used the worldwide GPS system. Locating birds, using GPS and satellite transmitters provides completely new perspectives on their movements and migrations. Totally independent of the number of observers this method enables us to reconstruct migratory routes and follow the individual movements of the marked birds on an almost daily basis. Actual results and maps of such a programme for Greater White-fronted Goose are shown at [www.blessgans.de](http://www.blessgans.de).



**Important for researchers on geese!**

Because of the limited number of combinations (codes and colours) and the current high number of projects actually using or intending to use colour marks, coordination of all colour ring schemes is obligatory. To help the national ringing organisations and species coordinators to coordinate all colour marking activities, EURING have formulated guidelines on the use of colour markings.

**EURING – guidelines on the use of colour markings**

In order to increase coordination between projects and to get all the information to the central database, ringing schemes need to handle permissions for colour ringing more strictly:

- Before using colour-rings a national ringing permit and the agreement of the national ringing scheme is needed;
- Only use colour-rings as additional marking to the official rings of the national ringing scheme;
- ringing schemes should issue colour ringing permits only after coordination with other projects has been assured;
- EURING is on the way to find coordinators for all species (species group). This coordinators have to be contacted before starting a c-ring program. The coordinators in close cooperation with the national ring scheme give the ring (colours, code) combinations to the ringers.
- in an area there should be only a single project for each species to make it easier for observers to report the rings to the right projects
- ringing schemes should issue and prolong colour ringing permits on the condition that the ringer sends in all information about ringing and resightings to the scheme;
- ringing schemes should store all the sightings in their central database.

It makes sense that all specialist groups should have at least one person dealing with the coordination of marker colours and codes within their group. At the Goose Specialist Group Meeting in Höllviken Berend Voslamber was chosen to coordinate the colour marking scheme for all goose species. This means that after a researcher has received a permit from his ringing scheme to ring geese with colour rings, he has to contact Berend and see which combinations could be used. In most cases contact will be made with researchers that are already working on the specific species.

In the next Goose Bulletin we will provide further details about how intend to organise and manage this system. The most important thing is that you NEVER start a colour ringing programme before being certain that nobody has used the same colour and code combination. Amongst some (not goose) species, such duplication has occurred between projects which gives rise to enormous confusion and represents a massive waste of time and information.

Any questions please contact Berend Voslamber ([berend.voslamber@sovon.nl](mailto:berend.voslamber@sovon.nl)).

## **A new interactive website to report marked geese.**

**Bart Ebbinge, Helmut Kruckenberg, Thomas Heinicke, Henk van der Jeugd, Leif Nilsson, Berend Voslamber, Jesper Madsen & Kees Polderdijk**

Since the 1950s thousands of geese of different species have been marked with leg-rings and neck-collars. Following the movements of marked geese is only possible with the help of many dedicated volunteer observers. Feedback to these observers has always had a high priority, but unfortunately it has become increasingly difficult to send annual printed reports during the last years.

Therefore the "Tracking Marked Geese" project proposed to use the world wide web to inform observers more regularly about the birds they have observed. The "Tracking Marked Geese" website <[www.geese.org](http://www.geese.org)> allows an observer to feed new data into the database in a standardized way, and to edit and update own observations from the past, which sometimes have not been entered correctly.



On this new website <[www.geese.org](http://www.geese.org)> registered observers can enter their sightings of geese marked with engraved colour-rings or neckbands, and get feedback about where these marked birds were ringed and spotted by other observers.

If the reported bird matches an existing bird in the database the observer can immediately find the ringing information as well as information about other sightings of the same bird.

To guarantee the quality of the data only registered observers have access to the database. After registration the observer will receive a personal 'code' and a password, which allows him/her to log in.

This new facility will help the "Tracking Marked Geese" project to improve the quality of the data. This is important for the reliability of the scientific inferences the project will make using these data, like estimating annual survival rates, changes in local distribution etc.

The "Tracking Marked Geese" project hopes that all observers will help the project, and in return the "Tracking Marked Geese" website will allow the observers to generate maps with all the other observations of the observed bird for personal interest. Besides general information registered observers will find a personal page where they can look at all their old observations, as well as at other observations of these birds.

The database now contains over 1,000,000 sightings from more than 51,000 birds. Observations are from 29 countries (for instance England, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and even Russia).

## Greenland White-fronted Goose International Workshop

**Tony Fox**

In the light of the dramatic declines in the wintering population, an international workshop on the Greenland White-fronted Goose was convened in early 2009. Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) funded the drafting of a management plan for the population and organised a workshop in collaboration with the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study on Islay in the west of Scotland to discuss the future conservation of the sub-species. This programme is part of the Species Action Framework of SNH which addresses some of the most pressing challenges facing individual species conservation in Scotland and recognises the real needs faced by Greenland White-fronted Geese at the global scale. The objective was to gather experts and stakeholders involved with the population from around the globe to discuss the issues affecting their effective conservation and to prioritise and agree actions for the future.

More than 50 individuals, primarily from the range states involved along the flyway (Ireland, the UK, Iceland, Greenland and Denmark) gathered for three days (24-26 February 2009) to discuss the problems. Participants were drawn from the scientific community, the statutory bodies, international and non-government conservation organisations, as well as representatives of hunting and agricultural interests, clearly all of whom have a stake in these long distance migratory birds and their future.



The ultimate aim of the meeting was to discuss the current range of threats and pressures currently acting on the population and to determine which of these are most prominent in affecting their current and future distribution and abundance throughout the flyway. The scientific review presented information on changes in reproductive success and adult survival of individuals in the population over the many years that monitoring mechanisms have now been in place. These showed that annual survival has been stable amongst the collared birds marked at Wexford, but there have been major reductions in the production of young in recent years that simply fail to replace annual losses throughout the annual cycle, so it is most likely factors affecting breeding success (acting mainly on the breeding grounds) that were responsible for the downturn in numbers. In this context, conservation actions, especially those that could enhance reproductive output and manage hunting off-take were key issues.

Critical in the discussions was a review of conservation actions taken in the four key Range States over the period, most notably the cessation of hunting on the winter quarters since 1982 and in Iceland since autumn 2006. The workshop also heard that, given the unfavourable conservation status of the Greenland White-fronted Goose, the committee that provides advice to the Greenland Government on revision of the hunting law in that country has recommended that the species be protected from hunting there under the next revision. Subsequently, we are delighted to announce that the Greenlandic government has completely protected the Greenland White-fronted Goose from hunting with effect from 2 March 2009!

The workshop also heard about the development of the protected areas networks for the species throughout the four countries as well as methods to resolve agricultural conflicts, with particular emphasis on the winter quarters where these issues are more to the fore. The workshop included a field trip to a farm to discuss conflict resolution and the effectiveness of the Islay Goose Scheme in maintaining a balance between farming needs and goose conservation on the island, as well as visiting the RSPB reserve at Gruinart to see land management for the geese at first hand.

It was clear from the deliberations that many of the most urgent conservation actions had been taken to date, and in particular, the cessation of shooting in Iceland which would stop the removal of some 3,300 geese annually from the population, was almost certainly the most important action of recent years in making a real difference to adult annual survival. This appears reflected in the relatively stable population trajectory since the implementation of the ban, and stands as a great credit to the actions of the Icelandic BirdLife Partner this achievement in conjunction with the Icelandic Shooting Association and the Icelandic Government. The cessation of the much smaller hunt in Greenland is also greatly welcomed from this year. The workshop reviewed many of the remaining, new and emerging threats to the population and potential management actions to alleviate these, concluding with recommendations for the necessary research and conservation action required throughout the flyway to tackle the issues associated with the decline.



With broad general agreement on the key issues and conclusions, the Plan will now be circulated to all parties for polishing and improvement for finalisation. The draft can be found at:

<http://gwfg-conservation.wikispaces.com/file/view/GWGS+Action+Plan+v4.3.pdf>

It is important that this is available as soon as possible to cement and build upon the agreement achieved amongst parties at the workshop, not least with regard to prioritising actions and agreeing the most important targets and objectives to be tackled over the coming months, both by the statutory agencies and the various NGOs involved in Greenland White-fronted Goose conservation now and in the future.

The workshop also provided the excuse for two very exciting public initiatives, an evening slide show and an afternoon open session of the workshop related to wintering site issues, both of which were open to the public on Islay and very well attended by folk representing a wide range of opinion. In addition, the presence on Islay of so many “foreign experts” was a wonderful excuse to visit four of the primary schools on the island, explain to the children about the annual cycle of “their” geese and provide first hand accounts of what the geese get up to when they are away from Islay’s shores. It was a great experience for all concerned, not least for the visiting experts who were probably more beguiled by the children than *vice versa*! At the same time, it was invaluable with the benefit of expert experience to be able to explain something of the fragility of our world and especially the sensitivity of long-distance migratory wildlife species to changes happening in the world. The Greenland White-fronted Geese are so totally dependent upon the habitats offered by places like Islay as they commute across our changing globe between their widely separated seasonal “homes”. The children were also treated to souvenirs in the form of glossy information pamphlets explaining about the geese and attractive t-shirts bearing “tour-dates” and “road-maps” of geese as they span the globe in their annual perambulations.

Most of all, it was so cheering to gather together committed folk from many different backgrounds to try and find consensus about how best to conserve this small and vulnerable population in the future. The workshop achieved an incredible amount in a very short time, and we look forward to more developments very soon.



## **Estimate of the annual goose harvest rates in the Western Palearctic**

**Johan H. Mooij**

Enshrined in the philosophy behind many of the International Conventions relating to migratory waterbirds such as the Ramsar and Bonn Convention, the African-Eurasian migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) as well as the EU Birds Directive, it is accepted that waterbird hunting should only be permissible according to the principles of wise or sustainable use of natural resources.

As the basis for a review presented at the annual meeting of the Gesellschaft für Wildtier- und Jagdforschung (Union of German Game Biologists), data on hunting practices and hunting bags were collected from 24 of 25 member states of the European Union.

The data for this review were collected by a questionnaire about hunting regulations, quarry species, hunting periods and annual hunting bags, sent to national hunting organisations, game research institutions, national authorities and hunting experts as well as the evaluation of literature. These data were compared with data of former reviews to get an impression of the changes in hunting pressure and protection during the past decades. Data about the estimated size of Western Palearctic goose species were taken from the published population estimates of Wetlands International.

*Table 1 Data to hunters and waterbird hunting bags in the European Union (italics: extremely rough estimate)*

Country	Area	Inhabitants	Pop.density	Hunters	H/I (%)	H/skm	hunting bag
	qkm	I	I/skm	H			geese
<b>European Union (EU)</b>							
Austria	83.858	8.160.000	97	115.600	1,42	1,38	2.200
Belgium	35.700	10.190.000	285	26.000	0,26	0,73	2.100
Cyprus	9.851	700.000	71	35.000	5,00	3,55	0
Czech Republic	78.884	10.300.000	131	115.000	1,12	1,46	1.500
Denmark	43.032	5.390.000	125	172.000	3,19	4,00	24.500
Estonia	45.000	1.400.000	31	16.000	1,14	0,36	2.650
Finland	338.145	5.200.000	15	297.110	5,71	0,88	21.600
France	550.000	58.720.000	107	1.460.000	2,49	2,65	21.000
Germany	357.025	82.560.000	231	338.580	0,41	0,95	37.000
Greece	131.967	10.510.000	80	293.000	2,79	2,22	0
Hungary	93.032	10.200.000	110	50.000	0,49	0,54	5.500
Ireland	70.300	4.000.000	57	300.000	7,50	4,27	10
Italy	301.277	57.560.000	191	809.000	1,41	2,69	0
Latvia	64.500	2.300.000	36	25.000	1,09	0,39	1.500
Lithuania	65.300	3.700.000	57	27.300	0,74	0,42	226
Luxembourg	2.586	440.000	170	2.070	0,47	0,80	0
Malta	300	400.000	1.333	17.000	4,25	56,67	10
Netherlands	41.526	15.650.000	377	30.000	0,19	0,72	10.000
Poland	312.685	38.500.000	123	100.000	0,26	0,32	12.500
Portugal	89.000	9.960.000	112	300.000	3,01	3,37	?
Slovakia	49.000	5.400.000	110	51.000	0,94	1,04	850
Slovenia	20.255	1.950.000	96	22.000	1,13	1,09	0
Spain	505.992	39.350.000	78	1.200.000	3,05	2,37	25.000
Sweden	449.964	8.900.000	20	300.000	3,37	0,67	44.400
United Kingdom	244.157	59.080.000	242	625.000	1,06	2,56	49.000
Total EU states	3.983.336	450.520.000	113	6.726.660	1,49	1,69	261.546
Cripple loss (at least 25%):							65.387
<b>Total EU-kill:</b>							<b>326.933</b>
<b>Non-EU-states</b>							
Albania	28.748	3.582.205	125	17.000	0,47	0,59	?
Belarus	207.600	10.300.483	50	71.000	0,69	0,34	11.000
Bosnia-Herzegovina	51.129	4.025.476	79	50.000	1,24	0,98	?
Bulgaria	111.002	7.450.349	67	110.000	1,48	0,99	14.000
Croatia	56.542	4.496.869	80	55.000	1,22	0,97	?
FYR Macedonia	25.713	2.045.262	80	45.000	2,20	1,75	?
Iceland	103.125	296.737	3	10.000	3,37	0,10	55.000
Kazakhstan	2.717.300	15.143.704	6	135.000	0,89	0,05	72.000
Moldavia	33.843	4.431.570	131	15.500	0,35	0,46	2.000
Norway	385.199	4.593.041	12	190.000	4,14	0,49	14.500
Romania	238.391	22.355.551	94	60.000	0,27	0,25	5.000
Serbia-Montenegro	102.350	10.829.175	106	80.000	0,74	0,78	?
Switzerland	41.285	7.300.000	177	30.000	0,41	0,73	0
Turkey	780.580	69.660.559	89	?	?	?	?
Ukraine	603.700	47.056.163	78	450.000	0,96	0,75	50.000
W.Russia	7.451.923	128.526.319	17	1.625.570	1,26	0,22	320.000
Total non-EU states	12.938.430	342.093.463	26	2.944.070	0,86	0,23	543.500
Cripple loss (at least 25%):							135.875
<b>Total non-EU-kill</b>							<b>679.375</b>
Total Western Palearctic (WP)	16.921.766	792.613.463	47	9.670.730	1,22	0,57	805.046
Cripple loss (at least 25%):							201.262
<b>Total WP-kill</b>							<b>1.006.308</b>

The data showed that an estimated 6.7 million hunters in the EU currently take at least c.7.2 million ducks and 262,000 geese per year. If a further 25 % of the annual bag is added to account for crippling loss, this means that on the territory of the EU annually at least about 9 million ducks and 327,000 geese are killed each year by hunters. However, the quality of the available bag data varied considerably between states and considerable quality control would be required before available bag statistics from many countries could be used as a reliable tool for estimate annual hunting kill.

The legal framework relating to waterbird hunters differs widely between countries, quarry species varied between 1 and 24 species, whilst the extent of the hunting period varied between three months and almost half a year.

A comparison bag data collected for the Western Palearctic with population estimates of the quarry species for this area showed that currently about 30-35 % of the duck and about 20 % of the goose populations is bagged annually in the western Palearctic (Table 2).

Table 2 Estimated harvest rates from hunting of geese during recent decades in the Western Palearctic

GEESE				Revised		Revised	
	Population estimate	goose bag	%	Population estimate	%	Population size	%
	winter			winter		summer	
1950's	2.119.800			2.344.800		2.644.800	
1960's	1.743.000	353.841	20,3	2.393.000	14,8	2.746.841	12,9
1970's	1.826.000	375.903	20,6	2.551.000	14,7	2.926.903	12,8
1980's	2.386.000	459.288	19,2	3.011.000	15,3	3.470.288	13,2
1990's	3.260.000	650.625	20,0	3.260.000	20,0	3.910.625	16,6
2000-2005	3.987.500	1.006.308	25,2	3.987.500	25,2	4.993.808	20,2

Furthermore recent data analysis indicated that also the precision of the current population estimates is subject to some doubt. This implies we still need to make much further progress in estimating population and bag size before we can claim that current hunting practice represents wise or sustainable use of natural resources. Data on sex and age ratios in the population as a whole and in the hunting bag are lacking, providing no means of providing information about the population structure of the quarry species nor about the influence of hunting on population structure. Hunting periods are generally based on tradition as a source of food, rather than on ecological criteria or principles. In most EU countries use of lead shot remains legal, or subject to restrictions that are difficult to enforce. Finally, kill of non-quarry “look-alike” species continues, which creates a particular problem for rare or threatened taxa such as the Lesser White-fronted Goose.

Table 3 Estimated annual goose bag data for different species in the countries of the Western Palearctic

Geese	Midwinter				Summer			
	Population size	Annual bag	Cripple loss	Total kill	% killed	Population size	% killed	Pop. Trend
	MPS	HB	CL	HB+CL	HB+CL/MPSx100	SPS	HB+CL/SPSx100	
Anser anser	610.000	256.810	64.203	321.013	52,6	931.013	34,5	INC
Anser albifrons	1.600.000	271.275	67.819	339.093	21,2	1.939.093	17,5	INC?
Anser erythropus	10.500	1.940	485	2.425	23,1	12.925	18,8	DEC
Anser fabalis	600.000	100.302	25.075	125.377	20,9	725.377	17,3	STA?
Anser brachyrhynchus	277.000	42.330	10.583	52.913	19,1	329.913	16,0	INC
Branta canadensis	140.000	54.600	13.650	68.250	48,7	208.250	32,8	INC
Branta leucopsis	440.000	42.789	10.697	53.487	12,2	493.487	10,8	INC
Branta bernicla	240.000	25.000	6.250	31.250	13,0	271.250	11,5	DEC
Branta ruficollis	70.000	10.000	2.500	12.500	17,9	82.500	15,2	DEC?
	3.987.500	805.046	201.262	1.006.308	25,2	4.993.808	20,2	

To achieve the ideal and harmonise waterbird hunting with the concept of sustainable off-take, it is essential that a Europe-wide system of collating reliable data on waterbird bags be adopted as a common standard approach, which should include protected species bagged in error, and to improve the coordination and collation of international waterbird counts to from which to derive reliable population estimates. Data should also be collected at the same time about age ratios both in the populations at large and amongst the hunting bag. These data should be used to monitor the status and development of the hunted populations, to estimate the influence of hunting and to initiate necessary measures in the case of a species developing unfavourable conservation status.

(This Information was published in: J.H. Mooij - Protection and use of waterbirds in the European Union, Beiträge zur Jagd- und Wildforschung, Bd. 30 (2005) 49-76. A copy of the paper with much more information can be ordered by the author)



### **Eckhart Kuijken retired**

In June 2007 Prof. Dr. Eckhart Kuijken, long-standing member of the Goose Specialist Group and general-director of the Belgium Institute for Nature and Forest Research (INBO), has retired.



Eckhart Kuijken was born in 1942 and is married to Christine Verscheure, another long-standing member of the Goose Specialist Group.

He studied biology at the Ghent University (receiving a PhD in 1975/76 with a thesis on the “Ecology of wintering geese around Damme (West-Flanders) in a West-European context”) and was a member of the scientific staff of the Laboratory of Animal Ecology, Zoogeography and Nature Conservation, currently called Research group on Terrestrial Ecology. Since 1991 he has been part-time professor at the same University, with graduate and post

graduate courses on 'landscape ecology and nature conservation'.

Since its establishment as a scientific institution of the Flemish Government in Belgium in 1986, he led and developed the Institute of Nature Conservation (IN) as well as (since January 2006) the new Institute of Nature and Forest Research (INBO), which resulted from the merger of the Institute for Forestry and Game Management (IBW) and the Institute of Nature Conservation in January 2006. During these 20 years his highest priority has been applied ecological research and the 'translation' of the research results to conservation policy.

Since the late 1960's, Eckhart Kuijken has been active on several national councils, international commissions and organisations, mainly concerning biodiversity research, ornithology, nature conservation and waterbird protection. Since 1968 he has been active in the former International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB, Slimbridge, UK), now "Wetlands International", based in Wageningen (NL). As Belgium delegate he participated in the Ramsar conference of 1971 in Iran as well as all following COPs; he was elected as member of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) and awarded by the Ramsar Bureau as "Wetland Person of International Importance" in 2002. Besides his engagement for Wetlands International and the Ramsar Convention as scientific advisor and expert he is active for the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Biodiversity Convention as well as the Bern and Bonn Convention.

Eckhart's research and nature protection activities mostly focus on the ecology of waterbirds and wetlands, landscape ecology and nature conservation, often in connection with instruments for conservation policy, planning and management. He is the author of many scientific and popular reports, papers, book chapters as well as conference contributions and has motivated hundreds of students and colleagues.

Because of his extraordinary engagement and enthusiasm for waterbirds – especially geese – and wetlands, we are sure that Eckhart will be an active member of the Goose Specialist Group also in future, in spite of his retirement. We are looking forward to it!



### **Tony Fox, Winner of the Luc Hoffmann Medal**

In 2008 Wetlands International awarded the Luc Hoffmann Medal for Excellence in Wetland Science and Conservation to Professor Anthony (Tony) Fox. He was awarded this Medal for excellence in wetland research, especially in waterbird ecology and physiology, and for outstanding communications, teamwork and collaboration worldwide for the active promotion of wetland conservation and wise use.



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Professor Anthony Fox lives and breathes science. Born in 1956 in Surrey, England his career started in Wales as a young peatland ecologist and has lead him to his current position as Professor in Wetland Ecology at the National Environmental Research Institute in Denmark. Throughout his career he has demonstrated excellence in scientific research and he has been amazingly productive. Moreover, most of his research has had wider practical utility for those more directly involved in the conservation process. Indeed to these practioners, he has always been extraordinarily generous in giving his assistance and expert advice.

Tony has always given emphasis to the communication of research to others, which he sees as a central responsibility for researchers. In his busy schedule, also being a father of two, he has created time to give regular talks and presentations to many amateur natural history societies and birdwatching clubs. His lively presentations helped stimulate the activities of these volunteers through his infectious enthusiasm. Tony has also long been a supporter of Wetlands International and its Specialist Groups, and has had active involvement with the International Wader Study Group (WSG), the Seaduck Specialist Group, and especially the Goose Specialist Group.

Throughout his publications shines a vivid love for all living creatures. Tony has been able to encompass both the deep specialisation of his life-long fascination with Greenland White-fronted Geese (for which he was awarded a DSc by the University of Copenhagen), whilst always being open to new ideas, avenues of thinking and people. However the common theme that links all his work is wetland ecology.

One of Tony's outstanding qualities as researcher is his extraordinary networking abilities. Tony has worked with others all over the boreal and arctic areas of the Northern Hemisphere. Of particular note is Tony's strong support for, and mentoring of, students and other younger researchers in whose work he has always taken the greatest interest. His quiet support and guidance has been highly motivating for all of those who have had the privilege of working with Tony.

The Goose Specialist Group is proud to have Tony as an active member!



### **In Memoriam: Rudi Drent (1937-2008)**



*Rudolf H. (Rudi) Drent, born 1937 in Los Angeles (USA), died 9 September 2008 in Groningen (NL), where he had taught Animal Ecology at the University of Groningen from 1972-2002.*

Rudi Drent was one of the brightest and most stimulating of people in the goose research scene. He was an exceptionally gifted lecturer and a brilliant analyst, who could summarise the results of a three days conference in an entertaining five minutes lecture. His publications speak for themselves: they are precise, concise, and written in a relaxed and informative way, with catching titles that set the scene for his messages. Rudi loved to work out in the field and he

loved to work hard. His approach to fieldwork and his thoughts about geese changed the thinking of most people who had the good fortune to interact and to work with him. He was a most inspiring teacher, researcher and colleague. He nurtured a new generation of goose biologists, who will continue his work and will keep his legacy alive and flourishing. The Goose Specialist Group and goose research community in general will sorely miss Rudi. A selection of memories and tributes to Rudi can already be found on the GSG website [www.goose.org/gsg](http://www.goose.org/gsg).

## In Memoriam: Lena Gurtovaya (1955–2007)



*Yelena (Lena) N. Gurtovaya (born 20.04.1955) died unexpectedly during the night of 13/14 January 2007 in Moscow, where she had worked in the Russian Bird Ringing Centre since 1978 together with her husband, Konstantin (Kostya) Ye. Litvin.*

After graduating from Moscow State University in 1977, Lena undertook long-term studies on the biology and behaviour of the Lesser Snow Goose 1980-1991 on Wrangel Island, together with Kostya, under the supervision of Yevgeniy V. Svyroechkovskiy.

Subsequently, she studied Bewick Swans and Barnacle Geese on Vaigach Island in 1995-1997 and on the Kanin Peninsula in 2001-2002, as well as Barnacle and White-fronted Geese at Tobseda (Kolokolkova Bay) during 2002-2006. Between these major summer expeditions, Lena participated in studies of the autumn migration of Lesser White-fronted Geese in Kazakhstan (1999), and of the spring migration of waterfowl in the Rostov (2001) and in the Manych part of the Chernye Zemli (2002 and 2004) Nature Reserves. Since 1989 she had gained international experience during regular study visits to Northern America, as well as taking part in international expeditions to the Russian arctic. From the very early days of its existence, Lena was one of the most active members of the Russian Goose, Swan and Duck Study Group (GSDSG) and an esteemed member of the Goose Specialist Group. With the death of Lena Gurtovaya, the Goose Specialist Group has lost a prominent member, who's gently uttered but relevant comments and recommendations will be greatly missed.



## Arctic Birds Breeding Conditions Survey (ABBCS)



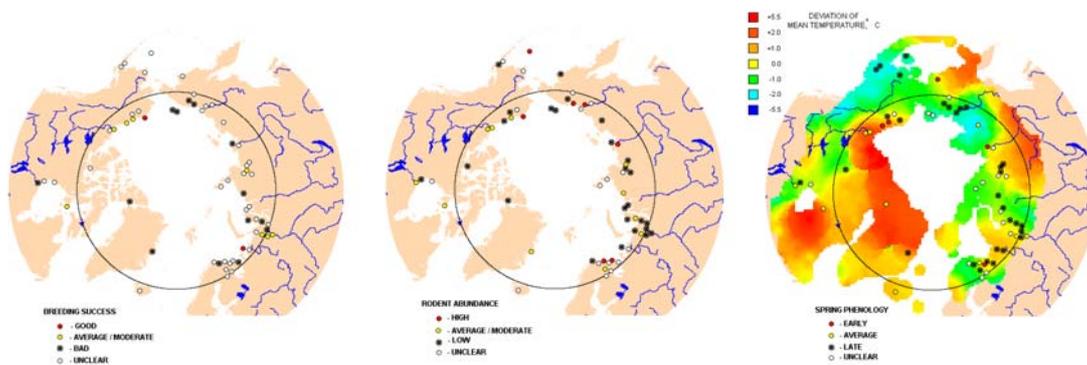
The International Breeding Conditions Survey on Arctic Birds (ABBCS) is a joint venture of International Wader Study Group and Wetlands International's Goose and Swan Specialist Groups. This project aims at collating information on environmental conditions on breeding grounds of Arctic nesting birds in a persistently updated database. Analyses of data on bird numbers and breeding performance during Arctic summer in relation to climatic, predatory and other relevant factors can give insights into ecological processes acting at wide scale, and also provide valuable information for the conservation of sites and species.

The database of International Wader Study Group and Wetlands International's Goose and Swan Specialist Groups accumulates simple and most up-to-date environmental information, obtained from many Arctic localities primarily by means of distributing questionnaires among Arctic field workers. Although being initially focused on waders and waterfowl and still making main emphasis on these groups due to their dominant role in most Arctic bird communities, the database now provides also for accumulation of data on other groups of Arctic terrestrial birds, as their responses to changing environment have often much in common.

Currently information is available online on bird breeding success, rodent abundance and certain weather characteristics in the Arctic from the summers 1999 to 2008.

Data on distribution and numbers of individual bird species can be obtained by querying the Bird Species Database.

The first eleven issues of annual Newsletter mainly (but not exclusively) describing bird breeding conditions in the Arctic in 1998 to 2008, respectively, are available from project coordinators as hardcopies, and also can be downloaded from the site <[www.soil.msu.ru/~soloviev/arctic/](http://www.soil.msu.ru/~soloviev/arctic/)> as pdf documents.



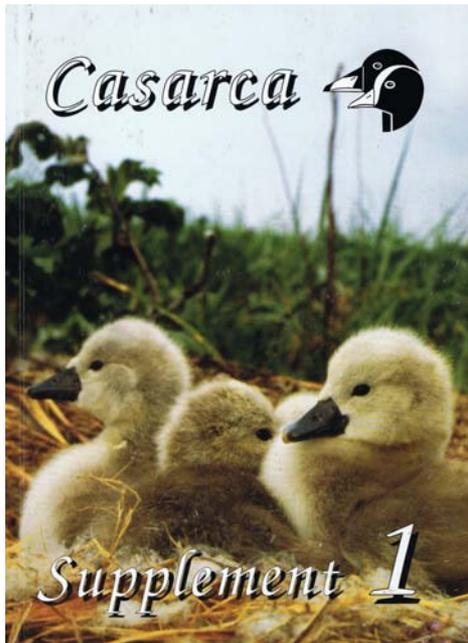
Information about bird breeding success, rodent density and weather in 2008.

The survey developed from and primarily depends on voluntarily contribution of Arctic researchers willing to share their observations on bird breeding performance with view of creating general picture in a cooperative effort. Differences in geographic coverage among Arctic regions adversely affect a potential for synthesis from individual reports. Accordingly, every new piece of information is highly valued. Data from poorly covered localities help to fill obvious gaps, while data from areas with some coverage allow to evaluate bird breeding conditions there with higher detail.

Therefore we encourage all visitors of the Arctic, not necessarily ornithologists or biologists, to join the survey by filling up questionnaires. Forms can be obtained from the download page, or requested as a paper copy or electronically from any of the addresses below. In case of getting electronic form you can also return it by e-mail to [soloviev@soil.msu.ru](mailto:soloviev@soil.msu.ru) after entering the necessary data. We would greatly appreciate feed-back and completed forms from Arctic researches and other visitors of Arctic regions.



## Casarca, journal of the GSDSG



The Goose, Swan and Duck Study Group of Northern Eurasia (GSDSG) is a Russian non-governmental organisation, established in 1994, with currently about 400 members in more than 20 countries, most of them in Russia and CIS countries.

Since 1995 the GSDSG has published its own excellent journal “Casarca” devoted to various aspects of waterbird research as well as conservation issues.

Between 1995 and 2005 Casarca was published once annually, but from 2008, the journal has appeared twice per year, under the present editor-in-chief, Konstantin E. Litvin.

In the first ten Casarca issues, a total of about 430 papers of Russian and non-Russian authors have been published, most in Russian with English abstracts and subtitles for the figures and tables. These papers offer a good overview of the waterbird research and conservation activities as well as about the status and development of waterbird populations on the territories of the former USSR. A few papers are published in English, but although most non-Russian goose researchers cannot speak or read Russian, the editorial board have gone to great lengths to enable to make sure the main themes, ideas and conclusions of Russian language papers are comprehensible by providing excellent English abstracts, table and figure subtitles.

In 2005, the GSDSG published a supplement (“Casarca – Supplement 1”) containing a compilation of selected papers in English, which were published in Russian in previous issues of the journal and are of general interest.

For everybody who wants to know what is going on in the Russian waterbird scene “Casarca” is an absolute must!

Issues of Casarca cost 10 Euro (postage costs not included) and can be ordered from: Bird Ringing Centre (RGG), Moscow, 117312, Russia.

Email: [goosegroup@gmail.com](mailto:goosegroup@gmail.com)



## New Publications.

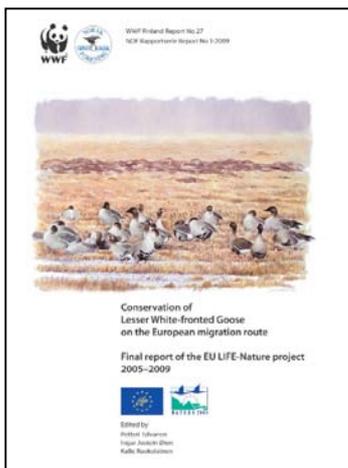


### Proceedings of the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GSG in Xanten

The proceedings of the **10th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group** in Xanten in January 2007 have now been published in English as a volume of the renowned German Journal „Die Vogelwelt“.

All Xanten-participants have already been sent a copy, but a few more copies are still available at a cost of € 20 (excluding postage) for interested people who could not attend the meeting.

If you are interested in such a copy, please contact Johan Mooij [johan.mooij@t-online.de](mailto:johan.mooij@t-online.de)



### The Life project “Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose on European migration route”

An international EU Life Nature project, titled “Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose on European migration route” started in April 2005 and ended in March 2009. The project was run by WWF Finland, with nine more partners in Finland, Norway, Estonia, Hungary and Greece.

The aim of the project was to improve and monitor the conservation status of the Lesser White-fronted Goose (LWfG) at the most important breeding, staging and wintering sites along the flyway.

The project attempted to localise the most important breeding areas, to secure a favourable conservation status of these areas, to eliminate the most important threats (high mortality due to hunting and poaching, loss of feeding and roosting habitats, and human disturbance) and to monitor the population development and the effect of the project actions.

The project did not include the re-enforced Swedish LWFG population. The LIFE project produced a detailed final report, a short so-called layman's report, as well as information material in national languages in Estonia, Hungary and Greece.

These publications can be downloaded in pdf format at [www.wwf.fi/english/finland/lesser\\_white\\_fronted/publications.html](http://www.wwf.fi/english/finland/lesser_white_fronted/publications.html). More informations can be found at [www.piskulka.net](http://www.piskulka.net)



Hilmi Kruckenberg, Alexander Kondratyev, Jeroen Mooij, Christoph Zöckler & Elena Zaynagutdinova  
White-fronted Goose Flyway Population Status  
Interim Report of a preliminary study in 2006



**Kruckenberg, H., A. Kondratyev, J.H. Mooij, C. Zöckler & E. Zaynagutdinova (2008): White-fronted Goose Flyway Population Status Interim Report of a preliminary study in 2006. *Angewandte Feldbiologie* 2: 1-77.**

This booklet represents the first attempt at viewing the European White-fronted Goose population status and recent trends using the flyway approach. The White-fronted goose is the most numerous arctic breeding goose in the Western Palaearctic with a total population estimate of 1.36 – 1.75 million individuals. Effective count coverage is difficult because of the extensive wintering range of the species. For this reason, count results have been supplemented with data on observations on large numbers of neck-banded geese and from the tracking of 5 geese fitted with satellite transmitters in the Netherlands in winter 2005. Local studies at a stop-over site on the Olonets fields in Karelia, Russia (an important stepping stone on east shore of Lake Ladoga) were undertaken to assess the influence of heavy spring hunting on the distribution, habitat use and behaviour of staging geese. Intensive collar reading generated resighting data on individuals which enabled estimations of local turnover rates to assess total numbers using the area. Studies on the breeding grounds on Kolguev Island in the Barents Sea provided major insight into population parameters, which are important for managing the population. The island of Kolguev proved to have the highest densities of breeding geese known anywhere, with 40-50 White-fronted Goose nests per sq.km. Up to 20-30% of the White-fronted Goose, 30-50% of the Barnacle Goose and 10-15% of the Bean Goose populations breed on this relative small island of 4850 sq.km. This report provides information on the the first of three recent summer expeditions to Kolguev Island, and underlines the great importance of this one island for arctic breeding geese in the Western Palearctic.

ISSN 1861-227X; 68 coloured pages DIN A 5, 54 fig. and photos. 20€ incl. Postal transfer abroad.



## Call for help and assistance!

During the discussions about the future of the Goose Specialist Group, the majority of the GSG Board Members thought it to be desirable

1. to have a group logo. All members of the GSG are invited to send in proposals for such a logo to the Editorial Board of the GOOSE BULLETIN.
2. to develop a data bank of grey goose literature. All members of the GSG are invited to send in their publications, preferably as a pdf file, to Fred Cottaar <cottaar@tiscali.nl>





Place for  
the future  
logo of the  
GSG