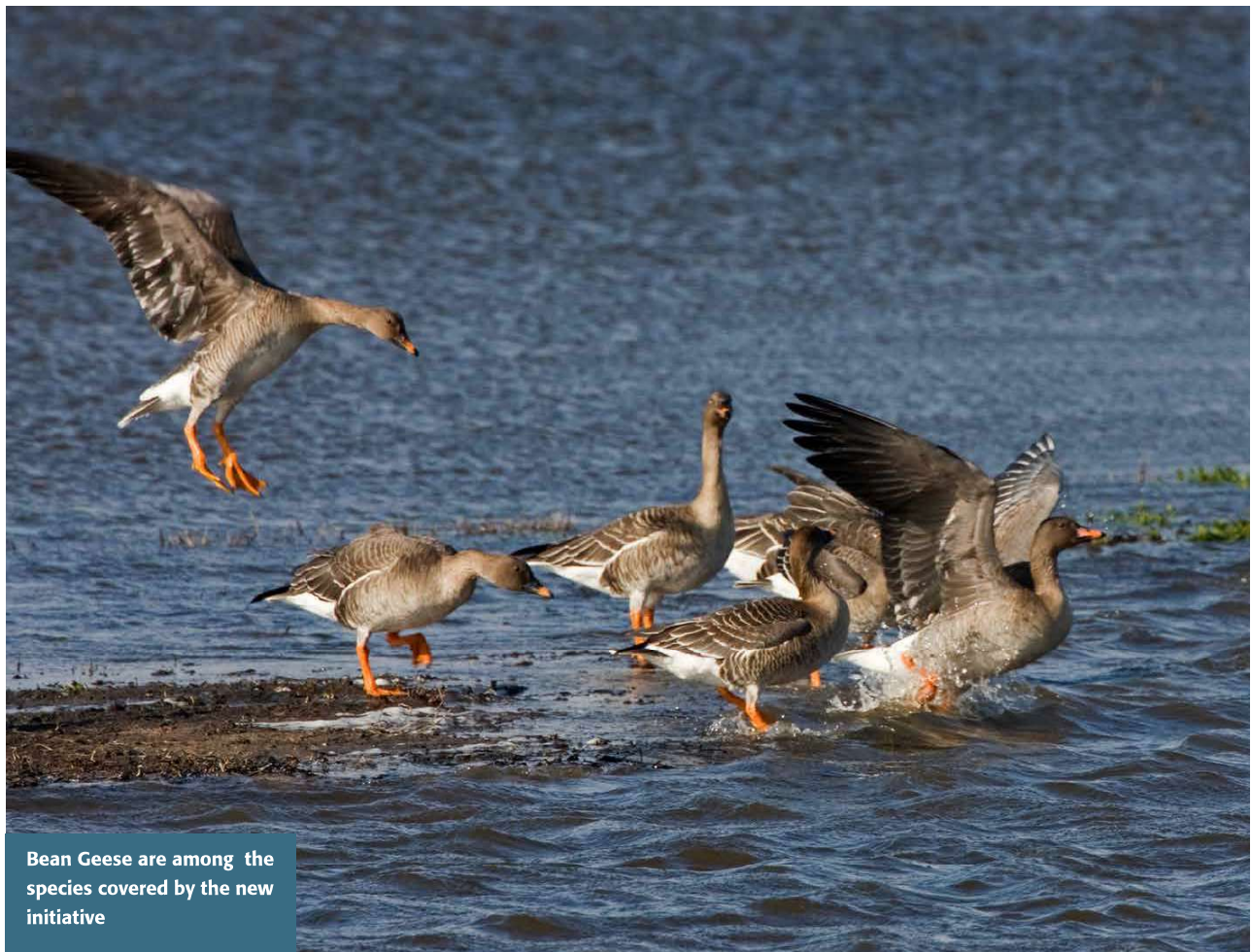


Breaking new ground in managing shared waterbird populations

The European Goose Management Platform (EGMP) is a recently established initiative under the African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) to coordinate multiple strands of European goose conservation and management.

David Stroud JNCC and **Rae McKenzie** SNH



Bean Geese are among the species covered by the new initiative

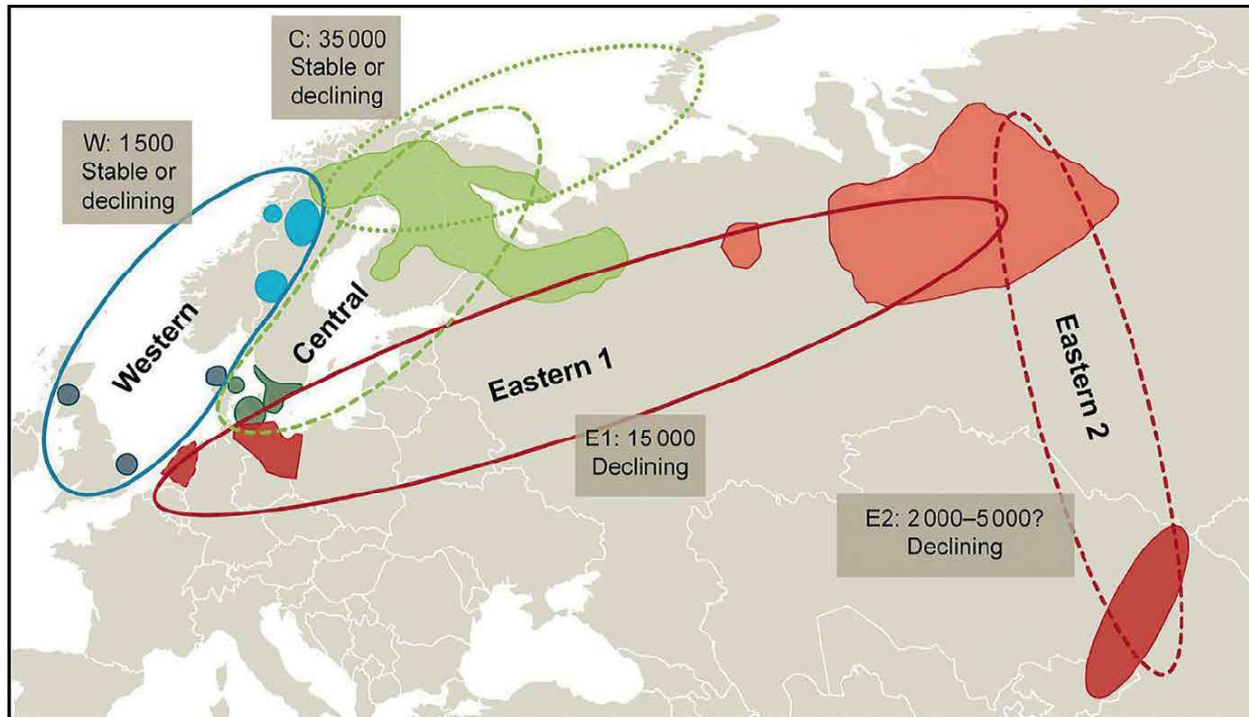
CHRIS KNIGHTS

At present, the EGMP oversees implementation of international plans for Svalbard Pink-footed and Taiga Bean Geese. Further draft Management Plans for the three populations of Barnacle Geese and the continental population of Greylag Geese will go to AEWA's seventh Meeting of Parties this December and, if adopted, co-ordination of their

implement will also fall to EGMP. UK participates within EGMP and our engagement will become greater with the anticipated adoption of the Barnacle Goose plan.

Current implementation of the Pink-foot and Bean Goose plans is breaking new ground in their adaptive processes to conservation and management.

For Pinkfeet, which cause significant agricultural damage on spring staging areas in Norway, the 2012 plan adopted a target population size of about 70,000 birds. Annual hunting regulations are now linked to population size assessments on the wintering grounds. At levels above 80,000, hunting regulations in Denmark and Norway are liberalised to



▲ Figure 1. Taiga Bean Goose Management Units (from AEWA conservation plan).

increase harvest and thus restrict population growth, whilst if the population were to fall below 60,000 more restrictive hunting regulation would allow recovery. The most recent assessments presented to the June 2018 EGMP meeting indicates that this adaptive approach to hunting regulation is indeed stabilising the population – which previously had shown unconstrained growth.

Taiga Bean Geese present a quite different set of challenges. The various population units (Figure 1.) have shown declines triggering the need for conservation attention by AEWA. An adaptive response has thus been developed which allows – on the basis of population demographic modelling – a small (and annually variable) harvest to be taken that allows population recovery whilst still maintaining a limited hunting opportunity. For the Central Management Unit – which migrates through the Baltic – the quota is allocated between the relevant Range States where hunting is permissible (currently Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany).

A programme of work also addresses other conservation issues, and the UK is involved with respect to our two flocks within the Western Management Unit (Figure 1.) – at Slamannan in Central Scotland, and in the Norfolk Broads. As WeBS counts have shown, the latter flock is in dire straits, having declined from a peak of almost 500 in 1990/91 to just 18 birds in 2018, and Natural England are seeking to investigate the causes of decline. Indeed, EGMP assessments show that, in 2017/18, the whole Western Management Unit (shared also with Denmark, Norway and Sweden) now comprises just 878 individuals. As pressures on the different Management Units may be similar, there is benefit from international sharing of research findings and thinking and EGMP facilitates this.

EGMP is innovating in implementing management processes for geese that are not only international in scope and collaborative between countries, but also adaptive in their nature. Further, the issues being addressed are becoming progressively more

complex – from the ‘simple’ flyway of Svalbard Pinkfeet involving just four countries, to – potentially – seeking common management approaches in the nine principal Range States across continental Europe that host Greylags.

EGMP has itself adopted an adaptive approach to its operations – ‘learning by doing’ – and is thus developing experience of relevance to other current international migratory bird conservation and management needs.

Further information:

Papers for the 2018 EGMP meeting:

<https://tinyurl.com/yccnrrn99>

AEWA adaptive management plan for

Svalbard Pink-footed Goose: [https://](https://tinyurl.com/y9759t7h)

tinyurl.com/y9759t7h

AEWA conservation plan for Taiga Bean

Goose: <https://tinyurl.com/yal5gbaa>