

AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM



**8th MEETING OF THE
AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT
INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP**



20-22 June 2023, Bonn, Germany

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF BARNACLE GOOSE EAST
GREENLAND/SCOTLAND & IRELAND POPULATION AND THE
SVALBARD/SOUTHWEST SCOTLAND POPULATION TASK FORCE AND DRAFT
WORKPLAN FOR 2023/2024**

*Prepared by Rae McKenzie, Coordinator of the with contributions from the members of the
Greenland/Svalbard Barnacle Goose Task Force*

Summary:

This document provides an overview of the status and key activities that the Barnacle Goose Task Force for the East Greenland/Scotland & Ireland population has undertaken since June 2022 until May 2023. In addition, a proposed list of recommendations is included as well as the proposed annual workplan for 2023/2024. It should be noted that some work has not taken place due to the impact of and available resources due to HPAI.

There are no activities reported for the Svalbard/South-west Scotland population, since the AFMP has not been developed yet. It was agreed at EGM IWG7 that development of the AFMP would be postponed until we have a better understanding of the impacts of HPAI.

The Task Force will follow the agreed workplan set out in Section 5. The key recommendations of this report are to follow up the IPM for the Greenland population, taking into account data from the flyway census and additional impacts of HPAI, with an IPM for the Svalbard population. There is no agreement to date on who leads the work and how it will be funded. Norway and UK are working on the impact model for the Greenland and Svalbard Barnacle Goose populations. New and ongoing work will take into account the impacts of HPAI and any associated research. The Greenland/Svalbard Barnacle Goose Task Force proposes to continue to support the implementation of the ISSAP and AFMP, following the workplan activities of previous years and recommended activities.

New work will include considering the impacts of HPAI on both populations and how this might impact on the AFMP and agreed management activities. Meetings will be organised as necessary, especially for the evaluation of the IPM.

Action requested from the EGM IWG: Take note of the task force report and recommendations and adopt the annual workplan.

Introduction

According to Rule 29 of the European Goose Management International Working Group (EGM IWG) Modus Operandi, the EGM IWG may establish species and/or thematic Task Forces as necessary to deal with the preparation and coordination of decision papers and background documents, as well as to deal with other specific tasks. The EGMP Greenland/Svalbard Barnacle Goose Task Force was established in 2020 following the recommendations of the 5th Meeting of the EGM IWG in June 2020. The first meeting of the Task Force took place on 7 October 2020.

This document provides an overview of the work that has taken place since the EGM IWG7 and the recommendations and work plan for the implementation of the AEWA International Single Species Management Plan (ISSMP) for the Greenland Barnacle Goose for 2021/2022. The agreed aims of the Task Force are: 1) Assist the EGM IWG in coordinating and catalysing the implementation of the ISSMP for the Barnacle Goose and its corresponding AFMPs for the respective populations under the EGMP; 2) Assist the EGM IWG in stimulating and supporting Range States in the implementation of the ISSMP for the Barnacle Goose and its corresponding AFMP for the respective population(s); and 3) Monitor and report on the implementation of these activities to the EGM IWG, as appropriate.

1. Status of the Task Force Membership

The Task Force is made up of representatives from 4 Range State and 6 NGOs and is supported by the EGMP Secretariat and Data Centre.

A full list of Task Force members is detailed in Annex 1.

2. Meetings

Since the previous Task Force Report submitted to EGM IWG7 in June 2022, the Task Force has had one meeting, on 9 February 2023.

Task Force members have also contributed to the Agriculture Task Force meetings over the past year and have joined a number of webinars, most notably the EGMP webinar on air safety.

The Greenland Barnacle Goose population model has also been discussed at the Modelling Consortium.

3. Report of key activities and outcomes

The main work of the Task Force over the past year has been to consider how the Greenland Barnacle Goose population model will be used to inform the Adaptive Flyway Management Plan for the population. This work is ongoing but has been delayed by the need to better understand the impacts of HPAI and the delayed provision of Irish data from the flyway census, which took place in February 2023.

Aimee McIntosh presented a number of projected scenarios to the last TF meeting. The first scenario was using the historical models prior to the harvest rate at about 2% on both Iceland and Islay. The second scenario increases winter harvest rate. The third one reduces the harvest rate. And the last one increases both Iceland and winter harvest rate. For each of the harvest scenarios 2 levels of winter harvest were modelled – Islay only and entire winter. The posterior estimates have been used to create series of different examples. Increasing the harvest rate could be a way of dealing with bird flu losses in the models.

It was reported to the TF meeting that the hunting season in Iceland might be extended further until summer, to be the same as general hunting time for geese. Scotland carried out no further shooting in 2023.

A partnership between NatureScot in the UK and NINA in Norway is ongoing to develop an impact model for Barnacle Goose and work to develop the model is progressing well. It will address the actions related to assessment of cumulative impact of derogations and likelihood of agricultural damage. Data from the enclosure experiments on Islay will also contribute to an overall impact synthesis lead by the Data Centre in cooperation with several EGMP members.

Beginning in autumn 2021, there was a serious outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) within goose populations in Scotland. The largest impacts were in the Solway area, where 30% (c.13,200) of the Svalbard Barnacle Goose population are estimated to have been lost. In winter 2022/2023, the population has shown signs of recovery with the productivity reported to have been the highest for over 20 years. Very few Svalbard barnacle geese were affected by HPAI over winter 2022/2023. Initial findings from blood samples taken from non-infected birds in February 2023 indicated that antibodies were present in these birds. Impacts on other goose species in the area remained relatively low.

HPAI was detected in the Greenland Barnacle Goose population in Ireland in early 2022 and losses were estimated to be between 700 and 900 birds at that point. Following the first reports of HPAI in this population, Scotland suspended derogation shooting on Islay and elsewhere. HPAI was then recorded in the Greenland Barnacle Goose population on Islay in February 2022 and losses there are estimated to be around 1000 birds. Estimates of total losses are difficult as sick geese were subject to intensive predation by white-tailed eagles.

On their initial return to Scotland in October 2022, there were no HPAI cases detected in the Greenland Barnacle Goose population and early counts suggested numbers on Islay appeared to be relatively normal. A low level of derogation shooting began, to try to reduce agricultural damage. The first winter 2022/2023 cases of HPAI were detected in mid-November 2022. These were initially low in number but very quickly increased so derogation shooting was again suspended. The number of cases peaked in late December/early January and tailed off quite quickly after that. It is difficult to estimate the total number of deaths at this stage, as Islay counts fluctuated between January and March, but the current estimate is at least 5,000 birds. This estimate will be revised when the census data is received from Ireland. Initial findings from blood samples from non-infected birds on Islay, taken in early March, were mixed, with some samples indicating the presence of antibodies.

There are no activities reported for the Svalbard/South-west Scotland population, since the AFMP has not been developed yet.

No data has been submitted to the Data Centre on reproduction and wing collection from Islay for 2022/23 due to the presence of HPAI. Data on Greenland Barnacle Goose population is stored on the [EGMP database](#) and available for everyone. It was concluded that for the most part of the workplan, the work is ongoing but there have been delays due to HPAI and lack of data availability.

4. Recommendations

The Task Force will follow the agreed workplan set out in Section 5. The key recommendations of this report are to follow up the IPM for the Greenland population, taking into account data from the flyaway census and additional impacts of HPAI, with an IPM for the Svalbard population. There is no agreement to date on who leads the work and how it will be funded. Norway and UK are working on the impact model for the Greenland

and Svalbard Barnacle Goose populations. New and ongoing work will take into account the impacts of HPAI and any associated research. The Greenland/Svalbard Barnacle Goose Task Force proposes to continue to support the implementation of the ISSAP and AFMP, following the workplan activities of previous years and recommended activities.

New work will include considering the impacts of HPAI on both populations and how this might impact on the AFMP and agreed management activities.

Meetings will be organised as necessary, especially for the evaluation of the IPM.

5. Draft Workplan 2023/2024

Table 1. Greenland/Svalbard Barnacle Goose Task Force Workplan for 2023/2024

Type of action	Actions from the ISSMP	Priority	Timescale	Greenland/Svalbard Task Force
	4.2 Assess periodically, and report to the AEWA EGM IWG, the cumulative impact of derogations (as well as hunting in Range States in which derogation is not required) on the development of the population, the likelihood of serious damage to agriculture and risk to air safety and to other flora and fauna (including the Arctic ecosystems), and the non-lethal measures taken to prevent damage/risk, as well as the effectiveness of these. If necessary, coordinate the derogation measures between Range States to avoid risk to the population and to enhance effectiveness of the measures.	Essential	Short	Impact model update / review and preparation of documents going to EGM IWG / providing recommendations
	A.1 Produce and update periodically, spatially explicit population size estimates based on agreed international monitoring	Essential	Short / Rolling	Consultation
	A.2 Maintain an annually updated bag statistics database including geese taken by any means (whether under derogations or, in those Range States in which it is permissible, hunting)	Essential	Ongoing / Rolling	Consultation
	A.3 Maintain a spatially explicit database on goose damage to agriculture, other fauna and flora and fauna and risk to air safety	Essential	Medium / Rolling	Consultation
National	2.2. Provide accommodation areas to reduce risks and conflicts at sensitive areas through e.g. subsidies[2]	Medium	Medium/ Rolling	Information exchange
National	2.3 Apply scaring and/or land management techniques to reduce the attractiveness of sensitive areas to geese, monitoring the implications of such local displacement for conflicts at wider scale[3]	High	Short / Rolling	Information exchange

	3.2 Establish an internationally coordinated programme to assess agricultural damage including monitoring and assessment protocols	High	Short	Consultation
National	3.3 Liaise with farmers affected by goose damages to reduce agricultural conflicts	High	Short / Rolling	Information exchange
	4.3 Improve effectiveness of derogation measures through experimenting with different timing and methods and better understanding the relative efficacy of lethal versus non-lethal scaring techniques	High	Medium	Information exchange - Liaise with other TFs
	4.4 Promote best practices of goose population adjustment including timing to minimize damage and significant disturbance to other species	Medium	Medium / Rolling	Information exchange - Liaise with other TFs
National	4.5 Maintain low crippling rates	High	Medium / Rolling	
	4.6 Improve derogation shooting techniques to further reduce crippling	Medium	Long / Rolling	Information exchange - Liaise with other TFs
	A.4 Collect demographic (mortality, reproduction, differential migration and connectivity) data from an agreed representative sampling framework across the range	High	Short / Rolling	Consultation
	C.1 Develop and implement a communication strategy and plan	Medium	Short / Rolling	Liaise with other TFs

6. Annex 1. Members of the Greenland/Svalbard Barnacle Goose Task Force as of May 2023

Country	Representative	Affiliation
European Commission	Iva Obretenova	Directorate-General for Environment
Iceland	Sigurdur Tharinsson	Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources
	Snorri Sigurdsson	Icelandic Institute for Natural History
	Svenja Auhage	Icelandic Institute for Natural History
Norway	Ingunn Tombre	NINA
	Kate Layton-Matthews	NINA
United Kingdom	Rae Mckenzie	Scottish Natural Heritage (TF Coordinator)
	Jessica Shaw	Scottish Natural Heritage
British Association of Shooting and Conservation (BASC)	Colin Shedden	BASC Scotland Director
CIC - International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation	Iben Hove Sørensen	Consultant, Migratory Game
FACE	Cy Griffin	Senior Conservation Manager

Nordic Hunters' Alliance	Johan Svalby	Senior Advisor for International Affairs
Wetlands International	Szabolcs Nagy	Senior Advisor
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust	Richard Hearn	Policy & Advocacy Manager
EGMP Data Centre	Gitte Høj Jensen	Aarhus University
	Fred Allen Johnson	Aarhus University
UNEP AEWa Secretariat	Eva Meyers	EGMP Coordinator
	Shenay Huseynova	EGMP Programme Assistant