

**AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM**



**8<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE  
AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT  
INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP**



*20-22 June 2023, Bonn, Germany*

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**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PINK-FOOTED GOOSE TASK FORCE  
AND DRAFT WORKPLAN FOR 2023/2024**

*Prepared by Prof Jesper Madsen, Coordinator of the Pink-footed Task Force,  
with contributions from the members of the Pink-footed Task Force*

**Summary:**

This document provides an overview of the status and key activities that the Pink-footed Goose Task Force 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. The most important task will be to provide input to the evaluation of the existing ISSMP for the PfG, expiring in 2025. Since it is highly likely that the current ISSMP will be recommended for revision, it is prudent that the EGMP range states of the PfG - including Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Finland - start planning the revision process, including a dedicated workshop, to undertake the revision of the ISSMP in 2024.

According to the Annual Status and Assessment Report, the PfG population is estimated to decline, being close to the population target of 60,000 in spring; however with great uncertainties. The Data Centre asked the Task Force for recommendations how to proceed with regard to harvest regulation needs for the coming hunting season: Option 1: reducing the level of harvest in accordance with the quota or, Option 2: in light of the data uncertainties, postpone a regulation while the Data Centre attempts to better estimate the magnitude and reasons for the biases in the May and November counts. The recommendation is divided, but the majority recommends Option 2.

**Action requested from the EGM IWG:**

Take note of the Task Force report and recommendations and adopt the annual workplan.

Decide on the way forward with regard harvest regulations for the forthcoming hunting season.

The full list of members is presented in Annex 1. Currently, the Task Force consist of 16 members from six Range States (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands and Belgium). Prof. Jesper Madsen (DK) has been identified as Coordinator of the PFG TF.

## **1. Meetings**

Since no funding has specifically been allocated for the work of the PFG TF, communication and information exchange has been conducted through online meetings. The 11<sup>th</sup> meeting (virtual) was held on 6 February 2023. The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting (virtual) was held on 22 May 2023.

## **2. Report of key activities and outcomes**

In June 2022, the EGM IWG approved the PFG TF workplan for 2022/2023, which encompassed the following tasks:

### *2.1 Continue as internal reviewers of annual Monitoring and Harvest Assessment Reports.*

The Task Force kindly conducted a review of the chapter concerning PfG in the EGMP Monitoring and Assessment Report 2023.

### *2.2 Discussions on adjustment of monitoring program.*

Two scientific papers were produced, informing about (1) the value of monitoring to inform management decisions<sup>1</sup> and (2) the sources of variation in estimating breeding success on the basis of age-counts in autumn, i.e., in the middle of the hunting season<sup>2</sup>. In consequence of the two assessments and a shortage of research funding, it was decided to stop the Capture-Mark-Resighting program based on neck-banding of PfG (very costly program for which funding had stopped) and reducing the age-counts. The monitoring program now consists of November and May population surveys, harvest data and wing collections, age-counts in autumn (reduced program, with less intensive effort in DK and stop of efforts in NL) and May weather condition in Svalbard. Observers can still report resightings of neckbanded PfG to [www.geese.org](http://www.geese.org), but the information is not directly used in the monitoring of the PfG. The integrated population model provides estimates of population sizes and post-breeding productivity, which are routinely used in the annual population and assessment reports (see the report by the PfG TF report from 2022 for further information).

### *2.3 Contribution to agricultural conflict resolution.*

No action taken by the PfG TF, but the Norwegian participants (IMT and OMG) actively participated in discussions in Norway.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson FA, Madsen J, Clausen KK, Frederiksen M, Jensen GH. 2023. Assessing the value of monitoring to biological inference and expected management performance for a European goose population. *Journal of Applied Ecology*. 60(1):132-145. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2664.14313>

<sup>2</sup> Jensen GH, Johnson FA, Madsen J. 2023. Sources of variation in estimating breeding success of migratory birds from autumn counts. *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*. 4(e12212). <https://doi.org/10.1002/2688-8319.12212>

## *2.4 Crippling*

Survey of the rate of crippling in PfG was undertaken in spring 2022, based on clap-net captured geese in Trøndelag in Norway. The results will be presented in the ISSMP evaluation report (2024).

## *2.5 Dissemination*

The plans for a goose dissemination centre based in Denmark (Naturpark Nissum Fjord, Bøvlingbjerg) focussing on goose migration, ecology and management, are still progressing. During 13-15 April 2023, Goose Days (in Danish) were held for the second time, primarily targeting local stakeholder groups and the general public. The idea to make nodes in the other range states of the PfG are in the planning phase.

The Norwegian Farmers' Association has produced a reportage on the EGMP PfG management plan process and scientific input to the decision making. So far, it has been broadcasted in Norwegian television, but versions with English and Danish subtitles are currently under preparation for wider distribution and use in the EGMP.

The discovery of the new distinct migration route and breeding grounds in Novaya Zemlya gave a lot of media attention, so far in national radio and newspapers in the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden, in articles in several online media (eg, Bloomberg, New Scientist) and websites, as well as at conferences and public meetings (in Belgium, Denmark, Norway).

Several evening meetings and webinars for relevant stakeholder groups (farmers, hunters) and local and regional managers have been conducted in Norway. The main aim has been to inform about the AEWA PfG management plan, and its implementation needs, and these dissemination activities have resulted in useful discussions and relevant feedback from the audience. It may be noted that the implementation of the PfG plan in Norway was one of the main drivers from the Norwegian Environment Agency to finance a position in the Norwegian Farmers' Union with related dissemination and communication tasks in focus (project now in its eight year).

## *2.6 Plans for the evaluation of the PfG ISSMP*

Since it was decided to postpone the revision of the ISSMP for PfG until 2025, the preparation of input to the evaluation of the current ISSMP was put on hold for 2022/2023. One key part of this is the assessment of the goose impact on vulnerable tundra vegetation in Svalbard. In 2022 and 2023, the Norwegian Environment Agency has funded an evaluation of the goose impact (in total 71,188 Euro, to the Norwegian Polar Institute and Aarhus University). The assessment will be finalised by the end of 2023.

## **3. Recommendations**

### *Evaluation and revision of the PfG ISSMP*

The most pressing need for the PfG TF is to plan the input to the forthcoming evaluation and revision of the ISSMP for the PfG in 2023-2025, in collaboration with the EGMP Secretariat and the Data Centre. An outline of the overall components and steps are shown in Table 1. Due to the dynamic adaptive approach to harvest management taken in the current ISSMP, which requires annual updates of the optimal harvest strategy and coordination of harvest, it is highly likely that a revised plan will be adopted by the Meeting of the Parties to AEWA in 2025.

The evaluation of the current ISSMP will start in the autumn of 2023 and will be presented at the IWG in 2024. The evaluation will be carried out by the PfG TF, the EGMP Data Centre and other scientific partners. The evaluation will include quantitative and qualitative assessments of the fulfilment of the goals and objectives of the ISSMP, i.e., range, ecological integrity, habitat restoration, population target, agricultural damage and conflicts, tundra impacts and crippling.

The evaluation (and revision) will also address the finding of the new migration route through Sweden and Finland and breeding grounds by PfG in Novaya Zemlya in north Russia. This new group, consisting of c. 4000 individuals and increasing partly due to immigration from the traditional flyway, qualifies as a separate biogeographic population according to AEWA definitions<sup>3</sup>. Hence, a revised ISSMP will have to take this into account.

It is recommended that the EGMP range states of the PfG - including Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Finland - start planning for the process, including a dedicated workshop (with governmental representatives, stakeholders and experts), to undertake the revision of the ISSMP in 2024.

### *Dissemination*

Several dissemination initiatives focussing on PfG have been taken. The plan to create a network of dissemination platforms (museums, visitor centres, online facilities) along the flyway, coupled to the ongoing GPS-tagging of PfG is still in the making (Danish initiative; contact Jesper Madsen; funding of Danish Centre by Lemvig and Holstebro Municipalities). The reportage centred around the use of science to inform management decisions with PfG as example, titled 'Migrating with the pink-footed geese' will come in English and Danish texted versions, to be used by the EGMP and others (Norwegian initiative: contact Ove Martin Gundersen; financed by the Norwegian Environment Agency). The PfG TF would like to engage in further initiatives to promote the EGMP flyway approach and uptake by national stakeholders, e.g. related to agricultural conflict resolution, reduction of crippling etc.

### *Recommended actions following the decline in population estimate described in the Status and assessment report 2022-23*

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 2023, the Data Centre sent the PfG status and assessment chapter to the PfG Task Force for their comments and recommendations regarding harvest regulation needs for the coming hunting season:

*In relation to chapter 3.1 "Pink-footed Goose offtake assessment", it is important to note that based on the assessment this year, the harvest quota for the 2023/2024 hunting season is 7,300 birds, thus about 2,000 birds lower than the total harvest during the last two years (averaged 9,577). We emphasize, however, that the population estimate (and thereby also the related harvest quota of 7,300) is highly uncertain for a number of reasons explained in the chapter. In fact, we can only say with 80% certainty that the true quota for the hunting season 2023/2024 lies between 0 and 15,650, which means that the total harvest during the last two years is well within the 80% credible interval of the allowable harvest. Given the situation, we ask the Task Force for their advice and recommendation, and propose the following two possibilities as a way to move forward:*

- 1) *Reducing the level of harvest in accordance with the quota*
- 2) *In light of the data uncertainties, postpone a regulation while the Data Centre attempts to better estimate the magnitude and reasons for the biases in the May and November counts*

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<sup>3</sup> Madsen J, Schreven KHT, Jensen GH, Johnson FA, Nilsson L, Nolet BA, Pessa J. 2023. Rapid formation of new migration route and breeding area by Arctic geese. *Current Biology*. 33(6):1162-1170.e4. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2023.01.065>

The Task Force was asked to provide their feedback with recommended action by the 8 June. The Data Centre received feedback from seven members of the Task Force, including three governmental Range State representatives.

The three RS representatives and one member recommended Option 2, with reference to the resilience of the population and the fact that the situation can be assessed again in 2024. One member was uncertain, but was leaning towards Option 1. Two members recommended Option 1, with reference to the precautionary principle and past decisions.

Hence, the recommendation is divided, but the majority recommends that a decision on regulation of harvest is postponed while the Data Centre attempts to better estimate the magnitude and reasons for the biases in the May and November counts.

## 4. Draft Workplan 2023/2024

Table 1. Pink-footed Goose Task Force Draft Workplan for the period July 2023 to June 2024, with a view to 2025.

Task	When	By whom?	Deliverables
<u>Dissemination platform along the Pfg flvway</u>	August 2023 –June 2024	Aarhus University + Nissum Fjord Naturpark + TF + relevant and interested museums and visitor centres	Project description, identification of potential partners, plan for funding
Input to the ISSMP revision in 2025: Step 1: Evaluation of existing ISSMP goals and objectives (report due for IWG June 2024)	September 2023 – May 2024: 1. Impact model for agricultural damage in range states (funded) 2. Svalbard tundra degradation assessment (funded) 3. Population range, ecological integrity, habitat management, crippling 4. Adaptive harvest management and population target feasibility and justification	DC + TF DC + TF + COAT (Norway) DC + TF DC + TF	Analysis of <u>relationship between abundance of Pfg and damage</u> Analysis of <u>relationship between abundance of Pfg and tundra impact</u> <u>Questionnaire to range states and desk study</u>  <u>Desk study, based on IPM outputs and outcomes of 1. and 2. (above)</u>
Input to the ISSMP revision in 2025: Step 2: Setting up revision process; drafting revised ISSMP	February – May 2024: Agreement on <u>protocol for revision process</u>  June 2024 – February 2025: 1. Revision of ISSMP  2. Development of an Adaptive Flyway Management Program (AFMP)	TF + DC + EGMP Sec  TF + DC + EGMP Sec + Range States + <u>interested stakeholders (at workshop)</u>  TF + DC + EGMP Sec	Protocol for revision of ISSMP  Range <u>state workshop</u> <u>Drafting of revised ISSMP</u>  <u>Draft AFMP</u>
<u>Internal review of annual reports</u>	<u>Early June 2024</u>	TF	<u>Review back to DC early June 2024</u>

**Annex 1. Members of the Pink-footed Goose Task Force as of May 2023**

Country	Representative	Affiliation
Belgium	Floris Verhaeghe	Nature and Forest Agency
	Frank Huysentruyt	Institute for Nature and Forest Research
	Eckhart Kuijken	Research Institute for Nature and Forest, Flemish Government of Belgium Expert, Univ. Ghent Belgium
	Christine Verscheure	Natuurpunt Belgium
Denmark	Jesper Madsen (Coordinator)	Aarhus University
	Søren Egelund Rasmussen	Danish Environmental Protection Agency
	Knud Flensted	BirdLife Denmark
Denmark/CIC - International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation	Iben Hove Sørensen	Danish Hunters' Association
The Netherlands	Kees Koffijberg	Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland
Finland	Jorma Pessa	Centre for Economic Development
Norway	Ingunn Tombre	NINA
	Ove Martin Gundersen	Norwegian Farmer's Union
Sweden	Per Risberg	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency

EGMP Data Centre	Gitte Høj Jensen	EGMP Goose Monitoring Coordinator
	Fred Johnson	Aarhus University
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat	Eva Meyers	EGMP Coordinator
	Shenay Huseynova	EGMP Programme Assistant