

**AEWA EUROPEAN GOOSE MANAGEMENT PLATFORM**



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

*21-23 June 2021, Online conference format*



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**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TAIGA BEAN GOOSE TASK FORCE  
AND DRAFT WORKPLAN FOR 2021/2022**

*Prepared by Mr Mikko Alhainen, Coordinator of the Taiga Bean Goose Task Force,*

*with contributions from the members of the Taiga Bean Goose Task Force*

## 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 Taiga Bean Goose Task Force (TBG TF) was established in early 2017, following the recommendations of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the EGM IWG (EGM IWG2) in June 2017, in Copenhagen. Mr Mikko Alhainen was identified as the Coordinator for the TBG TF. The current membership of the TBG TF is indicated in Annex 1 to this document. In line with the Terms of Reference, the nomination of additional members to the Task Force is at the discretion of the National Government Representative of each Range State, the observer organisations and the Coordinator of the Task Force.

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the EGM IWG (EGM IWG3) in June 2018, in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands, the TBG TF presented on the work progress since the establishment of the TF and presented recommendations to the EGM IWG, referring to document [AEWA/EGMIWG/3.13/Rev.1](#). Range States agreed on the extension of the period of the Workplan for the implementation of non-AHM related actions of the AEWA Taiga Bean Goose ISSAP from 2017-2018 until 2020 with small amendments, as recommended by the TBG TF. Moreover, the EGM IWG agreed on the establishment of a thematic sub-group to the Task Force including external goose monitoring experts not currently members of the Task Force, for the development of a monitoring framework.

At the 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the EGM IWG (EGM IWG3) in June 2019, in Perth, Scotland, UK the TBG TF presented on the work progress since the IWG3 and presented recommendations to the EGM IWG, referring to document [AEWA/EGMIWG/4.11](#). Range States agreed on the development steps on monitoring and population assessment at each Management Unit, based on the work of the thematic sub-group's work between IWG3 and IWG4.

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the EGM IWG (EGM IWG5) held remotely in an online conference format in June 2020, the TBG TF presented on the work progress since the IWG4 and presented recommendations to the EGM IWG, referring to document [AEWA/EGMIWG/5.9/Rev.1](#). Range States agreed on the new non-AHM workplan, continuation of at least October and March counts for Central Management Unit and adopted the Integrated Population Model as the basis for Adaptive Harvest Management decisions.

This document provides an overview of the work that has taken place since the EGM IWG5 and the recommendations and workplan for the implementation of the AEWA International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the Taiga Bean Goose for 2021-2022.

## 1. Status of the Task Force Membership

Presently, the TBG TF has 15 members. Members represent six Range States, one Observer Organisation, one invited expert, the Data Centre and the AEWA Secretariat.

Mr. Mikko Alhainen (FI) remains the current Coordinator of the TBG TF.

Details of the current membership of the TBG TF is indicated in Annex 1 to this document. In line with the Terms of Reference, the nomination of additional members to the Task Force is at the discretion of the National Government Representative of each Range State, observer organizations and the Coordinator of the Task Force.

## 2. Meetings

Since no funding has been specifically allocated for the work of the TBG TF, communication and information exchange has been conducted via email, online meetings and the EGMP Workspace.

The Task Force had total of five meeting during the period between EGM IWG5 and EGM IWG6. Online meetings took place on 14 September 2020, 17 November 2020, 16 February 2021 and 27 April 2021.

## 3. Report of key activities and outcomes

The work of the TBG TF was based on the mandates and tasks from EGM IWG5.

Recommendations to the EGM IWG5 are referred below and key outcomes by EGM IWG6 briefly described below each point respectively. Other key achievements on the implementation of the TBG ISSAP are mentioned for each MU.

### **Adoption of the non-AHM workplan and recommendation to actively raise funding from national sources to support the proposed activities in each Management Unit respectively.**

Key outcomes:

- *Establish coordinated Taiga Bean Goose counts in Eastern I Management Unit, especially in Poland.*
  - Germany: On-going TBG research activities. Outcomes will be reported in 2022.
  - Poland: From the autumn of 2021 nationwide monitoring of Taiga Bean Geese begins in Poland - counting will be carried out on the most important sites in November, January and March. Geese will be counted on feeding grounds to determine the subspecies concerned. This is the basis for the design of the new long-term national monitoring programme that will be carried out annually, which will provide good data in the future. The first estimate of numbers of Taiga Bean Geese will be available in late spring 2022. Poland has produced its own sub-species identification guide.
  - Ukraine: Annual migration counts are established at the most important stopover place in the north of Ukraine. Bird counts have been conducted regularly for the past ten years. Preliminary counting results show that the number of birds varies widely during spring migratory seasons and depends on the weather and water level in the rivers and reservoirs of the region. Spring 2021 was very good as there was high water levels in staging areas. Around 2000 Taiga Bean Geese were observed in the counts.
- *Other non-AHM activities*
  - Information on on-going and planned activities provided in the extracted Google-sheet, provided as an Annex 3.

### **Recommendation to foresee the continuation of at least October and March counts in Central MU beyond 2021 as an established and secured monitoring framework in respective countries.**

- October 2020 counts were cancelled due to Covid-19 situation.
- January 2021 counts were organized.
- Coordinated March 2021 counts were organized.

Range States are encouraged to nominate experts to the Taiga Bean Goose Task Force. Official members from **Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Poland and Germany** would be valuable investment to Task Force's capacity. Involvement in the Task Force activities enables information sharing and coordination of activities as well as formation of good overview of all the good progress made in the respective countries. Optimally a person from Eastern 1 Management Unit Range State could take the lead on the coordination of the monitoring framework to assess the population size of the Eastern 1 Management Unit.

- No new members from EMU countries were nominated to the Task Force.
- The TF produced updated *Description of the tasks of the EMU coordinator*, provided as Annex 2 of this report.

The Task Force reviewed the draft **Population Status and Assessment Report to EGM IWG6** provided by the Data Centre.

## 4. Recommendations

### Recommendations of the TBG TF for non-AHM activities

- Continue the implementation of the non-AHM plan.
- Consider the nomination of a candidate from EMU Range States to the position of the EMU coordinator. Please refer the Annex 2 of this report for *Description of the tasks of the EMU coordinator*.
- Strengthen and continue January counts in all MU's for the delineation of MU's in overlapping wintering areas & population size estimates.
- Continue October and March counts in CMU to foreseeable future for the data generation for the IPM. Prepare to extend the coordinated counts to Finland and Denmark by 2023.
- Furthermore, the Task Force recommends the following regarding the TBG TF's work:
  - The TBG TF continues to exchange general information and experiences with other species-specific Task Forces and liaises with the Agriculture Task Force, thus strengthening the relations between EGMP Task Forces and benefitting from the work already carried out on other species.
  - Webinars on topics of general interest are arranged for all Task Force members and other relevant stakeholders.
  - Use of the EGMP workspace is promoted and that all meeting notes are published there.

### Proposed decisions for Adaptive Harvest Management

The TBG TF proposes following decision for the Harvest Management:

1. Adoption of the Final Integrated Population Model (IPM), which excludes the *rossicus* subspecies from the model, while noting the available guidance on the harvest levels on *rossicus* in relation to past overall Bean Goose harvest bags.
2. A decision on overall quota needed to reach 70,000 Taiga Bean Goose in March in approximately 5 years (preliminary estimate of 3,000 TBG individuals, prior to May 2021 update of the IPM).

## **5. Draft Workplan 2021/2022**

The Taiga Bean Goose Task Force foresees to continue active working to support the implementation of the ISSAP, proposed non-AHM workplan and recommended activities.

Total of six meetings are planned for the period between EGM IWG6 and EGM IWG7:

- 1) August -September 2021: Organization and further planning of the TF activities based on outcomes of EGM IWG6.
- 2) November-December 2021: Update on agreed tasks and progress in relation to non-AHM workplan and other agreed work
- 3) January-February 2022: Update on agreed tasks and progress in relation to non-AHM workplan and other agreed work
- 4) March 2022: Preparation of the EGM IWG7 documents
- 5) April 2022: Finalization of the EGM IWG7 documents
- 6) June 2022: Face-to-face meeting back-to-back with EGM IWG7

**Annex 1. Members of the Taiga Bean Goose Task Force as of May 2021**

Country	Representative	Affiliation
Denmark	Anthony Fox	Aarhus University
	Iben Hove Sørensen	Danish Hunters Association
	Knud Flensted	BirdLife Denmark
	Boris Schönfeldt	BirdLife Denmark
Finland	Mikko Alhainen (TF Coordinator)	Finnish Wildlife Department
	Toni Laaksonen	Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)
Norway	Ingunn Tombre	Norwegian Institute for Nature Research, Department of Arctic Ecology
Sweden	Per Risberg	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency
Ukraine	Olesya Petrovych	Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine
	Vasyl Kostyshyn	Institute of Zoology NAS of Ukraine, Department of Monitoring and Conservation of Animals
United Kingdom	Morag Milne (rep for Scotland)	Scottish Natural Heritage
	Rebecca Jones (rep for England)	Natural England
Wetlands International	Szabolcs Nagy	Wetlands International
Russian Bird Ringing Center	Sonia Rozenfeld (invited expert)	Russian Bird Ringing Centre
EGMP Data Centre	Henning Heldbjerg	Aarhus University
	Gitte Høj Jensen	Aarhus University
	Fred Johnson	Aarhus University
UNEP/AEWA Secretariat	Eva Meyers	EGMP Coordinator
	Shenay Huseynova	Consultant

## Annex 2. Description of the tasks of the EMU coordinator

### Background

The Eastern 1&2 Management Units (MU) cover the entire flyway of the Taiga Bean Goose (*Anser fabalis fabalis*) breeding in Western Siberia Lowlands. The birds winter mainly in Germany and Poland (Eastern 1 MU) and in border areas of China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (Eastern 2 MU).

The AEWA EGMP focus is on the Eastern 1 Management Unit. Current key gaps in the conservation of this declining sub-population are: 1) lack of coordinated population counts for population size and trend estimation; 2) limited, but developing understanding of the migration patterns, staging and wintering areas.

The AEWA EGMP has proposed a moratorium for the Eastern 1 MU, due to the declining and low population size, until necessary information on population size and harvest is available, and the population has started to recover.

Development of monitoring and implementation of conservation activities are the responsibility of the Range States. Significant progress has been made and is currently on-going in many countries.

The establishment of a coordinated monitoring framework for the Eastern 1 MU requires an in-depth understanding of the regional context in bird monitoring. In addition, it also requires an existing relevant network or the capacity to establish contacts with Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Belarussian and German birding communities and research organizations. Key people and necessary funding for the monitoring activities are also required for the preparation of a population estimate.

### The role and tasks of the Eastern Management Unit Coordinator

#### Role:

Coordinating, planning and supporting the implementation of the Taiga Bean Goose International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) in the Eastern 1 Management Units with the support of the Taiga Bean Goose Task Force (TBG TF) coordinator and the AEWA EGMP Secretariat in line with the non-AHM workplan prepared by the Task Force.

#### Tasks for 2021-2022:

Supporting the implementation of the TBG non-AHM Workplan for 2020-2022 with the focus on:

- Activity 1: *Establish/*Strengthen coordinated TBG counts in the Eastern 1 Management Unit, especially in Poland (**population size**, **age ratio**, survival)
- Activity 2: Increase number of GPS tagged and neck collared Taiga Bean Geese.

Preparing the Taiga Bean Goose report and recommendations for the EGM IWG, together with the TBG TF Coordinator.

Annex 3. Biannual non-AHM Workplan for 2020-2022 for the implementation of the Taiga Bean Goose ISSAP

Western, Central, Eastern 1 & Eastern 2 Management Units				Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	Ukraine	UK
Action/Activity	Western, Central, Eastern 1 & Eastern 2 Management Units	ISSAP mandate							
<p><b>1 Establish coordinated Taiga Bean Goose counts in Eastern 1 Management Unit, especially in Poland.</b></p> <p><b>Target:</b> Functioning annual mid-winter (January) census of Eastern 1 Management Unit of Taiga Bean Geese on known key wintering areas (Germany and Poland) to generate population size estimate of the Eastern 1 Population.</p> <p>Development of spring and autumn counts on staging areas to better understand their exposure to hunting at other times of year, further strengthen the population size estimate and to establish a sampling protocol for generating annual age ratios from autumn staging areas.</p> <p><b>Concrete action points:</b></p> <p>a) In close coordination with on-going Taiga Bean Goose monitoring project in Germany, a Taiga Bean Goose monitoring in January is established in Poland utilising the existing GPS-data to cover previously unknown wintering sites in the area.</p> <p>b) The Range States of Eastern 1 MU are encouraged to raise funding for a project to cover the costs of monitoring framework establishment in Poland and adjacent areas of neighbouring relevant range states hosting Taiga Bean Goose during the times of the monitoring activities.</p>	<p>Eastern 1 Management Unit Range States (Primarily Poland and Germany) National authorities Bird and hunting organisations.</p>	<p>1.1.1. Develop and implement international adaptive harvest management framework. Obey the principles of sustainable harvest management and decision-making framework for harvest management as described in the revised AEWIA Guidelines for sustainable harvest of migratory waterbirds adopted by MOP6. Obtain accurate estimates of (sub) population size, and robust demographic and harvest data.</p>	N/A	NA					
<p><b>2 Strengthen the harvest bag recording</b></p> <p><b>Target:</b> Reliable Bean Goose harvest data with estimated Taiga Bean Goose proportion will be provided within the schedule of the annual decision-making process of the EGM IWG. Harvest bag recording shall cover regular hunting, conditional hunting and derogation shooting with the possibility to differentiate between forms of harvest.</p> <p><b>Concrete action point:</b></p> <p>Further develop or establish (electronic, citizen science-based) harvest bag recording system for waterbirds (focus on geese) with possibility to collect samples (pictures, heads) for sub-species and age ratio determination by end of 2021.</p>	<p>National hunting and conservation authorities and hunting NGO's of those range states that lack the capacity to provide data annually.</p>	<p>1.1.1. Develop and implement international adaptive harvest management framework. Obey the principles of sustainable harvest management and decision-making framework for harvest management as described in the revised AEWIA Guidelines for sustainable harvest of migratory waterbirds adopted by MOP6. Obtain accurate estimates of (sub) population size, and robust demographic and harvest data.</p>	<p>Mandatory harvest bag recording in place which relates the annual harvest to geography. Sub-species determination of shot heads has been started in close collaboration with the hunting organisation and progressing. Head and DNA-sample (IHS-?) collection from previous seasons is under analysis. We currently do not derive enough data to help with determining age ratios in the hunting bag.</p>	<p>Mandatory harvest bag recording in place. Sub-species and age ratio data collected by voluntary picture collection, which is foreseen to be developed further. Head and DNA-sample collection from previous seasons is under analysis.</p>	<p>Taiga Bean Geese are rarely shot in Norway (abundance very low). An estimation of the population size in Norway is based on monitoring on the breeding grounds (by researchers from Nord University) in a limited area in Mid-Norway (Bergefjell) where droppings are sampled for DNA-analyses. This information has revealed population size (for the area), adult survival rates and reproductive success.</p>	<p>Ongoing process, at the moment unclear when finished</p>			
<p><b>3 Increase number of GPS tagged and neck collared Taiga Bean Goose</b></p> <p><b>Target:</b> Minimum of 40 GPS deployed annually both in Western &amp; Central and Eastern 1&amp;2, totalling at least 80 GPS tagged Taiga Bean Goose annually and 160 by the end 2022.</p> <p>Deploy neck collars to all captured Taiga Bean Geese for which GPS is not available.</p> <p>Objective is to provide information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- migration routes &amp; timing and estimation of monitoring coverage to enable improvement of monitoring framework, to estimate the population size in each of the Management Units. Focus on Western and Eastern 1 MU;</li> <li>- breeding distribution of the population between the Range States and breeding success estimation. Focus on Central MU and</li> <li>- survival rates to assess the viability of the population. All MU's.</li> </ul> <p>It shall be noted that for scientifically robust estimation of above-mentioned points requires a sample of several hundred GPS-tagged birds which are captured as a random sample optimally in the wintering areas. This can be seen as a 5-year goal to provide information for the forthcoming update of the Taiga Bean Goose ISSAP in 2025. With annual tagging of at least 80 Taiga Bean Geese would lead to total of at least 400 tagged birds during 5-year period.</p> <p><b>Concrete action points:</b></p> <p>a) Explore research funding for</p> <p>1) the opportunities to strengthen international co-operation on TBG at respective MU;</p> <p>2) the purchase on average at least 6 GPS tags annually at each range state to be provided for scientists who are capable of catching TBG.</p> <p>The Range states are encouraged to establish multi-stakeholder funding framework for the purchase of the GPS tags involving nature, bird and hunting NGO's and their funding instruments as well as corporations and individuals willing to sponsor GPS tagging for example in the form of an 'adopt a Taiga Bean Goose' campaign.</p>	<p>All Range States of TBG. National authorities Bird and hunting organisations</p>	<p>1.1.1. Develop and implement international adaptive harvest management framework. Obey the principles of sustainable harvest management and decision-making framework for harvest management as described in the revised AEWIA Guidelines for sustainable harvest of migratory waterbirds adopted by MOP6. Obtain accurate estimates of (sub) population size, and robust demographic and harvest data.</p>	<p>None, although a number of previously telemetry-collar tagged birds from earlier studies are still providing data. Applications for funding for further marking have been unsuccessful in securing funding. We also still have aspirations to mark large numbers of birds annually with conventional plastic collars in order to generate data on annual adult survival and age specific fecundity. Although "low-tech" this also requires regular capture of and marking of individuals which are also expensive in terms of funding.</p>	<p>During 2019 and 2020 Finland has had 55 GPS tags and 59 individuals has been tagged. Approximately 10 new GPS tags will be deployed 2021.</p>	<p>GPS-tags may be put on some individuals in North Norway (Finmark) if snow conditions at the places where catching is possible allow it. Activities are conducted by Birdlife Norway. Output will be communicated with EGNP.</p>	<p>No funding for 2021</p>			

<p><b>4 Organise a campaign to raise skills and awareness of the goose hunters.</b></p> <p><b>Target:</b> Active goose hunters have been reached by end of 2021 with popularized communication materials delivering key messages about the importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flyway Management;</li> <li>• Species identification (ID brochure produced by TBG TF);</li> <li>• Status of TBG;</li> <li>• Role of harvest bag recording;</li> <li>• Good hunting practises and reduction of crippling.</li> </ul> <p><b>Concrete action point:</b></p> <p>In co-operation with national hunting NGO's a press release and other information activities will be carried out at national/regional level as relevant to TBG</p>	<p>All Range States Hunting NGO's &amp; hunting administrations</p>	<p>1.1.3. Raise awareness amongst hunters on the need and ways to reduce crippling</p> <p>1.2.2. Raise identification skills and awareness of the status of different goose species amongst hunters</p>	<p>Several articles on flyway management, species identification (of grey greese) and TBG management have been published in the Danish Hunters' Association's members' magazine and website. Previous campaigns focussing on ways to reduce crippling have been successful, and DNA is planning a new campaign in 2021.</p>	<p>The Finnish Wildlife Agency and Finnish Hunters' Association have developed education package 'responsible waterfowler'. This web-course is developed and the materials are used for webinars to educated waterfowlers, covering generic waterfowling topics. Detailed TBG issues are communicated through targeted press releases and the Metsästaja/Jagaren magazine articles to deliver information of hunting restrictions and other key issues related to Bean Goose hunting. FWA is currently preparing webinars on waterfowling where relevant issues are covered. <a href="https://www.nistainfo.fi/vierokasvatte-utbildningar/ansvarfull-fageljagare/">https://www.nistainfo.fi/vierokasvatte-utbildningar/ansvarfull-fageljagare/</a></p>		<p>Hunters exam deals with these issues, a specific goose hunters course has been developed by Hunters organisation. Plans on further information and education, Wildlife Damage Center in cooperation with Hunter's organisation</p>		
<p><b>5 Establish a national working group, if relevant, and develop national prioritised 5-year work plan for coordinated implementation of actions relevant for the Range States</b></p> <p><b>Target:</b></p> <p>Each Range State has thematic group of decision makers, researchers and stakeholders to support national level implementation of TBG ISSAP</p> <p>National working group has identified essential national activities and prepared a 5-year concrete action plan to implement TBG ISSAP.</p> <p><b>Concrete action points:</b></p> <p>a) National Working Group is active by end of 2020. If an EGMP National Working group already exists in the Range State, activities should be coordinated, and the Taiga Bean Goose discussion optimally takes place in shared EGMP Working Group alongside other populations subject to international coordination.</p> <p>b) Develop National 5-year action plan by IWG6 in 2021 for implementation of relevant ISSAP actions, where concrete progress is possible in respective range state.</p> <p>c) Provide compact annual reports on the implementation of the National plan until 2025 when TBG ISSAP is foreseen to be updated.</p> <p>d) EU-countries: Active involvement of national CAP planning process to include ISSAP Actions 2.2.1, 3.2.1 and 3.4.1.</p>	<p>All Range States</p>	<p>1.2.1. Strengthen enforcement on persecution through intentional poisoning, harvest of moulting birds and shooting outside of season</p> <p>1.3.1. Maintain and strengthen predator control measures in breeding and moulting areas</p> <p>1.4.1. Maintain and strengthen alien predator control and eradication measures in breeding and moulting areas</p> <p>1.5.1. Comply with AEWA provisions on the phasing out of lead ammunition for hunting in wetlands</p> <p>1.6.1. Minimise oil pollution by strengthening enforcement of rehabilitation of oil stations</p> <p>2.1.1. Introduce seasonal reserve protection at key staging and breeding areas</p> <p>2.1.2. Involve local stakeholders in the voluntary reduction of human access to key breeding areas in critical periods</p> <p>2.2.1. Maintain the unharvested-fields-for-birds programme within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union</p> <p>3.1.1. Continue the adaptation of forestry operations to take into account wildlife, in particular Taiga Bean Goose</p> <p>3.1.2. Continue restoring mires used by Taiga Bean Geese that have been affected by past drainage</p> <p>3.2.1. Maintain grassland restoration as part of CAP, in agricultural policies and actions to restore suitable grasslands as feeding habitat in key staging areas.</p> <p>3.3.1. Take account of Taiga Bean Goose breeding, staging and wintering habitats in the planning of new oil and gas and renewable energy developments</p>	<p>Currently there is no national working group in place. Perhaps the way ahead would be for a group/individual to take ownership of the process to give it some impetus. Otherwise we may manage to reestablish the national working group dealing with all goose species under the EGMP (Iben will follow up on this).</p>	<p>Finland has developed a national action plan, which was open for consultation 2014 which is still pending official approval. The key actions of the plan has been largely implemented or on-going. Official national working group is not established, while key information is shared with relevant authorities and stakeholders. 5-year concrete working plan is proposed to be postponed until 2022 to align the plan with current initiatives. Finland is developing HELMI biodiversity program with significant inputs to mire and wetland restoration until 2030. <a href="https://ym.fi/en/helmi-habitats-programme">https://ym.fi/en/helmi-habitats-programme</a></p> <p>The programme will largely cover the relevant objectives of TBG Action plans in Finland. The wildlife friendly forest management is gaining momentum for the benefit of forest grouse and also TBG. The Nordic Raccoon Dog project manages alien predators in northern Finland and effective working models are developed for valuable bird areas throughout the country during next few years.</p>	<p>A national group, coordinating actions and communicating results, is established for Norway.</p>	<p>A national group exist, national plan under development</p>		