Notes for the Meeting of the Taiga Bean Goose Task Force

Date and Time:	7th September 2021 14:00 – 16:00 CET
Chair/ Task Force Coordinator:	Mikko Alhainen, Finnish Wildlife Agency
Attendees:	Denmark: Anthony David Fox, Iben Hove Sørensen; Norway: Ingunn Tombre; Sweden: Per Risberg; Ukraine: Volodymyr Domashlinets; United Kingdom: Morag Milne; Wetlands International: Szablocs Nagy; EGMP Data Centre: Gitte Høj Jensen, Fred Johnson; AEWA Secretariat: Shenay Huseynova.

Agenda item 1

Welcome and adoption of the agenda

In absence of comments from the meeting participants, the agenda was adopted.

Tour-de-table news from countries

In Denmark, work is underway on a video aimed to encourage hunters to send in more head and wing samples. The goal is to get a better understanding of the ratio of subspecies in the bag. In addition, funding application for organisation of an improved network of the counts is being prepared. The funding would provide for more coverage during counts and a better delivery of information.

Hunting season has recently been stopped in Sweden, but the impact on population is still unknown. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, detailed counts might not take place this autumn.

Better breeding success has been recorded in Finland for 2021 compared to 2020.

Monitoring including age assessments and breeding locations is planned in the UK.

In Norway, monitoring activities for TBG only take place in summer. In Mid-Norway, based on DNA-samples (from feathers and droppings) in the breeding area, there is a current estimate of 30-40 individuals (data from Nord University). These individuals belong to the Western Management Unit.

In Finnmark, northern Norway, TBG are counted in spring in the Pasvik river area at the border between Norway, Russia and Finland. Spring counts show 600-650 individuals, and breeding pairs are estimated to count between 250 and 300 (data from BirdLife Norway). All these pairs do however not necessarily breed in Norway, as some may also breed in Russia or Finland. These individuals belong to the Central Management Unit.

Updates from the EGMP Data Centre

October counts took place in CMU. The data is to be submitted from counts in Sweden where the most of population is at this time. Also, productivity estimates are needed for WMU and if possible, for CMU.

Hunting bag info has been submitted from Finland and Denmark. Finland submits the information at subspecies level while that's not the case yet in Denmark. Monitoring data is missing from Russia. TBG is protected in Germany and the whole WMU. There is no info from EMU's.

Agenda item 2 - Tasks of the TBG TF until IWG7 in June 2022

Based on recommendations adopted at EGM IWG6, all countries are to strengthen January counts for the background data for delineation of MUs (mostly Poland, Germany and Denmark with overlapping management units). October and March counts are to be continued, in particular in Sweden where the key counts take place for CMU. Continuing implementation of the non-AHM workplan is also among the recommendations. Range States are to nominate new members to the TBG TF. Nomination of EMU coordinator is a long-standing request which requires for all Range States to be active.

Six meetings are planned until EGM IWG7 in 2021. There is less scheduled work than in the past years.

Agenda item 3 - Non-AHM workplan template

The TF went through the activities listed in the non-AHM workplan template.

Agenda item 4 – AHM Development

The current process for setting harvest quotas consists of:

- estimating population size in spring;
- using simulation to explore impacts of potential quotas over short time horizons; and
- reaching consensus on an acceptable quota for the coming autumn and winter.

This is not a formal adaptive harvest management process and has several disadvantages, including no explicit agreement on management objectives and acceptable trade-offs, no explicit recognition of the capabilities to regulate annual harvests, consensus on quotas can break down with unanticipated changes in population size, and the process is inefficient because only so many simulations can be run each year.

A complete AHM framework would include agreement of the range of acceptable population sizes and the importance of hunting opportunity and derivation of an optimal harvest strategy (i.e., a decision rule prescribing the optimal quota for any observed population size. The advantages of this process are a gurantee to meet management objectives over the long term, it relies on a single consensus on objectives rather than consensus each year on a quota, and it is efficient in that only one optimization routine is needed each year. Nonetheless, this fully adaptive program may not be feasible until such time that countries have better abilities to regulate their annual harvests.

Agenda item 5 - Communication work

The Secretariat is working on a number of updates on the EGMP website. In addition, development of a number of communication materials is planned based on the requests received at the EGM IWG6. The communications materials include briefing notes on AFMPs and factsheets on EGMP species. Development and design of a factsheet on Taiga Bean Goose is one of the tasks that TF and Secretariat could work together on.

Agenda item 6

A doodle will be circulated to determine the date for the next TF meeting.