

RESOLUTION

of the Conference “Waterfowl of Northern Eurasia: study, conservation, and sustainable use”

Salekhard, Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (YaNAO), 30 November – 5 December 2015

Participants of the Conference note with satisfaction that the Conference was held in a friendly and constructive spirit, and featured presentations that touched on many relevant questions of the study, conservation and sustainable use of waterfowl. Results of active discussion of the presentations are of great importance for the further advancement toward the resolutions of these questions in Russia and the development of efficacious international cooperation. Participants of the Conference express thanks to the Goose, Swan, and Duck Study Group of Northern Eurasia (GSDSG) and other co-organisers and sponsors of the Conference, as well they especially note the support and hospitality of the leadership of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous Okrug.

Participants of the Conference consider it necessary to set out the considerations and recommendations mentioned below as the Conference resolution.

General questions

Participants of the Conference confirm that in the majority of regions of Russia there has continued to be a significant decrease in the abundance of waterfowl, the main reasons for which are climate change, degradation of arable land, biotope changes on the wintering grounds, and spring hunting. The slow reaction of the system of management of waterfowl in Russia - the absence of systematic and full-scale scientific studies at the federal level and effective tools of international cooperation, hinder to a significant degree the taking of possible effective measures for the conservation of waterfowl.

In connection with this, the relevance of all proposals for the optimization of the system of hunting in Russia, enumerated in the resolution of the conference “Waterfowl of Northern Eurasia: the geography, dynamics and management of populations” (Elista, 2011), should be recognized.

Guided by evolving global experience and scientific recommendations, and **to eliminate the restraints hindering the effective management of waterfowl resources in Russia, it is recommended that the following measures for its regulation be put in place:**

1. Transferral of key powers concerning the management of migratory birds (including determination of the maximum allowable hunting periods, overall harvest, and daily allowable bag), to the federal level;
2. Introduction of the concept of flyways as territories on which coordination and planning of management of the resources are carried out, analogous with the efficacious ones operating in North America;
3. Introduction of the concept of “migratory population” as a fundamental management unit at both a legislative and a practical level;

4. Compilation of a list of game species at the federal level only;
5. Transition to evaluation of waterfowl resources on a species level;
6. Organization of a service for the evaluation of waterfowl harvest, employing best domestic and North American practices to develop an up-to-date methodology of evaluating the harvest on the species level and a plan for the phased introduction of harvest evaluation on flyways;
7. Development and acceptance of a federal plan for the management of waterfowl resources in Russia, employing the positive experience of North American countries and of the Republic of Kazakhstan;
8. Establishment of a governmental comprehensive register of key locations of the concentration of waterfowl on Russian territory;
9. Allotment of a grant for the financing of a staff of government inspectors for territorial units of the Russian Federation on which are located key waterfowl stopover sites;
10. Intensification of work on the approval of a second phase of wetlands of international importance in the Russian Federation, including lands on the “shadow” list of the Ramsar Convention (the list of potential Ramsar sites), reviewed in the light of the current situation;
11. Taking of effective measures to limit spring hunting pressure by up to complete closure at migration stopover sites in selected areas of European Russia, Western and Central Siberia in accordance with the designated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation List of key migration stopover sites for which there must be a complete ban on spring waterfowl hunting;
12. In connection with the decline in abundance of populations of geese in Eastern Siberia and the Far East, proactive provision of a complete ban on spring hunting and a limiting of the autumn hunt on key territories of concentration of migratory birds and in Oblasts with waterfowl nesting grounds for a period of five years;
13. Support of the proposal for revision of the “List of waterfowl species classified as game species” put forth by interested specialists of the Federal State Institution of the Centre of Hunting Control (FSI ICHC), the Goose, Swan, and Duck Study Group of Northern Eurasia (GSDSG), and the Severtsov Institute of Ecology and Evolution of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IEE RAN);
14. Support of the approaches proposed by interested specialists of the FSI ICHC, the GSDSG, and IEE RAN for the defining of norms for the calculation of hunting capacity of the land, and for the making of corresponding changes to page 4, Article 34 of the Federal Law from 24.07.2009 “Concerning hunting and the conservation of hunting resources and concerning the making of changes to individual legislative acts of the

Russian Federation”; taking into account that the limits on waterfowl hunting relevant to small territories are absolutely unacceptable for territories with low population densities in large areas, in the Steppe and Forest-Steppe zones of Russia, analogous with the effective experience of the Kazakhstan Republic during the autumn hunt, the designating of “days off” for waterfowl; the designating of hours of daily rest for waterfowl; the banning of hunting during hours of darkness; in the hunting of geese, the banning of hunting on roosting sites on water bodies and in the vicinity of their zones of protection.

15. Invitation to interested specialists of the GSDSG, IEE RAN, and the Goose Specialist Group of the IUCN-Species Survival Commission and Wetlands International drawing upon the experience of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop and implement a plan of the most pressing, specific measures for the conservation of waterfowl at key Russian sites of migration stopovers, nesting and wintering.
16. Taking of immediate measures to raise the abundance of the Red-breasted Goose, Lesser White-fronted Goose, Swan Goose, Forest Bean Goose, Taiga Bean Goose, Eastern Tundra Bean Goose, Bewick’s (Tundra) Swan, Greylag Goose, Ferruginous Duck, Baer’s Pochard, and the Stiff-tailed Duck, including the limiting of hunting up to a complete ban at key migration stopover sites, breeding areas, and wintering grounds of more numerous species and subspecies of waterfowl; development and implementation of national action plans; and strategies for these species.

The Conference also considers it necessary to support **recommendations promoting the improvement of the system of management of the waterfowl resources of Russia, suggested during the course of discussions:**

1. To simplify work on the resolution of the aforementioned problems, requesting of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources and Ecology expedition of approval of the directive of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation “Strategies for the management of waterfowl resources in the Russian Federation” and recommendation for the authorities of the Russian Federation, in the composing of regional programmes for the protection of the environment and the use of natural resources, to include measures guaranteeing their being brought to fruition;
2. To again direct to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation the proposals on regulating the spring waterfowl hunt in Russia submitted to the Ministry in 2011;
3. Taking into account that currently on the list of regions of the Russian Federation where regionalization (territorial fragmentation) is permitted with respect to the periods of the spring waterfowl hunt, small areas are included in which the spring hunt does, in fact, last up to 30 days, to address the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation with the proposal to revise the aforementioned list to include on it only those territorial units whose greatest dimension exceeds 500 km;

4. To recommend to the government bodies regulating hunting to implement the following measures of optimizing waterfowl hunting
 - 4.1 mandatory delineation of a network of scattered “quiet zones” for the protection of game, in particular waterfowl, on hunting grounds;
 - 4.2 centralized regulation of science-based hunting seasons in the regions;
 - 4.3 a temporary pause in goose hunting in key locations at times when rare species whose visual identification is difficult migrate through them, analogous to the best practices of the Republic of Kalmykia;
 - 4.4 paying of particular attention to the questions of education of the hunting culture through public associations;
5. To work out the legislation for the use of species of waterfowl of the Russian Federation raised in captivity and released into the wild as game;
6. To address the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation with the initiative of preparing a project plan of key territories, based on the latest data, obtained using state-of-the-art methodology, and to propose to the Ministry that the given plan be used for the organization of new Specially Protected Nature Areas (SPNA) within the framework of and in accordance with the “Concept of development of specially protected natural territories of federal significance for the period until 2020”, approved by Order of the Government of the Russian Federation from 22.12.2011 N 2322-p;
7. To propose to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation initiation of the process of becoming a signatory of international agreements, including AEWA, embracing those countries with which at the present time Russia does not have agreements on migratory birds;
8. To propose to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation initiation of the revival in the regions of an accounting of ecological funds into which payment for the damage to nature and the environment is transferred; the financial resources of this fund should be directed only to specific measures for habitat restoration and protection, as well as scientific research;
9. To recognize the exceptional importance and necessity of continuation of the monitoring of the status of populations of rare and game species of waterfowl on the territory of the Kazakhstan Republic at the key migratory stopover site in northern Kazakhstan; to propose to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation the advancement of an initiative to establish an international Russian-Kazakhstan project for joint monitoring of waterfowl populations;
10. To enquire of the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources as to the means of implementing the Order of the President of the Russian Federation of 18.09.2012, in which the necessity of increasing the numbers of government hunting inspectors to three per administrative district is stated;

11. To recognize the need for a transition in the monitoring of waterfowl abundance from the level of local populations to the levels of species and populations, with the transfer of authority for procurement of said monitoring from the regional to the federal level;
12. To recommend the use, in hunting and nature conservation legislation and regulatory activities, including at the international level, of the concepts of “migratory population” (as a unit of management) and “flyway” (as a territorial unit of management);
13. Through the Department of International Cooperation of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation, to address the agricultural attaché of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Moscow with an official request for correct and factual information on the current numbers and methods of regulating the numbers of geese in the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
14. To address the GSDSG with a request to develop scientific methods of determining optimal numbers *per* species/subspecies/population of waterfowl in Russia and to submit this request to the Russian Ministry;
15. Paying attention to the results of new genetic research, presented at the Conference, which indicates a high degree of gene flow between species of the genera *Anser* and *Branta*, to consider this in the development of strategies for the conservation of species and the management of their populations;
16. To revive (with the GSDSG) the institution of curation for groups of waterfowl for the regions of the Russian Federation and, through the GSDSG, to implement an exchange of information with international working groups; to set up contacts between the GSDSG and curators and local authorities for cooperation in finding answers to questions concerning the sustainable use of waterfowl resources;
17. To recognize the relevance of the method of identification of waterfowl by means of the humerus and to recommend the continuation of the work on establishing a guide to the humeri of waterfowl of Northern Eurasia for employment in, amongst others, evaluation of the species composition of hunter bags;
18. To continue development of a method of aerial surveys through professional sojourns by Russian researchers in countries in which great knowledge of similar work has been accumulated; taking into account the results heard at the Conference of the testing of methods of the identification of waterfowl during aerial surveys, to recognize the relevance of these methods and to recommend the continuation of the work on the establishment of a manual for the identification of waterfowl during aerial surveys;
19. To address the State Duma of the Russian Federation with a proposal to introduce Federal Law №209 from 24 July 2009 N 209-FZ "On hunting and on the conservation

- of game resources and on Amendments to Individual Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation", an article concerning the compulsory checking of the minimum of required knowledge (including biology, safety, law, regulations, rights and obligations) - "*okhotminima*" - for individuals obtaining a state hunting licence, concerning the procedure for obtaining a hunting permit as a compulsory course at specialized organizations having a licence for educational activities, with a mandatory training period and the procuring of references, and the procedure for provision of an exam on the hunting-minimum knowledge;
20. To recognize the need for the continuation of the monitoring of waterfowl wintering grounds in Uzbekistan, and to draw to the attention of the AEWA Secretariat the possibility of supporting this work;
 21. To develop, discuss, and implement an interregional strategy and action plan for the conservation and sustainable use of waterfowl in the YaNAO, Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug (KhMAO), Komi Republic, Arkhangelsk Oblast', and Krasnoyarsk Krai;
 22. To approve an initiative of discussions of the YaNAO with representatives of the agencies responsible for the protection of wildlife resources of Western and Central Siberia (Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug, Tyumen Oblast', Komi Republic, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai, Tomsk Oblast', and other territorial units of the Russian Federation) concerning the establishment of an interregional coordinating council for waterfowl, the geographic range of which would encompass the said territorial units, for the exchange of experiences and the development of a coordinated means of managing waterfowl resources; to support a proposal concerning the establishment of an interregional working group for the monitoring of waterfowl in Western and Central Siberia;
 23. To recommend to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation the mobilization of work in the framework of international agreements of Russia concerning migratory birds and to conduct an examination of the status of these agreements, with the GSDSG and BirdsRussia to give the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation the appropriate data support;
 24. With regard to marking with transmitters, to pay particular attention above all to the prevention of adverse consequences for the birds from the use of this method (from the perspective of a worsening of their physical condition and changing their behaviour), and to request that interested specialists publish instructive data on the basis of best practices;
 25. That the Goose Specialist Group create a database on methods of tracking and of attaching trackers, in order to identify optimal methods for the various species of waterfowl;

26. To encourage the inclusion of more satellite/mobile tracking in research and conservation projects in East and Central Eurasia, as the areas of least study and for which information is badly needed for the conservation of declining species and in connection with avian flu issues;
27. With the GSDSG, to coordinate and support these activities in Russia in cooperation with the AWG of the EEAFP;
28. To recommend the continuation of the use of transmitters in research projects, including those for the broadening of the scientific knowledge necessary for the planning of monitoring and protection activities, and for the management of waterfowl populations.

The Conference considers it necessary to consider and approve the following **regional proposals**.

1. In connection with the catastrophic status of geese in Southern Siberia and in the Far East, to address the Governments of the territorial units of the Siberian Federal Okrug located south of 60°N latitude, as well as the Governments of Khabarovsk and Primorskiy kraia, the putting in place of a moratorium on spring hunting beginning in 2016;
2. Addressing the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation to set up a single continuous period of spring hunting for all hunting zones for all of Omsk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, and Kemerovo oblasts; Altai Krai; the Altai, Khakassia, and Tuva republics, including territorial units in point 39.1 of the Hunting Regulations.
3. Addressing the administrative bodies of the territorial units of the Russian Federation to speedily establish SPNAs at the rank of regional reserves in key areas of waterfowl habitat:
 - 3.1 Krasnoyarsk Krai: “Lake Salbat” and “Tyukhtet-Shadat” reserves (the Greylag Goose, Taiga Bean Goose, and Tundra Bean Goose)
 - 3.2 Sakhalin Oblast: Ekarma Island (Aleutian Cackling Goose)
 - 3.3 Kamchatka: “Utkholok”, “Moroshechnaya River”, and “Yugo-zapadnyy (Southwest) Tundra” reserves.

Proposals to the Government of the YaNAO

The Conference recommends

1. strengthening cooperation with the international African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) with respect to the potential of using the YaNAO as a model territory for the development of innovative methods of waterfowl conservation on the entire flyway; considering the possibility of carrying out pilot projects jointly between the

Government of YaNAO and AEWA and of signing a resolution on co-operation that in the future may facilitate the signing of the AEWA at the federal level;

2. supporting the continuation of annual aerial surveys of the YaNAO territory, making available the necessary information for the establishment of temporary protection zones for game resources, in particular waterfowl (“quiet zones”) in springtime, as well as the development of standardized scenarios of the distribution of similar zones with respect to the dynamics of weather conditions and water levels, and for provision of the annual planning of the establishment of protected zones; in the future, the paying of particular attention to the aerial survey in the lower reaches of the Ob’ and Taz rivers, as well as territories of the Yamal and Taz districts of the YaNAO not surveyed earlier;
3. intensifying aerial-survey monitoring using ultralight aircraft on the YaNAO territory in spring, summer, and autumn, to obtain a full picture of the seasonal distribution of the waterfowl resources of the district; examining the possibility of enlisting light aircraft based in the YaNAO, and additional support, from the district government;
4. intensifying research on the Gydan Peninsula of the YaNAO as a region of priority in the study of waterfowl in the YaNAO, and including Gydan State Nature Reserve; developing a research programme, including collection of information on YaNAO Red Book species and game resources, including the use by the Goose, Swan, and Duck Study Group of Northern Eurasia (GSDSG) of methods of GPS/GPM satellite marking of exemplar species of waterfowl for refinement of our understanding of the flyways;
5. continuing monitoring on Belyi Island in the Kara Sea by the collective of researchers formed by the GSDSG, with a broadening of the group’s composition and the participation of the Russian Centre for the Exploration and Development of the Arctic (Salekhard);
6. addressing the Government of YaNAO for support of the proposal by A. A. Sokolov concerning the establishment of a network of long-term research stations in the YaNAO and the inclusion in them of a scientific programme of the monitoring of waterfowl populations;
7. conducting a series of studies of rare waterfowl species to provide information for the preparation of the third edition of the Red Book of the YaNAO in 2020;
8. with respect to information voiced at the Conference, recognising the inadequacy of measures for the conservation of waterfowl in the YaNAO; in order to correct the situation,
 - 8.1 accepting the measures proposed by the GSDSG in 2012 through 2014 for the changing of hunting parameters (quotas) submitted to the Department of Natural Resource Regulation, Forestry, and Oil and Natural Gas Development (DNRR);
 - 8.2 accepting a regional strategy for the management of populations of rare and game species of waterfowl, developed in the course of monitoring in 2012 through 2014;

- 8.3 appealing to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation with a request for the revision of the periods of autumn and spring hunts in the YaNAO in agreement with recommendations submitted to the DNRR 2012-2014.
9. excluding the Taiga Bean Goose from the list of game species in YaNAO, before the acceptance of a new list of species in the Russian Red Book;
 10. addressing the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation by the YaNAO Administration with a request to support an initiative to establish a cluster of nature reserves on the Khudosey River; addressing the DNRR of the YaNAO to pay particular attention at the time of agreement on the siting of oil and natural gas facilities to the prevention of construction of such facilities in the water-protection zone of tributaries of the Taz River in their middle courses, since the flood plains of these water bodies are places of nesting and moulting of the Taiga Bean Goose;
 11. for the protection of places of nesting of waterfowl and raptors in the Yerkuta River basin of the Yamal District of the YaNAO, that the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (UbrAS) gather evidence for the establishment of a zone of protection for game resources (“quiet zone”) during the periods of hunting and of nesting of the Lesser White-fronted Goose, the Red-breasted Goose, and the Peregrine Falcon, and that the UbrAS send this information to the DNRR YaNAO for consideration;
 12. changing the boundary of the Yamal Reserve in agreement with the recommendation made at the Conference and prepared on the basis of data obtained in the course of investigations in 2015 and made available to the GSDSG at the Non-Commercial Partnership “Arctic” Interregional Expedition Centre (NP “Arctic” IEC) [Salekhard].
 13. approving measures undertaken by Yamal-Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) (project for the development of the South-Tambey Gas-condensate Field) with regard to effective protection of waterfowl habitat, and putting it forward as an example for other territorial units of the Russian Federation in the conducting of analogous work; inviting the Yamal-LNG leadership to publish the relevant recommendations;
 14. drawing to the attention of the responsible bodies regulating aerial navigation and of the YaNAO Government information about the main summer migration of geese in the area of Sabetta to ensure the safety of aircraft flights.

APPENDICES

Programmes for individual species

TAIGA BEAN GOOSE (*Anser fabalis fabalis*)

Taking into account that

the Taiga Bean Goose is proposed for inclusion in the Russian Red Data Book;

an International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Taiga Bean Goose was adopted at the 6th Meeting of the AEWA Parties of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) in November 2015;

data of scientific research presented during this Conference showed the serious decrease in the abundance of the Taiga Bean Goose throughout much of its range, and that many gaps in knowledge still remain with regard to the current status and migration routes for the population breeding in Russia;

The Conference recommends

in accordance with the “precautionary principle”, cessation of hunting of the Taiga Bean Goose, where possible, within the so-called Eastern I and Eastern II flyway management units as defined in the AEWA Action Plan;

continuation of research on the distribution of these populations of the Taiga Bean Goose, and evaluation of their current abundance, paying particular attention to the timing of migration of this species in comparison with that of the Tundra Bean Goose, which is a key quarry species;

the taking of an active role in the carrying-out of measures for the conservation of the species and the development in 2016-2017 of a mechanism of inter-governmental relationships in this area within the framework of the AEWA by countries that host significant numbers of Taiga Bean Geese from these two Eastern populations.

LESSER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (*Anser erythropus*)

Taking into account that

the Lesser White-fronted Goose continues its status as globally threatened, but that detailed and precise information on the status of this species in several of its breeding areas in Russia, as well as at key migration stopover sites and on its wintering grounds, is missing;

an AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose exists and that the International Working Group of the AEWA on the Lesser

White-fronted Goose has invited the range states of the main Eastern population to be included in the Action Plan;

and highlighting the fact

that poaching still represents a threat to the species, and that there is a need for the development of adequate hunting regulations and measures for their enforcement, as well as the establishment of protected territories and buffer zones at key sites where the Lesser White-fronted Goose might accidentally be shot;

The Conference recommends

revision of the AEWA International Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose with the aim of including China and Japan as range states in order to have a network for the conservation of the entire world population; noting that such Action Plans are not legally binding documents for countries that are not Parties to the Agreement;

continuation of the proven good work on the research and conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose in Yamal – one of the most important areas for the species; further development of cooperation with the YaNAO Government, as well as the use of experiences with measures for the conservation of the species in Yamal as an example for the development and implementation of analogous measures on other flyways of the Lesser White-fronted Goose.

COMMON POCHARD (*Aythya ferina*)

In connection with habitat degradation of the Common Pochard caused by climate change and increasing anthropogenic pressure, and also *taking into account* the dramatic situation of its close relative, the Baer's Pochard,

The Conference recommends

support of research on the population dynamics and status of the Common Pochard; actions for managing its population and for restoring its habitats; and the preparation of an International Action Plan (AEWA) for the species.

SWAN GOOSE (*Anser cygnoides*)

Taking into account the fact that

the abundance and reproductive success of the Swan Goose over the course of the last 20 years have decreased catastrophically;

in wintering areas the Swan Goose has lost the majority of its winter habitat and currently overwinters almost exclusively on Lake Poyang in China, where it is subject to severe poaching;

on the territory of the majority of migration stopover sites, the habitats used by the Swan Goose have lost their value, disappeared, or undergone (negative) transformation;

the main threats to the species in Russia, Mongolia, and China are habitat loss owing to climate change; changes in the nature of land-use; water pollution; and prescribed burning in spring, as well as disturbance by humans, cattle, and poaching;

The Conference strongly recommends

development of an International Action Plan for the conservation of the Swan Goose within the framework of the EAAFP;

initiation of immediate measures by all range countries for the conservation of the Swan Goose.

BEWICK'S (TUNDRA) SWAN (*Cygnus bewickii*)

Taking into account that

the Northern European population of the Bewick's (Tundra) Swan is recognized as "threatened" in Europe and current data support the fact that the abundance of the population continues to decline;

The Conference recommends

taking the measures to preserve the Bewick's (Tundra) Swan in the Russian Federation indicated in the Action Plan of AEWA, including minimizing losses due to poaching;

clarifying the change in distribution of the swans on their breeding grounds and comparing the population dynamics of Bewick's (Tundra) swans using three different flyways, in order to understand which actions are necessary to undertake for the conservation of the species on the flyway crossing northwestern Europe;

immediately publishing, in Russian and in English, and distributing to interested individuals and organizations, an evidence-based (scientific) review of the effects of the activity of nesting swans on neighbouring waterfowl, refuting the widespread and false belief that swans are "harmful" birds, because they "interfere" with nesting geese and ducks.