

Expanding Goose Populations and their Management – Introduction

BART EBBINGE

Chairman of the Goose Specialist Group

It is a great pleasure to write this introduction for the proceedings of the 12th meeting of the Goose Specialist Group in Höllviken, 9–14 October 2009, which was so well organised by Leif Nilsson and his team of the University of Lund, and sponsored by the Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management (Svenska Jägareförbundet). It was great to see 98 members and interested persons from nineteen different countries gathered together in Höllviken, Sweden during a meeting at a very well chosen venue.

It was gratifying to see the discussions that strengthened the contacts between researchers that often work together in remote arctic places. Our special guests from China and North America were impressed by the special open and friendly atmosphere during this meeting.

The meeting was a very lively one and focused in particular on the Bean Goose, a species for which Sweden is especially important. In particular, the size of the Taiga subspecies *Anser fabalis fabalis* is in serious decline as underlined by a presentation by “Mr. Bean” Thomas Heinicke. Despite the fact that the main theme of the conference was “The expanding goose populations and their management”, we should keep in mind that not all goose populations are thriving. For the first time also studies were presented that addressed the problems of “naturalized”, “exotic” or Neozoan goose populations that are spreading in more and more European countries and locally causing problems.

The meeting also gave rise to a board that energetically will support our activities in the future in a much more ambitious way. The eight members of this new board are Tony Fox, Thomas Heinicke, Konstantin Litvin, Jesper Madsen, Johan Mooij, Ingunn Tombre, Berend Voslamber and Bart Ebbinge (chairman). We have to resettle our relationship with Wetlands International and the IUCN-Species Survival Commission, and in particular make sure that the network responsible for the mid-winter counts in Europe will be improved. The meeting proposed the creation of a Goose MetaDatabase as a “one-stop-shop” source for all information on goose abundance and distribution in the western Palearctic.

Another ambition is to seek for possibilities to update the famous “Goose book” entitled *Goose populations of the Western Palearctic*, so carefully edited by Jesper Madsen, Gill Cracknell and Tony Fox, in which all populations of geese that winter in Europe and Middle Asia have been covered. It was published in 1999, and given the huge changes in goose numbers recently an update is of great importance. Who would ever have thought it possible that the Russian population of Barnacle Geese, that numbered only 20,000 in 1960 and 270,000 in the “Goose book”, now numbers 770,000 individuals and gave rise to breeding populations outside the Russian arctic in the Baltic and even in the Netherlands. The overview paper in these proceedings can be seen as a first start.

Another decision of the meeting was to revive the *Goose Bulletin* and an editorial board

consisting of Johan Mooij (editor-in-chief), Fred Cottaar, Tony Fox and Berend Voslam-ber has by now already produced two issues which have been mailed to all members, and can also be downloaded from our website www.geese.org/gsg. This revived *Goose Bulletin* serves as a platform of information exchange for goose researchers and those interested in goose management.

After the conference during a three-day excursion by bus to the more important goose-sites in south Sweden (Tåkern, Kvismaren, Östen, Hornborgasjön and Getterön) Leif and Christina Nilsson showed us impressive flocks of Taiga Bean Geese.

Finally I would like to thank the editorial board of *Ornis Svecica* for publishing the results of our meeting in this special volume, so that we will never forget this meeting.

*Bart Ebbinge, Chairman Goose Specialist Group IUCN-Species Survival Commission/
Wetlands International, Alterra Centre for Ecosystem Studies, Wageningen University and
Research Centre, P.O. Box 47, NL-6700 AA Wageningen, the Netherlands. E-mail: Bart.
Ebbinge@wur.nl*



Photo of the participants. *Foto på deltagarna.*