



LIFE LWfG CLIMATE - Providing a climate resilient network of critical sites for the Lesser White-fronted Goose in Europe

LIFE19 NAT/LT/000898

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Project description:

Background

The lesser white-fronted goose (LWfG) is one of the most threatened species in the world. It is listed as globally vulnerable by the IUCN Red List and critically endangered in the EU by the 2015 European Red List of Birds, while it is included in Annex I of the EU Birds Directive, in Appendix II of the Bern Convention, in Table 1 Column A of the African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbird Agreement (AEWA) and in Appendix I of the Convention of Migratory Species. BirdLIFE International moreover recognises it as a European species of global conservation concern. Although the global decline has levelled off as a result of previous conservation efforts, including LIFE-funded projects, the LWfG population is still very low and at a high risk of extinction. Currently, the population is estimated at around just 105-120 individuals, equivalent of around 30-35 adult breeding pairs. The LWfG are long-distance migrants, whose wintering and staging areas and migration routes are only partially known, posing a major obstacle to its conservation. Almost all known major staging and wintering sites are in SPAs located in Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary and Greece. Currently, the latter is the most important country for the Fennoscandian population with the EU as 40% of the LWfG annual cycle is spent there. Within the EU, the main threats to the species are habitat loss and degradation, and human disturbance, such as hunting and agriculture. Climate change is also emerging as a major threat. Availability of suitable habitat is crucial for the species, and it is therefore vital to ensure that there is a sufficient amount of quality habitats.

Objectives

The overall goal of the LIFE LWfG CLIMATE project is to contribute to the internationally agreed long-term goal of restoring the Fennoscandian LWfG population to a favourable conservation status as outlined in the LWfG

Individual Special Species Action Plan, by delivering a 5% annual average increase. Specifically, the project aims to:

- Mitigate of the effect of climate change on the Fennoscandian population by increasing the climate resilience of the existing network of sites within the EU;
- Provide overarching guidance to countries and stakeholders to implement climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, including the production of bespoke guidance for 20 sites;
- Increase the availability of suitable habitats for the LWfG both in terms of surface area and number of sites (at least 466 ha in four SPAs in three EU Member States);
- Support the adaptation and expansion of the LWfG critical sites network to reflect the changing migratory behaviour of the population;
- Increase knowledge of LWfG migration routes by establishing eight new monitoring teams and a caretaker network of 30 trained observers in three SPA sites in Greece, two SPA sites in Lithuania and three SPA sites in Finland;
- Identify at least two new sites for the species through trained teams, expeditions and eDNA analysis;
- Improve SPA network for the LWfG conservation by including the LWfG as a new trigger species within the current SPAs in Lithuania;
- Improve long-term implementation of conservation action by adopting two LWfG National Action Plans;
- Contribute to the international conservation of the LWfG and other threatened migratory waterbirds by engaging with the AEWA LWfG International Working Group and other conservation initiatives;
- Contribute to the adoption of farming practices in the key species stopover sites while avoiding disturbance of the LWfG; and
- Raise awareness about the conservation of the LWfG locally and internationally, showcasing the species as a champion for flyway level conservation action by reaching around 700,000 stakeholders through dedicated networking and dissemination actions.

The project will contribute to the EU policy objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, the Birds and Habitats Directives and the EU Action Plan on Nature, People and Economy and thematic priority of LIFE programme, the EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change and Resolution 6.6 on Climate Change Adaptation Measures for Waterbirds of AEWA (by assessing the effects of climate change on the species critical habitat and by developing guidance for adaptation/mitigation measures), the Convention on Migratory Species and AEWA International Single Species Action Plan for the Conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose through all activities of the project, and Green Public Procurement (by applying green procurement procedures).

Results

Expected results:

- A 5% annual average increase of the Fennoscandian LWfG population;
- Establishment of climate resilient network of critical sites for the LWfG in the EU;
- Increase of the available suitable and protected, climate-resilient habitat for

the LWfG by 55 ha in the Evros Delta SPA in Greece, by 304 ha in one SPA in Hungary and 96.2 ha in two SPAs in Lithuania. In total, 466.2 ha in five SPAs will provide additional rehabilitated LWfG habitat, while site specific guidance on climate change adaptation measures will be developed and adopted by relevant bodies;

- Completed assessment of the vulnerability of 20 critical sites to climate change and guidance for adaptation and mitigation measures for LWfG sites, adopted by the inter-governmental AEWALWfG IWG, disseminated to governments of all 22 LWfG Range States and considered in the two NAPs and developed and adopted 7 site-specific management guidance. Two international workshops will be organised to extend climate resilient site network to critical LWfG sites;
- Prepared eco-tourism development plan in Evros Delta;
- The conservation objectives of two PSAs in Lithuania including LWfG;
- A novel eDNA analysis method developed for the LWfG and analysis carried out in at least 50 water bodies in the potential breeding areas of the species in Fennoscandia;
- Increased knowledge and understanding of LWfG sites and migration with at least three new national or regional teams established and equipped, three new staging areas of Fennoscandian LWfG covered by regular monitoring; caretaker network established in Greece with 20 trained permanent volunteer observers in three SPA sites. Identification of at least two new sites for the species through trained teams and expeditions and management and monitoring recommendations developed for all new sites identified;
- Adoption of two new/revised LWfG NAPs by the relevant government authorities in Lithuania and Hungary;
- At least 2 000 stakeholders (hunters, farmers, local business owners) informed about disturbance, illegal killings and accidental shootings with at least eight local events organised; and
- Around 700 000 members of the public informed about the project and the species in the five EU project countries and around 5 000 members of the wider international conservation community beyond the project countries.

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Environmental issues addressed:

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- COM(2011) 244 final “Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020 ...
- Directive 79/409 - Conservation of wild birds (02.04.1979)
- Directive 92/43 - Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora- Habitats Directiv ...
- Climate Change & Energy efficiency
- COM(2013)216 - EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change (16.04.2013)

Target species

Anser erythropus

Natura 2000 sites

SPAGR1260008TECHNITI LIMNI KERKINIS - OROS KROUSIA
SCI FI1300103 PÖYRISJÄRVEN ERÄMAA
SCI FI1300105 KÄSIVARREN ERÄMAA
SCI FI1300118 TARVANTOVAARA
SCI FI1300201 LEMMENJOEN KANSALLISPUISTO
SCI FI1300202 MUOTKATUNTURIN ERÄMAA
SCI FI1300204 Vätsärin erämaa
SCI FI1302001 Kevo
SCI FI1302002 KALDOAIVIN ERÄMAA
SCI FI1302003 Paistunturin erämaa
SCI GR1260001LIMNI KERKINI - KROUSIA - KORYFES OROUS BELES, ANGISTRO -
CHAROPO
SPAGR1110006DELTA EVROU
SPAEE0040001 Väinamere
SPALTALYB003Zuvinto, Zaltycio ir Amalvo pelkes
SPALTSLUB001 Nemuno delta
SPALTSLUB002 Senrusnes ir Sennemunes ezerai
SCI LTSIU0013 Nemuno delta

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Lithuanian Ornithological Society
Partners	UOULU(Oulun yliopisto (University of Oulu)), Finland HNPD(Hortobágy National Park Directorate), Hungary WWF-Fin(Maailman Luonnon Säätiö – World Wide Fund For Nature, Suomen rahasto sr.), Finland AEWA(UNEP/AEWA Secretariat), Germany MBEDSPA(Management Body of Evros Delta and Samothraki Protected Areas), Greece MHPWF(Metsähallitus Parks & Wildlife Finland), Finland EOS(Estonian Ornithological Society), Estonia HOS(Hellenic Ornithological Society), Greece

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE19 NAT/LT/000898
Duration	01-SEP-2020 to 31-AUG -2025
Total budget	5,689,448.00 €
EU contribution	4,263,543.00 €
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