The globally threatened Lesser White-fronted Goose (*Anser erythropus*) is a migratory species which occurs regularly in the following countries: Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, China, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

The conservation of the Lesser White-fronted Goose is particularly challenging due to the fact that it looks very similar to its close relative the Greater White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons*), which is a common species open for hunting. During the non-breeding period the two species are often found together in mixed flocks, making it difficult to tell them apart - even for experienced ornithologists.

Many range states and dedicated stakeholders are already working together to protect the Lesser White-fronted Goose. However, much information on the species is still missing and therefore your help is needed to save this charismatic bird.
## The Challenge: Correctly Identifying Lesser White-fronted Geese

### Lesser White-fronted Goose vs. Greater White-fronted Goose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Lesser White-fronted Goose</th>
<th>Greater White-fronted Goose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head colour</td>
<td>Head and upper two thirds of neck are uniformly dark brown – distinctly darker than the Greater White-fronted Goose.</td>
<td>Only narrow zone at the rear margin of the white blaze is dark brown – clear contrast with light brown head and neck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head shape</td>
<td>Smaller, neater, more rounded head (“boxy” shape) with steeper forehead.</td>
<td>Larger, slimmer head.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neck</td>
<td>Distinctly shorter and thicker.</td>
<td>Longer, slimmer and lighter in colour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye-ring</td>
<td>Prominent bright yellow eye-ring.</td>
<td>Either no eye-ring or thin dull yellow eye-ring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Short, stubby triangular bill – bright pink.</td>
<td>Longer, slimmer bill - duller pink in colour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blaze</td>
<td>White blaze reaches far up on the crown.</td>
<td>Relatively smaller white blaze.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size</td>
<td>Smaller in size.</td>
<td>Larger in size.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **In a flock on the ground**, a good indication is the small size, overall darkness and more upright posture of Lesser White-fronted Geese.

- **In flight**, the smaller size combined with the shorter neck and bill, darker head and somewhat narrower wings are the best characteristics for identification.

- **Juveniles** are particularly hard to identify! Try to locate the family group as families typically migrate together and identify the species of the juvenile by identifying the parents.

Collecting Vital Information: Monitoring of Lesser White-fronted Geese

When observing Lesser White-fronted Geese, please note down the most important information:

**Count - or estimate - the number of Lesser White-fronted Geese** (also assess the total number of all geese present and the percentage of Lesser White-fronted Geese in the flocks).

**Check for possible colour rings, neck bands and satellite transmitters** (write down any colours or numbers you can identify).

**Identify the feeding and roosting sites being used by the Lesser White-fronted Geese** (note the exact locations and habitat types being used and take photos).

**Estimate the hunting pressure** (assess whether hunting is heavy in the area used by the geese by counting shots per minute and by observing hunters moving in the area - request hunters to show you birds they have shot and take photos).

**NOTE:** Distinguishing between Lesser White-fronted and Greater White-fronted Geese requires good conditions in the field and good identification skills. Identification should never be based on one characteristic alone: for example, at close range the yellow eye-ring can be surprisingly clear also in Greater White-fronted Geese, whilst on the other hand the eye-ring of the Lesser White-fronted Goose is not visible at a long distance. If you are not 100% sure about your sighting, please report seeing unidentified White-fronted Geese. In addition, try to take a photograph for possible later identification.

More detailed monitoring instructions can be found on the website of the EU LIFE+ project “Safeguarding the Lesser White-fronted Goose along its European Flyways” hosted by WWF Finland: http://wwf.fi/lwfg/
Much is still unknown about the Lesser White-fronted Goose - particularly concerning its migration routes and wintering areas. In order to gather more information, an online reporting template for the Lesser White-fronted Goose has been established on the website hosted by the Fennoscandian Lesser White-fronted Goose Project:

www.piskulka.net

Please report any sightings of Lesser White-fronted Geese on this website or send an email directly to Tomas Aarvak at the Norwegian Ornithological Society (tomas@birdlife.no). All information is valuable - including information about dead or accidentally shot birds.

If possible, please include photographs of the birds you have seen. You can also send us information in other languages - such as Russian or Arabic - and we will arrange for it to be translated.

For more information on the species as well as current conservation efforts, please visit the following websites:

Portal for the Lesser White-fronted Goose: www.piskulka.net

EU LIFE+ project website hosted by WWF Finland: http://wwf.fi/lwfg/


Thank you for helping to save the Lesser White-fronted Goose!

This field guide was produced within the framework of the EU LIFE+ project “Safeguarding the Lesser White-fronted Goose within the European Flyway” and was funded by the UNEP/AEWA Secretariat.