



Good news from the North

Fennoscandian Lesser White fronted Geese have record breeding season



24. August 2015, Porsanger Fjord, Finnmark, Norway – First reports indicate that it appears to have been a record-breaking breeding season for the Fennoscandian Lesser White-fronted Goose population.

As reported by members of the [Birdlife Norway](#) conducting the yearly monitoring on the main staging grounds at Porsanger Fjord in Finnmark in northern Norway, a total of 126 individuals were counted on Sunday the 23rd of August. Of these birds, 70 were identified as juveniles born this season belonging to 22 separate broods. It was hoped for a good breeding season based on prospects for a good rodent year, and this seems to be the case with reports of large numbers of grey-sided voles and tundra voles in the core breeding area. In good rodent years, the predation pressure by e.g. foxes on the nests is typically lower, resulting in better juvenile production of land breeding birds.

Regular autumn monitoring has been carried out at the Porsanger Fjord since 1994, with the highest autumn total of 128 individuals (consisting of 61 adults and 67 juveniles) recorded in 1995. Hence this year's total count of 126 birds almost reaches the 1995 record. The number of broods and juveniles is the highest recorded since the regular autumn counts were started.

The Lesser White-fronted Goose is globally threatened and listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and as Critically Endangered within the European Union according to the 2015 European Red List Assessment. Main threats to the species include illegal killing and accidental shooting as well as habitat loss and disturbance.

A tiny population harboring an amazing migration, Fennoscandian Lesser White-fronted Geese migrate to autumn staging and wintering areas in Hungary and Greece after the breeding season. Unsuccessful breeders undertake a so-called moult migration to Arctic Russia, thus taking a more precarious route through Central Asia to meet up with the other birds in Eastern Europe. During spring migration, the birds stop in Lithuania, Estonia and Finland on their way back to Norway. As a result, a successful breeding season not only gives the population a boost in juvenile numbers but also increases the survival rate of entire families as they will follow the safer and shorter route to the wintering grounds in Greece.

Following a long-term decline from an estimated 10,000 individuals in the early 20th century, the Fennoscandian population has been balancing on the brink of extinction. However, since 2009 the decline appears to have halted – and there has been an increase in numbers.

Relentless conservation efforts are being carried out by national and international conservation organizations, governments and other stakeholders spread throughout the flyway on behalf of this species. Not least within the framework of the current EU LIFE + project "Safeguarding the Lesser White-fronted Goose Fennoscandian population in key wintering and staging sites within the European flyway".

Project partners are delighted and also cautious with the astonishing news as great responsibility now lies on the hands of the countries in the Fennoscandian European flyway. As hunting is the most important threat for the population, goose hunters are reminded to pay special attention to the identification of the target species this autumn and winter. The Lesser White-fronted Goose is protected in all European countries.

For more information about ongoing conservation efforts for the Lesser White-fronted Goose, please visit the [Portal to the Lesser White-fronted Goose](#), the [EU LIFE+ project website](#) as well as the [AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose International Working Group website](#).