IUCN SSC Swan Specialist Group

2016-2017 Report

Chair
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Location/Affiliation
Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester GL2 7BT, UK

Number of members
370

Social networks
E-mail forum:
ssg-forum@wwt.org.uk
Website:
http://www.swansg.org/

Mission statement
The Swan Specialist Group (SSG) is an international network of swan specialists who undertake monitoring, research, conservation and management of swan populations. Its mission is to facilitate effective communication between members and others with an interest in swan management and conservation world-wide, in order to improve national and international links for cooperative research, to identify gaps in knowledge and to provide a forum for addressing swan conservation issues.

Main activities by Key Priority Area (2016 & 2017)

Communications

■ Communication
i. Issues 12 and 13 of Swan News newsletter. (KSR #28)
ii. Online SSG-forum distribution link was maintained. (KSR #28)
iii. Swan SG logo agreed by members.
iv. The SSG website was developed and can be previewed at http://www.swansg.org/. It will be officially launched in February-March 2018. (KSR #28)

Conservation action

■ Conservation activities
i. Conservation project “Flight of the Swans” in which Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust’s Sacha Dench flew by paramotor from the Bewick’s Swans’ (Cygnus columbianus) breeding grounds in the Russian arctic to their long-established wintering site at Slimbridge, SW England, provided a focus for a range of initiatives across the flyway to address the decline the NW European Bewick’s Swan population. Events organized by partners in ranges states included seven conservation workshops, 51 school visits and 15 community events. There were >700 articles published in the press, c.1,000 reports on TV/radio, and the project was honored as “Campaign of the Year” at the 2017 ENDS Environmental Impact Awards. (KSR #37)

■ Research activities
i. Results of the censuses of migratory swans were collated and distributed. Trumpeter Swan (Cygnus buccinator) survey reports and data are available at: https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications.php. Paper on the Icelandic Whooper Swan (Cygnus cygnus) population can be found at https://wildfowl.wwt.org.uk/index.php/wildfowl/article/view/2645/1761.
iii. Sub-lethal threat of lead poisoning to swan species assessed. Paper on the effects of ingested lead on swans’ body condition was published: Newth et al. 2016, in Environmental Pollution 209: 60-67. (KSR #32)
iv. Tracking swan migration in relation to wind farm development completed. Movements of twenty two swans caught in southern England in winters 2013/14–2014/15 were tracked in relation to wind farm development along the migration route, with particular reference to offshore wind farm sites proposed for the North
Sea between Britain and continental Europe.

Data recorded up to spring 2016 were analyzed and published in a report to the Department of Energy and Climate Change. (KSR #32)


Acknowledgements

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Targets for the quadrennium 2017-2020

Communications

Communication: Production of newsletters (1 issue per year) and operative website.


Policy advice: Provide information and technical advice globally.

Conservation action


Research activities: survival and distribution population trends for Bewick’s Swan and censuses of migratory swan populations in the Northern Hemisphere.

Increasing diversity of SSC

Membership: development of the Swan SG membership in the Southern Hemisphere.

Projected impact for the quadrennium 2017-2020

By the end of 2020, we will have undertaken a further census of the NW European Bewick’s Swan population to determine whether we have achieved the initial target of the AEWA Bewick’s Swan Action Plan, of halting the ongoing decline in the NW European population and, if necessary, begin recovery of the population to its 2000 level. By 2020, we also envisage having a better understanding of the environmental factors contributing to the decline, and to have started addressing these where necessary. For the other swan species, which are currently classed as Least Concern by IUCN, we will maintain our monitoring of population trends, or collect such information where the monitoring is being undertaken by other organizations, to identify any conservation issues that may arise for the swans.

Summary of activities (2016-2017)

Key Priority Area ratio: 2:7

Key Priority Areas addressed:

• Communications (4 activities)
• Conservation action (6 activities)

Main KSRs addressed: 28, 32, 37

KSR: Key Species Result