

***Wildfowl* Special Issue No. 3: Editorial**

The fifteenth conference of the Goose Specialist Group of Wetlands International and the IUCN-Species Survival Commission was held at Arcachon, France, from 8–11 January 2013. The meeting took place at the Palais de Congres next to the Bassin d' Arcachon, where tens of thousands of Dark-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla bernicla* winter each year. Although presentations described the results of research and conservation initiatives for a range of goose species, the focus therefore was on the *Branta* genus – namely Brent Geese *Branta bernicla*, Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis* and Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis* – and particularly on the Brent, with 36 of the 58 talks and posters covering Brent Goose population development, genetics, migration and the importance of eelgrass *Zostera* sp. as a food source. Sixty-six participants attended from 17 different countries, from Belgium (2), Canada (2), Denmark (1), France (18), Germany (4), Greece (1), Iceland (1), India (1), Ireland (3), Mexico (1), Netherlands (17), Norway (1), Poland (1), Russia (6), Sweden (2), UK (4) and the USA (1).

We are therefore delighted that the Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS) has kindly sponsored this *Wildfowl* Special Issue, devoted to Brent Geese (or to Brant, as they are known in North America), to publish new information on the species, subspecies and populations presented at the meeting. An overview of the changes in population size for all Brent/Brant Goose populations was drawn together by David Ward, Kevin Clausen, Kerry Mackie, Kathy Dickson and Bart Ebbsing during the course of the conference, and this is included in a paper with more extensive information on Dark-bellied Brent Goose population trends since 1990. Other papers describe long-term trends in the number of Dark-bellied Brent Goose at key sites in France, site use by East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla brota* at the spring staging sites, use of the Netherlands as a cold weather refuge by Light-bellied Brent Geese and flexibility of Dark-bellied Brent Geese in choosing their moulting sites in the Russian arctic. Information on the North American populations includes results of tracking Grey-bellied Brant *Branta bernicla* migration patterns, and on the gritting and foraging behaviour of Black Brant *Branta bernicla nigricans* at an important staging site in California. Some of the presentations made at the meeting, on the Brent Geese and on other goose species, have been published elsewhere. Details of these are listed at the end of these proceedings, including papers on non-Brent species given at the meeting which have been published in *Wildfowl* 63.

The meeting was sponsored by the Office National de la Chasse et de la Faune Sauvage (ONCFS), Oiseaux Migrateurs du Paléarctique Occidental (OMPO), Fédération Nationale des Chasseurs (FNC), Fédération départementale des Chasseurs de Gironde (FDC33), Maison de la Chasse, Mairie d'Arcachon, Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine, Conseil Général de Gironde and la Fédération des Associations de Chasse et conservation de la faune sauvage de l'UE (FACE). We are immensely grateful to these organisations for their generous support. In addition, eight participants received a travel grant from the Dutch Faunafund, OMPO and

ONCFS to attend the meeting, which greatly enhanced the range of work covered and discussed, both at the meeting and here in the proceedings. We also thank members of the host committee for organising the logistics and ensuring that meeting flowed smoothly. From ONCFS, these were: Pierre Migot, Guillaume Rousset, Jean-Marie Boutin, David Gaillardon, Brigitte Bonnemains, H el ene Melkebeke, Isabelle Rivault, Thierry Thomas, Anne Floch and Val erie Gu erineau; and from the Palais de Congres, Virginie Dochez.

The Goose Specialist Group seeks to strengthen contacts between all researchers on migratory goose populations in the northern hemisphere. More information on its activities and publications can be found on its website, at <http://www.geesc.org/gsg>, including information on the next meeting, which is scheduled to be held in China in November 2014.

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Photograph: Participants of the 15th Goose Specialist Group conference in Arcachon, France, by Gilles Leray.