



# Lesser White-fronted Goose Field Guide

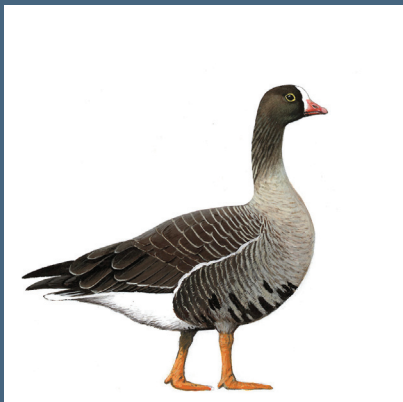
## Identification and Monitoring of a Globally Threatened Species

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

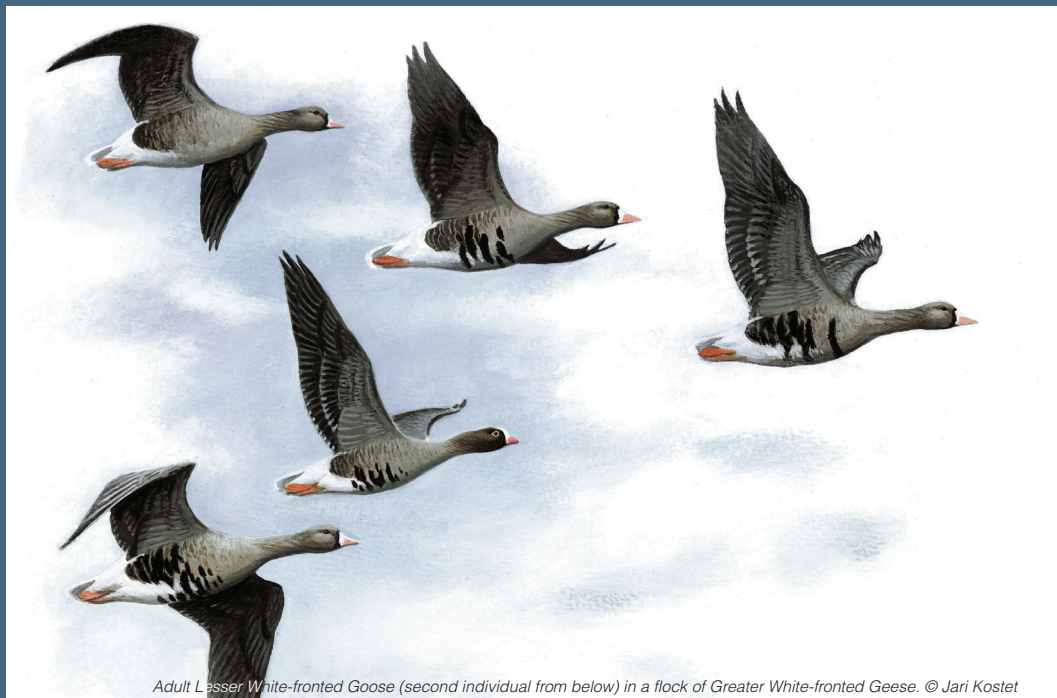


*Adult Lesser White-fronted Goose and adult Greater White-fronted Goose © Jari Kostet*

	Lesser White-fronted Goose	Greater White-fronted Goose
Head colour	Head and upper two thirds of neck are uniformly dark brown – distinctly darker than the Greater White-fronted Goose.	Only narrow zone at the rear margin of the white blaze is dark brown – clear contrast with light brown head and neck.
Head shape	Smaller, neater, more rounded head ("boxy" shape) with steeper forehead.	Larger, slimmer head.
Neck	Distinctly shorter and thicker.	Longer, slimmer and lighter in colour.
Eye-ring	Prominent bright yellow eye-ring.	Either no eye-ring or thin dull yellow eye-ring.
Bill	Short, stubby triangular bill – bright pink.	Longer, slimmer bill - duller pink in colour.
Blaze	White blaze reaches far up on the crown.	Relatively smaller white blaze.
Size	Smaller in size.	Larger in size.
Call	Clear and whistling "tu-yu(-yu)" voice – lacks sharp "click-click-click-click" call of the Greater White-fronted Goose.	The call corresponding to the "tu-yu(-yu)" of the Lesser White-fronted Goose is raspier – also makes a sharp "click-click-click-click" call.

- 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



*Adult Lesser White-fronted Goose (second individual from below) in a flock of Greater White-fronted Geese. © Jari Kostet*

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).

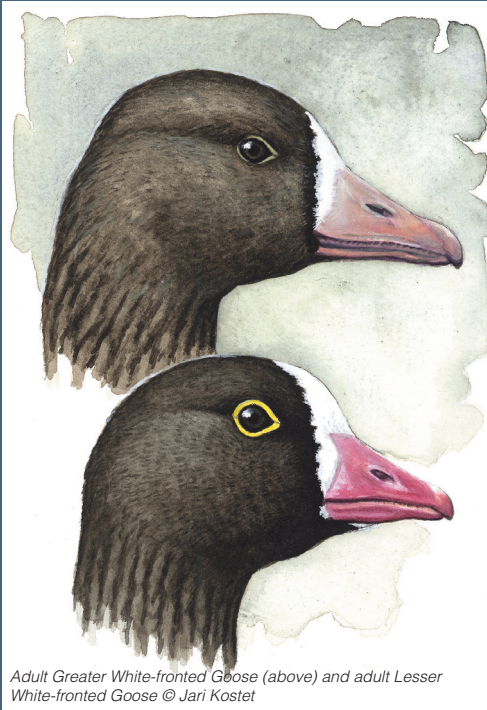
**Check for possible colour rings, neck bands and satellite transmitters** (write down any colours or numbers you can identify).

**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](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.piskulka.net)

EU LIFE+ project website hosted by WWF Finland:

<http://wwf.fi/lwfg/>

AEWA Lesser White-fronted Goose  
International Working Group:

<http://lesserwhitefrontedgoose.aewa.info>

**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.

