

# Project Background

## BULGARIA – U.S. Red-breasted Goose Conservation Project

### **Background:**

The red-breasted goose is one of the rarest, smallest and most beautiful goose species in the world. It breeds on the Taimyr, Gydan and Yamal peninsulas of Russia, migrates along a corridor east of the Ural Mountains, and winters almost entirely at Durankulak and Shabla Lakes and the surrounding pastures and agricultural lands of Bulgaria. It also winters in fewer numbers on the Romanian Black sea coast. The world's main authority on the conservation status of species, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) categorizes this species as endangered.

**Problem:** Numbers of wintering red-breasted geese have declined dramatically in the last decade from as many as 88,000 up through the year 2000 to fewer than 30,000 in recent years. An understanding of all the reasons for the decline are incomplete but known threats include:

- development of agricultural foraging habitat to windmill farms on wintering grounds
- conversion of cereal cultivation to other crops on wintering grounds
- legal and illegal hunting on the migratory pathways and wintering grounds
- disturbance by fishermen at roosting sites at Durankulak and Shabla Lakes
- intentional disturbance of foraging geese from farmers concerned about foraging on their cereal crops
- unintended poisoning of geese from pesticide use on cereal crops and the use of rodenticides.

### **Project Objectives:**

- Support the Branta Conservation Center to expand cooperation and strengthen the effectiveness of local nature conservation groups.
- Fully participate winter surveys for the redbreasted goose.
- Develop partnerships with local and regional institutions to ensure compliance with hunting regulations (Police, Regional Inspectorate of Environment, Forestry).
- Facilitate agreements with large agrarian cooperatives, agriculture companies and farmers in the Coastal Dobrudja region to implement several agri-environmental measures suitable for foraging geese.
- Raise public awareness to promote conservation action.
- Facilitate greater synergy and international and within country cooperation among partners and stakeholders to implement priority actions identified in the Action Plan developed by the International Red-breasted Goose Working Group.
- Increase knowledge of movements and behavior on wintering grounds, migration routes and threats at stop over sites.
- Construct and operate a rehabilitation center for sick and injured red-breasted geese and other endangered or threatened species.

## **How Will We Accomplish This?**

- Develop ecotourism, publish leaflets and posters, organize campaigns, and an annual red-breasted goose celebration event.
- Designate at least one mobile observer to participate and support the cooperative patrolling teams set up by the responsible institutions.
- Collaborate with all organizations, groups or individuals that may contribute to the conservation of Red-breasted Geese.
- Cooperate and exchange information with other projects, NGO's or individuals involved in the conservation of the Red-breasted Goose.
- Raise funds to purchase lands for foraging habitat on wintering grounds and to establish a program for cooperative agreements with willing leaseholders and farmers for crop management with a special focus on Shabla and Kavarna Municipalities.
- Conduct satellite telemetry studies of Red-breasted Geese to determine movements on wintering grounds and during migration to better inform management and policy conservation of the Red-breasted Geese especially around issues of hunting, public activities on protected areas and development.
- Conduct satellite telemetry studies of white fronted geese on wintering grounds and during migration to understand the relationship between this species foraging and roosting behaviors to the red-breasted goose so as to be able to better inform hunting policy to ensure White-fronted Geese hunting regulations are compatible with Red-breasted Geese conservation.
- We will work closely with governmental institutions with regulatory or management authority for conservation of red-breasted goose to facilitate greater attention and necessary actions for protection and management of the species.

## **Current Project Partners and Sponsors:**

- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
- Le Balkan-Bulgaria Foundation
- Bulgaria Ministry of Environment and Water
- natur&ëmwelt – LNVL Bettembourg – local group of Lëtzebuerger Natur- a Vulleschutzliga (Luxembourg)
- Branta-Tours Inc.
- Branta Conservation Centre in Durankulak

## **For more information please contact us:**

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