

Reducing illegal shooting of Bewick's Swans in the Russian Arctic: identifying practical approaches

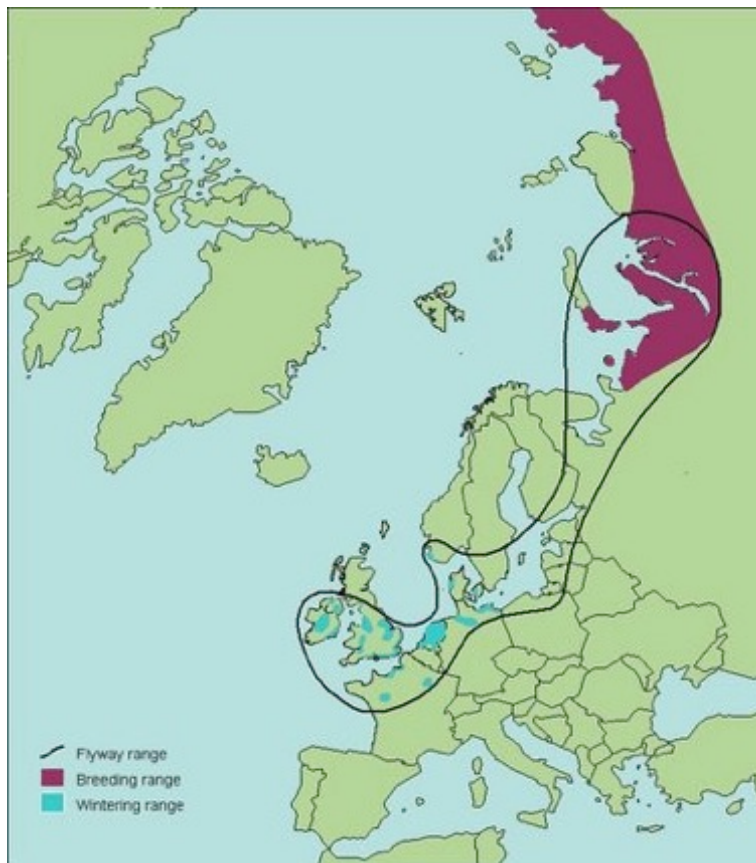


Talk outline

1. Species background
2. The issue: illegal shooting
3. Plans to address the issue
 - *Scoping review*
 - *Human dimension project*

1. Species background

NW European Bewick's Swan (*Cygnus columbianus bewickii*)



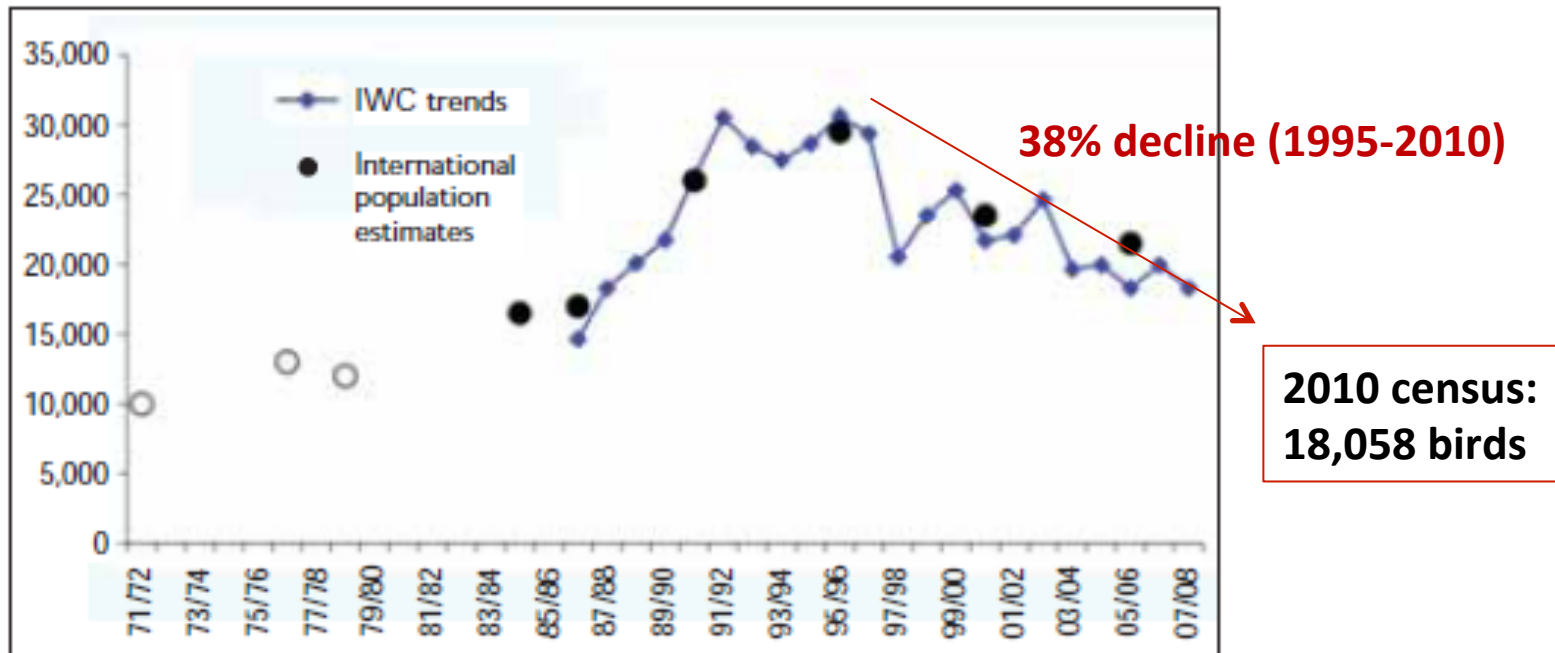
Legally protected

- Convention on Migratory Species (1979 'Bonn Convention')
- Red Data Book of Russia
- legislation in the countries concerned



Status, population & trends

Overall 2004 EU25/ Pan European Conservation Status (BirdLife International)	African-Eurasian Waterbird Agreement	EU Birds Directive	Convention on Migratory Species (CMS or Bonn Convention)
Unfavourable	A (3)	Protected	Appendix II



Bewick's Swan Action Plan

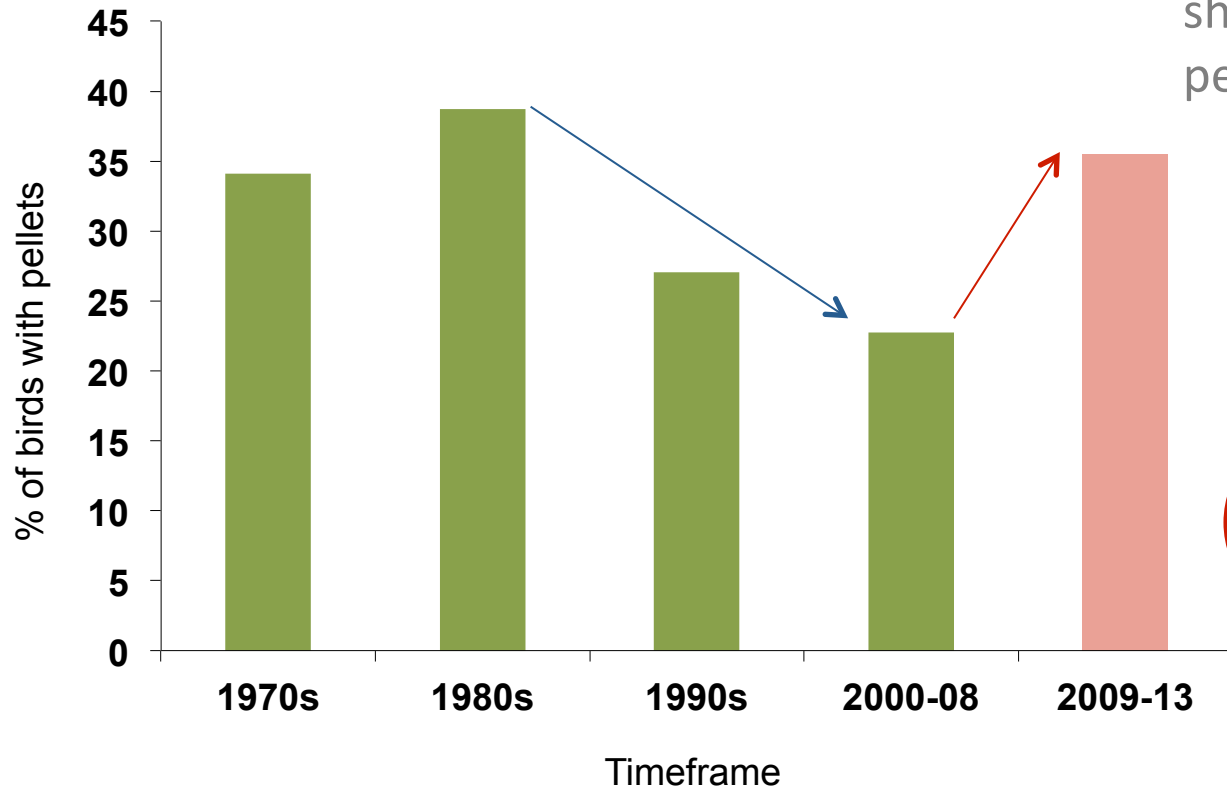
Adopted by AEWA in May 2012

Identified habitat changes and **illegal/accidental shooting** as important existing threats

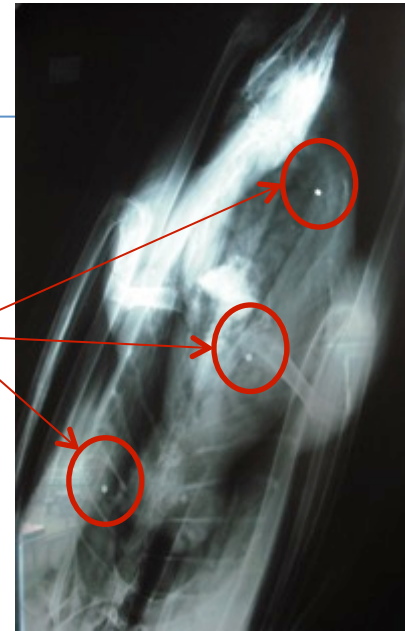


2. The issue

Shotgun pellets found in bodies of live birds



Embedded
shotgun
pellets



35.5% (n = 62)
birds X-rayed 2009-2013
carried shot

Newth *et al.* 2011

WWT Unpub.

Knowledge gaps

WHERE & WHEN?



Wintering grounds?



Staging sites?



Breeding grounds?

WHO & WHY?

- ❖ Subsistence hunters (food)?
- ❖ Farmers (crop damage)?
- ❖ Military (sport)?
- ❖ Game poachers (deliberate)?
- ❖ Game hunters (accidental)?
- ❖ Trophy poachers?
- ❖ Vandals?
- ❖ Other (ignorant of law)?



3. Plans to address issue

Illegal shooting of migratory swans project

Aim: working with **local communities** and **other wetland users** along the flyway to identify best approaches and implement activities for reducing the illegal shooting of Bewick's swans

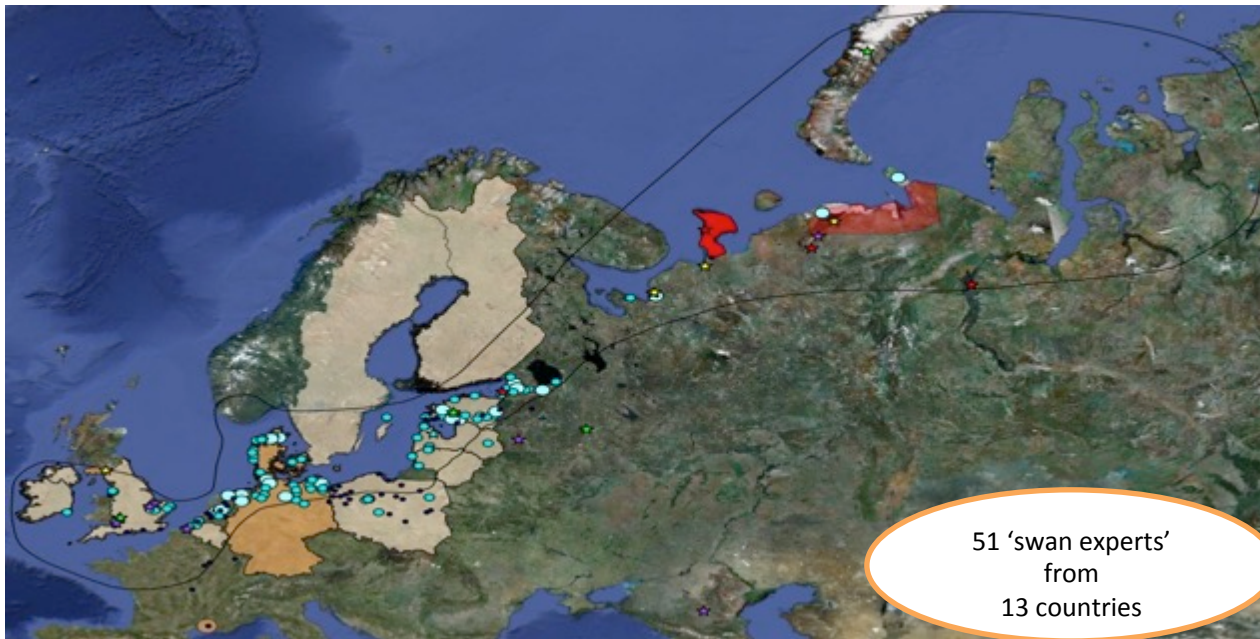
- ➔ **Understand the range of issues**
- ➔ **Identify potential hotspots of shooting activity**
- ➔ **Engage with communities** for their advice on tackling the issue and involvement in the **active stewardship of the swans across** their flyway
- ➔ **Improve awareness**
- ➔ **Encourage greater enforcement** of protective legislation across the flyway



Understand range of issues: scoping review

- An assessment of existing knowledge of the issue within the swan community
- Flyway-wide reviews of mortality caused by shooting

Illegal shooting occurring **across** the flyway



Bewick's found shot dead (8.4% of all 202 ring recoveries) along flyway:
Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Belgium & Britain

Russian Arctic: a key focus area

Hosts entire NW European population between May and October

Shooting known to occur in parts of the Russian Arctic, particularly during the birds' migration in May and September/October

But we need to learn more from a wider range of people, particularly those living near to key swan sites that host significant numbers of birds

***“There needs to be a paradigm shift
from people as a problem to people
as part of the solution”***

- Bath & Frank 2011

Human dimensions project

➔ Identify **practical approaches** for reducing the illegal shooting of Bewick's

Talk with tundra users along the migration route within Russia (e.g. the White Sea regions, the Gulf of Finland) starting with Pechora Delta



**Later roll out to other areas
along migration route..**

Objectives

People & swans

Undertake a **baseline assessment of attitudes, knowledge and beliefs** about Bewick's Swans and their conservation

Motivations for shooting

Understand the **beliefs that motivate the illegal shooting of Bewick's Swans**

Recommendations

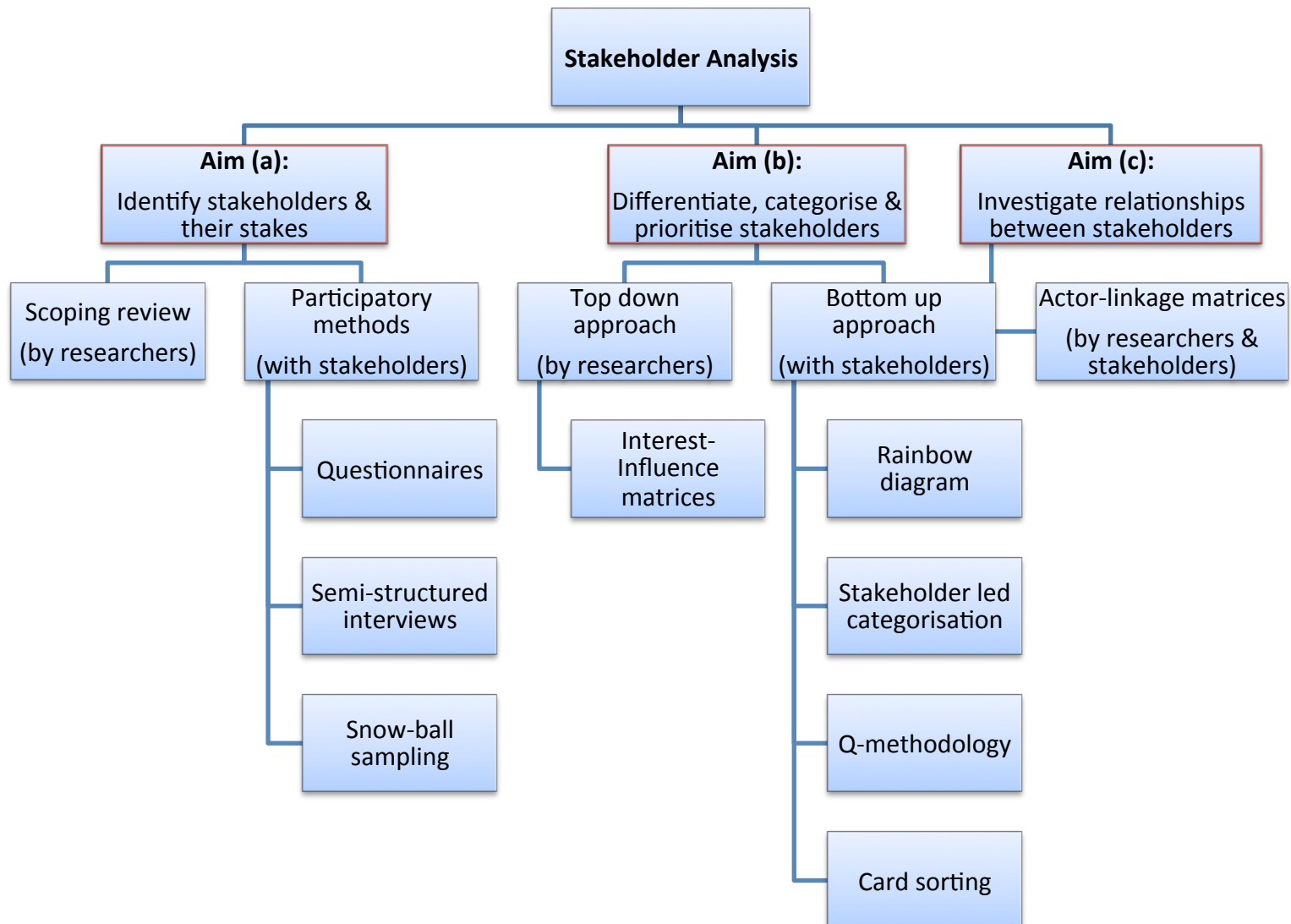
Use outputs to design **practical approaches** to reduce illegal shooting and identify barriers

Learn from communities

Best practices to implement and manage change – co-management with local knowledge

Identify stakeholders and their stakes

Those who are (a) **influenced by** (b) **may influence** and (c) have an **interest** in or **knowledge** about swans and the issue

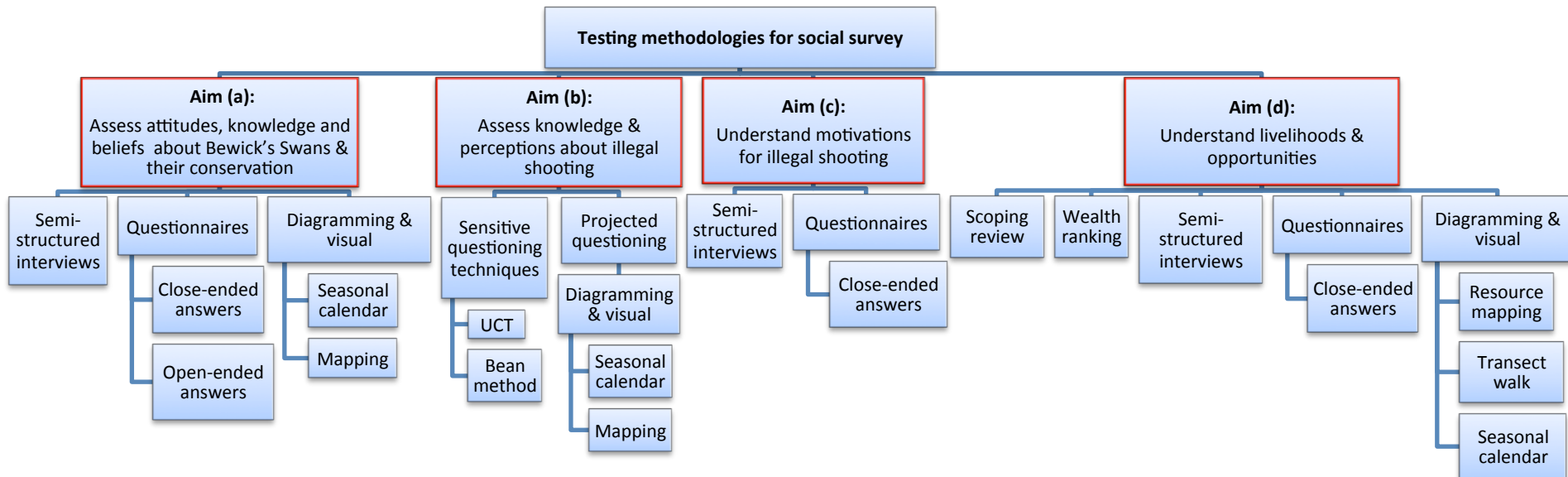


Learning more from communities

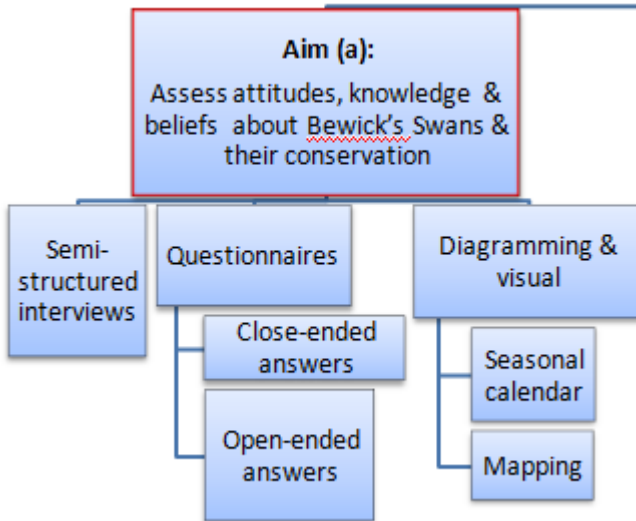
➔ **Explore feasibility** of survey methods and identify best methods

➔ **Ask opinions of stakeholders:**

- Attitudes knowledge and beliefs about Bewick's Swans and their conservation
- Knowledge and perceptions about illegal shooting
- Motivations
- Livelihoods and opportunities



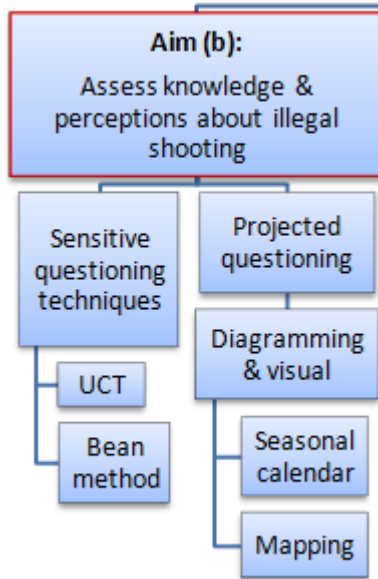
Assess attitudes, knowledge & beliefs



Attitude and belief statements will measure and understand:

- **Knowledge** and **beliefs** about Bewick's, including their conservation status, protective legislation, identification, trends /changing distributions over time, other ecological aspects
- **Attitudes** toward Bewick's and various management approaches

Assess knowledge & perception about shooting



Given the **illicit and sensitive nature** of illegal shooting, data collected using direct questions is likely to be affected by **biases**, thus reducing their validity (Nuno & St John 2014)

Unmatched-count technique (UCT)

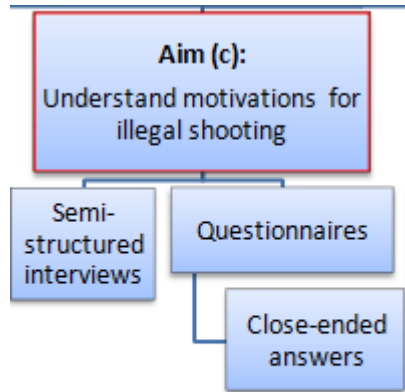
Baseline Group	Treatment Group
Livestock herding	Livestock herding
Farming	Farming
Trading	Trading
Oil/gas worker	Oil/gas worker
Local services	Hunting (swans)
Teaching	Local services
	Teaching

Differences in the means between baseline and treatment groups are used to estimate the prevalence of the sensitive behaviour (Droitcour *et al.* 1991; Nuno & St John 2014)

Projected questioning

Participants are asked to provide information about illegal shooting conducted by *other* people. Diagramming and visual exercises will be tested

Understanding motivations for shooting

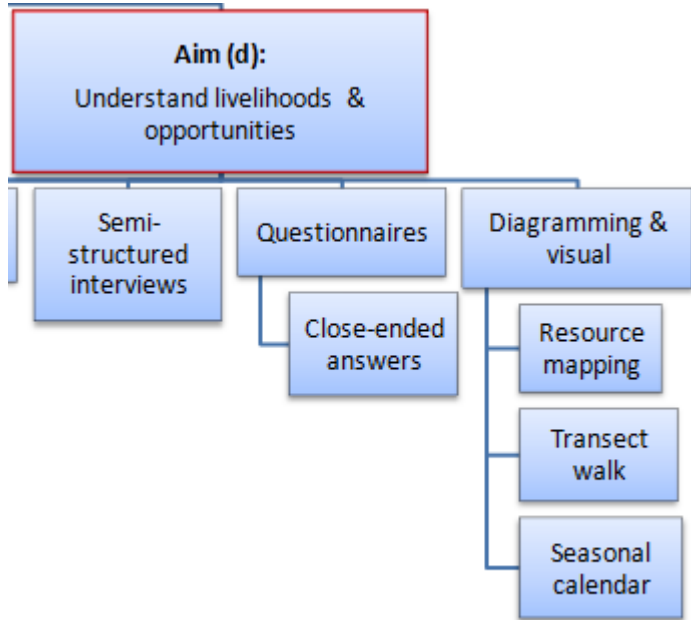


The following motivations for the illegal shooting of swans will be explored:

economic gain, food source, recreation, trophy and cultural /spiritual/traditional



Understand livelihoods and opportunities



Provide insights into **local resources available** for residents and **opportunities for alternative livelihoods** for people that depend on swans as a resource in one form or another **(if this is found to be the case)**



C. Engage and build relationships with stakeholders

- Stakeholder participation in this project will be underpinned by a philosophy that emphasises **empowerment, equity, trust** and **learning**
- Develop **partnerships**
- Ensure that any **issues and concerns** within the community are understood and considered



Conclusions

- Migratory swans are **legally protected** throughout their range
- BUT illegal shooting is still a problem with **35.5%** of live Bewick's (2009-2013) found with shot
- Shooting known to occur in **arctic Russia** - further information required
- Project aim: **identify practical approaches for reducing illegal shooting in Russia by learning from wetland users along migration route (starting with Pechora Delta)**
- Identify barriers / support for communities
- Phase 2: implementation of recommendations



Can you help support this project?

★ FUNDING

★ RESOURCES

★ PARTNERSHIPS

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Photos: G. Hann & C. Butters