

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2013/14

East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta Bernicla hrota*

1. Abundance

The abundance of East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese in the UK during 2013/14 was monitored through the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). Results are presented in survey reports that are available on the WeBS website.

2. Breeding success

Seven age assessments of the geese were carried out from late September through to early December 2013 at Fenham Mill and Fenham Flats, Northumberland. The largest sample, of 2,000 aged birds, made on 27 September, contained 84 young within the flock (4.2%). Later samples had even fewer goslings, with the second largest sample of 1,592 birds holding only seven goslings (0.4%), whereas samples of smaller flocks had slightly larger percentages of young (6.3% and 7.4% in two flocks of 96 and 108 birds, respectively). No brood size data were collected at Lindisfarne.

These counts were part of the annual flyway-based compilation of breeding success. In Denmark, a further 1,674 birds were aged, with slightly higher productivity estimates than those obtained in England. Combining the Danish early October data with the largest Lindisfarne sample gave an overall population productivity estimate of 5.5% young.

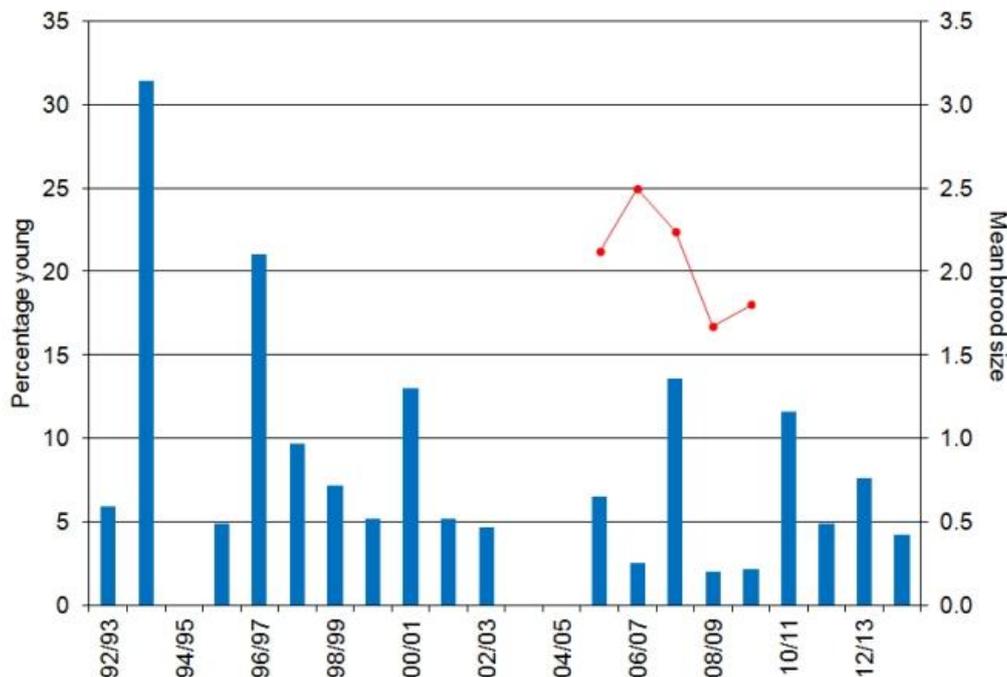


Figure 1. Percentage of young (blue circles) and mean brood size (red circles) of East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese at Lindisfarne, 1992/93-2013/14. Note; no data were collected in 1994/95, 2003/04 or 2004/05.

3. Discussion

The internationally coordinated early October 2013 count from either side of the North Sea gave an updated population estimate of 6,900 birds – Lindisfarne held about one third of the total population with Denmark supporting the remainder. Low breeding success in this population is increasingly common and a cause for concern, but the reasons for this are not well understood.

4. Acknowledgements

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Goose & Swan Monitoring