

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2012/13

Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis*

1. Abundance

During winter 2012/13, monitoring of Taiga Bean Goose, was undertaken at the Slamannan Plateau, Falkirk, by members of the Bean Goose Action Group, and at the Yare Valley, Norfolk, by RSPB reserve wardens. A peak count of 233 birds was recorded at the Slamannan Plateau, slightly lower than the previous ten-year mean (261.3 ± 7.6 SE). At the Yare Valley, where the number of wintering Bean Geese has been declining since 1993/94, the peak count of 76 was lower than in 2011/12, when 86 geese were recorded. The slow decline of this important flock continues.

Arrival at the Slamannan Plateau was again early, with the first birds arriving in late September. The first flock of 50 birds was counted on 26 September, increasing to 179 birds by 6 October and reaching a peak of 233 on 23 November. Migration back to the spring stop over sites took place in mid February; the last 24 birds being recorded on 26 February 2013.

At the Yare Valley, no geese were recorded in October and the first birds (26 individuals) were seen on 18 November. Numbers increased to a peak of 76 in December, falling to 44 in January and 28 in February. Two neck collared birds ringed in Sweden (EFJ and EPS) were amongst the flock from late December and through January.

2. Breeding success

Age assessments at the Slamannan Plateau indicated that 2012 was an average breeding year for Taiga Bean Geese wintering in Scotland. Out of a flock of 200 birds, 90 were aged on 5 November, of which 17.8% were young birds (Figure 1). Eight families were identified with a mean brood size of 2.0 goslings per successful pair. However, this is a very small sample of the total (flyway) population. Breeding success data were not collected at the Yare Valley.

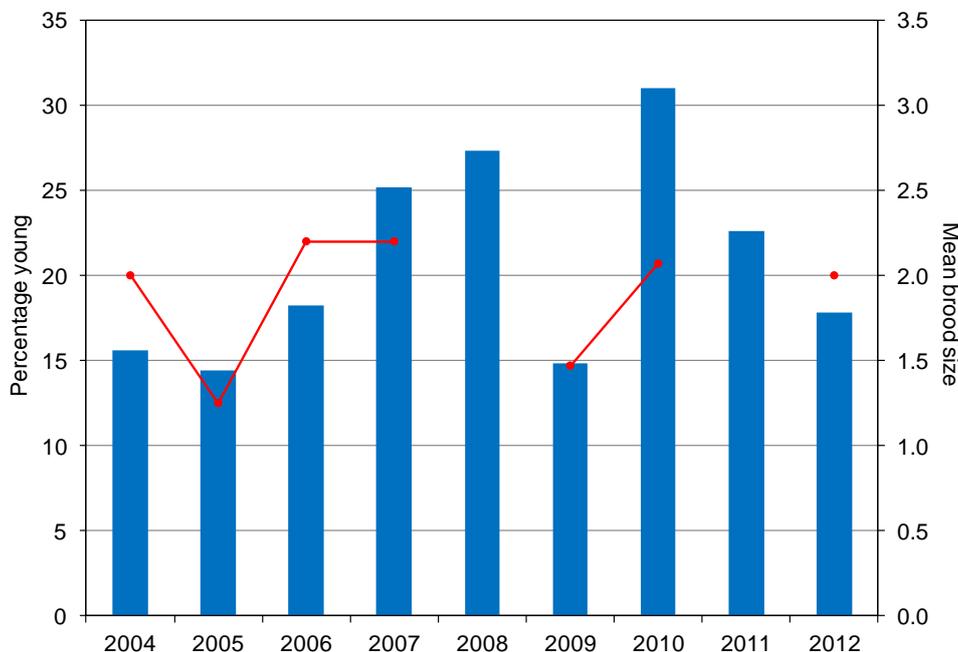


Figure 1. The proportion of young (%) and mean brood size of Taiga Bean Geese recorded at Slamannan Plateau, 2004 – 2012.

Migration and site use

Six Bean Geese were caught in mid October and these were fitted with telemetry equipment enabling the birds' feeding and roosting habits to be studied in detail. The geese spent the entire winter on the Slamannan Plateau in an area of approximately 30 km². In addition, the migration route and stop over sites in northwest Europe were identified for the first time. In March the geese spent a month in northwest Jutland, Denmark, before spending a few weeks at Akershus, Norway, in April. From here, the geese moved to Dalarna county in west Sweden where it is believed they spent the summer.

3. Discussion

Since the peak of 300 geese in 2005/06 and 2007/08, numbers at the Slamannan Plateau have remained stable at 200-250 birds, although the peak count in 2012/13 (233 birds) was the lowest since 2003/04. Numbers at the Yare Valley continue to decline and were below the previous ten year mean (128.8 ± 8.5 SE).

Breeding success in 2012, recorded at Slamannan, was average. However, because this flock is <1% of the whole population, this estimate may not be representative of overall breeding success in the population.

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Goose & Swan Monitoring