

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2011/12

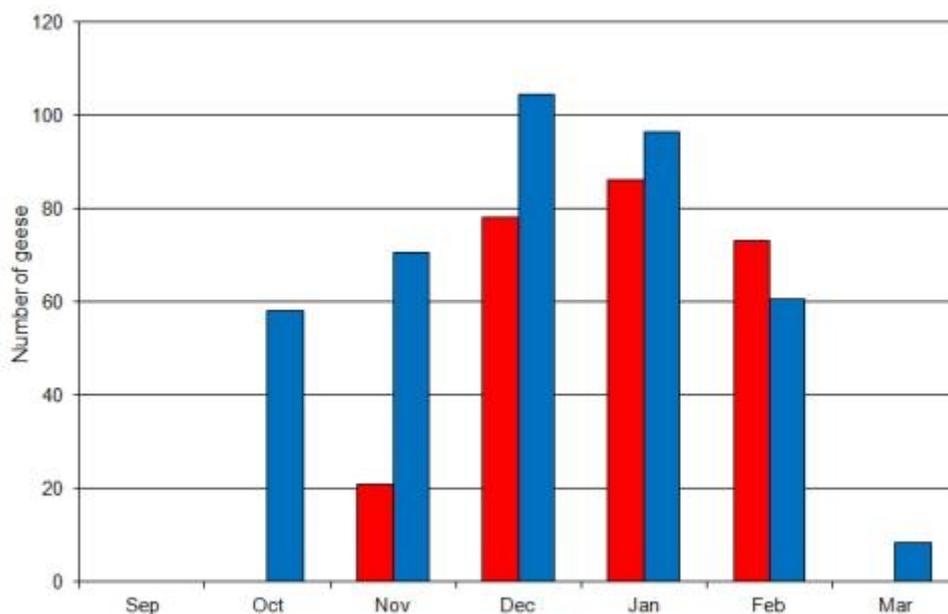
Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis*

1. Abundance

During winter 2011/12, monitoring of Taiga Bean Goose, was undertaken at the Slamannan Plateau, and the Yare Valley. A peak count of 238 birds was recorded at the Slamannan Plateau, a figure slightly lower than the previous ten-year mean (257). At the Yare Valley, where the numbers of wintering Bean Geese has been declining since 1993/94, the peak count of 86 was lower than in 2010/11, when a peak of 137 geese was recorded. The slow decline of this important flock continues and the peak count remains below the previous ten-year mean (145).

Arrival at the Slamannan Plateau was earlier than in previous years, with the first birds arriving in late September. The first flock of 16 birds was counted on 20 September, increasing to 56 birds a week later. Numbers increased in early October, reaching a peak of 238 geese. Migration back to the spring stop over sites took place in mid February; the last 120 birds being recorded on the 25 February. Part of the Slamannan flock, including seven colour marked geese, were located at Akershus, east of Oslo, Norway on 20 March, on spring migration to their breeding quarters.

At the Yare Valley, no geese were recorded in October and the first five birds were seen on 18 November. Numbers increased to 79 on 4 December, and the peak count was made in the new year, as is typical for this site, when 86 were counted on 15 January. On 10 February, 73 birds were still present, but numbers quickly declined and the last 3 birds were seen on 24 February.



Peak monthly counts of Bean Geese at the Yare Valley (blue columns represent the mean of 2006/07-2010/11; red columns 2011/12).

2. Breeding success

Age assessments at the Slamannan Plateau indicated that 2011 was a good breeding year for Taiga Bean Geese wintering in Scotland. Out of a flock of 233 birds, 133 were aged on 10 October, of which 22.6% were young birds. However, this is a very small sample of the total population. Age assessment data were not collected at the Yare Valley.

3. Discussion

Since the peak of 300 geese in 2005/06 and 2007/08, numbers at the Slamannan Plateau have remained stable at 200-300 birds, although the peak count in 2011/12 was the lowest for since 2003/04. Numbers at the Yare Valley continue to decline and were similar to that in 2009/10 and below the previous ten year mean (144.7 ± 13.2 SE).

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

This report should be cited as:

WWT. 2012. *Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme: survey results 2011/12 Taiga Bean Goose* *Anser fabalis fabalis*. WWT/JNCC/SNH, Slimbridge.

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This report was produced under the Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme (GSMP). This programme monitors numbers and breeding success of geese and swans in the UK during the non-breeding season. GSMP is organised by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of Natural Resources Wales, Natural England and the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside) and Scottish Natural Heritage.



Goose & Swan Monitoring