

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2010/11

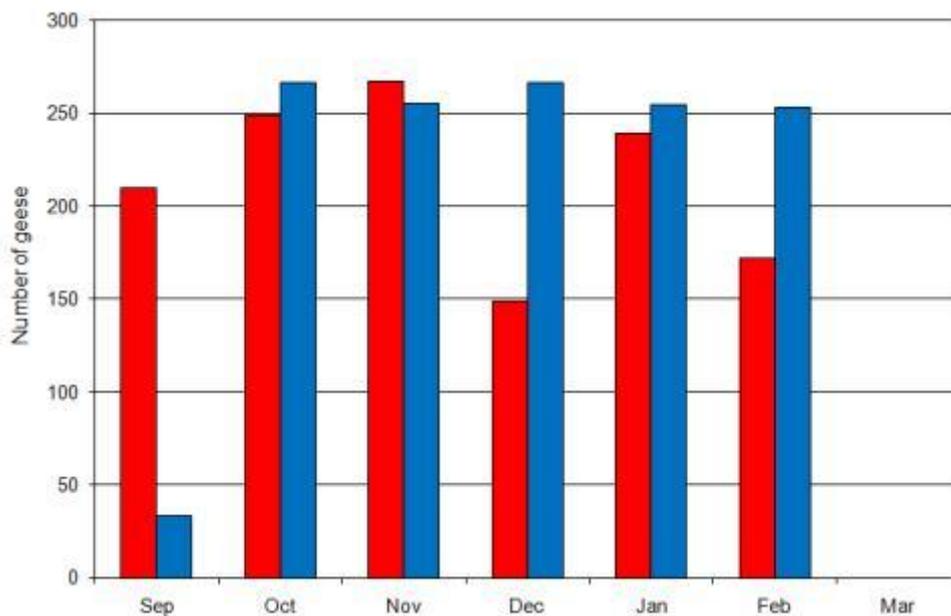
Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis*

1. Abundance

During winter 2010/11, monitoring of Taiga Bean Goose, was undertaken at the Slamannan Plateau, and the Yare Valley.

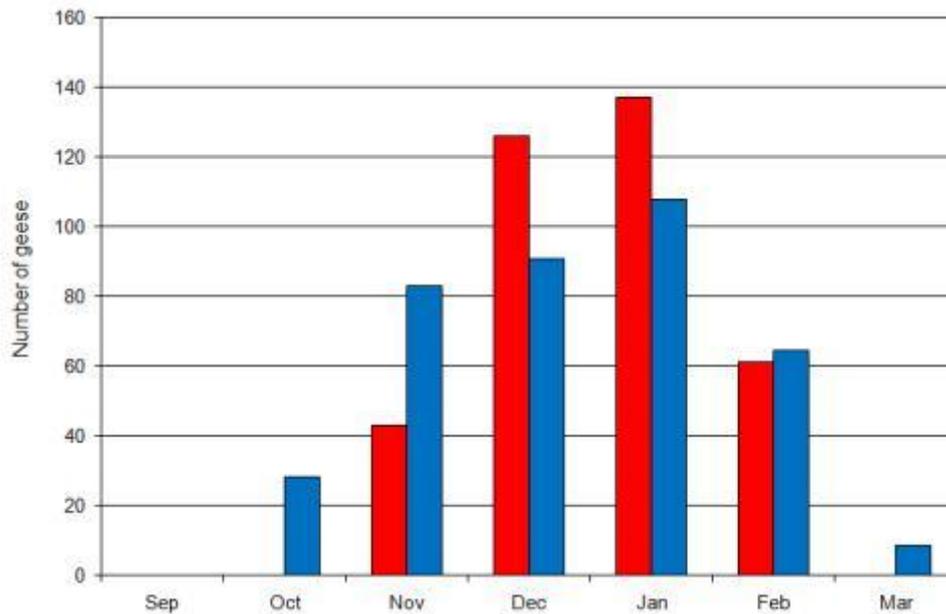
A peak count of 267 birds was recorded at the Slamannan Plateau, a figure comparable to recent years and slightly higher than the mean for the previous ten years (242.8 ± 12.4 SE). At the Yare Valley, where the numbers of wintering Bean Geese has been declining since 1993/94, the peak count of 137 was significantly higher than in 2009/10 (87 birds), possibly due to cold weather movements.

The arrival of geese at the Slamannan Plateau was earlier than in previous years. The first count on 28 September recorded 83 geese, increasing to 210 two days later previously, the maximum September count was 89 geese in 2007. The flock size increased slightly during October, reaching its peak of 267 in early November. Numbers dropped substantially during December (peak count of 149), probably due to severe weather forcing birds to move further afield to find suitable feeding areas (small numbers were recorded near the Solway Estuary at this time), but recovered to 239 by the beginning of January. The last record was on 24 February.



Peak monthly counts of Bean Geese at the Slamannan Plateau (blue columns represent the mean of 2005/06-2009/10; red columns 2010/11).

At the Yare Valley geese arrived later than expected. No geese were recorded in October and the peak November count of 43 was almost half of the mean peak count for that month (82.8 ± 25.1 SE; 2005/06-2009/10). Numbers of geese reached a peak in January but by 20 February only 16 birds remained with the majority having migrated back to the Continent.



Peak monthly counts of Bean Geese at the Yare Valley (blue columns represent the mean of 2005/06-2009/10; red columns 2010/11).

2. Breeding success

A total of 155 birds were aged at the Slamannan Plateau during winter 2010/11, of which 31% were young birds. The average brood size, calculated from 14 family groups was 2.07 (± 0.25) young per successful pair. 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 around 260, with the peak count during 2010/11 being the highest since the latter of these two years.

Following the low count of the previous year, numbers at the Yare Valley were similar to that of recent years; though still below the previous ten year mean (149.4 ± 14.4 SE). Although numbers are not currently showing signs of returning to those seen during the 1990s, flock size has remained relatively stable in the most recent four years.

Breeding success was the highest recorded at Slamannan since age assessments started in 2004. 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:

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Goose & Swan Monitoring