

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2005/06

European White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons albifrons*

1. Breeding success

A total of 1,491 European White-fronted Geese was aged at six localities in Britain during January and February 2006. The overall proportion of young was 34.3%, and of the 93 broods recorded, the mean brood size was 3.01 (0.14 s.e.) young per successful pair.

The proportion of young and mean brood size of European White-fronted Geese during winter 2005/06.

Region	No. sites	Total aged	% young	No. broods	Mean brood size
Essex	1	11	9.1	0	-
Gloucestershire	1	696	31.6	64	3.3
Norfolk	3	597	36.9	27	2.4
Suffolk	1	187	38.0	2	3.5
Total	6	1,491	34.3	93	3.0

2. Discussion

The breeding success of European White-fronted Geese is greatly influenced by rodent abundance, predation and other factors such as weather. In 2005, monitoring stations in the Arctic reported favourable breeding conditions, noting an exceptionally high number of lemmings and above average spring temperatures, and indications are that productivity was generally high (Soloviev & Tomkovich 2006). This good breeding success was reflected in the proportion of young and mean brood size recorded in flocks of White-fronted Geese in Britain; the overall proportion of juveniles and mean brood size were among the highest recorded in the past ten years. Preliminary data from Europe also suggest high breeding success among European White-fronted Geese wintering there, with the percentage of young in flocks in the Netherlands and Germany reported to have been higher than in 2004 (K. Koffijberg pers. comm.).

In Britain, prior to 2004/05, estimates of annual productivity were only routinely carried out at WWT Slimbridge, Gloucestershire. Here, the proportion of young birds in 2005 was the highest recorded in the last 13 years (31.6%). The mean brood size (3.25) was the second highest, exceeded only in 1998 (3.3). Past records show that the proportion of young birds measured in Slimbridge flocks are not always representative of the population as a whole (Cranswick *et al.* 2005). The continuing collection of data away from Slimbridge will allow estimates of breeding success to be made that are more representative of both the total British and Baltic/North Sea populations.

4. References

Soloviev, M & P Tomkovich. (Eds.) 2006. *ARCTIC BIRDS: an international breeding conditions survey*. Online database: <http://www.soil.msu.ru/~soloviev/arctic/index.html>. Accessed 29 June 2006.

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This report should be cited as:

WWT. 2006. *Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme: survey results 2005/06 European White-fronted Goose* Anser albifrons albifrons. 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.



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