

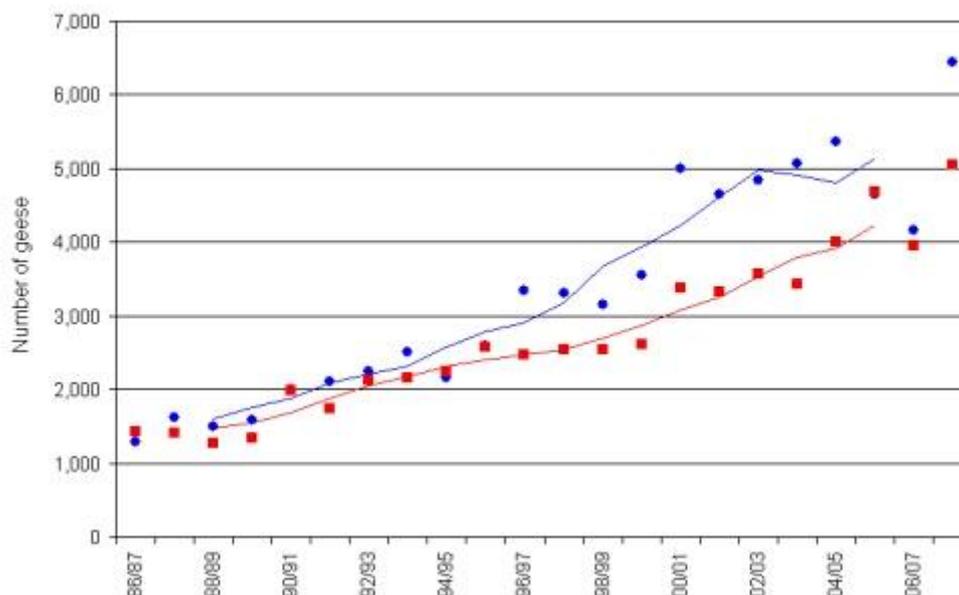
# WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

## Survey results 2007/08

### Northwest Scotland Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

#### 1. Abundance

A total of 6,440 Greylag Geese was counted on the Uists in late August 2007. This is an increase of 55% on the August count for the previous year, although counts in late summer 2005 and 2006 were considered underestimates. During February 2008, a count of 5,053 was made, representing an increase of 28% on the count in February 2007.

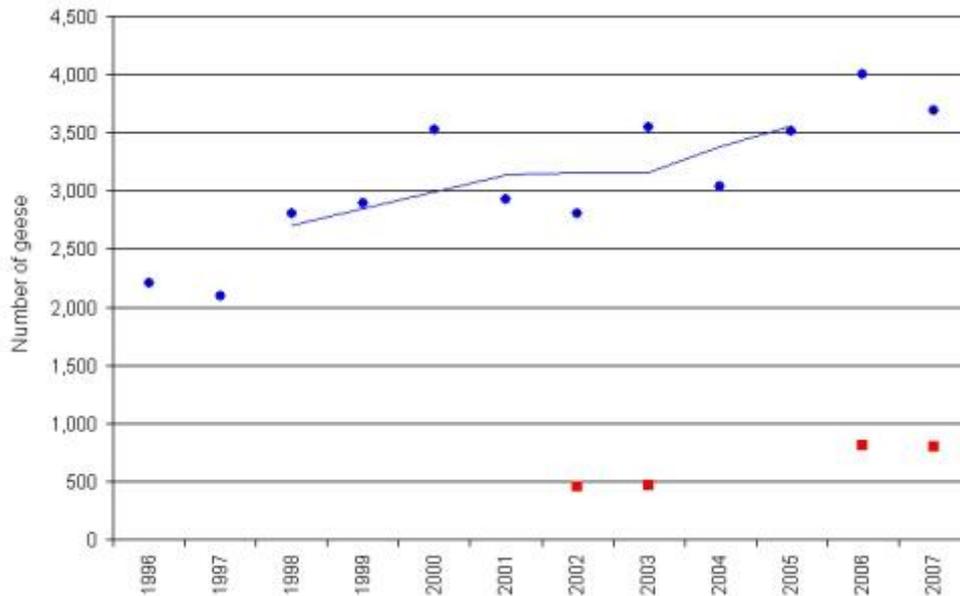


Peak counts of Northwest Scotland Greylag Geese recorded in August (blue circles) and February (red squares) on the Uists, Outer Hebrides, 1986/87 to 2007/08. The five-year running means (eg mean for August 2005 is from counts for August 2003-2007) are shown as lines.

A total of 24 areas in the Uists was surveyed in August and 28 in February. Greylag Geese were present at 22 of these during both the August and February counts. The distribution of birds in both August and February was fairly typical, with North Uist holding the largest number in both months. Between 2002 and 2007, North Uist has held approximately 50% of the Greylag Geese recorded during these counts.

During August, the favoured areas on North Uist were Berneray (595 birds), Paible (580 birds), Baleshare/Carinish (569 birds), and Balranald, Clettraval and Tigharry (550 birds). On South Uist, most birds were counted in the Iochdar, Gerinish and Drimsdale area (1,141 birds). In February, the geese were concentrated at Ardivachar/Drimore, where 909 birds were counted. On North Uist, the favoured area was Baleshare/Carinish (492 birds).

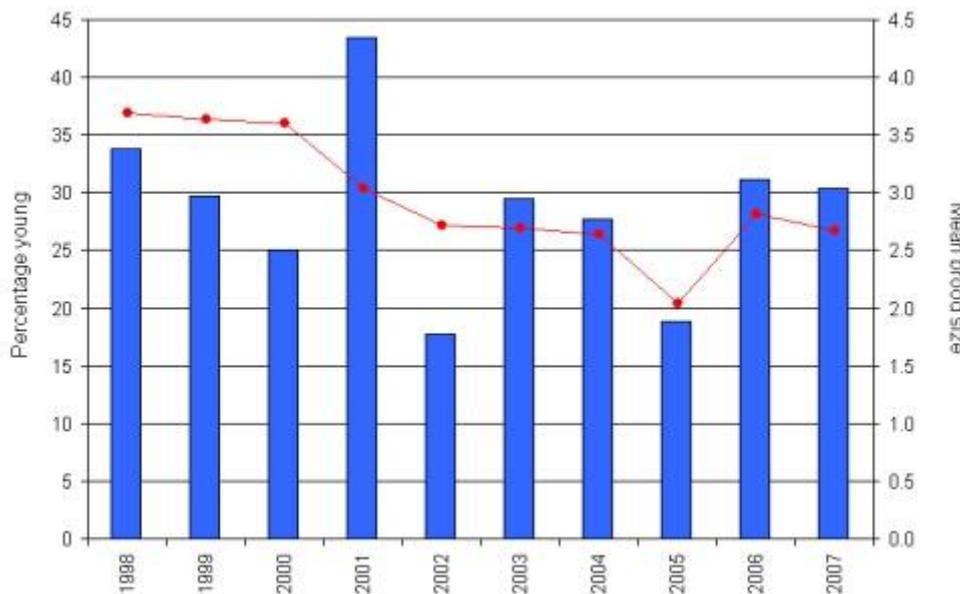
The other key area monitored on an annual basis is the island of Tiree, in the Inner Hebrides. An island-wide census in late August 2007 produced a count of 3,694 birds, including goslings. This represents a decrease of 7.7% on the count in August 2006, although the long term trend is one of increase.



Peak counts of Northwest Scotland Greylag Geese recorded in late August/early September on Tiree, Inner Hebrides (blue circles), 1996 to 2007. The five-year running mean (e.g. mean for August 2005 is from counts for August 2003-2007) is shown as a line. Coordinated counts for Coll, Inner Hebrides are also shown (red squares).

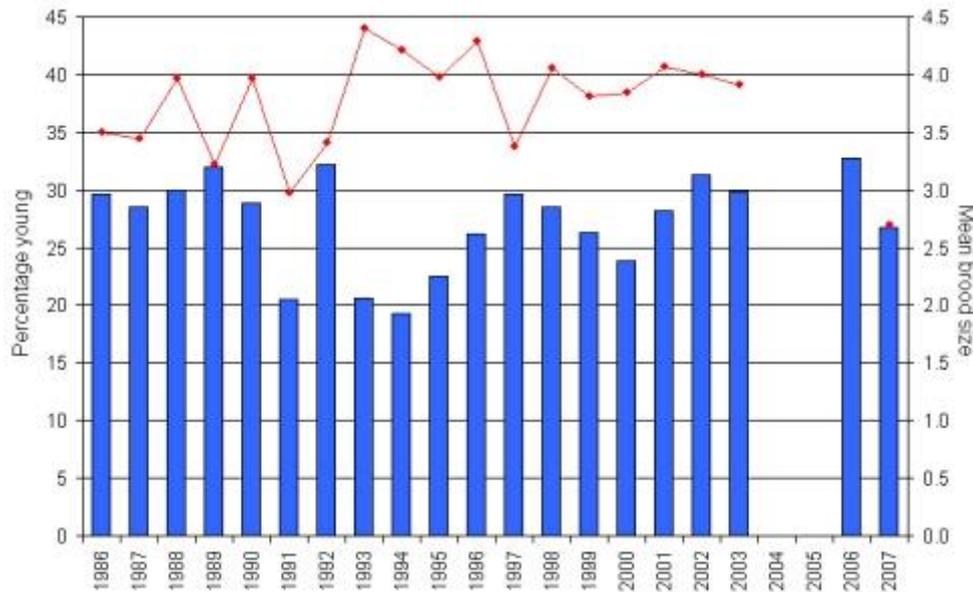
## 2. Breeding success

A total of 2,726 Northwest Scotland Greylag Geese was aged on Tiree on 27/28 August 2007, and brood sizes were collected for 305 broods. The percentage of young birds in the post-breeding August count was 30.4% - above the average for the previous five years (mean 2002-2006:  $24.9 \pm 2.80$  se). The mean brood size was also just above average for the previous five years at 2.67 goslings per successful pair (mean brood size 2002-2006:  $2.58 \pm 0.14$  se).



The mean percentage of young (blue columns) and mean brood size (red circles) of Northwest Scotland Greylag Geese on Coll and Tiree, 1998 to 2007. Data from Bowler *et al.* (2005).

Productivity data were also collected from the Uists, Outer Hebrides in 2007. A total of 769 birds in 26 flocks was aged between 17 and 31 August 2007, with an overall proportion of young of 26.8%. The mean brood size was 2.69 goslings per successful pair, from a sample of 26 broods.



The mean percentage of young (blue columns) and mean brood size (red circles) of Northwest Scotland Greylag Geese on the Uists, 1986 to 2007.

### 3. Discussion

The numbers of Greylag Geese counted on the Uists in August 2007 and February 2008 were higher than the previous year, increasing by 55% and 28%, respectively. It is acknowledged by the count organiser that counts in both 2005 and 2006 were underestimates of the total number of geese present in those years. Numbers on Tiree decreased by 7.7% since the previous year, although the long term trend is one of increase.

Since the last national census in 1997, the Northwest Scotland Greylag Goose population is thought to have increased in number and range. In some parts of Scotland, the Re-established and Northwest Scotland populations overlap and are therefore indistinguishable. It is likely that it will become increasingly difficult to separate these populations in future, with consequences for the monitoring schemes.

A complete census of Greylag Goose in Scotland is due to take place in summer 2008 and 2009. Due to the difficulties in delimiting the two populations in Scotland, the area surveyed will be extended from that covered in 1997 to include the whole of Scotland, in order to improve the understanding of distribution and to determine whether the Northwest Scotland and Re-established populations can still be delimited. There is also a need for more information on the movements of these Greylag Geese, especially between breeding areas, and on mortality patterns. This could be achieved through increasing the number of individually marked birds.

### 4. References

Bowler, J, C Mitchell, & AJ Leitch. 2005. Greylag Geese on Tiree and Coll, Scotland: Status, Habitat Use and Movements. *Waterbirds* 28(1): 61-70.

This report should be cited as:

WWT. 2008. *Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme: survey results 2007/08 Northwest Scotland Greylag Goose Anser anser*. WWT/JNCC/SNH, Slimbridge.

© The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

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