

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

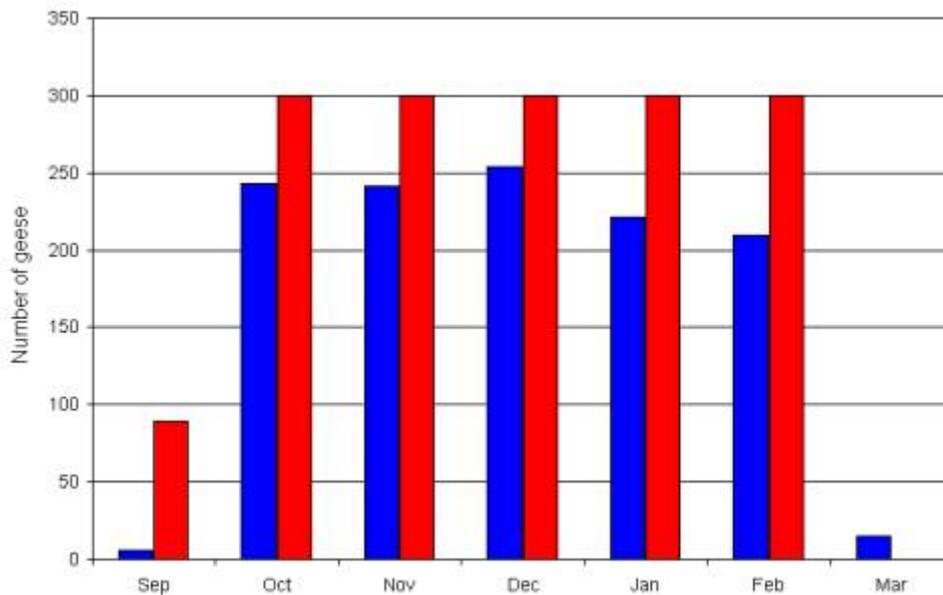
survey results 2007/08

Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis*

1. Abundance

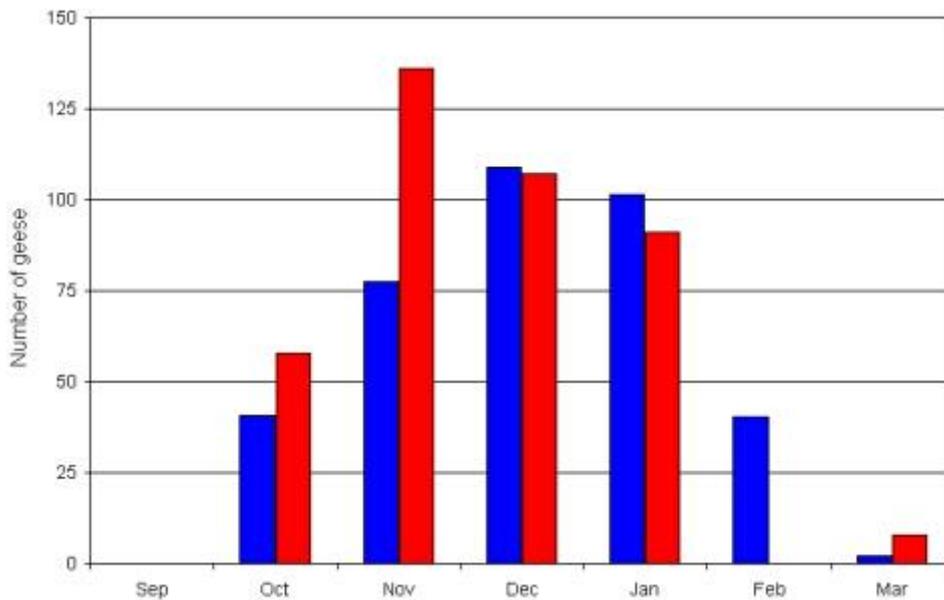
During 2007/08, counts were undertaken at the two key sites for Bean Geese in Great Britain, the Slamannan Plateau and the Yare Valley. A peak count of 300 birds was recorded at the Slamannan Plateau, an increase of 45 from the previous year and equalling the record count made in 2005/06. The peak of 136 at the Yare Valley is an increase of 26 on the previous year. However, this is still one of the lowest peak counts recorded there since 1977/78.

There were no major changes in the phenological patterns at the Slamannan Plateau during 2007/08. The arrival was typical, with a rapid build-up during October, and stable numbers between October and February. Migration back to the breeding grounds began during the last week of February.



Peak monthly counts of Bean Geese at the Slamannan Plateau (blue columns represent the mean of 2002/03 - 2006/07; red columns 2007/08).

At the Yare Marshes, the arrival of Bean Geese was earlier than average. October numbers were the highest since 2002 and the November count was considerably above the mean of the previous five years. The peak winter count was also recorded in November, compared to December or January in most recent years. As usual, the majority of the flock had migrated by March, although a small number of birds were still present. No counts were made during February.



Peak monthly counts of Bean Geese at the Yare Valley (blue columns represent the mean of 2002/03-2006/07; red columns 2007/08). No data were collected in February 2008

2. Breeding success

At the Slamannan Plateau, 103 Bean Geese were aged and the size of six broods was recorded during mid October. The proportion of first-winter birds was thus estimated at 25.2%, the highest percentage recorded since productivity data were first collected in 2004. Mean brood size was 2.2 (± 0.16 se) young per successful pair. No productivity data were again collected at the Yare Valley as too few birds had arrived within the period when it is possible to confidently identify first-winter geese.

3. Discussion

There were mixed results for counts of Taiga Bean Geese at the two key UK sites during 2007/08. A peak count of 300 geese was recorded at the Slamannan Plateau during October, equalling the record count recorded in 2005/06. In contrast, the peak count of 136 at the Yare Valley was one of the lowest recorded since 1977 and is indicative of the steady decline seen at this site since the late 1970s.

The breeding success of Taiga Bean Geese wintering at the Slamannan Plateau was the highest recorded since data collection began. However, as estimates of annual breeding success have only routinely been conducted since 2004, and sample sizes remain small, it is not yet possible to examine the trends in breeding success for birds at this site

This report should be cited as:

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Goose & Swan Monitoring