

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2008/09

Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis*

1. Abundance

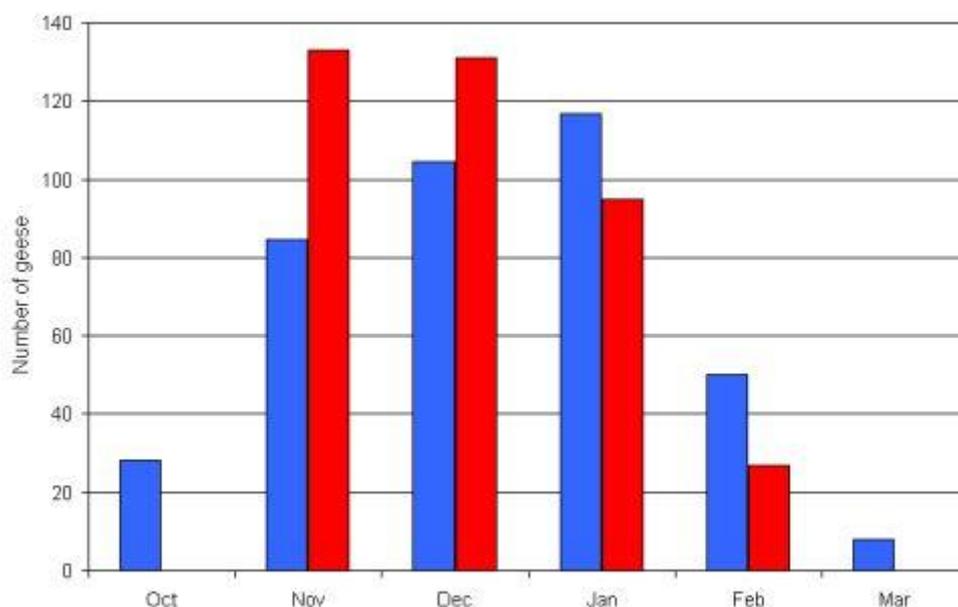
Since the 2008/09 results were first posted here in August 2009, this account has been revised following the receipt of corrected data for the Yare Valley.

During 2008/09, counts were undertaken at the two key sites for Bean Geese in Britain, the Slamannan Plateau and the Yare Valley. A peak count of 265 birds was recorded at the Slamannan Plateau, a decrease of 35 from the previous year.

At the Yare Valley wintering numbers were similar to the previous year, with the peak count of 133 being only fractionally below that of 2007 and lower than the previous five year mean (142.4 ± 9.8 SE). The peak count at the Yare Valley was previously reported as 206 individuals but has been revised to incorporate corrected data.

There were differences in the phenological patterns at the Slamannan Plateau during 2008/09. The arrival was typical, with the first birds arriving in mid October and numbers rapidly increasing to their peak in November. However approximately 100 birds appeared to leave the area at the end of December. Numbers remained low until migration back to the breeding grounds began during the last week of February. This phenological pattern was also observed during the 2006/07 winter.

At the Yare Valley, the peak count was recorded in November for the second consecutive year. This is, however, unusual for this site. Numbers were notably above the previous five year mean in November and December but then fell to below average in January, with only 27 geese remaining at the site by February.



Peak monthly counts of Bean Geese at the Yare Valley (blue columns represent the mean of 2003/04-2007/08; red columns 2008/09). No data were collected in October 2009

2. Breeding success

Poor weather conditions at the Slamannan Plateau prevented good quality age assessment data being collected. Only 33 birds from a flock of 60 were aged during October, of these 24 were adults and nine were young. The proportion of first-winter birds was thus estimated at 27.3%. No brood size data were collected. At the Yare Valley too few birds had arrived within the period when it is possible to confidently identify first-winter geese; therefore productivity estimates were not made.

3. Discussion

The numbers of Taiga Bean Geese at the two key sites in the UK were high during 2008/09. At the Slamannan Plateau wintering numbers have been consistently above 250 for the last five years confirming this is the premier site for this species in Britain. The peak count at the Yare Valley brings some stability to the steady decline seen at the site in recent years. It will be interesting in the coming years to see if numbers remain similar or whether the higher numbers were, perhaps, a result of colder winters.

The breeding success of Taiga Bean Geese wintering at the Slamannan Plateau was the highest recorded since data collection began. However, as the sample size was very small it is unlikely to be representative of the whole population. No firm conclusions can, therefore, be drawn from these data.

This report should be cited as:

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Goose & Swan Monitoring