

# WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

## survey results 2014/15

### European White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons albifrons*

#### 1. Abundance

The breeding success of European White-fronted Geese wintering in the UK was assessed at WWT Slimbridge, Gloucestershire, and RSPB Church Farm, Suffolk, during 2014/15. In total, 316 birds were aged, of which 97 (30.7%) were young. At WWT Slimbridge, 143 birds were aged with 33 juveniles (23%) present (Figure 1), with a sample of 173 birds aged at Church Farm, containing 64 goslings (37%). No brood size counts were carried out.

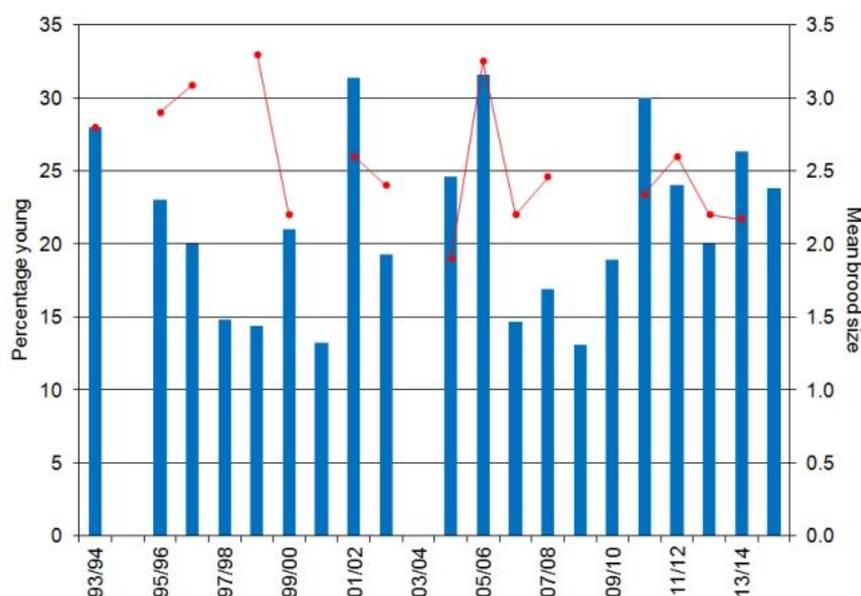


Figure 1. The percentage of young (blue columns) and mean brood size (red line) of European White-fronted Geese recorded at Slimbridge (where data have been collected regularly), 1993/94-2014/15. No data were collected during 1994/95 or 2003/04.

#### 2. Discussion

The results from age assessments made at wintering sites in the UK indicate that the breeding success of European White-fronted Geese in 2014 was above the previous five-year average (23.8%  $\pm$  2.03 SE), and 4.3% higher than the previous year.

This level of breeding success was considerably higher than the overall average for the population. Age ratio data collected in other countries along the North Sea / Baltic flyway show that the overall breeding success of European White-fronted Geese in 2014 was poor to intermediate.

The percentage of first-winter birds recorded was 14.8% (13.3% lower than the previous year), based on a sample of 136,940 birds in the UK, Belgium, The Netherlands and western Germany (the latter two countries provided the bulk of the data). This figure is within the range of breeding success recorded in the past ten years, but it confirms the long-term decline which has occurred since the early 1990s (Figure 2). Given that the flyway population has stabilised since 2000/01, this pattern points at density-dependent factors occurring in the breeding areas. Indeed, analyses show that the decline in breeding success has contributed much to the trend in flyway numbers recorded in the past 15 years (Jongejans *et al.* 2015 in press).

The skewed distribution of successful families, whereby more tend to winter along the western fringe of the wintering range, has been previously shown. As well as the higher percentage of first-winter birds in the UK, flocks assessed in Belgium during 2014/15 held 21.3% young (n=941).

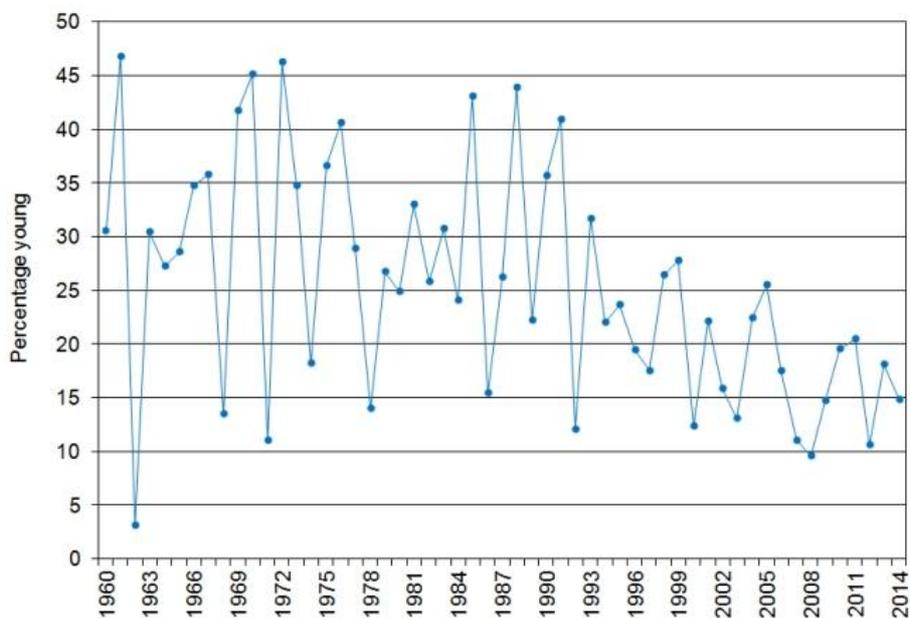


Figure 2. Long term trend in breeding success of European White-fronted Geese, expressed as the percentage of juveniles recorded in the wintering areas. Mainly data from The Netherlands and Germany. Data: Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland.

### 3. Acknowledgements

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### 4. References

Jongejans E., B.A. Nolet, H. Schekkerman, K. Koffijberg & H. de Kroon 2015. *Naar een effectief en verantwoord beheer van de in Nederland overwinterende populatie Kolganzen. Sovon-rapport 2014/56, CAPS-rapport 2014/02. Sovon Vogelonderzoek Nederland, Nijmegen. In press.*

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## Goose & Swan Monitoring