

# WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme survey results 2018/19

## British Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

### 1. Abundance

The abundance of British Greylag Geese in Britain during 2018/19 was monitored through the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). Results are presented on WeBS Report Online.

#### Numbers at key sites in Scotland

Annual counts of British Greylag Geese are carried out in key areas in Scotland where Greylag Geese are actively managed. In most years these are Orkney, the Uists (Outer Hebrides) and Tiree/Coll (Inner Hebrides), with Harris/Lewis (Outer Hebrides) in some years.

On Tiree, the late summer (August 2018) count totalled 1,968 geese (Figure 1), a 3.5% decrease compared to the previous year. No late summer counts were undertaken on Orkney, the Uists or Harris/Lewis in 2018. However, a spring count of 4,560 Greylag Geese was recorded in Harris/Lewis.

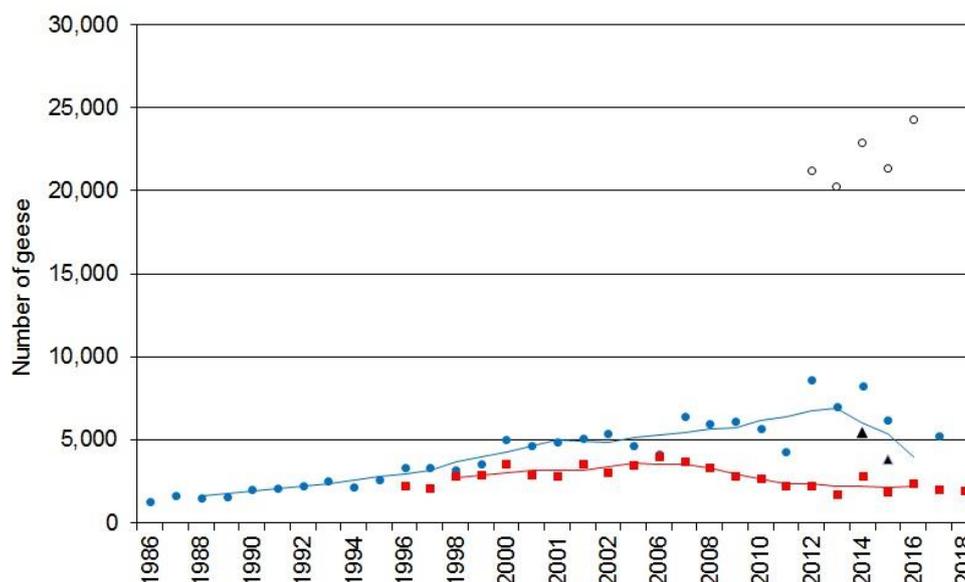


Figure 1. Late summer counts of British Greylag Geese on the Uists (blue circles), Tiree (red squares), Orkney (black open symbols) and Harris/Lewis (Black triangles), 1986–2018. Five-year running means shown as lines (e.g. the mean presented for 2016 covers 2014–2018).

### 2. Breeding success

Population-wide sampling of annual breeding success of British Greylag Geese is not undertaken, but data are collected in key areas in Scotland where Greylag Geese are actively managed, namely Orkney, the Uists (Outer Hebrides), Tiree/Coll (Inner Hebrides) and Harris/Lewis (Outer Hebrides) in some years.

In 2018, no age counts were undertaken in Orkney nor in the Uists. Breeding success on Tiree was estimated at 40.8% young in late summer flocks, with a mean brood size of 2.81 young per successful pair. In Harris/Lewis, breeding success was estimated at 33.5% young in November 2018.

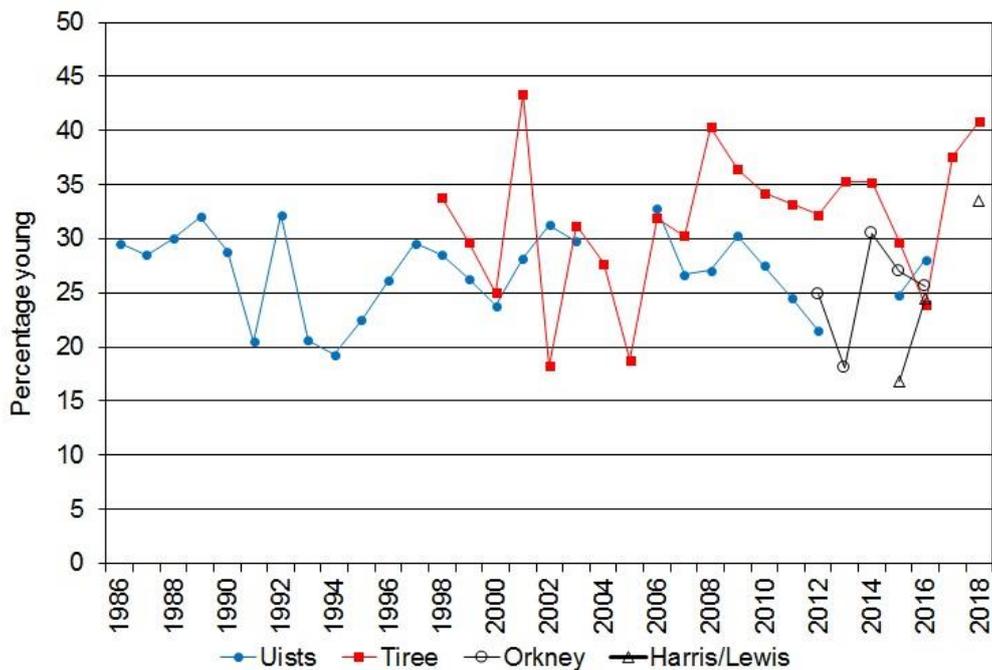


Figure 2. The percentage of young British Greylag Geese recorded from 1986 on the Uists (blue circles) (no data were collected in 2004, 2005, 2013, 2014, 2017 and 2018), on Tiree (red squares) 1998–2018, on Orkney (black open circles) 2012–2016 and on Harris/Lewis (black triangles) 2015–18 (no data were collected in 2017).

### 3. Discussion

The number and distribution of British Greylag Geese both appear to continue to increase: the latest WeBS trend, for the whole of the UK, shows a steady increase in numbers, especially since the 1980s (Frost et al. 2019). The increase in abundance in parts of Scotland has led to calls to control numbers in key areas where the geese cause conflict with agricultural economic interests. Three areas in Scotland were chosen for pilot adaptive management schemes (Orkney, the Uists and Tiree/Coll) and these areas have been subject to an increase in shooting during the open season. On Orkney, licensed shooting has recently been extended into the close season too.

Numbers counted on Tiree in late August 2018 (1,968) were 3.5% lower than the previous year. The current peak counts of Greylag Geese on Tiree, at any time of the year, are just over a half of what they were in 2006. Under the management scheme, the target population range for Greylag Geese is of 1,350 to 1,650 birds on Tiree (SNH in litt.). No counts were undertaken on Harris/Lewis, the Uists nor on Orkney in summer 2018, so comparisons with previous years is not possible.

### 4. Acknowledgements

Goose and age counts from Tiree were kindly provided by John Bowler (RSPB Scotland), and counts on the Harris/Lewis were provided by Roddy MacMinn (SNH).

### 5. References

Frost, T.M., G.E. Austin, N.A. Calbrade, H.J. Mellan, R.D. Hearn, A.E. Robinson, D.A. Stroud, S.R. Wotton and D.E. Balmer. 2019. Waterbirds in the UK 2017/18: The Wetland Bird Survey. BTO/RSPB/JNCC. Thetford.

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## Goose & Swan Monitoring