

# WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

## survey results 2008/09

### East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*

#### 1. Abundance

The abundance of East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese during 2008/09 was monitored through the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS).

#### 2. Breeding success

A total of 768 individuals was aged at Lindisfarne, Northumberland, in January 2009. Of these, 2.0% were young. The number of goslings was determined for 9 families and the mean brood size was 1.67 young per successful pair ( $\pm 0.24$  SE), ranging from 1-3 goslings per family.

#### 3. Discussion

Breeding success was the lowest recorded since records began in 1992/93. The percentage of young in wintering flocks has remained low over the past 17 years, only exceeding 10% on four occasions; 1993, when the highest productivity was recorded (31.4%), 1996, 2000 and 2007.

Results from age assessments undertaken on the Continent suggest productivity there was higher. Counts were made at six autumn staging sites in October 2008; 2,198 geese were aged, of which 10.1% were juveniles, and 17 families were assessed, producing a mean brood size of 2.53 young per successful pair. A single age count of *c* 1,300 birds in January found only *c* 50 juveniles suggesting there may have been a loss of young birds during late autumn and early winter (P. Clausen pers comm.).

Past productivity assessments have revealed no significant difference in the proportion of young found in Denmark when compared with that found in Britain, with data from both countries showing highly variable percentages of young between years (Denny *et al.* 2004). Such low and fluctuating productivity is likely to be the main regulator of population size (Clausen *et al.* 1999) which emphasises the importance of conducting annual age assessments as a means of assessing the status of this population. It is thought that nest predation is a major factor limiting reproductive success and the ability of the East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Goose population to return to its former size (Denny *et al.* 2004).

#### 4. References

Denny, MJH, P Clausen, SM Percival, GQA Anderson, K Koffijberg & JA Robinson. 2004. *Light-bellied Brent Goose Branta bernicla hrota (East Atlantic population) in Svalbard, Greenland, Franz Josef Land, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Britain 1960/61 – 2000/01*. Waterbird Review Series, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust/Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Slimbridge.

Clausen, P, J Madsen, SM Percival, GQA Anderson, K Koffijberg, F Mehlum & D Vangeluwe. 1999. Light-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla hrota*: Svalbard. In Madsen, J, G Cracknell & AD Fox (eds.). 1999. *Goose populations of the Western Palearctic. A review of status and distribution*. Wetlands International Publication no. 48, Wetlands International, Wageningen, The Netherlands/National Environmental Research Institute, Ronde, Denmark. 344pp.

Denny, MJH, P Clausen, SM Percival, GQA Anderson, K Koffijberg & JA Robinson. 2004. *Light-bellied Brent Goose Branta bernicla hrota (East Atlantic population) in Svalbard, Greenland, Franz Josef Land, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Britain 1960/61 – 2000/01*. Waterbird Review Series, The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust/Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Slimbridge.

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## Goose & Swan Monitoring