

# WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

## survey results 2010/11

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

#### 1. Abundance

The abundance of East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese during 2010/11 was monitored through the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). The latest WeBS results, for 2009/10, are published in Holt *et al.* 2011.

In 2009/10, the British maximum recorded by WeBS was 4,979 in November (Holt *et al.* 2011). This represents a 26% increase on the previous winter.

#### 2. Breeding success

Breeding success of the East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese wintering in the UK was much higher than the previous year and the highest recorded since 2007/08. An early sample of families from Lindisfarne, Northumberland, of 885 birds aged on 12 October only found 60 juveniles, equating to 6.8% of the number aged. However, further assessments of a total of 228 geese aged at three locations between November 2010 and February 2011 at Lindisfarne and Sandilands and Huttoft Pitt (Sea Bank Clay Pits) SSSI on the North Lincolnshire Coast resulted in a much higher percentage of 30.3% young. The overall proportion of young for all data combined was thus 11.6%. No brood size data were collected. Although there was a large difference between the first and subsequent samples it is well known that such high variation in juvenile numbers may exist between individual Brent Goose flocks.

#### 3. Discussion

The UK supports less than half of the total population and only a small sample of these birds was aged in 2010/11. In Denmark, where the remainder of the population normally winters, breeding success was assessed twice, in mid-October (30.8% juveniles; n=1,574) and in mid-November (25.4% juveniles; n=637). The mean brood size in October was 3.64 (n=11) per successful pair. The largest sample within the shortest time frame was made in October (including the large Lindisfarne and Denmark samples) which gives an overall population breeding success of 22.2%, which is the highest recorded since 1996/97. These results indicate that it was a very successful breeding season for these Light-bellied Brents, particularly given that the proportion of young has rarely exceeded 10% since records began in 1992/93.

#### 4. References

Holt, CA, GE Austin, NA Calbrade, HJ Mellan, C Mitchell, DA Stroud, SR Wotton & AJ Musgrove. 2011. *Waterbirds in the UK 2009/10: The Wetland Bird Survey*. BTO/RSPB/JNCC. Thetford.

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## Goose & Swan Monitoring