

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2010/11

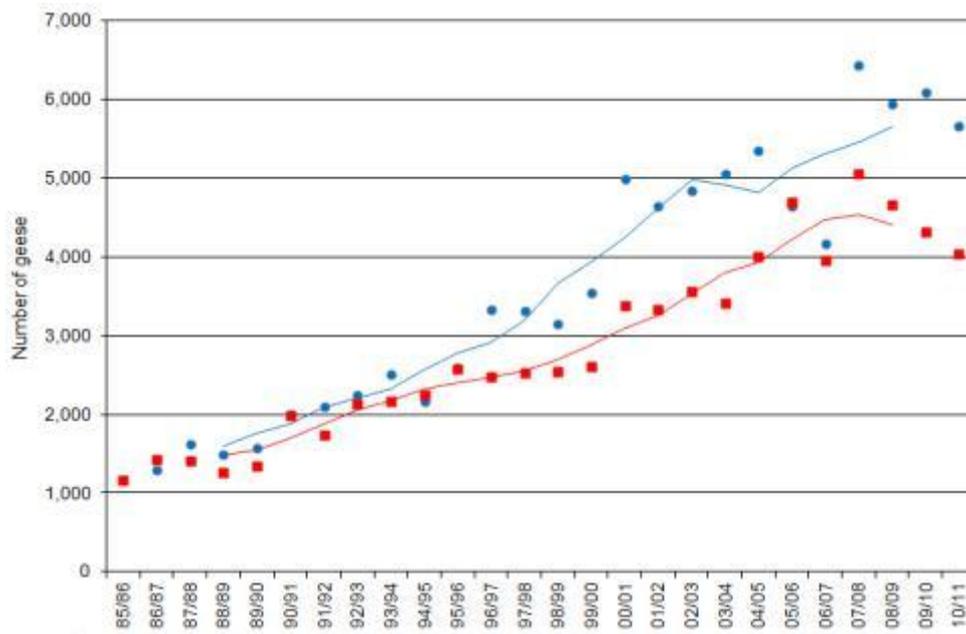
British Greylag Goose *Anser anser*

1. Abundance

Numbers of British Greylag Geese are monitored by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS). The latest results, for 2009/10, have been published in Holt *et al.* 2011.

As well as the WeBS counts, annual monitoring is carried out at two key sites: Uists, Outer Hebrides and Tiree, Inner Hebrides.

A total of 5,658 Greylag Geese was counted on the Uists in late August 2010, a decrease of 7.2% on the August count in the previous year. During February 2011, a count of 4,037 was made, also representing a decrease of 6.6% on the count in February 2010. North Uist held 38% and 53% of the count totals in August 2010 and February 2011, respectively, whilst South Uist held 55% and 41%, respectively. The decline on South Uist, from 3,087 to 1,661 birds is significant and presumably reflects attempts to limit the population there through shooting under licence. Smaller numbers were counted on Benbecula.



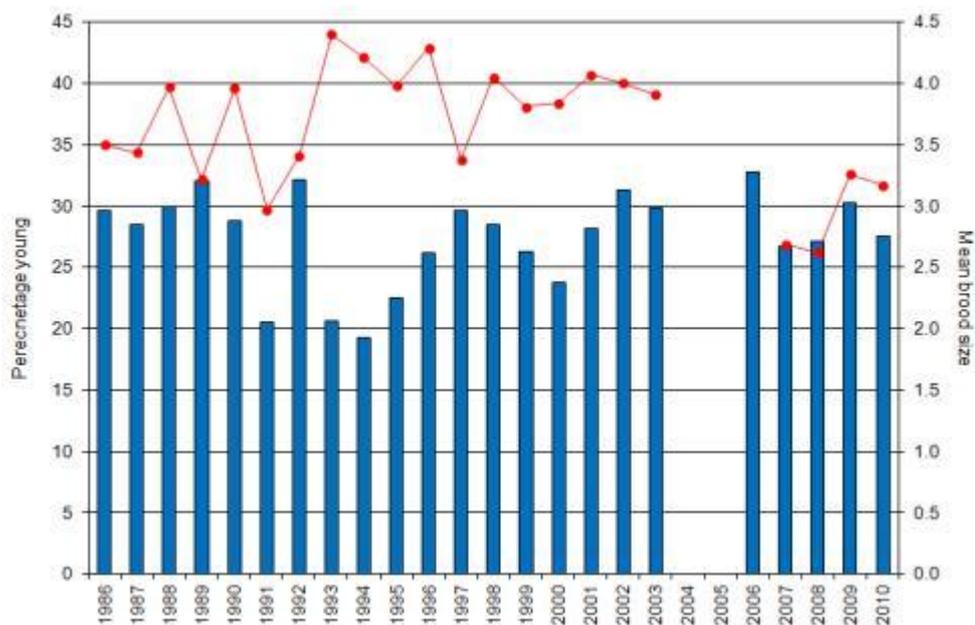
Peak counts of British Greylag Geese recorded in August (blue circles) and February (red squares) on the Uists, Outer Hebrides, 1986/87-2010/11. The five-year running means (*e.g.* mean for August 2008 is from counts for August 2006-2010) are shown as lines.

The other key area monitored on an annual basis is the island of Tiree, in the Inner Hebrides. An island-wide census in late August 2010 produced a count of 2,639 birds, a decrease of 7.3% on the count in August 2009. Numbers on Tiree are thought to have declined after reaching a high point in 2006 (4,005 birds), presumably reflecting the increase in the number of birds shot under licence.

2. Breeding success

Age assessments of the whole British Greylag Goose population are not routinely undertaken. Annual age counts are, however, carried out on the Uists, Outer Hebrides and on Tìree, Inner Hebrides.

Productivity data were collected on the Uists, with a total of 425 birds in 23 flocks aged on 21/22 August 2010 and brood sizes collected for 29 families. The percentage of young birds was 27.5% - similar to the mean for the four previous years (mean 2006-2009: 29.2% \pm 1.4 SE). The mean brood size was higher than the mean of the previous three years at 3.17 goslings per successful pair (mean brood size 2007-2009: 2.85 \pm 0.20 SE).

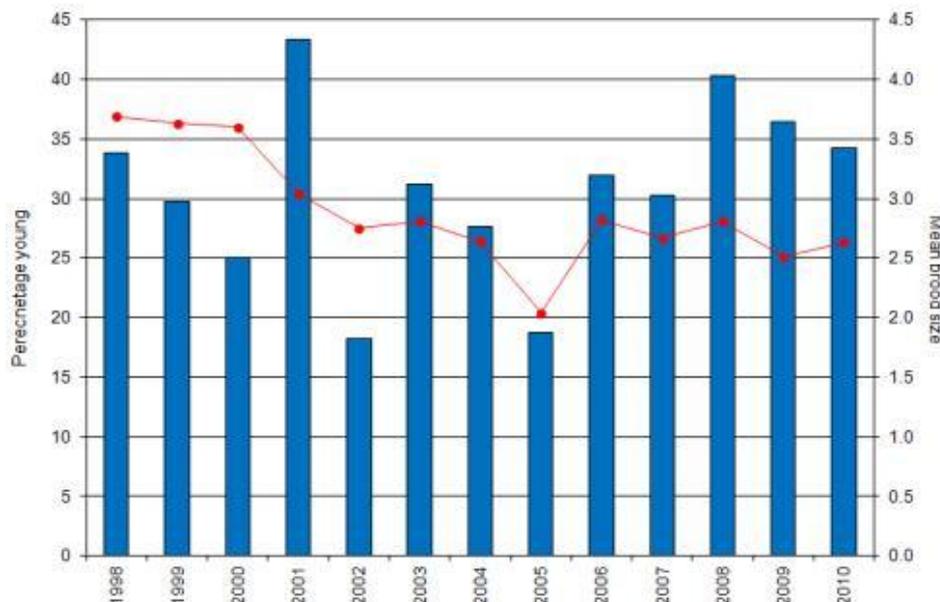


The mean of young columns) brood size

(circles) of British Greylag Geese on the Uists, 1986-2010. No data were collected in 2004 and 2005.

percentage (blue and mean (red

On Tìree, 2,121 Greylag Geese were aged on 18/19 August 2010 and brood sizes were collected for 276 families. The percentage of young birds in this post-breeding August count was 34.2% - similar to the mean for the previous five years (mean 2005-2009: 31.5% \pm 3.6 SE). The mean brood size was similar to that recorded in the previous five years at 2.63 goslings per successful pair (mean brood size 2005-2009: 2.54 \pm 0.14 SE).



The mean percentage of young (blue columns) and mean brood size (red circles) of British Greylag Geese on Tiree, 1998 to 2010. Data from Bowler *et al.* (2005) and updated (J. Bowler pers. comm.)

3. Discussion

The number of Greylag Geese counted on the Uists in August 2010 was 7.2% lower than the same month in the previous year, although the breeding success was similar to the previous year. Similarly, the February 2011 count was lower than the February 2010 count by 6.6%. It is thought that a recent increase in the number of birds being shot on the Uists may account for this decrease in numbers. Numbers counted on Tiree in late August 2010 were 7.3% lower than the previous year and an overall decrease in the Tiree population in recent years is thought to be likely. In both areas (Tiree and the Uists) annual breeding success remained high with over 34.2% and 27.5% young in post-breeding flocks, respectively. Both areas have been subject to licensed shooting and this extra mortality appears to have halted, or at least slowed, the gradual increase witnessed over the last 10-20 years.

4. References

- Bowler, J, C Mitchell, & AJ Leitch. 2005. Greylag Geese on Tiree and Coll, Scotland: Status, Habitat Use and Movements. *Waterbirds* 28(1): 61-70.
- 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