

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2011/12

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

1. Abundance

The abundance of East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese during 2011/12 was monitored through the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS); the results are expected to become available in 2013

The latest WeBS results, for 2010/11 have been published in Holt et al. 2012.

In 2010/11, the British maximum recorded by WeBS was 5,637 in October (Holt et al. 2012). This represents a 13% increase on the previous winter.

2. Breeding success

Breeding success of the East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese wintering in Britain was lower than the previous year. Counts were received from Lindisfarne, Northumberland where individual counts were made each month from November to February. In total, 1,231 birds were aged of which 106 (8.6%) were young. No brood size data were collected. The largest sample, which avoids sampling the same birds twice, was undertaken on 16 December; when 525 birds were aged and 26 (4.9%) were young.

Britain supports less than half of the total population, the remainder wintering in Denmark. Combining the largest sample from Lindisfarne (taken on 16 December) with age counts undertaken in Denmark (from P. Clausen pers. comm.) gave an overall sample of 2,274 birds aged of which 101 (4.4%) were young. In Denmark, 36 families were recorded with a mean brood size of 2.11 goslings per successful pair.

3. Discussion

Breeding success amongst the Light-bellied Brent Geese at Lindisfarne was lower in 2010/11 than in the previous winter. The percentage of young in flocks has remained low over the past 20 years, only exceeding 10% on five occasions; 1993, when the highest breeding success was recorded (31.4%), 1996, 2007, 2007 and 2010. The UK supports less than half of the total population and only a small sample of these birds was aged in 2011/12. Low productivity in this population is a cause for concern and the reasons for this are not well understood.

4. References

Holt CA, GE Austin, NA Calbrade, HJ Mellan, RD Hearn, DA Stroud, SR Wotton & AJ Musgrove. 2012. *Waterbirds in the UK 2010/11: The Wetland Bird Survey*. BTO/RSPB/JNCC, Thetford.

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Goose & Swan Monitoring