

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2007/08

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

1. Abundance

The abundance of East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Geese during 2007/08 was monitored through the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS).

2. Breeding success

A total of 568 individuals was aged at Lindisfarne, Northumberland, on 2 December 2006. Of these, 2.5 % were young. The number of goslings was determined for six families and the mean brood size was 2.5 young per successful pair (± 0.6 s.e.), ranging from 1-4 goslings per family.

3. Discussion.

Breeding success of the East Atlantic Light-bellied Brent Goose was the lowest recorded in Britain since 1992/93. The percentage of young in wintering flocks has remained low over the past ten years, only exceeding 10% on two occasions during that time (21% in 1996 and 13% in 2000). A similar result was obtained from other key wintering sites in Denmark, where an overall proportion of young of 1.3% was recorded from a sample of 1,058 birds (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.

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Goose & Swan Monitoring