

WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2005/06

Greenland Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

1. Abundance

A full census to estimate the size of the Greenland population is due in spring 2008; annual counts, however, are undertaken at several important sites for this species throughout Argyll, the Uists, and South Walls, Orkney.

Argyll

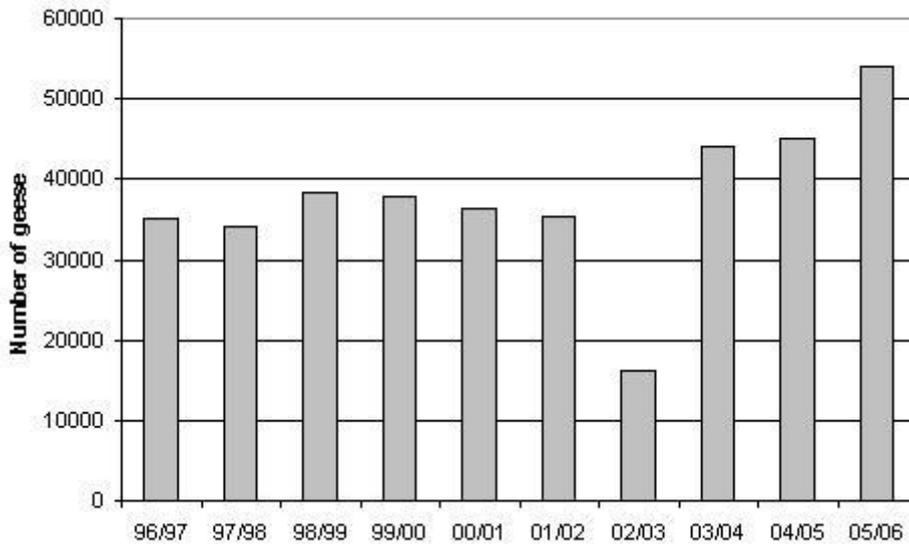
Count data were collected throughout Argyll during winter 2005/06 by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Two coordinated counts were carried out in December and March, the spring count giving the highest total count. Overall numbers during spring 2006 were the highest recorded by this survey, and showed an increase of 19.8% since the preceding year and 49.4% since 2000/01.

Numbers of Greenland Barnacle Geese in Argyll during 2005/06.

Location	December 2005	March 2006
Laggan	52	400
Tayinloan	0	117
Clachan/Whitehouse	0	2
Danna	468	450
Keills	0	1
Moine Mhor	185	0
Bute	2	0
Coll/Tiree	2,010	5,553
Colonsay	-	0
Oronsay	716	300
Islay	42,526	47,303
Total	45,959	54,126

Midwinter counts in mid Argyll (Danna, Keills, Mhoine Mhor) and Coll/Tiree were comparable with those of the previous year, however, spring counts at Coll/Tiree were substantially higher than the five year mean (3,025). A relatively high spring count was also made in Kintyre (517 birds at Laggan and Tayinloan) in comparison with previous years. Spring counts at Colonsay and Oronsay were lower than those in spring 2005, although numbers have fluctuated somewhat over previous years.

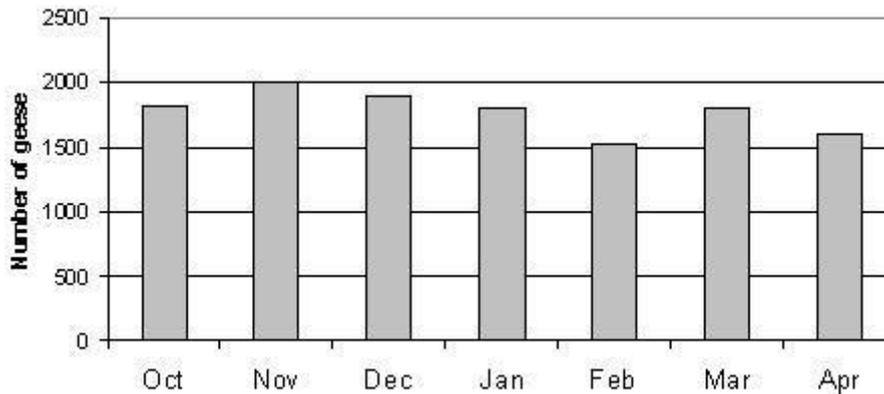
These counts indicate that numbers are still increasing on Islay with both midwinter and spring counts higher than all preceding years, and thus exceeding the corresponding five year means (midwinter mean 31,618, spring mean 31,698). The spring count on Islay is a 7.1% increase on the previous year and a 45.9% increase since 2001/02.



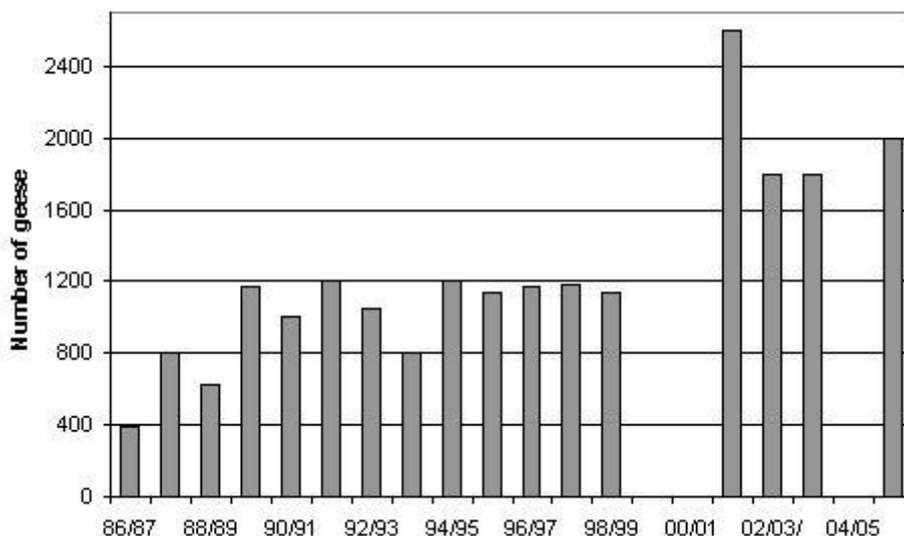
Numbers of Greenland Barnacle Geese counted by SNH in Argyll 1996/97-2005/06.

South Walls, Orkney

Monthly count data were collected by SNH throughout winter 2005/06 as part of the South Walls Goose Management Scheme. Peak counts varied from 2,000 in November to 1,520 in February. The annual peak count of 2,000 was similar to the peak mean over the most recent five year period (2,067), although counts are substantially higher than those throughout the 1990s (75.7% increase over a ten year period).



Maximum monthly counts of Greenland Barnacle Geese at South Walls, Orkney in 2005/06.



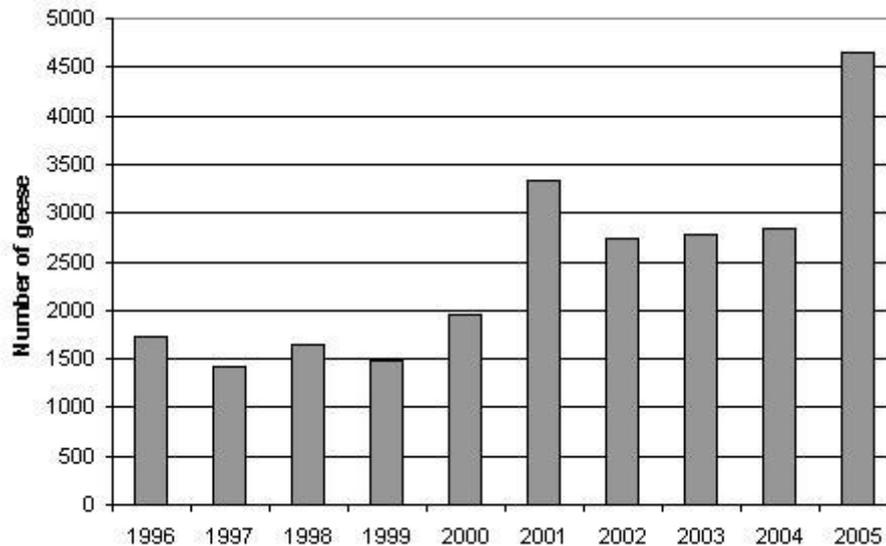
Maximum annual count of Greenland Barnacle Geese at South Walls, Orkney, 1986/87-2005/06.

Uists

Data were collected for Greenland Barnacle Geese in February 2006 as part of the Uist Greylag Goose counts organised by the Uist Greylag Goose Management Committee. The combined total in February 2006 far exceeds any in the most recent ten year period for which data have been collected. The total of 4,659 geese represents a 1.6 fold increase on 2005 numbers and a 2.7 fold increase since February 1997. Many locations saw higher than average numbers and a substantially higher count was recorded on Berneray in February 2006 (5-year mean, 717).

Numbers of Greenland Barnacle Geese in the Uists in February 2006. Only locations where geese were found are shown.

Location	No. of birds
North Uist: Baleshare/Carinish	519
North Uist: Clachan to Bayhead	685
North Uist: Paible	280
North Uist: Balranald, Clettraval & Tigharry	8
North Uist: Malaclate to Grenitote	548
North Uist: Ath Mhor	451
North Uist: Trumisgarry to Newton	344
North Uist: Berneray	1,327
North Uist: Boreray & Lingay	320
North Uist: Pabbay & Shillay	100
North Uist: Loch MhicPhail area	66
South Uist: Howbeg to Bornish	11
Total	4,659



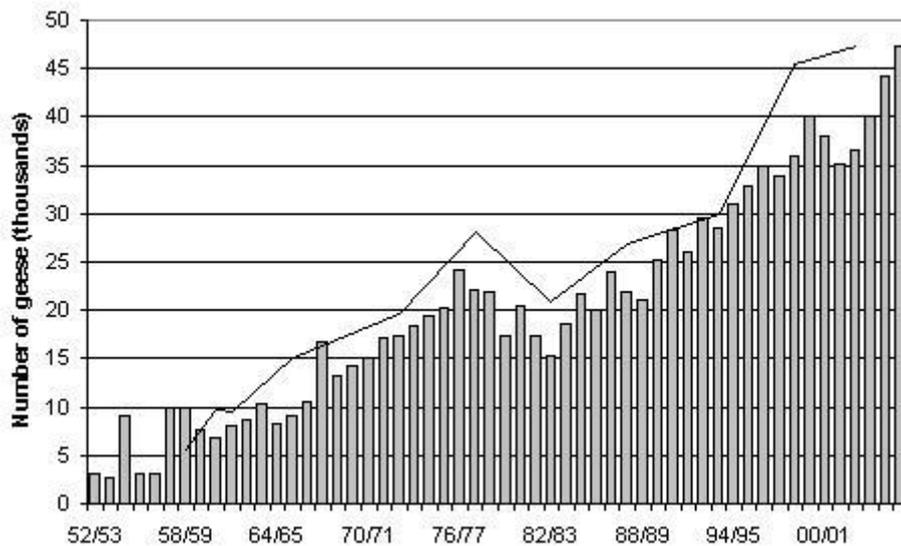
Number of Greenland Barnacle Geese in North Uist during February counts 1996-2005.

2. Breeding success

Age counts were conducted on Islay during 2005/06. Results will be available shortly.

3. Discussion

Count data collected during 2005/06 suggest an ongoing increase in the size of the Scottish wintering population. Although not coordinated (and therefore should be treated with some degree of caution), combined counts for Argyll, Uists and South Walls using data from February and March exceeded the population estimate following the most recent census of spring 2003 (60,585 compared with population estimate of 56,386; Worden *et al.* 2004). Numbers on Islay, which alone accounted for over 70% of the census total in 2003, have undergone a long-term sustained increase, with a 24% increase over the previous five years. The latter increase corresponds with recruitment to the population following a particularly successful breeding season in 2004 (16.1% young – the highest for ten years). Results from age counts conducted during 2005/06 are awaited to determine breeding success over the most recent summer.



Annual peak counts of Greenland Barnacle Geese on Islay (bars), and international census totals for Scotland (line) 1958/59-2005/06.

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Goose & Swan Monitoring