

THE NUMBERS OF GREYLAG & PINK-FOOTED GEESSE FOUND

IN GREAT BRITAIN ON 10th NOVEMBER, 1963

About 34 000 Greylag Geese Anser anser and 53,000 Pink-footed Geese Anser brachyrhynchos were found in Scotland and England on 10th November, 1963. A year previously there had been 38,000 Greylags and 58,000 Pinkfeet.

The following table shows how the geese were distributed in different counties. Birds have been assigned to the counties in which they were believed to be roosting, not necessarily those in which they were seen. The county totals are rounded to the nearest ten birds and the British total to the nearest thousand. Feral flocks are excluded.

	GREYLAGS		PINKFEET	
	1963	1962	1963	1962
<u>North Scotland</u>				
Shetland	20	10	-	-
Caithness	150	-	-	-
Sutherland	200	10	-	-
Ross & Cromarty	1120	810	50	-
Inverness	260	190	-	-
Moray	800	850	-	-
Aberdeen	2250	1610	2650	1270
Kincardine	150	-	-	-
<u>Central Scotland</u>				
Angus	4920	3800	2920	3100
Perth	17480	16910	11490	12430
Fife	1610	420	8320	9170
Kinross	340	1500	1350	650
Stirling	-	20	-	970
Dunbarton	450	380	-	-
<u>South-east Scotland</u>				
Lanark	120	400	2130	4460
Midlothian	1120	1180	5310	4760
E. Lothian	-	-	1380	680
Berwick	180	290	200	3500
Peebles	-	-	1600	1450
<u>West and South Scotland</u>				
Argyll	750	1060	-	10
Bute	530	2200	-	-
Avr	90	240	-	-
Dumfries	210	810	6500	2000
Kirkcudbright	270	3330	-	-
Wigtown	400	1180	-	-
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total SCOTLAND	33320	37190	43800	44450
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Northumberland	300	120	-	-
Cumberland	-	150	350	860
Westmorland	190	210	-	-
Lancashire	30	-	1530	4150
Yorkshire	-	-	2000	2060
Lincolnshire	-	-	5500	6000
Gloucestershire	-	-	-	50
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total ENGLAND	520	480	9380	13120
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BRITISH TOTAL	34000	38000	53000	58000

No geese were found at any of their midwinter haunts in Clackmannan, Renfrew, Norfolk, or north Wales.

**GREYLAGS.** Sample counts indicated that about 0.400 (14%) of the Greylags seen were juveniles and that the average brood-size was 2.3. These figures are well below the averages for the previous five years:- 11,000 (38%) and 3.5. They suggest that the decrease of about 10% in the population size from a year earlier can be attributed to poor breeding success, thus confirming the results of our counts in March, 1963, which seemed to show that, despite the hard weather of January and February, Greylag losses last winter were not much greater than in other recent years.

The notice sent out before this count recorded that an aerial survey in Iceland in July yielded fewer geese than expected from the March census. It is now clear that the discrepancy was due to failure to detect in early July more than about one-sixth of the goslings and of their parents, although at least four-fifths of the adult geese not parents were found then. This failure to see families was probably made worse by an unusually delayed and protracted nesting season, due to a cold spring in Iceland. Some of the young Greylags handled by the Wildfowl Trust rocket-netting team in November were remarkably small and backward-looking.

619 Greylags were ringed in Perthshire between 14th and 23rd November.

**PINKFOOT.** The total count on 10th November was only about 8% less than that in November, 1962. This result is a happy one from the point of view of the geese but raises some awkward problems for the biologist. It will be recalled that on 17th March 1963 only about 29,000 Pinkfeet were found, suggesting that half the population had died since November 1962, more than twice as many as in recent mild winters. This evidence of heavy losses was supported by a number of recoveries of ringed Pinkfeet between December, 1962 and March, 1963 which was nearly 2½ times as large as expected.

If it is accepted that the population in March was only 29,000 while in November it was 53,000 it follows that sufficient goslings must have been produced last summer to provide 24,000 survivors in November. The 29,000 geese in March are most unlikely to have included more than 20,000 birds capable of breeding last summer. For 10,000 breeding pairs to produce 24,000 juveniles in November would require a much high proportion of successful breeders than is known to have occurred since 1950 (in which year similar success may have been achieved). However, it has already been remarked that the Icelandic weather was bad at the start of nesting, while field observations in Scotland in November showed the proportion of juveniles to be only 20% instead of the 45% required. This difficulty re-opens the question of the extent to which the March total might have been depressed by failure to find all the Pinkfeet alive at that time. There is still no evidence that abnormal emigration (e.g. to Ireland or France, or early return to Iceland) had taken place because of the cold weather. But it is possible that some large groups may have been missed, because our knowledge of distribution is less good for March than for November. The best way to reduce these doubts seems to be to carry out another census next March, with a special effort to examine areas where Pinkfeet might occur though not known to have done so in 1963.

**Regional distribution.** The tendency for increasing proportions of both Greylags and Pinkfeet to stay north in November was accentuated this year, presumably because of the abundant food made available by a late harvest with many rain-damaged crops. The following table compares the proportion found in different areas in 1963.

	Proportion of total population		Change from 1962 to 1963	
	Greylag	Pinkfoot	Greylag	Pinkfoot
N. & N.E. Scotland	14.5%	5.1%	+ 43%	+ 113%
Central Scotland	73.2%	45.1%	+ 8%	- 9%
S.E. Scotland	4.2%	20.0%	- 24%	- 28%
W. & S.W. Scotland	6.6%	12.2%	- 74%	+ 223%
England	1.5%	17.6%	+ 8%	- 28%
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		whole population	- 10%	- 8%

Acknowledgements. Over 130 observers took part in this count. I am very grateful to them all. Those who counted on Saturday 9th had good weather but on Sunday 10th it was foul almost everywhere. The trouble taken by watchers to check their findings in these conditions, often by means of another visit, provides an impressive record of their competence and enthusiasm. I apologise to those helpers whose names may be omitted from the following list: E.J. Abrahams, L. Adams, W. Alexander, J.S. Armitage, R. Barker, J.A.G. Barnes, W.M. Barr, Mrs. L.S. Barrus, W.R. Battr, J.A. Begg, M. Biggs, W. Birrell, C.G. Booth, F. Brady, W. Brotherston, J.D. Brown, H.O. Bunce, Dr. J.W. Campbell, L. I. Cambell, N. Campbell, N. Campbell, Dr. A. Charlesten, M. Clark, S. Clark, A. Cowieson, C.N.L. Cowper, Mrs. J.R. Crawford, J.R. Crawford, W. Crawford, G. Dall, R.H. Dennis, G. Dick, T. Donaldson, C. Dunlop, F.J. Ellwood, Sir Robert Erskine-Hill, D. Ferguson, W. Fiddler, W. Finlay, A. Fraser, L. Fullerton, J. Gilmour, K. Goodchild, Seton Gordon, A. Graham, D.R. Grant, D. Gray, H.C. Gray, Miss F. Greig, W.A. Hall, E. Harding, B. Hardy, J.F.D. Hargreaves, R.H. Harrison, J.M. Harrop, Dr. Helen Hayes, M. Hedley, M. Henderson, T.W. Henderson, K.J.M. Henry, J.L. Hirst, W.G. Hughes, M. Jones, P. Hope Jones, T. Judd, Mr. & Mrs. W.A. Kelly, W. Kidd, the Marchioness of Lansdowne, E. Larkins, D.D. Laurie, Mr. & Mrs. T. Lister, A. Lodge, W.J. McCulloch, A. MacDonald, D. MacDonald, K.S. Macgregor, J. McIntosh, Miss A.M. MacIntosh, I. McLachlan, J. McNish, E.A. Maxwell, T.D.H. Merrie, Dr. D.H. Mills, C.G.I. Murdoch, C. Murray, W. Murray, C.G. Nendick, M.A. Oglvie, D.W. Oliver, T. Paterson, G. Pearson, N. Picozzi, R.E.M. Pilcher, J. Potter, Commander & Mrs. D.H. Rainier, G.W. Reid, G.A. Richards, W.K. Richmond, Dr. R. Richter, E.L. Roberts, A. Ross, Dr. Maeve Rusk, J. Ruxton, H.K. Seth-Smith, R. Shaw, A. Shepherd, H. Shorrocks, P. Slater, R.T. Smith, R.W.J. Smith, D.M. Stark, J.A. Stewart, R. Stokoe, R.J.F. Taylor, Miss V.M. Thom, M. Thorpe, Dr. R.G. Titchhurst, R. Walker, R. Walker, R.C. Walls, G.F. Walton, L. Watkinson, A.D. Watson, W.H. Wild, J. Williams, E. Young, J. Young, J.G. Young, L. Young, Miss R. Young.

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