

## GREYLAG AND PINK-FOOTED GEESE IN BRITAIN

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> November 1978

The nineteenth annual census of Greylag Anser Anser and Pink-footed Geese A. brachyrhynchus was held over the week-end 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> November 1978. Both species have increased by about 9,000 compared with November 1977.

The numbers of geese found roosting in each region and district of Scotland, and each county of England, are set out in the table below, together with the comparable figures for 1976 and 1977. The sub-totals are rounded to the nearest 10, while the national totals are rounded to nearest 1,000. Feral or indigenous flocks of Greylags are not included.

	GREYLAGS			PINKFEET		
	7 Nov 1976	6 Nov 1977	5 Nov <u>1978</u>	7 Nov 1976	6 Nov 1977	5 Nov <u>1978</u>
Orkney	-	60	-	-	-	-
Highland						
Caithness	300	4240	7440	-	-	-
Sutherland	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ross & Cromarty	3020	12670	14180	80	150	240
Inverness	200	2450	1140	-	-	20
Nairn	30	130	120	-	-	-
Grampian						
Moray	1130	560	1540	-	-	-
Banff & Buchan	8250	6100	700	6250	7500	6200
Gordon	1610	3370	1150	3130	4110	7800
Kincardine & Deeside	1000	1700	3500	-	-	-
Tayside						
Angus	4060	1450	7680	5430	840	6530
Perth & Kinross	19160	22480 <sup>1</sup>	19940	9220	22600 <sup>1</sup>	20370
Central						
Stirling	1320	370 <sup>1</sup>	280	3440	860 <sup>1</sup>	820
Fife	350	250	250	3830	5750	5000
Strathclyde						
Argyll & Bute	2890	1620	670	-	-	-
Cunningham	10	150	500	-	-	-
Renfrew	130	-	-	-	-	-
Dumbarton	300	-	3000	-	-	-
Strathkelvin	10	-	20	-	-	-
Lanark	20	50	-	2430	620	2520
Kyle & Carrick	490	140	270	-	-	60
Lothian						
West Lothian	- <sup>1</sup>	- <sup>1</sup>	20	-	-	-
Midlothian	630 <sup>1</sup>	640 <sup>1</sup>	650	2000	5100	9600
East Lothian	300	230	90	5800	5100	5200
Borders						
Tweeddale	-	-	30	970	5520	7000
Berwickshire	230	-	1200	250	1200	400
Roxburgh	2070	3200	2900	-	-	-

	GREYLAGS			PINKFEET		
	7 Nov 1976	6 Nov 1977	5 Nov <u>1978</u>	7 Nov 1976	6 Nov 1977	5 Nov <u>1978</u>
Dumfries & Galloway						
Wigtown	1610	1610	1040	-	-	-
Stewartry	2030	850	410	-	-	-
Nithsdale	700	140	60	1710	650	470
Annandale & Eskdale	150	-	-	-	-	-
Northumberland	2480	1610 <sup>1</sup>	1430	40	-	-
Cumbria	1360	820	-	370	180	10
Lancashire	-	-	-	26520	8680	5280
Humberside	-	-	-	500	230	400
Lincolnshire & Norfolk	-	-	-	170	200	10
BRITISH TOTAL	56000	67000 <sup>1</sup>	<u>76000</u>	71000	69000	<u>78000</u>

Note: Some adjustments have been made to the totals for the past two years (*items marked* <sup>1</sup>), correcting some errors that had arisen in locating the various haunts in the new regions and districts of Scotland. The total of Greylags in Perth and Kinross in 1977, and also the national total, has been increased by 4,000 in the light of information received subsequent to the publication of last year's report.

#### Weather and general conditions

Counting on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> was hindered by moderate to poor visibility, with rain in many areas and a strong wind. However conditions improved markedly overnight, and in most areas Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> was generally fine, with some sun and much better visibility.

The grain harvest in Scotland was a poor one for the farmers, though good for the geese, with a considerable spill of barley in many areas from the Lothians northwards. The overall distribution of the geese reflects this.

#### GREYLAGS

The population has increased for the second year running and is now back to the peak level reached in 1973. Age counts of a sample of 2,532 birds showed 20.6% young birds, with a mean brood size of 2.4.

The main table, and that of the regional distribution, both show a similar position to last year, with a great preponderance of the geese in the north and east-central parts of Scotland. In particular, the exceptionally high totals in Ross and Cromarty last year were actually exceeded, and there were also many more birds than usual farther north in Caithness. Not only the abundance of spilt grain but the very mild weather during late October and early November will have favoured the geese in this area.

## PINKFEET

The increase in the total follows a moderate breeding season, and is perhaps a little larger than might have been expected. The fact that both species have increased this year suggests that perhaps the mortality suffered in the past twelve months has been below average. Age counts were made on a sample of 4,852 birds giving 18.4% young. Thanks to the efforts of an observer in Lancashire, it is possible to compare the percentage young there (19.8% in a sample of 3,114) with that in east-central Scotland (15.9% in a sample of 1,738). It is not often that the sample size allows of regional comparison though too much must not be read into this single example. Mean brood size, in Scotland only, was 2.3.

The regional distribution table shows a much higher than usual proportion in south-east Scotland, and indeed the total counted there was the highest for many years. The main decrease occurred in north-west England, where the very high totals recorded in Lancashire in the last two years were not reached, though larger numbers did arrive later in November. Clearly the plentiful supply of food in Scotland delayed the birds' southward movement.

Regional distribution of Greylags and Pinkfeet in 1975-78

Figures are percentages of the total population

	GREYLAGS				PINKFEET			
	1975	1976	1977	1978	1975	1976	1977	1978
North Scotland	42.7	26.0	46.8 <sup>1</sup>	47.1	23.4	13.3	17.0	18.2
East Central Scotland	33.2	46.4	32.5 <sup>1</sup>	26.8	40.3	30.9	43.5	41.9
South-east Scotland	5.5	5.9	6.2 <sup>1</sup>	6.4	13.4	16.2	25.4	31.6
South-west Scotland	13.7	14.7	6.7 <sup>1</sup>	7.8	2.3	0.9	0.7	1.0
North England	4.9	7.0	3.6 <sup>1</sup>	1.9	19.0	37.9	12.8	6.8
East England	-	-	-	-	1.6	0.8	0.6	0.5

Note: Numbers marked <sup>1</sup> have been revised from the 1977 report in line with note following the main table.

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M.A. Ogilvie  
Wildfowl Trust  
Slimbridge  
Gloucester, GL2 7BT

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