

IN GREAT BRITAIN ON 8th NOVEMBER 1964

Summary. About 43,000 Greylag Geese Anser anser and 65,000 Pink-footed Geese Anser brachyrhynchus were found in Scotland and England on 8th November, 1964. These numbers are the largest yet reported. The increases from November 1963, when there were about 34,000 Greylags and 53,000 Pinkfeet, seem to have been due to unusually small numbers of deaths in 1963-64, because the breeding success of both species was somewhat below average.

The following table shows where the geese were found, birds being assigned to the counties in which they were believed to be roosting. The county totals are rounded to the nearest ten birds and the British total to the nearest thousand. Feral flocks of Greylags have been excluded, as far as possible.

| | GREYLAGS | | PINKFEET | |
|------------------------|----------------|-------|----------|-------|
| | 1964 | 1963 | 1964 | 1963 |
| Shetland | 0 | 20 | - | - |
| Caithness | 90 | 150 | - | - |
| Sutherland | 30 | 200 | - | - |
| Ross & Cromarty | 460 +lc | 1120 | - | 50 |
| Inverness | 660 | 260 | 10 | - |
| Nairn & Moray | 1430 | 800 | 10 | - |
| Aberdeen | 5080 | 2250 | 5720 | 2650 |
| Kincardine | 120 | 150 | - | - |
| Angus | 4150 | 4920 | 1030 | 2820 |
| Perth | 16130 | 17480 | 17580 | 11490 |
| Fife | 2020 +no | 1610 | 7880 +no | 8320 |
| Kinross | 1200 | 340 | 3100 | 1350 |
| Stirling & Clackmannan | 10 | - | - | - |
| Dunbarton | 500 | 450 | 10 | - |
| Lanark | 30 | 120 | 990 | 2130 |
| Midlothian | 2450 | 1120 | 5510 | 5310 |
| E. Lothian | - | - | 950 | 1380 |
| Berwick | 580 | 180 | 3400 | 200 |
| Peebles | 710 | - | 5510 | 1600 |
| Argyll | 1740 | 750 | - | - |
| Bute | 690 | 530 | - | - |
| Ayr & Renfrew | 160 | 90 | - | - |
| Wigtown | 2850 | 400 | 80 | - |
| Kirkcudbright | 1300 | 270 | 150 | - |
| Dumfries | 650 | 210 | 4300 | 6500 |
| total SCOTLAND | 43060 43070 | 33420 | 56230 | 43800 |
| Northumberland | 120 | 300 | - | - |
| Cumberland | 20 | - | 900 | 350 |
| Westmorland | 70 | 190 | - | - |
| Lancashire | - | 30 | 4750 | 1530 |
| Yorkshire | 10 | - | 2000 | 2000 |
| Lincolnshire | - | - | 1350 | 5500 |
| Norfolk | - | - | 10 | - |
| total ENGLAND | 220 | 520 | 9010 | 9380 |
| BRITISH TOTAL | 43000 | 34000 | 65000 | 53000 |

Sample counts indicate that about 28% of the Greylags and 27% of the Pinkfeet were ovis in their first autumn and that the average brood-size was 3.1 for Greylags and 2.9 for Pinkfeet. All these figures are slightly below the corresponding long-term averages, so that it is surprising to find that the stocks of both species show substantial increases over the numbers found in November 1963.

British stocks of Greylags and Pinkfeet in November, 1960-64

| | 1960 | 1961 | 1962 | 1963 | 1964 | gain from 1963 |
|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------------|
| GREYLAGS | 30000 | 36000 | 38000 | 34000 | 43000 | 9000 (26.1%) |
| PINKFEET | 47000 | 56000 | 58000 | 53000 | 55000 | 12000 (22.7%) |

Since 1958 the Greylag population has doubled, while Pinkfeet have increased by about one-third. The notable increase from 1963 to 1964 seems to be a consequence of abnormally small losses during the year. Only 3-4000 Greylags and 5-6000 Pinkfeet are thought to have died, compared with 8-11,000 Greylags and 12-19,000 Pinkfeet in each of the three preceding years. It is not yet clear why casualties were so low though it is tempting to associate the reduction with the relatively mild winter in Britain and with the exceptionally warm spring in Iceland.

Despite the growth of the total stock, the numbers of Pinkfeet found in England at the time of the annual counts have continued to decline.

Numbers of Pinkfeet in England in November, 1960-64

| | 1960 | 1961 | 1962 | 1963 | 1964 |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|
| | 14480 | 12850 | 13120 | 9380 | 9010 |
| % of national total | 30.8 | 23.1 | 22.8 | 17.6 | 13.8 |

The Greylags show no such striking trend, though the proportion found in England is tiny - 0.5% in 1964 and between 0.6 and 1.5% in the four preceding Novembers.

Overlapping of observations. Many people share my unqualified enthusiasm for goose-hasing but some are clearly unhappy at my attempts to obtain duplicate records of the geese in congested areas. I am unrepentant. It is so often so difficult to sort out just what is happening that every extra scrap of information may be helpful. This is particularly true in areas where the popularity of alternative roosts is changing rapidly or where new roosts and feeding areas are coming into use. At least five new roosts were found in central Scotland this autumn, though in no case were they being used by geese whose existence was hitherto unknown.

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Miss F. Greig, W.A. Hall, Miss A. Harding, R.H. Harrison,
M. Hedley, M.T. Hedley, E.J. Henderson, J.L. Hirst, Miss S.E.
Hood, W.G. Hughes, Mr. & Mrs. P.F. James, M. Jones, W. Kidd,
Mr. Kilpatrick, Mr. Laing, D.D. Laurie, R. Leach, Mr. & Mrs.
J.A. Lister, A. Lodge, D. Long, W.J. McCulloch, A. MacDonald,
D. Macdonald, F. McDonald, Major A.M. MacFarlane, K.S. Macgregor,
J. McIntosh, Miss A. Mackintosh, I. McLachlan, J. McNish, Miss
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R.T. Smith, Mr. & Mrs. R.W.J. Smith, Miss M.H. Spires, D.M.
Stark, A. Stewart, J.A. Stewart, C. Tait, R.J.F. Taylor, Miss
V.M. Thom, M. Thorpe, A.M. Turnbull, R. Walker, R.C. Walls,
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Status of Bewick's Swans in Great Britain and Ireland

M.A. Ogilvie is studying the distribution and status of Bewick's Swans Cygnus columbianus bewickii in Great Britain and Ireland and would be glad to receive all reports of flocks or lone individuals in the coming winter (1964/65). Details required in each case include the number of birds, the date and locality and, if possible, a brief description of the site (e.g. flood-water, reservoir, lake); counts of the proportions of immatures would also be very welcome. Records of migrants should include their direction, the time of day and an indication of the weather conditions. To ensure as full a coverage as possible, we hope that everyone will send their observations at the time to M.A. Ogilvie, The Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucestershire.

Mr. Ogilvie will also be investigating any changes which may have occurred since Dr. I.C.T. Nisbet's survey in 1954/55 and 1955/56 (Brit. Birds, 52 : 393-416) and he would therefore be equally grateful for any unpublished records from the intervening period (i.e. those which have not appeared in the Irish Bird Report, Scottish Birds or county reports).

20th November, 1964

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