

GREYLAG AND PINK-FOOTED GEESE IN BRITAIN 4th/5th NOVEMBER 1967

About 53,000 Greylag Geese Anser anser and 65,000 Pink-footed Geese A. brachyrhynchus were found in Scotland and England on 4th and 5th November 1967. About 58,000 Pinkfeet had been found on 22nd October. Both species have fallen in numbers compared with November 1966, the Greylags by almost 12% and the Pinkfeet by nearly 15%.

The following table records the numbers of geese roosting in each county where any were found in November 1966 or 1967. The county totals are rounded to the nearest ten birds, and the national total to the nearest thousand. Feral flocks are omitted where possible.

	GREYLAGS		PINKFEET		
	5 Nov. 1967	6 Nov. 1966	5 Nov. 1967	22 Oct. 1967	6 Nov. 1966
Caitness	110	290	-	10	0
Sutherland	-	0	-	-	-
Ross and Cromarty	830	1850	0	10	1790
Inverness	460	750	-	-	-
Nairn, Moray	660	1370	-	-	-
Aberdeen	5270	4560	15180	10300	14290
Angus, Kinocardine	5750	5280	2050	4040	890
Perth	28200	31440	21130	19000	24520
Fife	1270	410	4150	4170	3950
Kinross	680	2180	1540	2450	5590
Stirling	0	10	-	-	-
Dunbarton	900	300	-	-	-
Lanark	0	240	3760	2450	2550
Midlothian	1870	730	7120	5670	1460
East Lothian	-	-	800	300	2750
Berwick	260	220	850	2200	4200
Peebles	0	420	3800	1410	2300
Roxburgh	450	50	0	0	450
Argyll	930	1190	-	-	-
Bute	2500	3800	-	-	-
Ayr	0	10	-	-	-
Wigtown	1000	3310	0	0	0
Kirkcudbright	1000	700	250	230	290
Dumfries	500	690	1000	1000	3700
Northumberland	150	140	-	30	-
Cumberland	120	310	0	0	0
Westmorland	70	80	80	430	-
Lancashire	-	-	1500	1480	2860
Yorkshire	-	-	3000	2300	1750
Lincolnshire	-	-	260	80	2560
Norfolk	-	-	0	0	10
BRITISH TOTAL	53000	60000	65000	58000	76000

The weather for the October count was generally good. Fresh winds were blowing over some parts of the country during the November count weekend but at least the gales and heavy rain of the previous week had cleared away.

GREYLAGS. The fall of 7,000 since November 1966 is the first decrease recorded in the autumn population for four years and follows a period of very rapid increase (from 34,000 in November 1963 to 60,000 last year). The main reason for the drop is clearly the very poor breeding success in 1967. The proportion of young birds in the population (11%) and the mean brood size (1.7) are both the lowest recorded in ten years of observations.

PINKFEET. The decline in numbers of this species is due to the same main cause as for the Greylags, namely an unsuccessful breeding season. At just under 11% this too is the lowest proportion of young birds we have recorded for the species.

Many observers noted that this year the Pinkfeet were later arriving in Britain than usual with movement into the country still continuing in the second and third weeks of October. However, the numbers found on 21st/22nd October were about the same proportion of the November count as in the two previous years.

FUTURE CENSUSES. The autumn counts of Greylags and Pinkfeet will be continued as most valuable checks on the population size of the two species. For the past five years we have attempted counts in the spring to try and determine winter losses. These have never given results which could be viewed without reservations due to the difficulty experienced in locating the birds which at this time of year are often using floodwater as roosts, and are in smaller flocks than in autumn. Counts in spring may be continued though with reduced effort in some areas. I shall be writing for your help in the future; if not this spring, then certainly next autumn.

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