

(Preliminary report, not for publication)

THE NUMBERS OF GREYLAG & PINK-FOOTED GESE FOUND
IN GREAT BRITAIN ON 15th MARCH, 1964

About 23,000 Greylag Geese Anser anser and 35,000 Pink-footed Geese Anser brachyrhynchus were found in Great Britain on 15th March, 1964, or within three days of that date. The search of likely haunts was not quite complete, because of bad weather and road conditions, so that the total numbers of both species were probably substantially larger - perhaps 27,000 Greylags and 45,000 Pinkfeet in all, compared with 34,000 Greylags and 29,000 Pinkfeet found on 17th March, 1963.

The distribution of the two species in different counties in March, 1964 and November, 1963 is tabulated below. All county figures are rounded to the nearest ten birds and the national totals to the nearest thousand.

	GREYLAG		PINKFEET	
	Mar. 1964	Nov. 1963	Mar. 1964	Nov. 1963
<u>North Scotland</u>				
Shetland, Caithness	x	170	-	-
Sutherland	20	200	-	-
Ross & Cromarty	250 x	1120	x	50
Inverness	840 x	260	90	-
Moray	1420	800	40	-
Aberdeen	780 x	2250	1250 x	2650
Kincairdine	10	150	270	-
<u>Central Scotland</u>				
Angus	940	4920	2130	2820
Perth	8820	17480	6330	11490
Fife	1210	1610	8580	8320
Kinross	600	340	1920	1350
Stirling, Clackmannan	200	-	930	-
Dumbarton	120	450	-	-
<u>South-east Scotland</u>				
Lanark	x	120	1630 x	2130
Midlothian	30	1120	3850	5310
E. Lothian	-	-	310	1380
Berwick	-	180	800	200
Peebles	-	-	600	1600
<u>West and South Scotland</u>				
Argyll	1130 x	910	-	-
Bute	2440	530	-	-
Renfrew	160	-	-	-
Ayr	660	90	-	-
Dumfries	1070	210	1710 x	6500
Kirkcubright	960	270	1960	-
Wigtown	1040	400	2500	-
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total counted SCOTLAND	22700	33480	34900	43800
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Northumberland	-	300	-	-
Cumberland	40	-	140 x	350
Westmorland	240	190	-	-
Lancashire, Cheshire	10	30	10	1530
Yorkshire	-	-	-	2000
Lincolnshire	-	-	30	5500
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total counted ENGLAND	290	520	180	9380
Flint WALES	-	-	40	-
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TOTAL COUNTED	23000	34000	35000	53000
likely numbers in unvisited places	4000	-	9800	-
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estimated BRITISH TOTAL	27000	-	45000	-

The symbol x in place of, or following, a county total indicates that searching there is known to have been incomplete. No geese were found at any of their midwinter haunts in Norfolk, Gloucestershire and Anglesey.

The substantial additions to the counted totals which are suggested for both species consist in large part of geese seen a few days before 15th which could not then be found. In the case of the Greylag, only 440 could be found in the neighbourhood of the Beaulieu Firth on 15th (and 14th), but on 9th and 10th a flock credibly estimated at 4000 was present. The Pinkfoot offers an even more baffling problem. At Rockcliffe Marsh, Cumberland, there were 9000 on 10th, 6000 on 11th, but only 140 on 15th, and 1000 on 17th. No compensating increases elsewhere have been detected. At Rockcliffe, the 'emigration' was clearly due to gale force winds from 12th to 17th. In many other places this violent weather, with snow or heavy rain, produced appreciable local shifts, making the counting operation an unusually difficult as well as an extremely unpleasant one.

The report on the count in November 1963 called for a special effort to examine areas where Pinkfeet might occur in spring. Though this was frustrated in the north-east, additional searching in central Scotland disclosed several 'new' localities. The behaviour of geese in Lanarkshire continues to baffle searchers, though some additional clues have been obtained.

The unlucky timing of this count raises doubts about the possibility of making a wholly successful census in the late winter or spring. But there is no doubt about the value of November counts and I hope to enlist the aid of as many watchers as possible next November.

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