

THE NUMBERS OF GREYLAG AND PINK-FOOTED GESE

FOUND IN GREAT BRITAIN ON 28th MARCH, 1965

About 34,000 Greylag Geese Anser anser and 40,000 Pink-footed Geese Anser brachyrhynchos were found in Scotland and England on, or about, 28th March, 1965. The number of Greylags was large in relation to the population of about 43,000 found on 8th November, 1964, suggesting that winter losses had been light. In November 1964 there had been over 65,000 Pinkfeet; it seems likely that a substantial number had already emigrated by the date of the count.

The following table compares the numbers of geese found roosting in different counties with those found on 8th November, 1964 and on 15th March, 1964. 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. Entries in parentheses are less reliable than most. Minus signs indicate that the species has no regular haunt in a county.

County	GREYLAGS			PINKFEET		
	Mar 1965	Nov 1964	Mar 1964	Mar 1965	Nov 1964	Mar 1964
Caithness	10	90	?	-	-	-
Sutherland	30	30	20	-	-	-
Ross	(3440)	480	?	(2470)	0	?
Inverness	990	660	840	100	10	90
Moray	1300	1480	1420	0	10	40
Aberdeen	2790	5080	(780)	3330	5720	(1250)
Kingairdine	250	120	10	130	0	270
Angus	1030	4150	940	2550	1030	2130
Perth	9770	16130	8820	10180	17580	6330
Fife	1580	2030	1210	4700	8000	8580
Kinross	950	1200	600	1200	3100	1920
Stirling/Clackmannan	170	10	200	1180	0	930
Dunbarton	450	500	120	-	10	-
Lanark	(0)	30	?	200	990	(1630)
Midlothian	50	2450	30	2440	5510	3850
East Lothian	-	-	-	300	950	310
Berwick	0	580	0	630	3400	800
Peebles	0	710	0	470	5510	600
Argyll	1810	1740	(1130)	-	-	-
Bute	(3400)	690	2440	-	-	-
Renfrew	90	0	160	-	-	-
Ayr	540	160	660	-	-	-
Wigtown	1290	2850	1040	1300	80	2500
Kirkcudbright	3500	1300	960	(2000)	150	(1960)
Dumfries	700	650	1070	(4860)	4300	1710
total SCOTLAND	33640	43120		37280	56350	
Northumberland	0	120	0	-	-	-
Cumberland	0	20	40	2300	900	(140)
Westmorland	240	70	240	-	-	-
Lancashire	0	0	10	0	4750	10
Yorkshire	-	10	-	0	2000	0
Lincoln	-	-	-	30	1350	30
Norfolk	-	-	-	10	10	0
total ENGLAND	240	220	290	2340	9010	(180)
Flint WALES	-	-	-	0	0	40
BRITISH TOTAL	34000	43000		36000	65000	

Despite snowfalls in many areas a few days earlier, the weather on 27th-28th March was kinder to counters than in either of the previous attempts at a census in March. The cover of known haunts was good, an aerial survey being used to supplement ground searches in much of east and north Scotland. Yet the number of Pinkfeet found was substantially less than the 43,000-49,000 that would be expected to survive from a population of 65,000 in early November 1964 suffering normal winter losses. This is the third time that the March inventory of Pinkfeet has been low. In 1963 and 1964 the subsequent November counts and the proportion of young birds in autumn showed that the low March scores were not due to high mortality. It is certainly true that Pinkfeet are harder to find in March than in November, because they tend to be in smaller groups and to use unfamiliar and temporary roosting places, but this is also true of Greylags. It begins to look as if substantial numbers of Pinkfeet may leave the country in March, if not earlier, presumably to return to Iceland. I hope it will be possible to investigate this next winter, by looking for Pinkfeet in January or February as well as in November and March.

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Hugh Boyd
The Wildfowl Trust,
Slimbridge, Glos.