

# WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

## survey results 2009/10

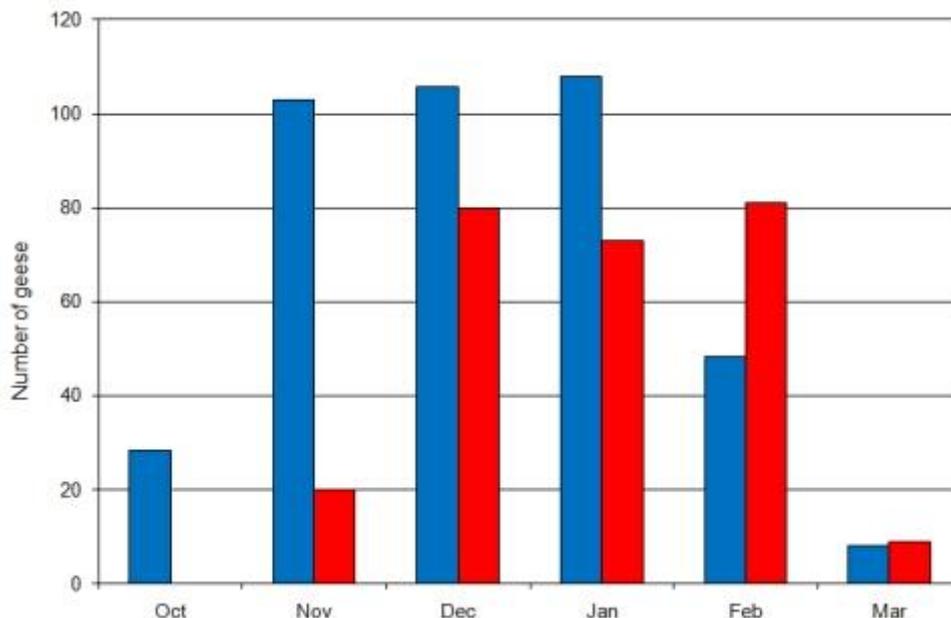
### Taiga Bean Goose *Anser fabalis fabalis*

## 1. Abundance

During 2009/10, counts were undertaken at the two key sites for Taiga Bean Goose in Britain, the Slamannan Plateau, and the Yare Valley. A peak count of 260 birds was recorded at Slamannan in October, a similar number to the previous winter and below the previous five-year mean ( $276.0 \pm 9.8$  SE). At the Yare Valley, the number wintering was the lowest recorded at the site since the winter of 1973/74. The peak count of 81 was almost half that of the previous winters and 36% lower than the previous five year mean ( $141 \pm 10.0$  SE).

The differences in the phenological patterns between these sites noted in 2006/07 and 2008/09 were also detected during 2009/10. At the Slamannan Plateau, the first birds arrived at the start of October, a few days earlier than usual, and numbers had rapidly increased to a peak by the end of the month. However, few birds remained in the area during December and January. It is possible that they were more widely dispersed in search of suitable grazing fields during the unusually harsh winter. Numbers remained low until migration back to the breeding grounds began during the last week of February.

At the Yare Valley, the peak counts were recorded in December and February with 80 and 81 birds respectively. Usually peak counts in previous years occurred during December or January and only once before in February 2006. Numbers remained high throughout January but by March only nine geese remained at the site.



Peak monthly counts of Bean Geese at the Yare Valley (blue columns represent the mean of 2003/04-2008/09; red columns 2009/10). No data were collected in October 2009 and 2010.

## 2. Breeding success

Age assessment data were collected at the Slamannan Plateau during winter 2009/10. A total of 183 birds were aged of which 14.8% were young birds, one of the lowest values since records began in 2004/05. The average brood size was 1.47 young per successful pair among 19 families assessed. Age assessment data were not collected at the Yare Valley.

### 3. Discussion

Peak numbers of Taiga Bean Geese at the Slamannan Plateau remained high during 2009/10. Wintering numbers at the site have been consistently above 250 for the last six years, confirming this as the premier site for this species in Britain.

After two consecutive years with peak counts above 130 birds, numbers at the Yare Valley have, once more, dropped significantly. In 2009/10, counts seemed to confirm the steady decline since the early 90s, but it will be interesting to see if this further fall in numbers was a reflection of the unusually cold winter and subsequent harsh feeding conditions.

The breeding success of Taiga Bean Geese wintering at the Slamannan Plateau was the second lowest recorded since data collection began and is also below the previous five-year mean ( $20.1 \pm 2.6$  SE). However, this was the biggest sample ever aged it is likely that these results are more accurate than in previous years.

This report should be cited as:

WWT. 2010. *Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme: survey results 2009/10 Taiga Bean Goose* *Anser fabalis fabalis*. WWT/JNCC/SNH, Slimbridge.

© The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

All rights reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

This report was produced under the Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme (GSMP). This programme monitors numbers and breeding success of geese and swans in the UK during the non-breeding season. GSMP is organised by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of Natural Resources Wales, Natural England and the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside) and Scottish Natural Heritage.



## Goose & Swan Monitoring