

## Wildfowl censuses and counts

### Goose censuses

**Pink-footed Goose** *Anser brachyrhynchus*. About 65,000 Pinkfeet were counted in Britain at the time of the annual census held on 9th/10th November 1968. This figure shows no change from that for the previous year. Also similar was the low breeding success as measured by the percentage of young birds counted in the flocks (11.7% young birds; average brood size 1.4).

**European White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons albifrons*. Peak numbers in Britain were reached in mid-January 1969 when 11,200 birds were counted. This was a somewhat earlier peak than normal;

by the time of the census held on 8th/9th February numbers had dropped to 8,800. Although the previous winter's exceptional peak of 12,000 was not repeated the general level of population was above the average of recent years. Breeding had been poor (13.2% young; average brood size 1.6).

**Greenland White-fronted Goose** *Anser albifrons flavirostris*. No census was carried out but counts at major Scottish and Irish haunts showed no change from the levels of recent years. In Scotland a sample of 450 contained 16.4% young; in Ireland a very much larger sample of several thousand had 35.0% young.

**Greylag Goose** *Anser anser*. 61,000 Greylags were counted during the annual census on 9th/10th November 1968. This represents a slight increase over the previous winter, but breeding had been the poorest recorded in twelve years of counts (5.9% young; average brood size 1.3).

**Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis*. The flock wintering on the Solway, which breeds in Spitsbergen, reached a peak of 2,200 during the season. For the second year running breeding had been good (23.2% young).

The Greenland population of Barnacle Geese was not fully censused. Increased numbers were found to be wintering on Islay, with over 12,000 present through the winter, but it is not known whether this represents an overall population increase, or merely a redistribution. Breeding had been poor (9.5% young; average brood size 1.3).

**Light-bellied Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla hrota*. The highest count at Lindisfarne, Northumberland, of the Spitsbergen population reached 1,000. In Ireland censuses were held in November 1968 and February 1969 of the Greenland stock when 7,765 and 5,982 birds were counted respectively (1.5% young).

**Dark-bellied Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla bernicla*. The highest count in Britain was 13,700 in mid-January 1969. This is over 2,000 below the peak for the last two winters, and counts from the rest of the wintering range in France and Holland show that there has been an overall decrease. The main reason is the almost total breeding failure (<1% young) following the poor production of 1967 (6.0%).

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#### Duck counts

**Shelduck** *Tadorna tadorna*. This species was more plentiful than usual in the early part of the winter (especially December), but less so from January onwards.

**Teal** *Anas crecca*. The counts in October, November and March were the highest since 1964-65. A marked improvement was noted in Scotland during the early part of the winter, and later there were relatively large numbers in the south-west. The seasonal index topped 50 for the first time in four years.

**Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos*. Throughout the winter the species was rather less plentiful than usual in the eastern and

northern parts of the country, and noticeably more plentiful in the west.

**Wigeon** *Anas penelope*. This was the best season since 1955-56 and the second best on record. Large numbers were present in all districts throughout most of the winter, and in November and January the counts were the largest recorded for the time of year. This is now the fifth consecutive season to show an increase in the seasonal index.

**Pochard** *Aythya ferina*. This species was not as numerous as in recent seasons, but still well above the level of the early 1960s. Very large numbers were recorded in Scotland from October until January, but elsewhere results were generally disappointing.

**Tufted Duck** *Aythya fuligula*. This species was plentiful throughout the winter in southern and western districts and very plentiful in Scotland during the first half of the season. The seasonal index is the highest since 1965-66, and slightly above the average level of the last ten years.

#### Seasonal Indices, 1968-69 (1959-60=100)

Shelduck	102	Wigeon	124
Teal	52	Pochard	162
Mallard	104	Tufted Duck	102

#### International wildfowl census

The third international wildfowl census was held in mid-January 1969. Counts were made in Britain at 1,291 sites producing the following numbers of duck:

Shelduck	36842
Pintail	8660
Teal	36054
Mallard	148181
Gadwall	492
Wigeon	150233
Shoveler	2925
Eider	10289
Pochard	28517
Tufted Duck	29029
Scaup	17893
Common Scoter	3823
Velvet Scoter	27
Long-tailed Duck	284
Goldeneye	7897
Smew	64
Red-breasted Merganser	3394
Goosander	1385
<b>Total</b>	<b>486029</b>

Counts from other countries total over 4,860,000 ducks from 4,800 sites.

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