

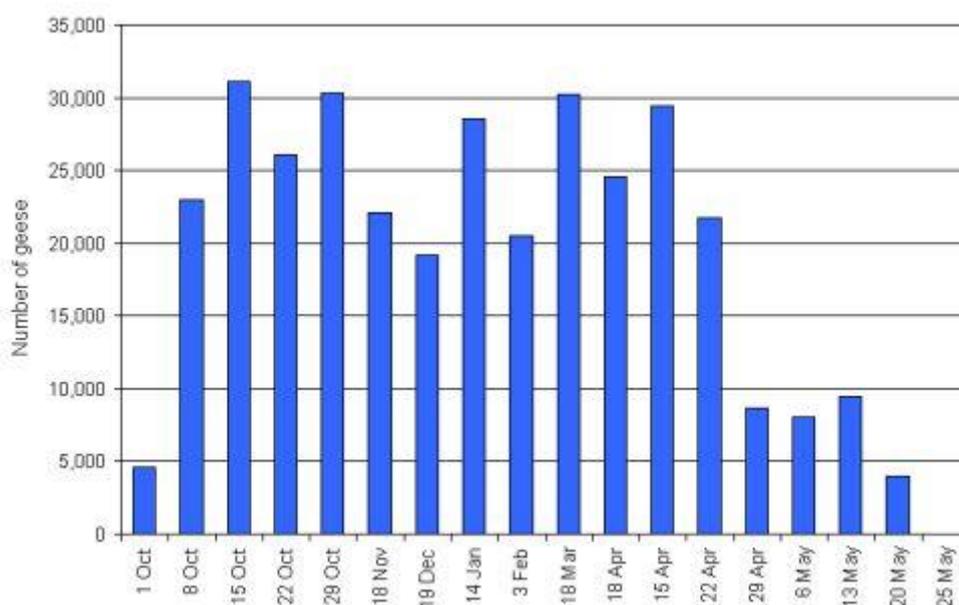
WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2008/09

Svalbard Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

1. Abundance

From 1 October 2008 (by which time 4,567 Barnacle Geese had arrived on the Solway) to 25 May 2009 (when 22 remained), 18 coordinated counts were carried out across the whole of the Inner Solway Estuary. The peak count was 31,111 recorded on 15 October. As a precaution against the possibility of some of the birds having been counted twice, this count was averaged against all of those within 10% of it within the October to April period; five counts in all. This procedure gives an adopted population total for 2008/09 of 29,900 (rounded down to the nearest 100). This is an increase of 3% on the adopted population estimate of 2007/08 (29,000).



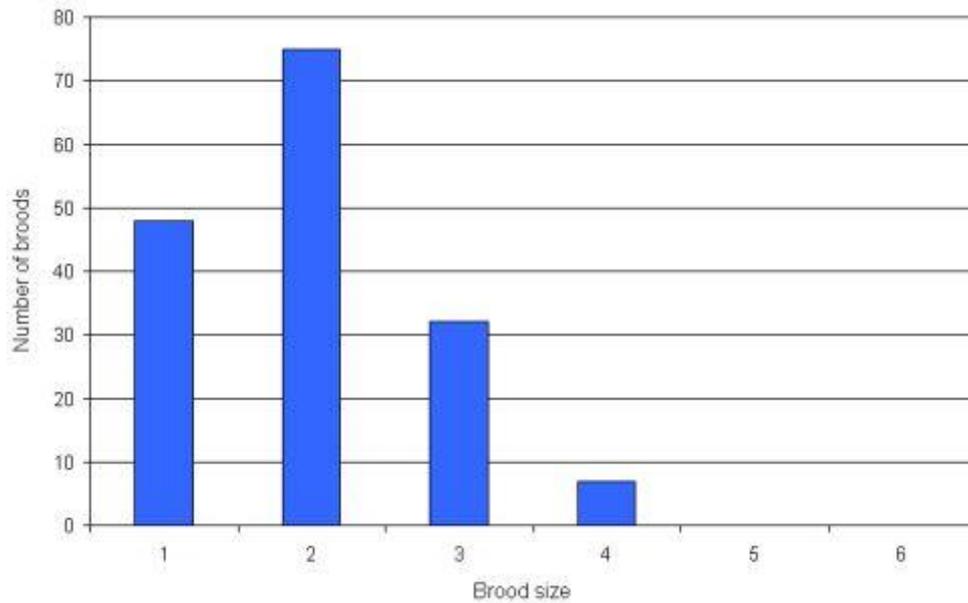
Total number of Svalbard Barnacle Geese on coordinated Solway counts during 2008/09 (22 geese were observed on 25 May 2009).

This winter a spectacular mass arrival was recorded by many observers on 1 October 2008 at Budle Bay, Northumberland. These birds moved on to the Solway that night and during the next few days such that the coordinated counts rose rapidly from 4,567 on 1 October to 23,022 by 8 October, with the whole population probably present on the Solway by 15 October when 31,111 geese were counted.

2. Breeding success

Between 2 October 2008 and 15 January 2009, a total of 10,300 Barnacle Geese was aged by a single observer at WWT Caerlaverock and at other sites around the Solway. A total of 17 flocks was sampled, varying in size from 217 to 5,550 birds. The number of birds sampled within these flocks ranged from 129 to 1,480. The overall percentage of young present in these flocks was 8.7%, ranging from 1.7% to 13.6% within individual flocks. As with the 2007/08 season, this value is above the current ten-year mean (7.8% \pm 1.4 SE), thus representing a reasonably good breeding season.

Brood size was recorded for a total of 162 families, and the mean brood size per successful pair was 2.0 goslings, with brood sizes ranging from 14 goslings, down slightly on the previous year. The mean for the most recent ten-year period (1999-2008) remains unchanged at 1.9 (\pm 0.1 SE) goslings per successful pair.



Frequency distribution of brood sizes of Svalbard Barnacle Geese on the Solway Estuary in 2008/09.

This report should be cited as:

WWT. 2009. *Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme: survey results 2008/09 Svalbard Barnacle Goose* *Branta leucopsis*.

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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