

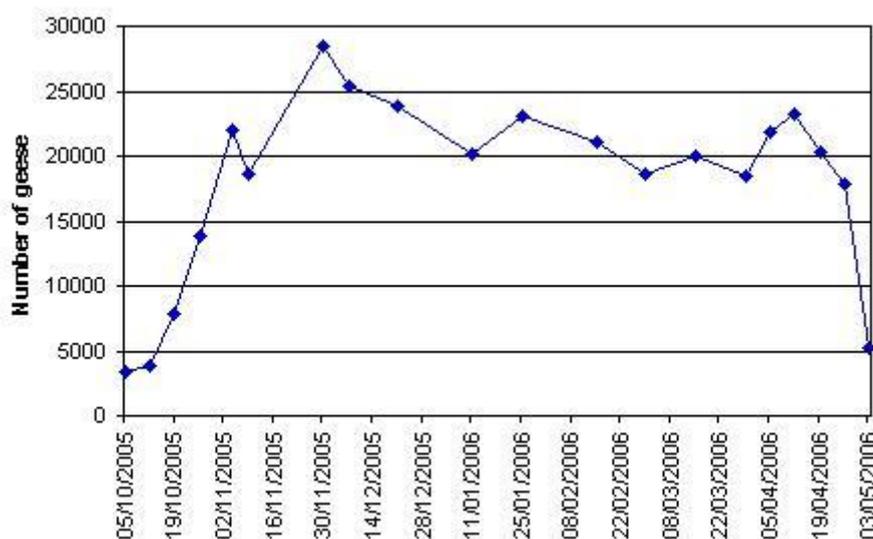
WWT/JNCC/SNH Goose & Swan Monitoring Programme

survey results 2005/06

Svalbard Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

1. Abundance

Between 5 October 2005 (by which time 3,414 Barnacle Geese had arrived on the Solway) and 3 May 2006 (when 5,281 remained), 20 coordinated counts were carried out across the whole Solway Estuary. The peak count was 28,450 (just 180 more than the peak count in 2004/05), but this count was conducted over two days (30 November and 1 December) due to heavy fog on 30 November. This is likely to have meant that some birds were counted twice. Thus, the population estimate is calculated as the average of the next highest count and all those within 10% of it, which gives an adopted population total for 2005/06 of 23,900. This is a decrease of 3,000 (11%) on the adopted population estimate in 2004/05 (26,900).



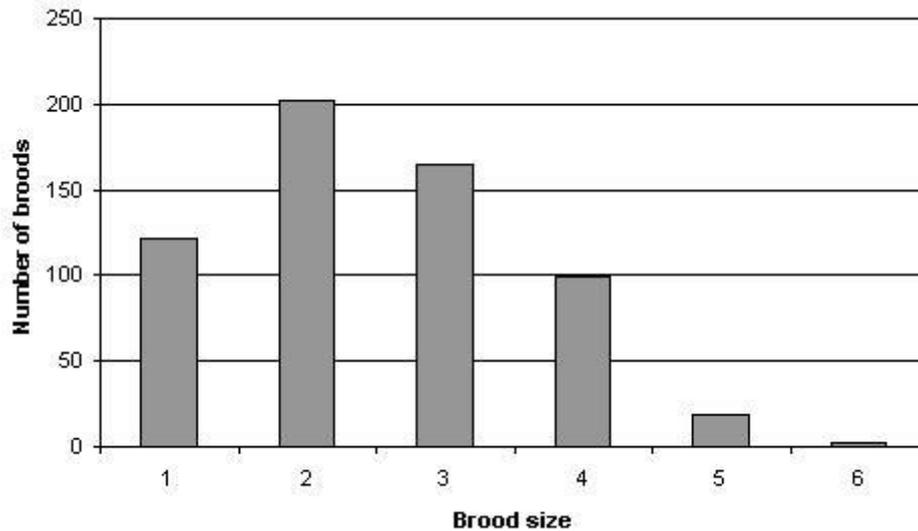
Total number of Svalbard Barnacle Geese on coordinated Solway counts during 2005/06.

The arrival of Barnacle Geese at the Solway was late in autumn 2005, and it is likely that the majority of the population was not present until around the first week of November. Many thousands were grounded in Shetland and Norway during September and October due to bad weather, and many also remained in eastern Scotland well into October.

2. Breeding success

Between 27 October and 14 December 2005, a total of 19,166 Barnacle Geese was aged by a single observer at WWT Caerlaverock. A total of 24 flocks were sampled, varying in size from 71 to 4,020 birds. Sample size ranged from 50 to 2,000. The overall percentage of young present in these flocks was 7.9%, ranging from 2.9% to 23.3% within individual flocks. This is the highest percentage of young since 2002, but is still lower than the current 10-year mean (9.0% \pm 1.84 se).

Brood size was recorded for a total of 608 families, and the mean brood size per successful pair was 2.5 goslings, with brood sizes ranging from 1-6 goslings. This represents the highest brood size recorded in the population since 1980. The mean for the most recent ten years (1996-2005) is 1.77 (\pm 0.10 se) goslings per successful pair, ranging from 1.37 to 2.50.



Frequency distribution of brood sizes of Svalbard Barnacle Geese on the Solway Estuary in 2005/06.

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Goose & Swan Monitoring