

## Numbers of geese in Britain and Ireland, 1984–85

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With the exception of the Dark-bellied Brent Geese, which breed in Siberia, most goose populations wintering in Britain and Ireland had a reasonably good breeding season in 1984. The annual November census of Pink-footed and Greylag Geese was badly disrupted by the weather, and the totals for both species are certainly too low. The March census produced higher totals for both, and enabled some estimate to be made of how many the November census had missed. The true totals were probably closer to 110,000 Pinkfeet and 105,000 Greylags, both of which would represent record levels.

The periods of cold weather during the winter brought influxes of European White-fronts, particularly to south-east England in January, with some movement further west by February. The very large numbers which winter in the Netherlands mainly moved south into France, however. Two censuses of the Greenland White-fronted Goose

were carried out.

The Svalbard Barnacle Geese had one of the best breeding seasons for some years, and the population rose to a new record total of 10,500, an increase of over 2000 on the previous winter. The Greenland population was not censused, but their breeding success was little more than average.

The Svalbard Light-bellied Brent Geese had a moderate season, and there was a high peak at Lindisfarne in January, during the cold weather. The Greenland population was censused in Ireland in November and January. (In winter 1983–84, the census figures were 13,740 in November and 12,038 in January, with breeding success in excess of 40%.) They bred a little less well in 1984, however.

The Dark-bellied Brent Geese had their second successive breeding failure, and the total population has fallen further, to 150,000. The British peak was boosted by the cold weather.

### Counts and breeding success of goose populations in Britain and Ireland, 1984–85.

Species	Count	Month	% young	Av. brood size
Pink-footed Goose <i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	86,000 <sup>1</sup> 97,000	Nov Mar	20.2 –	2.2 –
European White-fronted Goose <i>A. albifrons albifrons</i>	6,690 6,750	Jan Feb	19.0 –	1.8 –
Greenland White-fronted Goose <i>A. albifrons flavirostris</i>	18,810 <sup>2</sup> 19,807 <sup>2</sup>	Nov Apr	15.8 –	3.4 –
Greylag Goose <i>A. anser</i>	64,000 <sup>1</sup> 71,000	Nov Mar	15.8 –	2.6 –
Barnacle Goose <i>Branta leucopsis</i> – Svalbard	10,500	Oct	26.2	2.4
– Greenland	–	–	13.4	2.3
Light-bellied Brent Goose <i>B. bernicla hrota</i> – Svalbard	3,000	Jan	17.0	–
– Greenland	18,255 <sup>3</sup> 10,000 <sup>3</sup>	Nov Jan	21.9 –	3.2 –
Dark-bellied Brent Goose <i>B. bernicla bernicla</i>	89,000	Jan	<1	–

#### Notes

1. Too low – see text.
2. Supplied by Greenland White-fronted Goose Study Group, and H. J. Wilson and D. W. Norriss, Forest and Wildlife Service, Ireland.
3. Supplied by Michael O'Briain, Irish Brent Goose Study.