

Wild Geese at the New Grounds, 1965-66

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European White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons albifrons*

The first to arrive were three on 28th September, 1965. There was a slow increase to 100 by the end of October. The cold spells in November brought more birds and 800 were counted in mid-December, the highest for that time since 1959. There were further arrivals in the next few weeks with counts of 2,250 on 3rd January, 1966, and 3,150 on 15th. There was a short-lived but large influx in early February with 4,700 counted on 6th and 5,500 on 9th. This latter figure is the highest recorded at the New Grounds since the Trust was founded. Although some of the birds departed almost at once there were over 4,000 present for the remainder of February. The general departure in March was both early and rapid, with 3,500 counted on 7th, but only 350 the next day. The last few were seen on 10th.

The breeding success in 1965 was similar to that of the two previous years. In November and December the proportion of young birds was 31% and the average brood-size was 2.7. Unusually it was a little higher in January at 35%, average brood-size 2.7. It fell again to 31% in late February, and the average brood-size was also lower at 2.4.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus*

After only one sighting in the last three winters, 1965-66 produced a bumper crop.

Two adults were present during the second week of February, 1966, and a third was seen on 27th February. On that date also two first-winter birds were seen.

Bean Goose *Anser fabalis*

A first-winter bird of the Western race *fabalis* was seen on 6th February, 1966, and on a number of occasions later the same month.

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus*

The only autumn record was of a flock of 19 flying over the river on 26th September, 1965. This is the third season running in which a few birds have appeared in the autumn but failed to stop. A single bird was seen on 7th January, 1966, and this stayed for several weeks, being joined by a second for a time in February.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis*

A first-winter bird was present from 2nd February, 1966, until 6th March.

Dark-bellied Brent Goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*

Seven adults were seen together on the Dumbles on 26th January, 1966. This is the largest number recorded at the New Grounds in one winter. A single bird was seen on 2nd February.

Ringling, 1965-66

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Ducks. The total of 4,697 ducks caught and ringed by the Trust and its helpers is just over 1,000 down on last season. This is principally due to a much reduced catch of Mallard by Mr. W. A. Cook at Borough Fen Decoy. Major General C. B. Wainwright's catch of Teal was his lowest for five years but a larger number of Mallard more than compensated for this. The catch of Mallard at Slimbridge was again kept down to 500.

Useful numbers of ducks were caught at the Trust's other stations. Mr. J. E. A. Lambert caught over 100 ducks at Dersingham Decoy. An account of the history and re-building of the Decoy will be found on p. 22. At Loch Leven, Kinross, Mr. H. Boyd and Mr. C. Campbell of the Trust's research staff caught 80 ducks, including 13 Gadwall and 25 Tufted Ducks, mostly females on the nest. Details of their study of the breeding ducks at Loch

Leven are given on p. 36. Catching has restarted at Deeping Lake, Lincolnshire, by arrangement with Messrs. Dandridge, and 27 Pochard and 42 Tufted Ducks were among a useful catch. At Valley, Anglesey, Mr. R. Palethorpe's traps caught 62 Mallard, and at Abbotsbury, Dorset, the Decoyman, Mr. F. Lexster, had 22 Pintail in his catch.

We were sad to learn of the departure from How Hill, Ludham, Norfolk, of Messrs C. A. and M. R. Boardman. Their

ringing station started in 1936, and they have been ringing ducks for the Trust since 1954. In the last twelve years they have caught over 1,000 Mallard and 100 Teal. These have produced a most interesting series of recoveries which have included a very high proportion of foreign recoveries of Mallard, probably as a result of the predominance of late winter catches. It is hoped that Mr. R. Smithson will be able to continue to operate the traps.

Ducks ringed 1965-66.

Species	Borough				Total 1965-66	Total 1964-65
	Abberton Essex	Fen Decoy	Slimbridge Glos.	Other Stations		
Shelduck	38			1	39	51
Pintail	5	2	2	27	36	18
Teal	879	222	3	86	1190	1643
Mallard	1000	1140	500	508	3148	3831
Gadwall	1		1	16	18	1
Wigeon	11			23	34	33
Garganey	8				8	19
Shoveler	25	6	20	7	58	71
Eider				1	1	
Pochard	20		3	27	50	15
Tufted Duck	44		2	67	113	33
Goldeneye	1				1	
Goosander	1				1	
	2033	1370	531	763	4697	5715

Geese. A rocket-netting team spent a fortnight in Scotland in February, 1966, and caught 92 Greylags on Bute and 22 Barnacle Geese on the Solway. These disappointingly small catches were mostly due to the very bad weather conditions encountered. Trust staff took part in a number of round-ups of flightless geese. In Wigtownshire a team organised by Mr. J. G. Young caught and ringed 39

Greylags, and Canada Geese were ringed in Yorkshire, where Mr. A. F. G. Walker and his helpers caught 80 birds, in Staffordshire (61 birds) and at Frampton Gravel Pits, Gloucestershire (21 birds). Swans. Trust support for the ringing of Mute Swans was restricted to a few ringers undertaking special projects. Fourteen Bewick's Swans were caught and ringed at Slimbridge.

Numbers of birds, other than ducks and swans, ringed at Abberton Reservoir and Borough Fen Decoy

Although the trapping of ducks is the prime object of the Wildfowl Trust's ringing stations at Abberton Reservoir and Borough Fen Decoy, large numbers of other species of birds are caught and ringed at both places. At Abberton, Major General C. B. Wainwright traps many birds in his cage traps, and also uses mist

nets. Mr. W. A. Cook mist nets birds in the Decoy wood at Borough Fen and rings numbers of nestlings. He also rings the birds, mainly gulls, caught in the duck trap at nearby Deeping Lake. The waders on his list come from catching trips to the Wash.

Numbers of birds, other than ducks and swans, ringed at Abberton Reservoir and Borough Fen Decoy, 1966.

Species	Abberton	Borough Fen	Species	Abberton	Borough Fen
Great Crested Grebe	2	8	Wren	13	
Little Grebe	7		Mistle Thrush		1
Heron		3	Fieldfare	3	5
Bittern	1		Song Thrush	72	66
Water Rail	14	1	Redwing	3	8
Spotted Crake	1		Blackbird	75	175
Moorhen	64	125	Wheatear	17	
Coot	68	56	Greenland Wheatear	1	
Oystercatcher		5	Redstart	3	
Lapwing	8	3	Nightingale	2	
Ringed Plover		3	Robin	23	27
Grey Plover		5	Reed Warbler	46	1
Turnstone		5	Sedge Warbler	174	1
Snipe	81		Blackcap	11	23
Jack Snipe	2		Garden Warbler	1	5
Curlew		18	Whitethroat	53	11
Bar-tailed Godwit		1	Lesser Whitethroat	171	7
Common Sandpiper	80		Willow Warbler	39	7
Redshank	1	4	Chiffchaff	6	2
Knot		33	Goldcrest	1	1
Dunlin		82	Spotted Flycatcher		6
Great Black-backed Gull		1	Dunnock	102	49
Lesser Black-backed Gull		3	Meadow Pipit	36	
Herring Gull		13	Rock Pipit	12	
Common Gull		27	Pied Wagtail	89	
Black-headed Gull	2	196	White Wagtail	5	
Common Tern		1	Grey Wagtail	2	
Woodpigeon		33	Yellow Wagtail	423	
Turtle Dove	8	5	Great Grey Shrike	1	
Collared Dove		72	Starling	278	97
Cuckoo		1	Greenfinch	60	41
Little Owl		1	Goldfinch	2	18
Skylark	11		Linnet	13	17
Swallow	2	3	Twite		2
House Martin	1		Redpoll		2
Sand Martin	104		Bullfinch	22	24
Jackdaw		2	Chaffinch	29	23
Great Tit	14	14	Yellowhammer	1	1
Blue Tit	25	17	Reed Bunting	72	
Long-tailed Tit	2	8	House Sparrow		4
			Tree Sparrow	1	124
				2360	1497

