

Canada Goose 1953

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

A few wild Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* of various subspecies certainly reach Britain and Ireland but it is certain that the majority of the birds now found are descendants of birds of races *B. c. canadensis* and possibly *B. c. interior* which were introduced and released onto lakes in private parks from the 18th Century onwards. The original pairs were probably pinioned but their offspring were soon allowed to be full-winged. The species was evidently well established in the wild by 1783, and since that date introductions both from America and within Great Britain continued until the time of the survey at least.

Around 120 observers sent in records and coverage for the survey was thought to be good over the whole range. Therefore the numbers reported were thought to include the considerable majority of the birds. The results showed that most birds occurred in small groups in clearly defined groups of waters and that there was limited movement between the different groups. The published report lists all these sub-populations and documents the history of each.

Overall the feral British population in July 1953 (adults, non-breeders and goslings) was found to be between 2200 and 4000 (probably 2600-3600). Of these 200-250 were in Scotland, and 40-120 in Northern Ireland. None were thought to be in the Republic of Ireland. There were 308-386 breeding pairs reported and they produced 727-773 goslings. Most of the sub-populations consisted of one large colony and some smaller ones, and the wintering birds tended to congregate in the area of the largest colony in the area.

The majority of nests were on islands mostly within 5m of the water. The few on the main banks of waters were mostly robbed by casual egg collectors and animal predators. All large colonies had extensive grazing adjoining the lake at some place.

Non-human predation was small, but it was known that humans limited some populations by egg destruction and shooting and had exterminated individual sub-populations. Habitat seemed not to determine the range of the species, but it was restricted movements which seemed to limit the discovery of new waters by geese and to be the cause of the very local distribution.

Methods of Data Capture

Observers were asked to provide numbers of breeding pairs of Canada Geese and goslings and details of the habitat and nest sites on supplied record cards. They were also given a list of other information required. To get a fuller picture of the distribution and numbers of birds the National Wildfowl Count records for the winters either side were also made available by the Wildfowl Trust.

Purpose of Data Capture

To determine the distribution and status of the Canada Goose in Britain via a complete census. Also to get as much information as possible on habitats and nest sites.

Geographic Coverage

All of Britain and Ireland.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding season of 1953.

Other Interested parties

The survey was organized and run by the BTO as a Trust-aided Enquiry with the support of the Wildfowl Trust (now Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) and the Wildfowl County Group of the International Wildfowl Enquiry.

Organiser(s)

N G Blurton-Jones

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Blurton-Jones, N.G. 1956. Census of breeding Canada Geese 1953. *Bird Study* 3: 153-170.

The survey was noticed in *BTO Annual Report* number 20, *BTO Bulletin* numbers 47-50 and in *Bird Study* issue for March 1954 (vol.1).

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

Nothing found in BTO archives. It is presumed that the data were stored at the Wildfowl Trust (but are no longer extant there) or retained by the organiser.

Notes on Access and Use**Other information****Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**