

Wintering Geese in Mid-Argyll 1989/90

Introduction

A small but significant number of geese winter in Mid-Argyll - Greenland White fronted and Greylag geese in the Crinan Moss area, and Greenland White fronted and Barnacle Geese south of Tayvallich.

Methods

Counts were made monthly following a regular route established in 1987/88, with additional casual sightings recorded.

Results and Discussion

Table 1. Counts of Wintering Geese 1989/90.
(Maximum monthly count)

Month.	Morrie Hot			Danna		Total White Fronted
	Greylags	White fronted*	Barnacle	White-fronted	Barnacle	
Oct	76	18		250 - 300	None seen	268 - 318
Nov	210	58 *		224	"	282
Dec	350	48 *		155 (No full count)	"	203
Jan	460	48 *		190	"	238
Feb	479	58 *		224	296	282
March	360	58 *	1	176	330	234
April	220	57 *		203 **	330 **	260.

* 1 pink footed goose grazing regularly with the white fronts on these months.

** March 30th International count.

Hoene Mhor - Curran Moss.

Distribution of Geese. - Table 2.

Month	Area - Number of Times Seen.										
	Batsloisnoch		Drummore		Dunadd		Dunamuck		Killinchoch		
	GL	WF	GL	WF	GL	WF	GL	WF	GL	WF	
Oct		2								2	
Nov	7	6			2				1	1	
Dec	5	5	1		1		1	1	1	1	
Jan	2	1					*17	11	4	4	
Feb	1	1			1		14	5	4		
March	1	4					8	3	2	2	
April							1	1	1	1	

(*This area is counted regularly, being by my home)

White Fronted Geese

The white fronted geese were difficult to see in October, grazing in rushy pasture (field B5) at Batsloisnoch and not as in previous years in the Killinchoch barley, in small numbers. By November the usual number was seen. As last year they had one pink footed goose grazing amongst them. One collared bird, 1RU, was with them, and remained with the flock throughout the season. This bird was originally ringed in Wexford, and seen last year at Lock Ken.

The geese grazed most of November and December at Batsloisnoch, with fields B5 and B12, being most popular, these are rushy pasture, B12, being less disturbed. Fields B1, 10 and 11, nearby were occasionally used. Later in the year, the white fronts were seen in other areas, but continued to use their favourite fields at Batsloisnoch. In January + Feb. Dunamuck, pasture was popular D2 and (3) next door. This is a rushy field that was drained last year

This field was used extensively by the geese in previous years, and this continued to be used. It is not as muddy now as previously, but becomes very wet still. Later in the year the flock appeared to split into 2 groups, the smaller one being of 15-18 birds, ^{one group} half grazing at Dunamuck, the rest elsewhere.

Fields at Killinochnoch K5, K6 and K1 were also grazed. K5 and K6, pasture with rush encroaching, and K1, waterlogged barley stubble, throughout the winter.

Grey Lags.

Smaller numbers were seen in the Killinochnoch barley (K1) late October, but this did not provide feeding for long. The birds soon moved to Bardsnoch and used these fields (B 10, 11, 12, 5, 3, 1) throughout November and December extensively, and occasionally for the rest of the winter. Dunamuck fields were frequented mainly in January and February, and Killinochnoch throughout the year, but this ^{was} more popular in late winter, ^{particularly the reaps K4.} The Greylags grazed more widely than the White fronts, using the majority of fields in the area Dm 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12 and Ks, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Drimvone, and Dunadd fields were rarely used this year nor Barnakill.

Moore Mhor.Numbers.Counts of White Fronted Geese. 1986-90.Maximum monthly count.

	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90
Oct	No data	≈ 50	58	18
Nov	No data	54	69	58
Dec.	54	Not seen	46	48
Jan	50	52	49	48
Feb	2 50	52	50	58
March	54	52	59	58
April	50	34	No data	57
Average	52	49	56	55.

Numbers of White Fronted Geese in 1989/90, were very similar to the previous year, once the main flock arrived. The pinkfooted goose was still with the flock. This was first seen grazing with them in 1988. Only 5 young birds, ^(out of 58) were seen, 9% juveniles, compared with 8-10 last year - 15-17%, which possibly explains the lack of increase in flock size. Some movement had obviously taken place, with the presence of the collared bird in the flock.

Mounè Mhot.

Numbers.

Counts of Greylag Geese 1986-90.

Maximum monthly count.

	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90
Oct.	No data	80	80	76
Nov.	No data	170	65	216
Dec.	88	100	145	350
Jan.	253	300+	270	460
Feb	357	350	295	479
March	325	358	350	360
April	320	10	No data	220.

Greylag numbers built up earlier in 1989/90, in early November, and remained higher than in previous years until March. Maximum numbers were seen in January and February, following the pattern of previous years. In March 1st^{4th}, one barnacle goose was feeding with the flock, possibly this arrived with some birds from Kintyre, as a single barnacle was seen feeding amongst greylags here earlier in the winter. The barnacle was not seen again later in the month.

Danna Keels and Ulva.

Distribution of Geese Winter 1989/90.

White Fronts. -- Area seen.

Date.	Danna Fields	Danna Coast	Ulva	Keel's
Oct 26th	9, 10 and 3	25		
Nov 19th	3	23, 25		
Nov. 30th	3		5.	
Dec 4th	5, 11, 16	28		✓
Jan 13th	2, 3	25, 26	5	6+ 7.
Feb 8th			5	7
	3	28, 23	2, 38	
March 10th	15, 4			10, 11 2
March 30th	5, 6, 11 14, 13 15.	28, 26 25		✓

Barley was not grown at Danna na Cloiche this year, the fields here remained as pasture and silage, and had been grazed pretty hard, so the pattern of grazing was different this year. The white fronts made use of the Danna na Cloiche fields when they first arrived but soon moved to different parts of the island.

North Danna ^{fields} were most consistently grazed, along with the coast here and North Danna. The fields at Ulva, in particular 5, behind Old Ulva were well used again this year. Keels was also popular with the geese from Xmas onwards. A flock of 100-130+ grazed the area regularly since then, with another 80-100 on Danna and Ulva. Geese grazed the far west fields on Keels for the first time this year, (improved pasture) and also the fields below Coshandrochaid. As numbers increase, the geese are grazing more widely. The McCormag Islands were also used.

White Fronted geese, Danna, Ulva and Keels

Numbers.

Counts of Greenland White fronted Geese 1986-90

* Maximum Monthly count

Month	1986/87	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90
Oct	No data	176	165	(275) ^{in flight} \pm count
Nov	No data	131	No data	224
Dec	54	162	155	155 (not full.)
Jan	123 0	176*	140	190
Feb	120	165	180	224
March	137	145*	190	203
April	No Data	132	No data	No Data
Average	127	155	166	210.

The numbers of Greenland white fronts in the Danna area increased considerably in 1989-90 - varying from 190 to 224, averaging 210, compared with 166 in 88/89.

This could be explained, ^{partly} by the number of juveniles (Oct) - 18 out of 130, and 23 out of 125 (Jan), on average 16%. Possibly additional geese are choosing to winter on Danna as well. There has been a steady increase in numbers from 1986 to 1990. The improvement of fields at Ulva and Keels has helped to sustain these numbers.

Bannacle Geese.

Bannacles. - Distribution;

These geese were not present on Danna on any of the visits from October to January. There was no barley stubbles to attract them. They were seen on the McCormag Islands and also Carsaig Island. On the February and March visits they were grazing at Danna na Cloiche fields 8 and 10, and the coast here area 26 and 25 and at Mid Danna field 15.

Numbers. 1986-1990.

Bannacle Geese on Danna 1986-1989.

Month	1986/89	1987/88	1988/89	1989/90
Oct	No data	0	250	0
NOV	No data	295	No data	0
Dec	0	75	34	0
Jan	350	200+	267	296
Feb	0	10	150	330
March	0	460	275	330
April	No data	0	No data	No data

When the Bannacles were seen on Danna numbers remained fairly constant 296-330, similar to numbers in previous years.

P. Batty
1990.