

BREEDING GREY-LAG GOOSE (ANSER ANSER) IN DENMARK 1981

Mette Fog

Distribution

The densest population of Grey-lag Goose in Denmark is to be found in the eastern part of the country on the islands of Sjaelland, Lolland, Falster and Fyn. Since the Grey-lag Goose started to expand in this century, little islands in fresh water lakes, ponds and bogs were used as breeding places, and later on also islets in the sea are used for nesting.

Numbers

Dybbro (1976) estimates the Danish breeding population in 1971–1974 at about 2000 pairs.

M. Fog (1977) registered in July 1974 and 1975 19 000 and 22 000 Grey-lag Geese (i. e. adults, juveniles, non-breeding and young birds) on Danish haunts. At this time of the year all individuals are probably of Danish origin, as the migration from the north has not yet started, and the Danish birds are gathering on the haunts just before going south in the course of August and September. According to *Paludan* (1973), the adult birds are estimated to be 30% of the total population. This means that the above mentioned number from July should correspond to a breeding stock of about 2850–3000 pairs (*J. Fog*, 1981, in press). From 1974 to 1975 there was an increase in the population of 10%, this seems to be realistic in relation to the population development. The increase has continued up to 1981.

Breeding in Denmark 1981

Because of the draught in the Spanish winterquarter in Las Marismas during winter 1980/81 and the rumours about heavy loss of Grey-lag Geese from starvation, the Game Biology Station and the Goose Research Group in the regi of the Nordic Council for Wildlife Research (NKV) decided to pay special attention to the breeding population of the Grey-lag Goose 1981 in Denmark as well as in other Nordic countries.

Material

In the course of spring 1981, The Game Biology Station sent requests to a number of persons living in or at some of the greater breeding places for Grey-lag Goose in Denmark and asked them to give a qualified estimate of the population level this year. The following localities were contacted: Vejlerne (Jylland), Hvidkilde, Weddellsborg, Gyldensteen (Fyn), Tissø, Amosen (Sjælland) and Søholt (Lolland). From the localities there was no decrease in the breeding stock, and the geese seem to be in good condition. From Søholt it was said that there were fewer non-breeders than usual and that the geese came late in 1981. Some of the other localities agreed to this last point, too.

From Weddellsborg, especially the area around Tybrind, there were more geese than usual in spring 1981, but the geese arrived 2 weeks later than the previous years. From Holekenhavn, island of Fyn, there were fewer geese than usual, instead of 100 adult birds there were only 20, and all the young birds (100–200) did not arrive. A local population in the city of Horsens in Jylland usually count more than 100 individuals in June, this year there were only about 25 birds – adults with goslings.

In Copenhagen there is a population of Grey-lag Goose on a certain locality, Ueterslev Mose. Here the geese used to be studied, i. e. ringed every year. Here the first geese arrived March 9th, which is very late compared with other years, and out of 55 pull. ringed in 1980 only 2 (3,5%) returned, usually 40% return. There were only 17 breeding pairs, a lower number than usual, but the same number as in 1980, 1972, 1970 and some other years, besides there were many pairs without goslings, totally 73 pairs (*Henning Jensen*, pers. comm.).

Islands in the sea

An investigation on the breeding population of Grey-lag Goose on little islands in the sea was carried out in 1981. A request was sent to 47 people who usually count birds on those islands. Altogether 48 islands were included in the investigation, and there were 178 nests on 33 islands, as 15 did not contain breeding Grey-lag Geese at all. In 14 cases there were less breeding pairs than the year before, in 4 cases there were more. On 8 islands there were quite as many as the previous year, in 7 cases the warden did not know.

Conclusion

It seems as if the young birds and the non-breeders did not turn up at the Danish breeding places in as great a number as expected, but that the breeding pairs arrived. In some cases the breeding failed for unknown reasons. This might be because the winter situation did not put the geese into the usual good condition before breeding, it might be for other more local reasons.

In the NKV it is decided to pay special attention to the Grey-lag Goose population during the next few years in the Nordic countries.

Author's address:
M. Fog
Vildbiologisk Station
Kalo
DK—8410, Rønde.
Denmark

References

- Dybbro, T. (1976):* De danske ynglefugles udbredelse. D. O. F. 293 p.
Fog, J. (1981): Markskader forvoldt af gaes i Danmark. (in press)
Fog, M. (1977): Gänse, Gänseforschung und Gänseprobleme Dänemarks. Die Vogelwelt. 98. 121—141. p.