

## **BLACK BRANT**

*Branta nigricans*

Adult

Fleet Head, Great Wakering

4<sup>th</sup> January 2004

I visited the seawall with my wife with the intention of looking for the over wintering Little Stint which was duly located along Potton Creek. After seeing the stint we made our way along the sea wall towards Fleet Head as I wanted to look at a Brent Goose flock that I had noticed yesterday from the seawall at Barling. The flock was present in the fields north of the central track but it was going to be difficult to approach with out disturbing them. We walked along the seawall on the eastern side and scanned the flock at a range of about 250 yards. As I scanned through the geese I came across an obvious Black Brant which was on the far side of the flock and unfortunately this is where it spent most of it time during the observation. Only occasionally was it seen unobstructed by any other geese. I was able to get an identifiable record shot at a range of about 200 yards after we walked along the sea wall a little further. I eventually managed to creep to within 150 yards of the birds but the Brant remained on the far side of the flock and it proved difficult to obtain any photographs of it. After 20 minutes a member of the public disturbed the geese and at least half of the flock flew towards Potton Island whilst the other half returned to fields slightly closer to where I was standing. Unfortunately it would appear the Brant had chosen to travel with the other birds to Potton Island as there was no further sign of it by dusk.

**Optics:** Kowa TSN824 with 32x wide angle eye piece

**Photographic Evidence:** yes – taken with Nikon Coolpix 995

### **Previous Experience**

I have seen numerous birds in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and have even found several with the most recent in November 2003 that was accepted by the BBRC.



Fig 1: adult Black Brant, *Branta nigricans*, Fleet Head, Great Wakering, Essex 4<sup>th</sup> January 2004. Note the over all dark appearance compared with the nearby Dark-bellied Brent Geese. The white flank patch looks almost silvery with a dark chest that does not contrast with the black neck.



Fig 2 & 3: adult Black Brant, *Branta nigricans*, Fleet Head, Great Wakering, Essex 4<sup>th</sup> January 2004. Note in these shots the overall dark plumage quality of the Brant when compared with the nearby Dark-bellied Brent Geese and the silvery white flank patch. Also note the shorter blacker neck and the broad white horizontal V collar which in fig 3 clearly shows that it meets on the throat and is relatively broad. It can also be seen that it is a rather small individual and is considered to possibly be the bird that that at Paglesham, Essex in November 2003. This based on the two black crescents on the rear white flanks.

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