

Farmland Waders Action Plan

Redshank, Lapwing, Snipe and Redshank

Tringa Totanus, Vanellus vanellus, Gallinago gallinago, Numenius arquata

UK List of Priority Species:

Redshank – No

Lapwing – Yes

Snipe – No

Curlew - Yes

Scottish Biodiversity List:

Redshank – No

Lapwing – Yes

Snipe – No

Curlew - Yes

Birds of Conservation Concern (2002-2009):

Redshank – Amber

Lapwing – Red

Snipe – Amber

Curlew - Red

Summary

In the UK, farmland waders have declined dramatically over the last century. This is mirrored in North Lanarkshire, due to habitat loss through drainage, changes in land use and development. Much of their remaining populations are now restricted to fragmented habitat and are of particular concern in North Lanarkshire due to dwindling numbers.

Historically, there are two strongholds for these species locally but outside of these locations breeding pairs are scarce and scattered.

Species Profile

Lapwing

This wader has a distinctive green, white and black appearance. The adult bird gives a tumbling display flight over its breeding territories in spring. A distinctive 'pee-wit' call gives this bird one of its numerous alternative names. Lapwings are birds of open farmland requiring bare ground or short vegetation for nesting between mid-March and June. Consequently, they prefer spring-tilled arable land and short grassland, including moorland margins and in-bye when selecting nest sites. Those birds which nest on arable often relocate their young to nearby wet ground and appropriately short vegetation (such as grazed pasture) in order to find suitable feeding. Lapwings require a ready abundance of ground and soil invertebrates throughout the year, their preferences being for earthworms, leatherjackets, insects and their larva, which are most abundant on wet grassland and grazed pasture.

Snipe

This is a secretive, mottled brown bird with an extremely long straight bill that can sometimes be as long as its body. They use their long bill to probe for invertebrates such as earthworms and leather jackets in soft soil whilst also taking insects from livestock dung. When flushed, it can be distinguished by an erratic zigzag flight pattern. During display flights, male birds make an unusual 'drumming' sound with their tail feathers. Their breeding period lasts from mid-march to early July. Ground nesters, they build their nest in mires, bogs, wet moorland, rough wet grassland with tussocks, sedges and rushes, and in the marshy marginal areas of wetlands. Winter months find Snipe more commonly on lowland and coastal areas, taking advantage of root crops, stubbles and wet pasture.

Redshank

This noisy wading bird has long red legs and bill with a brown body. In flight it is easily distinguishable, being the only British wader with a broad white bar across the trailing edge of the wing. It has an extensive white rump and upper tail. Its body appears tapered. It breeds on damp fields with tussocky grass or sedge, especially those prone to flooding, or near open water or wet ditches, wet meadows and moorlands. They have also been known to breed on saltmarsh and gravel pits. They winter on mudflats and rocky shores. The adult food source on breeding grounds includes earthworms, beetles, spiders, aquatic insects, flies and their larvae. Out with nesting times they take worms, molluscs, shrimps and crabs. Breeding season lasts from April to late June, the nests are situated on the ground on tussocks or grassy hollows. The young eat mainly midges and flies with beetles and spiders also being taken. Evidence suggests that invertebrates associated with dung can also be an important dietary constituent.

Curlew

Curlew is a widespread resident in Scotland, breeding on farmland and uplands. Also called the 'whaup' in Scotland, is a large, brown wading bird, distinguished by its long, downward-curving bill. Like all of our waders, it nests on the ground, tending to use rushy pastures and moorland, where eggs and chicks can be camouflaged by the long vegetation. Birds often come down to lower pastures to feed. After breeding, large flocks of birds will gather in our uplands before

moving to the coast in the winter. Some wintering Curlew will over winter inland such as the population using Merryton, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Baron's Haugh and Carbars Pool in the Clyde Valley. Curlews have a haunting, plaintive call of 'cou-lee', from which their name derives. Adult curlews feed on earthworms, leatherjackets, beetles, spiders and caterpillars. Their chicks feed mainly on surface invertebrates, with adult flies, crane-flies, beetles and spiders all featuring prominently in their diet.

Legal Status

Redshank, Lapwing, Snipe and Curlew are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended and are covered by Appendix II of the Bonn Convention; Appendix III of the Berne Convention and Article 4.2 of the EU Birds Directive.

Current Status

Species	UK Breeding Population	Scotland	Long term population trend (1994 -2011)	Short term population trend (2006 – 2011)
Lapwing	140,000	71,500 – 105,600 pairs	decreasing	decreasing
Snipe	80,000	34,000 – 40,000 pairs	increasing	increasing
Redshank	25,000	11,700 – 17,500 pairs	decreasing	decreasing (slowing)
Curlew	68,000	58,800 pairs	decreasing	decreasing

The overall trend for breeding farmland waders in Scotland is one of steep decline. This decline is also evident within North Lanarkshire. Each species requires different land management techniques to produce habitats conducive to successful breeding. For example, Lapwings generally require freshly ploughed land whereas Redshank require wet areas and wet ditches. Factors such as land management changes, farming intensification and development have led to suitable breeding wader habitat to become unsuitable and fragmented. Sites that were once known for notable breeding wader numbers are now in sub-optimal condition, with breeding waders uncommon at these sites. During 1984 to 1991, the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) Clyde Branch undertook surveys of breeding waders over extensive areas of North Lanarkshire, and the fieldwork for a tetrad based Breeding Bird Atlas of the Clyde Area. In 1992, the RSPB/BTO/SOC undertook a survey of Breeding Waders in Lowland Scotland. This survey was repeated in 1997/8.

In 2002 there was a survey of waders east of the A80 carried out by a student from the University of Edinburgh assisted by RSPB Scotland. However, updated surveys are required to establish numbers of breeding waders in North Lanarkshire.

All four species have the potential to benefit from restoration and habitat management works arising from development such as mining or windfarms.

Known Key Areas in North Lanarkshire

- River Kelvin floodplain from Kilsyth to Kirkintilloch, including Dumbreck and Dullatur Marshes.
- Fannyside Muir and Garbethill Muir.
- Gartcosh industrial site.
- Baron's Haugh, RSPB reserve, Motherwell.
- Kingshill, Allanton.

With one exception, key wader areas in North Lanarkshire are not covered by any SSSI designations and therefore are not included in any SACs or SPAs. However, a number of small fragmented sites have been designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs). A few sites also have reserve status, although it is recognised that this will only assist a very small numbers of waders.

Current Factors Affecting This Species

- Destruction of habitat due to drainage of wetland areas.
- Autumn sowing, leading to unsuitable breeding habitat in spring and early harvesting, this will severely restrict the birds opportunity to breed or nest successfully.
- High stocking rates, leading to short pasture and trampling of nests.
- The addition of fertiliser and early cutting, leading to nest and chick losses.
- Use of pesticides and herbicides, leading to loss of insects; their main food source.
- Late spring rolling and harrowing of grassland, this will destroy any nests on the site.
- Move from cattle to sheep grazing, this requires an increase in drainage of habitat, fertiliser use, and winter feeding outside (providing a food source for predators).
- Opencast mineral extraction, which is a threat to some key areas. Although, alternative areas of new wader habitat can be created in the restoration stage.
- Inappropriate woodland planting on agricultural land, this can fragment open habitats and can attract predators.
- Climate change

Current Action

- Surveys taken forward annually by NLC Countryside Ranger Service.
- Significant habitat improvements at Dumbreck Local Nature Reserve, Kilsyth in 2022 as part of the Water Environment Funded Garrell Burn River Restoration.
- Significant habitat improvements at Barons Haugh, Motherwell.
- Protection of the habitat through the Local Plan and Planning process.

Objectives

1. Maintain and increase the extent of suitable habitats.
2. Maintain and improve the populations of four key lowland waders breeding in North Lanarkshire.

3. Improve wader records database for North Lanarkshire.

Action	Meets Objective Number	Action by	Target
Policy and legislation			
1.1 Encourage developers to create wader- friendly habitat as part of the restoration of sites, such as mineral workings and windfarms.	1,2	NLC	Ongoing through planning consultations.
1.2 Ensure that proposed flood alleviation schemes do not damage key wader sites and where possible, are used as an opportunity to create breeding wader habitat.	1.2	NLC	Ongoing through the Planning system.
Site safeguard and management			
2.1 Encourage land managers to enter agri-environment schemes such as SRDP, and to adopt wetland creation and management options.	1,2	NLC, RSPB	Engage with 5 landowners by 2028.
Future research and monitoring			
3.1 Establish baseline for key farmland wader breeding sites in North Lanarkshire.	3	NLC	Agree upon survey methodology by 2023 and complete baseline data by 2025.
3.2 Review established farmland wader sites, identify habitat condition, and identify new privately owned sites such as farms and quarries.	3	NLC	To be completed by 2026.
Communications and publicity			
4.1 Encourage public to send in records of breeding waders through social media and survey cards to be handed out at events.	3	NLC	Implement by 2023.

References

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