

## Lesser redpoll

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### Status

BoCC Amber listed because of a marked population decline. There are considerable geographical variations in population change.

### Population

Approximately 50,000 pairs.

### Habitat

Pioneer woodland habitat, eg open scrub woodland, usually dominated by birch, on hillsides and heaths is favoured. Alder woods and young conifer plantations are also used, although large and dense forest stands are avoided.

### Conservation issues

The lesser redpoll is a boreal species, and in Britain appears to be responsive to certain climatic influences and shows pronounced fluctuations in its use of habitat.

The causes of the current population decline are not clear, and locally some populations may increase temporarily. However, following recent taxonomic review, lesser redpoll range is restricted entirely to western Europe with a high proportion of the population in Britain; this adds considerably to the concern regarding the species.

### Ecology

*Feeding:* lesser redpolls feed on very small seeds, especially of birch and alder when available, and locally of spruce or larch, and on invertebrates in the breeding season. They take the seeds from the trees in summer and autumn, but feed on fallen seeds in late autumn and winter.

*Breeding:* nests are located in scrub or in trees, and only rarely on the ground. They are made from tree twigs with an inner layer of densely packed roots, grass, bark, moss and/or leaves, and are down or wool.

Eggs are laid from late May to August with a peak usually in late June, and two broods are usually attempted. Incubation lasts 10–12 days and the chicks fledge in 9–14 days.

### Management issues

Pioneer woodland was relatively widespread and common in the mid-20th century in England on abandoned heathland, commons, downland and marginal farmland. However, these are now maturing beyond the pioneer stage, and intervention to set back succession ie by removing much of the tree cover would encourage the process to begin again. Potential conflicts between encouraging pioneer woodland and objectives for the conservation of open ground habitats will need careful consideration.



**Figure 2.24**  
Breeding  
distribution of the  
lesser redpoll in  
England.