

**THREESTONEBURN FOREST**

**APPENDIX 13**

**NORTHUMBERLAND BIODIVERSITY  
PARTNERSHIP SPECIES & HABITAT  
ACTION PLANS**

## UPLAND WADERS SPECIES ACTION PLAN

Plan Co-ordinator	Upland Habitat Group
Plan Author	Elaine Jaggs
Plan Lead	
Latest version	May 2007



*Working with Wildlife*

### Description

The upland hill areas of Northumberland are important locations for wading birds. Some of these species winter in the coastal areas of Northumberland and return to the uplands in spring, specifically to breed. Other species are long distance migrants.

Damp pastures and meadows or 'wet grassland' are ideal habitat for these ground nesting birds, with areas of rushy vegetation to provide cover. Wading species have characteristic bills of differing length which they use to pick small invertebrates out of the mud and soft soil of the wet habitat. In-bye pastures and moorland edge are important feeding areas for several species including curlew and lapwing and higher altitude blanket bog is used by species such as dunlin and golden plover.

Historically, agricultural land has been drained since the 1930s to enable farmers to grow more crops. Flooded meadows are now a rare site in the British countryside and the populations of wading birds dependent on them have declined as a result.

### Conservation Status

EC Birds Directive, Annex 1 - Golden Plover  
Bern Convention, Appendix 2 - Dunlin  
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, Schedule 1 (all birds)

The conservation status of each upland wader is included in the appendix to this plan.

### Current Extent in Northumberland

In 2002 findings from a census study by the RSPB revealed that snipe had declined by 60% and lapwing and curlew had each declined by 40% since 1982. Nature reserves are now regarded as key to the survival of the species.

The North Pennines AONB is of significant importance for the populations of wading birds that breed in the area. The RSPB estimates that the AONB is home to upwards of 22,000 pairs of wading birds, making it the most important upland area in England.

Annual monitoring of waders occurs on the Otterburn Training Area. A predator control experiment is currently in progress to monitor the effects of foxes, crows and mustelids on ground nesting bird breeding success.

The North Pennines AONB Partnership is currently running a specific project for upland waders called 'Pastures for Plovers'. The project provides management advice to landowners and farmers on the work that most benefits nesting birds and encourages take up of agri-environment schemes.

### Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Overgrazing and trampling
- Predation
- Spring machinery operations
- Visual obstructions
- Drainage
- Disturbance

### Associated Action Plans

Heather Moorland  
Upland Hay Meadow  
Rivers and streams  
Black Grouse  
Blanket Bog

### Further Information

RSPB website - <http://www.rspb.org.uk/>

British Trust for Ornithology website - <http://www.bto.org/>

### Targets

Maintain the current population numbers of upland waders in Northumberland by 2010

Maintain the current range of upland waders in Northumberland by 2010

Increase the current population numbers of upland waders in Northumberland by 2015

Increase the current range of upland waders in Northumberland by 2015

Priority Actions	Date
Establish and coordinate a system to monitor the range and populations of all upland wader species identified in this action plan. Repeat surveys every 5 years.	2007
Identify the key sites for upland wading birds	2007
Compile a list of potential nesting and feeding sites	2008
Encourage ELS and HLS schemes to increase feeding and nesting sites and address unsuitable agricultural management regimes	ongoing
Produce educational and interpretation material on upland wading birds to increase public interest and understanding	ongoing
Ensure all SSSIs designated for upland waders are in favourable or recovering condition.	2010

## Appendix

Species	Conservation Status			
	UK BAP Priority species	Regional BAP Priority species	UK Red list	UK Amber list
Curlew ( <i>Numenius arquata</i> )		x		x
Dunlin ( <i>Calidris alpina</i> )		x		x
Golden Plover ( <i>Pluvialis apricaria</i> )		x		
Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> )		x		x
Oystercatcher ( <i>Haematopus ostralegus</i> )				x
Redshank ( <i>Tringa tetanus</i> )		x		x
Snipe ( <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> )		x		x

## BATS SPECIES ACTION PLAN

Plan Co-ordinator	Urban Habitat Group
Plan Author	Sam Talbot with support from Northumberland Bat Group
Plan Lead	
Latest version	May 2007



*Working with Wildlife*

### Description

10 of the 17 British species of bat have been recorded in Northumberland and although the different species have different requirements their needs are broadly similar. All are insectivorous and need insect-rich wetland, pasture or deciduous woodland in which to hunt. They navigate to feeding sites from their roosts using linear land features such as hedgerows, watercourses, avenues of trees or roads. All bats need a warm safe place to roost in the summer such as a hollow tree, in a building or in cavities external to a building such as hanging tiles, soffits and bargeboards or timber fascias. All bats hibernate and so need a cold, draft-free and safe place to spend the winter months, often within stone structures, mineshafts, large trees or even behind rotten timber window frames in wall cavities.

Pipistrelle bats are the most abundant and widespread bat species in the UK, but are thought to have undergone a significant decline in numbers in the last century. Estimates from the National Bat Colony Survey suggest a population decline of approximately 70% between 1978 and 1993. The current pre-breeding population estimate for the UK stands at approximately 2,000,000. The problems of estimating population trends have been compounded by the recent discovery that there are 3 distinct species of Pipistrelle bat in the UK.

### Conservation Status

Bern Convention, Appendix III  
 EC Habitats Directive, Annex IV  
 Bonn Convention, Appendix II  
 Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994, Regulation 38  
 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Schedules 5 and 6

### Current Extent in Northumberland

<u>Species</u>		<u>Frequency</u>
Brandt's bat	<i>(Myotis brandtii)</i>	Rare
Brown Long Eared	<i>(Plecotus auritus)</i>	Frequent
Common Pipistrelle	<i>(Pipistrellus pipistrellus)</i>	Common
Daubenton's bat	<i>(Myotis daubentonii)</i>	Frequent on water
Leisler's bat	<i>(Nyctalus leisleri)</i>	Rare
Nathusius' Pipistrelle	<i>(Pipistrellus nathusii)</i>	Rare
Natterer's bat	<i>(Myotis nattereri)</i>	Uncommon
Noctule bat	<i>(Nyctalus noctula)</i>	Scattered
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>(Pipistrellus pygmaeus)</i>	Common
Whiskered bat	<i>(Myotis mystacinus)</i>	Uncommon

### Associated Action Plans

Brownfield land  
Built environment  
Gardens & allotments  
Lowland meadows & pastures  
Native woodland  
Ponds, lakes and reservoirs  
Recreational & amenity spaces  
Rivers & streams  
Transport corridors  
Wet grassland

### Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Loss and fragmentation of insect-rich feeding habitats such as wetlands, native grasslands, gardens, over mature trees and deciduous woodland
- Loss of or damage to linear features such as tree-lines or hedgerows, depriving bats of commuting routes and foraging routes between roosts and feeding areas
- Loss of or damage to roosting sites, including buildings, hollow trees, and underground structures (mines, tunnels, ice-houses, cellars, etc.)
- European protected species status not enforced by local authorities and other organisations when assessing planning applications for various kinds of development and proposals to restore historic buildings and structures
- Loss of many roosts through demolition, inappropriate building practices, use of toxic timber treatment chemicals, installation of cavity wall insulation, roof removal and tree felling by roost owners
- Reduction in the abundance and diversity of insect prey due to intensive agriculture, particularly over-grazing, loss of diverse grassland and the use of pesticides
- Legal or illegal roost loss not being balanced by active general provision for bats elsewhere in new builds or other structures (such as woodcrete boxes) unless a roost has been directly damaged by a refurbishment or new development and the planning process has identified and addressed this impact
- Predation of bats by domestic cats or accidental death by collision with vehicles

### Further Information

Bat Conservation Trust - [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)  
The Bat Conservation Trust, Unit 2, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London, SW8 4BG. Tel: 020 7627 2629 Fax: 020 7627 2628

This Bats action plan links to the pipistrelle bat UK BAP action plan, whose lead partner is the Bat Conservation Trust

## Targets

Maintain the current population of bats in Northumberland by 2010.

Maintain the current range of bats in Northumberland by 2010.

Install 20 suitable hibernation and summer roosts in areas known to be used by bats in Northumberland by 2015.

Priority Actions	Date
Establish baseline knowledge of recorded bat roosts, swarming sites and bat hunting areas through mapping Northumberland Bat Group records and any EIAs in planning departments with follow up surveys	2008
Establish baseline knowledge of existing but unrecorded bat roosts through strategic surveying of areas with no records and appealing to the public for roost reports. Assess under-recorded areas through car transect surveys	2008
Monitor known bat roosts to establish population numbers	2010
Survey all old Pipistrelle roost records to establish which species is resident	2010
Review survey data to establish typical distributions for each bat species	2010
Identify types of roost considered to be of national, regional, county, district and parish importance to help inform future planning decisions	2010
Use the survey results to create numeric targets to maintain and increase the population and range of each individual species of bat found in Northumberland	2010
Create a display on bats and tour it through events and libraries	2007
Hold bat walks to promote bats and encourage people to submit roost records.	ongoing
Engage schools and out of school groups through box making, craft activities and meet-the-bat events	ongoing
Continue to offer free general advice to householders and an injured bat rescue service via the Bat Advice Line	ongoing
Create an advisory leaflet aimed at the construction sector on how to deal with bats legally	2008
Create an advisory leaflet aimed at tree surgeons on how to deal with bats legally	2008
Prevent where possible, or mitigate against, any roost loss or habitat loss or fragmentation (including commuting roosts)	ongoing
Require habitat enhancement as planning gain for all developments that adversely affect bat roosts to help meet local authority requirements to conserve biodiversity	ongoing
Promote habitat enhancement through rural and farming grants	ongoing
Promote establishment of new hedgerow trees by allowing existing trimmed ash and oak to grow on. Promote hedge cutting on at least a three-year cycle to increase hedge sizes. Lay hedges rather than flail where possible	ongoing

## BLACK GROUSE SPECIES ACTION PLAN

Plan Co-ordinator	Uplands Habitat Group
Plan Author	Elaine Jaggs
Plan Lead	Game Conservancy Trust & RSPB
Latest version	May 2007



*Working with Wildlife*

### Description

Male black grouse or 'blackcocks' have glossy blue-black plumage with bright red patches over each eye called wattles and striking white stripes on each wing which can be seen when they are in flight. They have curved black tail feathers which they fan when displaying to reveal white under tail feathers.

The females or 'greyhens' have mottled brown feathers to camouflage them in heather and grass when nesting or feeding on the ground. They have a short, slightly forked tail and their white wing bars are narrower than on males. The female is slightly smaller than the male. Black grouse can live up to five years in the wild.

Adult black grouse have wide food requirements feeding on heather, herbs and grasses and the buds and berries from trees. Young chicks feed on insects. Black grouse therefore rely on a mosaic of habitats on moorland edges, where heather meets grassy fields and areas of scrub and woodland to provide sources of food all year round.

Studies on the dispersal patterns of black grouse show that juvenile females disperse on average 9 kilometres from their natal site compared with less than 1 kilometre by males. The male black grouse carry out early morning displays at clearings known as 'leks' to defend their territories and during spring compete for the attention of females to mate. The display involves strutting with their tails spread and heads held low whilst making their distinctive call.

Once mating is over the male takes no further part. The female makes a nest site on the ground in tall, reasonably dense, vegetation where she will lay 6 to 13 eggs which will hatch in mid to late June. Chicks leave the nest immediately, following the hen to feed in insect rich vegetation and become independent after 2 to 3 months. Cock poults will leave the family group first in early September, followed by the females in October and November.

### Conservation Status

UK Red List, Birds of Conservation Concern

UK BAP Priority Species

Games Act, closed season 11<sup>th</sup> December to 19<sup>th</sup> August

North East Regional BAP Species

Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000, Species of Principal Importance



### **Current Extent in Northumberland**

Measures to arrest the decline of black grouse in England are being coordinated by the North Pennines Black Grouse Recovery Project. The project covers the three main areas that contain black grouse in England which are the North Pennines AONB, the Yorkshire Dales and north-west Northumberland.

The county of Northumberland is included in two of these areas; the North Pennines AONB and north-west Northumberland.

The population of lekking males in the North Pennines AONB was recorded as 773 males in 1998 and has increased to 1029 males in 2006. The overall population covers a range of 93 occupied 5 kilometre grid squares, an increase of 19 grid squares since 1998.

The population of lekking males in north-west Northumberland was recorded as 61 males in 1998 and has declined to 50 males in 2006. The overall population covers a range of 12 occupied 5 kilometre grid squares, which has remained the same since 1998. The population in this area is isolated from the core North Pennines population and specific conservation measures will be required in order to arrest this decline.

### **Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline**

- Changes in farming
- Changes in forestry
- Predation
- Poor weather conditions
- Fence collisions

### **Associated Action Plans**

Blanket Bog  
Heather Moorland  
Native Woodland  
Upland Hay Meadows

### **Further Information**

Black Grouse UK website - <http://www.blackgrouse.info/index.htm>

The Population Status of Birds in the UK - Birds of Conservation Concern: 2002-2007

This black grouse action plan links to the black grouse UK BAP action plan whose lead partners are the Games Conservancy Trust and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.  
<http://www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=596#6>

## Targets

Increase the population of black grouse in England to 1,000 lekking males by 2010

Increase the range of the black grouse in England to 48 occupied 10 kilometre grid squares by 2010.

Priority Actions	Date
Ensure funding to continue the North Pennines Black Grouse Recovery Project	ongoing
Continue to carry out brood counts on an annual basis to monitor breeding success	ongoing
Continue to carry out lek counts every 4 years to monitor adult numbers	2010
Provide free advisor visits to farmers and land owners to encourage them to improve conditions for black grouse	ongoing
Ensure funding is available through agri-environment schemes and forestry grants to deliver landscape scale habitat improvements for black grouse	ongoing
Continue to promote the code of conduct for bird watchers when observing black grouse	ongoing
Carry out a translocation trial of males to new sites on the fringe of their range in order to establish new leks. Monitor their movements, behaviour and survival.	2010