

PROGRESS Report – tentative conclusions/observations from two seasons of breeding wader surveys in the New Forest

The breeding wader surveys were undertaken at eight areas in 2006 and nine areas in 2007. These study areas selected support a range of open habitats favoured by wading birds. These areas also feature significant visitor infrastructure such as car parks, with the intention of changing the use of these car parks and monitoring the effects on breeding wader activity in subsequent seasons. Two of the nine study areas are controls where no changes to normal visitor management were proposed.

Due to the limited time availability during the 2006 breeding wader season, surveys were only conducted between 10th - 30th June, with a minimum of 2 visits to each site. In contrast, a full season of survey work was undertaken in 2007, with a minimum of 3 visits to each site between 4th April - 4th July. The shortened survey season in 2006 meant that some early nesting attempts (whether successful or otherwise), in particular by Lapwing, will not have been recorded.

Summary of survey results to date:

Survey area	Lapwing	Snipe	Curlew	Redshank
Stonyford Pond	1 (2)	0 (3)	2 (0)	0 (1)
Crockford	16 (6)	4 (7)	3 (3)	1 (2)
Pig Bush/Denny	6 (0)	1 (2)	2 (1)	1 (0)
Longwater Lawn	4 (0)	1 (2)	2 (0)	0 (0)
Fulliford Bog	0	2	0	0
Hincheslea Bog	3 (1)	3 (4)	0 (4)	0 (0)
Holmhill	0	1	2	0
Clayhill (Burley)	3 (0)	6 (3)	2 (1)	0 (0)
Ditched Brook	0	1	0	0

N.B. The figures in black text are from 2007, figures in red are from 2006.

From the summarised data above it can be seen that there is a general trend of more Lapwing during the breeding season in 2007 than there was in 2006. A similar trend can be seen for curlew (with the notable exception of the Hincheslea study area). The unseasonal wet weather conditions in the breeding season of 2007 has not helped, and it is likely that snipe will have been under-recorded from several sites. Redshank are now unfortunately present in only very low numbers in the New Forest, and this survey confirms situation in the areas considered.

Due to the limited window of survey opportunity in 2006, and the unseasonal wet weather throughout the breeding season in 2007, it is too early to draw conclusions on breeding wader occupation in the study areas. For example, the control sites at Longwater Lawn and Stonyford Pond show significant fluctuations in the breeding waders using these areas of the last two seasons in the absence of any manipulation of visitor pressure. Similar such fluctuations can be seen in the seven other study areas where the PROGRESS Project has sought to change patterns of visitor pressure. Because it is too soon to draw conclusions from this work, it is therefore essential to continue to monitor breeding wader occupation in these study areas each season until sufficient data has been gathered to inform the future planning of visitor management.