

Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)

Peesie, Teuchat (Scots) Curracag (Gaelic)

National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

Building & Benefitting Biodiversity: Wading farmland birds

The Lapwing, commonly known as peewit, is a distinctive farmland wader, which has suffered severe population decline and has therefore a red conservation status. Scotland's Lapwing population has declined by 56% from 1995-2018; most recent population estimate is 71,500-105,600 pairs (Foster et al., 2013)

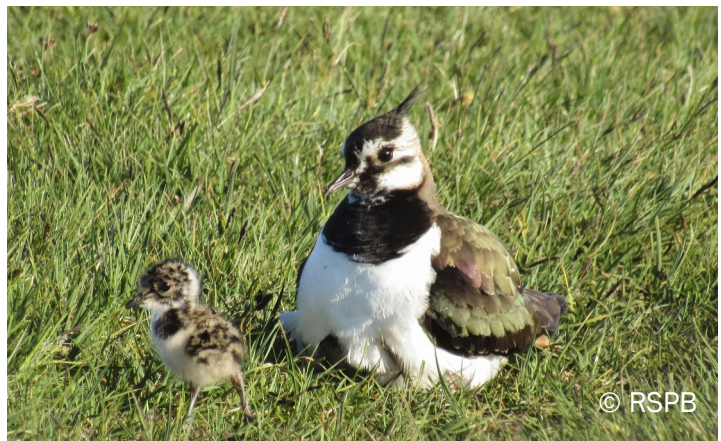
Characteristics

- A black and white wading bird with a green tinted back & distinctive crest & black crown
- In its wavering flight it shows a round-winged shape and distinctive black & white plumage
- The wheezing “pee-wit” calls can be heard from March until May (Scan QR code overleaf to hear calls)
- The male wobbles, zigzags, rolls and dives while calling to advertise his presence to rival males and potential mate



Habitat preferences

- Flock on pasture & ploughed fields in winter
- Return to inland breeding areas from mid-late February until late July, then return to the coast
- Prefer short, dry (ca. 5cm) vegetation on grassland, spring-sown crops, or fallow land, where they forage on worms & insects
- Also nest on heath, bogs, or wetland with short vegetation adjacent to improved pasture



Nesting behaviour

- Nest is a scrape in the ground, lined with a variable amount of plant material
- Nest away from trees & buildings to provide an all-around view from to spot predators
- Lay clutches eggs (up to 4) in April, that hatch in early May
- Replacement clutches hatch by June



Key considerations

- Crofters/farmers can contribute to the survival of wading birds
- In favorable conditions, Lapwings form loose colonies of several pairs to defend from predators
- Flocks of migrant lapwings can also be seen inland throughout autumn and mild winters

Practical management options

- Although their habitat requirements differ slightly, broadly similar measures will benefit Lapwing, Curlew, and Oystercatcher
- Manage grazing to create a predominately short (ca. 5 cm) sward in spring, but with some tussocks to cover from predators
- For Lapwings, exclude grazing from early April until mid-May, but ideally keep the stocking rate <1 Livestock Unit (LU)/ha until early June to reduce the risk of trampling of any late or replacement nests
- Bare or sparsely-vegetated fallow land can provide an alternative to spring-sown crops for nesting lapwings and oystercatchers
- Create open, shallow pools or scrapes within the pasture to hold water from March –June



Scan this QR code to use this [link](#) to listen to a recording of the distinctive, alarm call of the Lapwing.

For further information, search for waders at the following sites:

www.workingforwaders.com

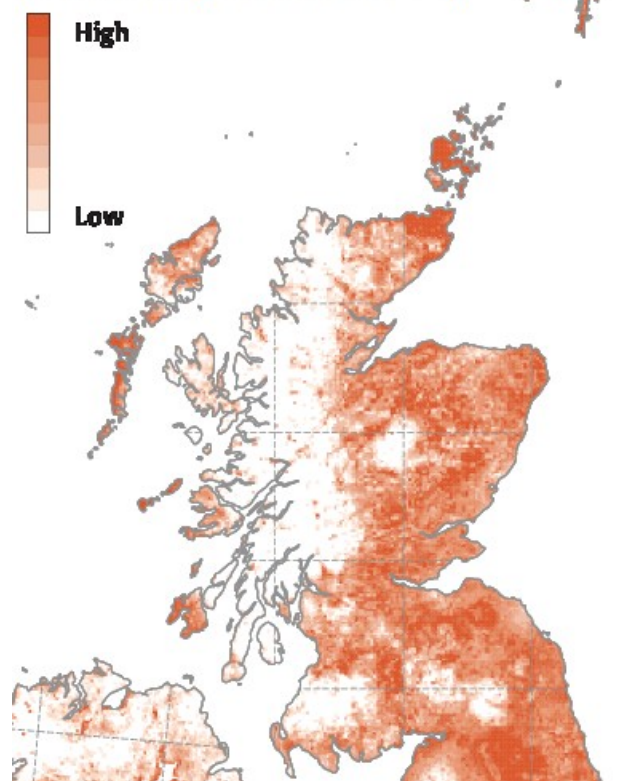
www.rspb.org.uk

www.fas.scot

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Relative Abundance (Breeding 2008-2011)



Lapwing abundance in Scotland during the breeding season. Map reproduced from Bird Atlas 2007–11, which is a joint project between BTO, BirdWatch Ireland and the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. Map reproduced with permission from the British Trust for Ornithology.