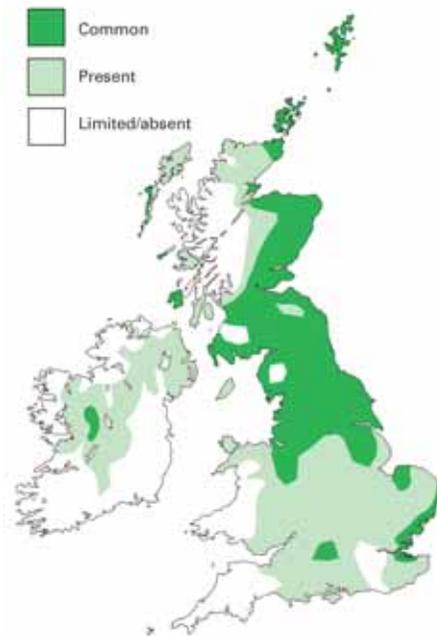




for birds
for people
for ever



Distribution map showing the relative abundance of lapwings in Britain and Ireland 1988-91



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

This distinctive bird gives a tumbling display flight over breeding territories in spring.

Lapwings can be found on all types of farmland, but are scarcer in purely arable or intensive grassland systems. The UK population of the lapwing fell by 45% between 1970 and 2003. This decline has been largely caused by the loss of mixed farming and spring cropping, and the intensification of grassland management. Declines in the west of the UK have led to local extinctions. Large winter flocks are not an indication of good breeding numbers as these birds have often travelled from northern Europe.

WHAT DO LAPWINGS NEED?

Nesting habitat

The most important attributes of nesting habitat are an open aspect and short, variable vegetation structure to allow adults to detect predators but also allow chicks to find cover in the event of danger. They nest on spring-tilled arable land or on short grassland with a low stocking rate (particularly on

unimproved or semi-improved grassland). Arable nesting birds often walk their chicks onto grazed pasture to feed.

can find lots of these, such as in grazed pasture. Wet grassland is a particularly important source of food.

Food (soil and ground invertebrates)

Lapwings feed mainly on earthworms, leatherjackets, soil surface insects and their larvae. They generally feed where they

ANNUAL LIFECYCLE OF A LAPWING

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Flocks feed in fields where soil invertebrate densities are high before returning to their breeding areas early in the spring.			Main breeding season. Require short swards or rough fallows for nesting. Only rear one brood, but may make several attempts.						Winter flocks generally move south or west, especially in cold weather, and find areas with plenty of soil invertebrate food.			

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE LAPWINGS?

Nesting habitat

- Look out for nests in fields during cultivation, drilling, muck-spreading or rolling operations between mid-March and June; where a series of operations is required, try to undertake them all within one week, so that failed pairs can re-nest safely.
- Avoid planting new trees or hedges in fields used by nesting lapwings.
- Create suitable nesting habitat where birds have nested before, or in large open fields away from tall hedges or woodland.
- Maintain or restore spring cropping in areas used by nesting lapwings.
- Plan cropping so that some spring crops are adjacent to areas of grazed pasture.
- **SA HLS** Where spring cropping is no longer a viable option, or in arable fields particularly favoured by nesting lapwings, create a 2-ha fallow plot by ploughing in autumn, or ploughing and discing in February (a derogation is needed for set-aside), then leave undisturbed until mid-July.
- **ELS HLS** Maintain or restore areas of unimproved or semi-improved grassland used by nesting lapwings.
- Adopt stocking rates during the nesting season to maintain a short sward, but with the fewest animals to reduce the risks of nest trampling. Raise stocking rates in late summer to graze sward down for following spring.
- **ELS** Take measures to control rush levels below 30% of field area.

Summer and winter food

- **HLS** Arable reversion to grazed pasture in large or open fields will boost feeding opportunities for lapwings in predominantly arable farming areas.
- **ELS** Buffer strips and field corner management may boost insect abundance in arable fields. Beetle banks in larger arable fields provide insect food and good cover for chicks.
- **HLS** Maintain or restore areas of wet grassland in fields where lapwings nest.
- **HLS** Create small wet features in grasslands used by nesting lapwings, such as wader scrapes, damp hollows created by blocking field drains, or re-profiling ditch banks and raising the water levels.

KEY

 = all farms  = arable and mixed farms  = pastoral farms

ELS = Entry Level Stewardship **HLS** = Higher Level Stewardship **SA** = Set-aside

PRIORITY ACTION

- The lapwing is a target species for Higher Level Stewardship.
- Maintain suitable nesting habitat in fields traditionally used for nesting.
- Where spring cropping is no longer a viable option, create fallow plots using set-aside or Higher Level Stewardship.
- Look out for nests during agricultural operations between mid-March and June.
- Avoid planting new trees or hedges in areas used by nesting lapwings.

See also the RSPB advisory sheets on:

- Fallow plots for ground-nesting birds
- Set-aside management
- Grazed pasture
- Rush management
- Scrape creation for waders
- Managing water levels to benefit birds
- Buffer strips on cultivated land
- Beetle banks
- Reversion of arable and temporary grassland

For answers to all of your farm wildlife enquiries, visit www.farmwildlife.info

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



Agricultural Adviser, The RSPB,
UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy,
Bedfordshire SG19 2DL
Tel: 01767 680551
www.rspb.org.uk/farming



Farming and Wildlife Advisory
Group, NAC, Stoneleigh,
Kenilworth, Warwickshire
CV8 2RX Tel: 024 7669 6699
www.fwag.org.uk



The Game Conservancy Trust, Fordingbridge,
Hampshire SP6 1EF Tel: 01425 652381
www.gct.org.uk