

BIRDS OF WET GRASSLAND

Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Species

This Species Action Plan is a generic plan for four priority bird species that breed on Hampshire's wet grassland:

| | |
|----------------|----------------------------|
| Lapwing | <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> |
| Common snipe | <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> |
| Redshank | <i>Tringa totanus</i> |
| Yellow wagtail | <i>Motacilla flava</i> |

The habitat also supports important populations of wintering wildfowl, including gadwall *Anas strepera* and, on the coast, dark-bellied brent goose *Branta bernicla bernicla*¹. Many other species regularly utilise the habitat, including bewick's swan *Cygnus columbianus*, white-fronted goose *Anser albifrons* and dabbling ducks such as Eurasian wigeon *Anas penelope* and common teal *Anas crecca*. When there is extensive flooding, internationally important numbers of black-tailed godwit *Limosa limosa* occur together with other waders such as dunlin *Calidris alpina*. The habitat is also important for resident passerines such as skylark *Alauda arvensis* and reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

Although habitat requirements vary from species to species, both breeding and over-wintering birds will benefit from the actions in this Plan.

1.2 Wet Grassland

For the purposes of this Plan, wet grassland is defined as any area of permanent damp grassland that is subjected periodically to freshwater flooding or has a high water table. Although many such areas have been lost in Hampshire, some could be brought back into wet grassland conditions if managed appropriately. Remaining areas of wet grassland occur along major river floodplains and on low-lying coastal areas where they often grade on the seaward side into saltmarsh, and on the landward side into pasture and arable farmland. The habitat includes grazing marsh, water meadow and fen meadow. Other wet areas such as coastal saltmarsh and heathland bog are also very important habitats for many of the species considered here. These habitats are the subject of individual habitat action plans

and conservation action will benefit many birds of wet grassland.

The extent of wet grassland in the UK has declined considerably over the past 50 years. The loss in Hampshire has been marked. The habitat is now mainly restricted to the floodplains of the Avon, Test, Itchen and Meon river valleys with remnants in the Blackwater, Rother, Wey and other valleys, and to the coastal grazing marshes around Langstone and Chichester Harbours, the Beaulieu Estuary and Keyhaven/Pennington Marshes.

As the extent of wet grassland has declined, the quality of many of the remaining areas has also deteriorated through inappropriate management. The four priority species in this Plan have undergone substantial reductions in numbers and are far less common as breeding birds in Hampshire now than they were 30 years ago^{2,3}.

The reasons for the declines differ from species to species and may not be attributed solely to the reduction in the extent and quality of wet grassland habitat. Other influences such as reduced rates of winter survival, increased disturbance due to sporting activities and public access, climate change or natural range changes could also be involved. As with many other bird species in southern England however, it is likely that habitat-related factors are of crucial importance.

This Plan is intended to draw attention to the value and vulnerability of Hampshire's remaining wet grassland as a habitat for priority bird species, and to identify actions to reverse the negative trends in habitat quality and number of bird populations supported.

1.3 Links with Habitat Action Plans

This Plan should be read in conjunction with the Hampshire Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) for Lowland Wet Grassland⁴ and Coastal Grazing Marsh⁴, which include all the factors affecting these habitats in Hampshire. Although wet grassland is an important habitat for all the species in this Plan, their needs will also be relevant to actions outlined in several other HAPs⁴:

- Heathland, acid grassland and bog
- Fen, carr, marsh, swamp and reedbed
- Standing open water

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- Ephemeral ponds
- Saltmarsh
- Mudflats and eelgrass beds
- Saline lagoons
- Arable land (for lapwing and yellow wagtail)

2 CURRENT STATUS

2.1 Ecology and Habitat Requirements

Three of the four species considered here – lapwing, common snipe and redshank – are wading birds and share some ecological and habitat requirements. There are, however, important differences in their feeding and breeding needs. The fourth member of the group, yellow wagtail, is a small passerine species that favours wet grassland as its breeding habitat. The race of yellow wagtail that breeds in Hampshire (*M.f.flavissima*) is restricted to the British Isles and the near continent.

Brief details of the ecology and habitat requirements for each species are given below⁵.

- **Lapwing** – Occupy open, unenclosed terrain with low, sparse or patchy vegetation. They feed on invertebrates living on, or just below, the soil surface and prefer moist or even saturated soil conditions for feeding. In southern England, lapwing favour natural sites such as bogs, marshes and wet grassland where available but are increasingly dependent on pasture and arable farmland. Some lapwings that breed in southern England move south in winter and immigrants from northern Europe boost the local population.
- **Common snipe** – Breed in wet meadows, marshes and heathland mires. Their basic requirement is for fresh or brackish shallow water with frequent clumps of low vegetation such as coarse grass or sedge to provide cover and nest sites. Common snipe also require elevated perches as look-out posts. They feed by probing their long bills into soft ground on the edge of water or in shallows. Food consists mainly of invertebrates such as worms, larval and adult insects and molluscs, but also includes vegetable material. It is a partial migrant with winter populations boosted by continental immigrants.
- **Redshank** – Breed on coastal islands and salt marshes, in heathland mires and on wet grassland. They choose open areas with fences, walls or isolated trees as look-out posts and nest on the ground in a tussock or under over-arching vegetation. They feed on

moist grassland or estuarine mud and, when feeding on the former, take earthworms and adult and larval insects. Most Hampshire breeding birds are resident but immigrants from further north in the UK and from Europe swell the population in winter.

- **Yellow wagtail** – Occupy fringes of wetlands including upper levels of saltmarshes, water meadows, moist pastures and wasteland around gravel pits and reclamation sites. They require low, dense vegetation, with bushes, fences, walls etc. to provide more elevated perches, and nest on the ground in a tuft of vegetation, usually close to water. They feed on a broad range of small invertebrates, including larval and adult mayflies, butterflies, moths, flies and spiders. The British population winters in West Africa.

2.2 National Population Trends

All four species are widely but patchily distributed in the UK. Available data from the British Trust for Ornithology's Common Bird Census (CBC), Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS), show significant population declines in recent years⁶.

| Species | Change | Period | Basis |
|----------------|--------|---------|---------------|
| Lapwing | -34% | 1968-98 | CBC |
| Common Snipe | -36% | 1994-99 | BBS (England) |
| Redshank | -34% | 1975-98 | WeBS |
| Yellow Wagtail | -40% | 1968-98 | CBC |

Declines have been pronounced in southern England. For example, the British Trust for Ornithology's (BTO) survey of lapwings carried out in 1998 found a 53% reduction in the region's population compared with results from their 1987 survey⁷.

2.3 Populations and Distribution in Hampshire

Although good quantitative data are lacking, it is clear that the situation in Hampshire mirrors the regional trends and is more extreme than the national picture. The breeding populations of all four species have declined considerably over the last 30-40 years. Population estimates for the county were last made in 1992 based on results of the Hampshire Ornithological Society (HOS) Tetrad Survey² :

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Lapwing | 2300-2900 pairs |
| Common snipe | 200 pairs |
| Redshank | 500-550 pairs |
| Yellow wagtail | 30 pairs |

These 1992 totals were upper limits as the populations were declining at the time. They also include birds breeding on areas other than wet grassland, for example lapwings on arable farmland, snipe on heathland bog and redshanks on saltmarsh. The populations on

the county's main wet grassland sites and population trends over the past decade are summarised below for each species.

- **Lapwing** – Still widely distributed across Hampshire farmland but notable concentrations are restricted to river valleys and coastal grassland. The 1992 population estimate above included survey data for the county's main wet grassland areas.

| Site | Year | Pairs |
|----------------------|-------|-------|
| Avon Valley | 1990 | 211 |
| Test & Anton Valleys | 1980s | 90 |
| Itchen Valley | 1980s | 60 |
| Farlington Marshes | 1990 | 24 |
| Needs Ore | 1992 | 57 |

More recent evidence suggests that the county population has been, and continues to be, in decline. For example in the 1987 BTO survey, 61 pairs were located in 35 randomly selected tetrads. In 1998 only 50 pairs were located in 79 tetrads³.

- **Common Snipe** – Mainly restricted to the river valleys and New Forest mires. The 1992 county estimate included the following populations for the main wet grassland sites.

| Site | Year | Pairs |
|-------------------------|------|-------|
| Avon Valley | 1990 | 35 |
| Test plus tributaries | 1992 | 20 |
| Itchen plus tributaries | 1992 | 11 |
| Meon Valley | 1992 | 3 |
| Whitewater & Loddon | 1992 | 5 |

At all sites, numbers declined through the 1970s and 1980s. For example, the estimate of 11 territories for the river Itchen and its tributaries in 1992 contrasts with 26 territories located in a survey of the area in 1976. In 1978 an area around the river Whitewater held 24 territories, yet during the HOS Tetrad Survey in 1986/91 only one territory was located². Recent evidence indicates that the decline is continuing³.

- **Redshank** – In Hampshire redshank breed in three main habitats: coastal islands and salt marsh, wet grassland and New Forest bogs. Population estimates for the main wet grassland sites included in the 1992 county total are as follows.

| Site | Year | Pairs |
|-------------------------|------|-------|
| Avon Valley | 1990 | 164 |
| Test plus tributaries | 1992 | 80 |
| Itchen plus tributaries | 1992 | 28 |
| Meon Valley | 1992 | 6 |
| Whitewater & Loddon | 1992 | 8 |
| Farlington Marshes | 1992 | 9 |

As with the previous two species, the population on wet grassland has declined substantially over recent years. For example, at Lower Test Marshes the number of territories fell from 16 in 1992 to just two in 1999³. In this particular case nest failure due to flooding (see section 3 below) is the main causal factor.

- **Yellow wagtail** – Once plentiful in Hampshire's larger river valleys⁸, the yellow wagtail is now rare as a breeding species in the county. The decline began in the 1960s and by the early 1990s the population had fallen to about 30 pairs. The 1992 total included the following estimates for river valley and coastal grassland sites.

| Site | Year | Pairs |
|--------------------|------|-------|
| Avon Valley | 1992 | 10 |
| Test Valley | 1992 | 6 |
| Itchen Valley | 1992 | 1 |
| Farlington Marshes | 1992 | 12 |

The decline continued through the 1990s and by the end of the decade Farlington Marshes was the only known regular breeding site in the county. In recent years, yellow wagtails have failed to breed successfully even at Farlington. The species is close to becoming extinct as a Hampshire breeding bird.

2.4 Protection

The species in this Plan are given basic protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the EC Birds Directive. Yellow wagtail is also listed on Appendix II of the Bern Convention (see also section 4.1 "Site and Species Protection" below).

3 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING BIRDS OF WET GRASSLAND

Hampshire is generally recognised as retaining some of the finest stretches of river floodplain and coastal grazing marsh in southern England. Unfortunately, even though gross destruction of these remaining areas through drainage, conversion to arable land and urban development is now largely a thing of the past, ongoing inappropriate land management practices continue to damage the biodiversity of the habitat. The situation is reviewed in detail in the Hampshire *Water and Biodiversity Topic Action Plan*⁴, the *Lowland Wet Grassland HAP*⁴ and the *Coastal Habitats HAP*⁴.

The most significant factors impacting on the attractiveness of the habitat to the species in this Plan are summarised below.

Changed frequency, duration and speed of flooding. A key problem in the river valleys is

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that the floodplains are generally drier than they used to be. Water management within the floodplains to make land suitable for agriculture has played a big part. Other factors such as catchment area extraction schemes and river engineering for flood defence purposes have combined to reduce the frequency and duration of flooding and lower the water tables. As the floodplains have dried they have become more susceptible to agricultural improvement or have suffered from a lack of appropriate management.

Enhanced drainage systems upstream have also led to rapidly changing water levels downstream with resultant flash flooding. In the Avon Valley, prolonged extensive flooding prevents areas of grassland being sufficiently grazed to produce the low sward height needed by breeding waders in spring. For a variety of reasons the richness of the flora and fauna associated with wet grassland, including its suitability as habitat for the species in this Plan, has been reduced.

- Agricultural improvement. Much of Hampshire's river floodplains and coastal marsh has been developed or agriculturally improved through drainage and/or the application of fertilisers, herbicides or insecticides. Intensive grassland management or conversion to arable cultivation destroys, or at least significantly impairs, the suitability of the habitat for wet grassland birds. The four species in this Plan are ground-nesters, so agricultural activities such as rolling and mowing, if carried out during the breeding season, can drastically reduce breeding success. Over-grazing, particularly by dairy herds, can also lead to nest failure through trampling or destruction of habitat. The application of fertilisers can lead to excessive grass growth in spring making habitat unsuitable.

- Agricultural neglect. Those remaining floodplain and coastal grasslands that have not been improved may, paradoxically, have suffered through dereliction and lack of appropriate agricultural management. For example, watercourses created to irrigate water meadows have fallen into disrepair leading directly to loss of wetland habitat. Abandonment of grazing or mowing has also resulted in species-rich wet meadows being replaced by rank grassland infested with nettles, thistles and dock. Scrub encroachment has also occurred. Lack of management of boundaries and fencing of ditches has led to once open field systems becoming enclosed by tall hedgerows and tree lines making them unsuitable for breeding waders.

- Contamination with agrochemicals. Water quality in Hampshire's rivers is generally good

but there may be a cumulative impact of agrochemicals on the viability of birds breeding on wet grassland. For example, veterinary products known collectively as avermectins are widely used to control internal parasites in farm animals. The residues of these drugs retain their insecticidal properties after excretion and have adverse impacts on the invertebrates colonising the dung⁹. Birds such as yellow wagtail are affected by the depletion of both the quantity and quality of these invertebrates in their food supply.

- Aggregate extraction. If carefully managed, aggregate extraction can lead to the creation of valuable wetland habitat with increased opportunities for breeding birds. However under some circumstances, extraction of minerals from land adjacent to floodplain and coastal grazing marsh can result in lower ground water levels and damage to wetland habitats. This has been dramatically demonstrated at Keyhaven where an internationally important wetland has been severely affected by gravel extraction on the landward boundary.

- Rising sea level and increased storminess. The sea level along Hampshire's coastline is rising and the trend looks set to continue in the long term. Climatic changes are also likely to increase the number and intensity of coastal storms. Although the rate and extent to which these changes are occurring are uncertain, the likely result is penetration of saltwater into some of the remaining areas of coastal grazing marsh. The impact of this can clearly be seen at Lower Test Marshes where the decline in breeding redshanks is largely attributable to nests being flooded by high tides. Where existing urban development and high value arable land restrict opportunity for the grazing marsh to retreat inland, the habitat will inevitably be squeezed and in some places may disappear.

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4 CURRENT ACTION

4.1 Site and Species Protection

- All the species in this Plan are declining in the UK and are of national conservation concern. Lapwing, snipe and redshank remain widespread and relatively common in northern areas of the country and yellow wagtail has an easterly bias. All four species are excluded from the UK Biodiversity Programme's Priority List. However declines have been particularly marked in Hampshire, and they are therefore included on the county BAP list of priority birds.

▪ An audit of protected wildlife sites in the county's river catchment areas has been carried out for the Hampshire *Water and Biodiversity Topic Action Plan*⁴. The results show that the full range of statutory and non-statutory conservation designations and incentive schemes is in force: international designations such as candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Site; national designations such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and National Nature Reserve (NNR); and local designations such as Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Virtually all the grazing marsh along Hampshire's Solent coast also benefits from a range of designations. Regrettably, despite this impressive array of protective measures the biodiversity of many areas, as measured by the breeding populations of the species considered in this Plan, is continuing to decline. This indicates that issues associated with management of sites need to be addressed (see Section 3 above).

4.2 Habitat Management and Programmes of Action

▪ Government funded incentives are available to encourage environmentally friendly farming and land management practices. They are channelled through agri-environment and other environmental land management schemes and are being applied in Hampshire to maintain and enhance the wildlife value of wet grassland areas⁴.

The Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) scheme administered by the Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) offers payments to farmers to adopt agricultural practices which will safeguard areas with particularly high landscape, wildlife or historic value. ESA schemes currently operate in the Avon and Test Valleys. Funds are available to encourage a range of grassland management schemes, some of which are aimed specifically at enhancing conditions for breeding waders.

The Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) is available throughout England outside ESAs. It aims to protect, enhance, restore and re-create targeted landscapes, their wildlife habitats and historic features. The Wildlife Enhancement Scheme (WES) enables English Nature (EN) to provide incentives to maintain and enhance the wildlife interest of SSSIs through management agreements. Agri-environment schemes are under review for several reasons. For example, they are not directly

linked to Biodiversity Action Plans and uptake of the higher level ESA schemes is patchy. In Hampshire where higher level schemes are restricted to the Avon and Test ESAs and the coastal nature reserves, few landowners have benefited.

▪ The Environment Agency (EA) has prepared Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) for the main river catchment areas in Hampshire. The plans provide guidance for all organisations and individuals whose activities impact on rivers and riverine habitats. EA does not have statutory powers to protect wildlife sites and species but does have a duty to do so via its works and consents. The enhancement of biodiversity through catchment area management is identified as one of the key targets to be delivered by the LEAP process. The priorities for the management of each catchment area differ widely and there is no consistent approach towards improving wet grassland habitat for breeding birds. However, the Hampshire Avon LEAP¹⁰ draws attention to the decline in bird populations and recommends that urgent action be taken to reverse the downward trends.

▪ Water Level Management Plans (WLMPs) are prepared under DEFRA guidelines. They provide another mechanism through which EN and EA can agree objectives for the management of wetland SSSIs and take steps to achieve them. The WLMP process for parts of the Avon Valley has helped to re-establish favourable conditions for breeding waders (see 4.3). Regrettably progress elsewhere in Hampshire has been disappointing. EA employs a WLMP Officer for the Avon Valley whose appointment should also help the development of plans for the Test and Itchen Valleys.

▪ On the coast, most of the wet grassland is publicly owned and established as nature reserves. Sites such as Farlington Marshes, Titchfield Haven, Keyhaven and Pennington Marshes and the North Solent NNR are managed, with the help of agri-environment schemes, to control grazing, water levels and public access. EA and EN are involved through WLMPs and Management Agreements. Although in some cases the populations of lapwing and redshank on these areas have been more resilient than in the river valleys, snipe and yellow wagtail have declined drastically. Improved understanding of the conditions required for these species is urgently required.

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4.3 Trials, Species Monitoring and Research

- Liaison Groups have been established to bring together organisations with an interest in environmental conservation in the Avon and Test Valleys. The AVLG has developed an Avon Valley BAP that includes targets for breeding waders. Encouraged by the Avon Valley Liaison Group (AVLG), EA SouthWessex has set up a trial site south of Sopley where water levels and grazing regimes are being managed specifically to encourage breeding waders. Lapwing, redshank and common snipe are breeding on the site and early indications are that the management techniques are effective. There are plans to establish further sites in the Avon Valley and perhaps extend the scheme to the Test Valley.
- The BTO, in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), co-ordinates the on going monitoring of wild bird populations by volunteer surveyors throughout the UK. This work has been instrumental in identifying changes in the status of many species, including birds breeding on wet grassland. Unfortunately, annual surveys such as the Common Bird Census (CBC) or the

Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) do not provide statistically sound data to monitor the species considered in this Plan. In 1982, the BTO organised a one-off survey of the Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows in England and Wales. A repeat survey was planned for 2001 but was postponed because of foot and mouth disease.

- Hampshire Ornithological Society (HOS) has established a Joint Hampshire BAP Bird Monitoring Group (JHBMG) with Hampshire Wildlife Trust (HWT), RSPB, BTO and Hampshire County Council (HCC). The Group ranked birds of wet grassland as high priority. An extension of the BTO survey was planned for 2001 but postponed because of foot and mouth disease.
- The RSPB is investigating how the management of wet grasslands can be improved to benefit breeding birds. For example, practical management techniques to maximise the area of wet conditions and the resulting impact on birds are being assessed. The Society is also sponsoring specialised research, for example into the impact of veterinary residues on bird populations.

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5 OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this Plan is to protect and increase the breeding populations of birds of wet grasslands in Hampshire. This broad aim translates into the specific objectives set out below. Where feasible, objectives have been allocated targets against which achievement can be measured. The 'Proposed Action' table in section 6 below identifies the action to be taken to meet these objectives.

| | OBJECTIVES | PROPOSED ACTIONS |
|----------|---|-------------------------|
| A | Maintain existing populations and ranges of birds breeding on Hampshire's wet grasslands. | 1-14, 18-22 |
| B | Expand the populations and ranges of birds breeding on Hampshire's wet grasslands. | 1-14, 18-22 |
| C | Establish a comprehensive understanding of the distributions, status and ecological requirements of birds breeding on Hampshire's wet grasslands through appropriate research, survey and monitoring. | 13, 15-19, 22 |
| D | Promote communication, education and awareness of the status and needs of birds breeding on Hampshire's wet grasslands. | 8-10, 19-22 |

6 PROPOSED ACTION

The following table lists the actions required to achieve the objectives set out in this Plan. Each action has been assigned to one or more 'Key Partners'. Key Partners are those organisations that are expected to take responsibility for the delivery of the actions assigned to them, according to the targets set in this Plan. Other organisations may also be involved in the delivery of action, and they have been indicated in the 'Others' column.

Key to symbols in Action Table:

- ◆ To be completed by the indicated year. Work can commence at any time before the due date, at the discretion of the Key Partner.
- ◆⇒ Design or production of a plan/strategy to be completed by this year and then followed by its implementation.
- ➔ To start by the indicated year and usually followed by ongoing work. A start arrow in year 2002/3 can indicate a new action, or a new impetus to existing work.
- ⇒ Work that has already begun and is ongoing.

| | ACTION | DELIVERY BY | | YEAR | | | | | | MEETS OBJ. |
|---|--|-------------------------|---------------------|--|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| | | Key Partner | Others | 2002/2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2010 | |
| | | | | ◆ = complete by ➔ = start by ⇒ = ongoing ◆⇒ = design by and implement | | | | | | |
| Site and Species Policy and Protection | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Ensure all actions identified in the Lowland Wet Grassland and Coastal Grazing Marsh HAPs relevant to the protection and management of wet grassland sites for breeding birds are fully and implemented. | HCC, EN EA, DEFRA | | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | A, B |
| 2 | Continue to specify the recovery of birds breeding on wet grassland as a key objective when agreeing, reviewing and adjusting relevant agri-environment schemes. | DEFRA | EN, AVLG | ➔ | | | | | | A, B |
| 3 | Ensure that Countryside Stewardship targeting statements for Hampshire reflect UK, regional and local BAP targets. | DEFRA | EN, HCC | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | A, B |
| 4 | When establishing new agri-environment agreements in Hampshire, target areas that have greatest potential to increase habitat quality for birds of wet grassland. | DEFRA | EN, HCC EA, HWT | ➔ | | | | | | A, B |
| 5 | Include the recovery of birds breeding on river floodplains and associated wet grassland areas as priority targets when reviewing and developing LEAPs and WLMPs. | EA | EN, DEFRA | ➔ | | | | | | A, B |
| 6 | Ensure that all wetland sites that regularly hold breeding snipe or yellow wagtails are identified and protected to the maximum extent using available designations. | EN, HCC | LAs, HOS, HWT | ➔ | | | | | | A, B |

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| | ACTION | DELIVERY BY | | YEAR | | | | | | MEETS OBJ. |
|--|--|------------------------|--|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|
| | | Key Partner | Others | 2002/2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2010 | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">◆ = complete by ➔ = start by ⇒ = ongoing ◆⇒ = design by and implement</p> | | | | | | | | | | |
| Site and Species Management | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | Encourage sympathetic habitat management where appropriate by utilising existing incentive schemes and providing advice to landowners and land managers: EN through WES, Management Statements and Agreements; DEFRA through agri-environment schemes; FWAG, HWT and EA through advice to farmers and landowners. | EN, DEFRA | LAs, HWT, NFU, FWAG, EA, HCC | ➔ | | | | | | A, B |
| 8 | Encourage landowners to take up agri-environment schemes such as ESA and Countryside Stewardship (CSS) on farmland where sympathetic management would benefit habitat quality for birds of wet grassland. | DEFRA | EN, NFU FWAG, HWT | ➔ | | | | | | A,B,D |
| 9 | Encourage landowners to adopt higher level agri-environment schemes relevant to improving biodiversity of wet grassland and ensure that financial resources are available to support higher take-up levels. | DEFRA | EN, HWT | ➔ | | | | | | A,B,D |
| 10 | Encourage landowners and farmers to adopt methods and practices in land management that are beneficial to birds of wet grassland. | DEFRA | FWAG, CLA, EN, HWT | ➔ | | | | | | A,B,D |
| 11 | Seek ways of removing suitable wet grassland areas from agricultural usage and establishing them as nature reserves. | RSPB, HWT, HCC | | ◆⇒ | | | | | | A,B |
| 12 | Adopt a more proactive approach towards the management of wet grassland habitat within protected areas, particularly with regard to control of water levels, grassland quality and grazing regimes. | EN, HCC LAs, HWT | EA DEFRA | ➔ | | | | | | A,B |
| 13 | Support existing pilot schemes aimed at increasing populations of breeding birds on selected areas of river floodplain and coastal grazing marsh. | EA, HCC | DEFRA, EN, HWT HOS | ➔ | | | | | | A,B,C |
| 14 | Extend area of land managed specifically to increase populations of breeding birds by establishing new agreements in Test and Itchen valleys. | EA, DEFRA | EN, HCC HWT, HOS | | ➔ | | | | | A,B |
| Research, Survey and Monitoring | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Support current research to establish reasons for declines in the populations of breeding birds on wet grasslands and possible remedial measures. | JNCC | BTO, RSPB | ➔ | | | | | | C |

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| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------|---|----|----|---|---|---|---|---------|
| 16 | Support current survey programmes to monitor the populations of birds breeding on Hampshire's wet grasslands. | HOS | HCC, HWT, RSPB, BTO, EA | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | C |
| 17 | Ensure that the BTO's national Birds of Wet Meadows survey is fully supported and, if practical, expanded in Hampshire. | HOS | HCC, HWT, RSPB, BTO, EN | | ◆⇒ | | | | | C |
| 18 | Develop long-term monitoring programmes for birds of wet grasslands. | HOS | HCC, HWT, BTO, RSPB, AVLG | ◆⇒ | | | | | | A,B,C |
| Communication, Awareness and Promotion | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Highlight the decline in the populations of breeding birds of wet grassland to the general public, landowners and policy makers in order to promote their conservation and beneficial habitat management. | EN, DEFRA | BTO, HCC, HOS, RSPB, AVLG, HWT | ➔ | | | | | | A,B,C,D |
| 20 | Seek to increase awareness of the ecology and conservation requirements of birds of wet grassland particularly amongst farmers, landowners and the public. | BTO, HCC, HOS, RSPB | DEFRA, FWAG | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | A,B,D |
| 21 | Promote an appreciation for, and the conservation of, birds of Hampshire's wet grasslands through provision of habitat guidelines, workshops, events and open days, press releases and appeals for records. Consider building the awareness programme around a well-known, attractive species such as the lapwing. | BTO, HCC, HOS, RSPB | | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | A,B,D |
| 22 | Maintain liaison between organisations in Hampshire with an interest in monitoring and maintaining birds of wet grasslands (HOS, RSPB, BTO, HWT, HCC) in order to facilitate efficient exchange of information on research progress and national issues. | BTO, HCC, HOS, RSPB | | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | ⇒ | A,B,C,D |

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KEY TO ORGANISATIONS:

| | |
|-------|---|
| AVLG | Avon Valley Liaison Group |
| BTO | British Trust for Ornithology |
| CLA | Country Land and Business Association |
| DEFRA | Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs |
| EA | Environment Agency |
| EN | English Nature |
| FWAG | Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group |
| HCC | Hampshire County Council |
| HOS | Hampshire Ornithological Society |
| HWT | Hampshire Wildlife Trust |
| JNCC | Joint Nature Conservation Committee |
| NFU | National Farmers' Union |
| LAs | Local Authorities |
| RSPB | Royal Society for the Protection of Birds |

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**SPECIES
ACTION
PLAN**

This is one of many Habitat, Species and Topic Action Plans being prepared by the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership. It will be monitored by the Partnership and fully reviewed in 2007.

This species action plan has been prepared by Dr John A. Eyre and the Hampshire Ornithological Society on behalf of the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership.

For further information contact: John Eyre, Hampshire Ornithological Society, Tel: 01252 677850