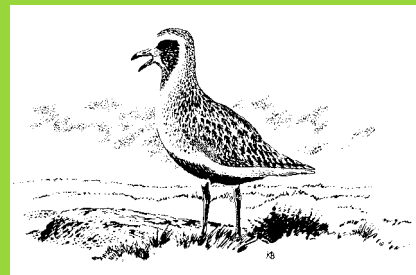


Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

STATUS

A relatively widespread breeding wader of the Durham uplands.

*National Amber list (RSPB 1996),
Annex I of the Birds Directive (EEC 1979),
Appendix II of the Bonn convention,
UK Steering Group long list,
Partial protection under Schedule I*



WHAT IS THE GOLDEN PLOVER ?

The golden plover is a medium-sized wader breeding on upland heather and grass moorlands, typically over 250-600m altitude, and wintering on agricultural grasslands and coastal areas, especially around estuaries. Both male and female show the golden plumage that gives the species its name with brown upper parts and black face grading through dark splotches to a cream belly. The high pitched call is designed to confuse and acts as part of the species distraction display. Adult golden plover feed on soil invertebrates, chicks feed on a variety of insects.

WHERE ARE THEY FOUND IN THE UK?

Golden plovers can be found in summer across the higher ground of the north and west of the UK with smaller populations in Wales and south west England. In winter the species is more widespread.

WHY IS THE GOLDEN PLOVER OF CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

The golden plover winters in the UK in internationally important numbers. Populations have declined in recent years in both range and number as a result of threats to the upland breeding sites. The current national population is thought to be just under 23,000 pairs.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER IN THE DURHAM AREA

HOW HEALTHY ARE THE POPULATIONS OF THE GOLDEN PLOVER?

In Durham, the golden plover is a fairly common breeding bird of the western uplands as well as a passage migrant and a winter visitor in some numbers. Population levels in Durham are high, with over five pairs per square kilometre in some parts of the uplands, a density, which compares favourably with those encountered over large parts of the Scottish uplands. The Durham population probably numbers at least 500 breeding pairs. Durham has nationally important wintering numbers of golden plover, up to 3.7% of the national population.

HOW MUCH DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE GOLDEN PLOVER IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

A recent four-year research programme by Sunderland University studied the breeding ecology of golden plover in the Durham Dales. Durham Bird Club carried out a winter survey of golden plover in 1994 and carries out ongoing surveillance of some of the coastal, wintering populations.

WHERE HAS IT BEEN FOUND IN THE DURHAM AREA ?

In the winter, golden plover are widely distributed. They are reasonably common at traditional grassland sites, both inland and at some open areas of the coast, occurring in flocks of up to 2000 birds. Particularly high winter concentrations of birds can be found in the Whitburn area of South Tyneside, although a number of other traditional wintering sites also hold significant numbers of birds i.e. over 1000 birds. As a breeding bird, golden plover are principally an upland species being found on unenclosed moorland in Lunedale, the Derwent Valley, Teesdale and Weardale; using pastures and hay meadows at lower elevations for feeding and daytime resting.

GOLDEN PLOVER ARE AT RISK FROM:

Inappropriate management of upland breeding sites including drainage of moorlands, which removes wet areas and pools that provide food for chicks, overgrazing and badly managed burning.

Intensification of management of allotment and in-by-land – including drainage, fertiliser use, reseeding and cutting, all decrease available food supply.

Disturbance – golden plover are sensitive to disturbance at long distances causing them to leave nests leading to chilling and increased predation of eggs and chicks in areas of high recreational disturbance.

GOLDEN PLOVER BENEFITS FROM:

A mosaic of upland habitats – including blanket bog, upland heath, acid grassland and upland meadows and pastures.

Invertebrate rich lowland grasslands as wintering sites.

Seasonally accessible paths - the availability of which is restricted to outside of the breeding season.

IMPORTANT HABITATS FOR THE GOLDEN PLOVER:

<i>Upland heathland and blanket bog</i>	*
<i>Upland hay meadows</i>	*
<i>Upland acid grassland</i>	*
<i>Improved grassland</i>	*
<i>Arable land</i>	*

Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*

OTHER SPECIES ACTION PLANS COVERING ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE GOLDEN PLOVER:

<i>Black grouse</i>	**
<i>Skylark</i>	**
<i>Grey partridge</i>	**
<i>Hen harrier</i>	*
<i>Merlin</i>	*
<i>Lapwing</i>	*

N.B. ** indicates action plan produced in 1998

* indicates action plan produced in 2000

THE GOLDEN PLOVER AND THE LAW:

Golden plover is partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Golden plover is listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive and Appendix II of the Bonn Convention.

TARGETS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF GOLDEN PLOVERS IN THE DURHAM AREA:

	DATE
<i>Target 1 Maintain and enhance the breeding population of golden plover.</i>	ONGOING
<i>Target 2 Protect and maintain the wintering and passage populations of golden plover.</i>	ONGOING
<i>Target 3 Monitor both breeding and wintering numbers of golden plover.</i>	2003 then 2008

GOLDEN PLOVER ACTIONS

ACTION	DATE	POSSIBLE PARTNERS	MEETS TARGET NO.
<u>POLICY AND LEGISLATION</u>			
1. Include important golden plover breeding sites in designations of SSSIs and SPAs.	2004	EN, RSPB	1
2. Seek designation for important wintering and feeding sites as County Wildlife Sites.	2009	EN, DWT, LAs	1, 2
<u>SITE MANAGEMENT</u>			
3. Include prescriptions for golden plover in agri-environment schemes e.g.. WES, Countryside Stewardship, ESA.	2004	MAFF, RSPB, DWT, EN	1, 2
4. Develop concept of seasonal footpaths to protect breeding and feeding sites.	2004	LAs, RSPB, EN, DBAP, Land owners	1
<u>RESEARCH AND MONITORING</u>			
5. Develop monitoring scheme for breeding golden plover as part of five yearly moorland bird surveys.	2004	DBC, DUBSG, RSPB, DBAP	3
6. Develop monitoring schemes for wintering golden plover.	2004	DBC, DUBSG, WWT, RSPB	3
<u>ADVISORY</u>			
7. Use upland heathland demonstration sites to show positive management for golden plover.	2004	EN, RSPB, DBAP, MKA	1, 2
<u>COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY</u>			
8. Use golden plover to raise awareness of biodiversity issues in the uplands.	ONGOING	DBAP, RSPB, EN	1, 2
9. Raise awareness of the importance of lowland farmland for passage and wintering birds.	ONGOING	DBAP, RSPB, EN	1, 2