

SANDERLING

(*Calidris alba*)

What is a SANDERLING?

The sanderling is a small wading bird whose energetic dashes up and down beaches have led to its being compared to a clockwork toy. It is a winter and passage visitor to the British Isles when its plumage is strikingly pale, being grey on top and white below with black legs. Sanderlings feed busily on small invertebrates exposed by each wave. Sanderlings will also feed along the strandline, picking over the seaweed looking for invertebrates.

Sanderlings breed on the tundra near the Arctic ocean. Their breeding distribution is restricted, but their winter distribution is very wide; they can be found wintering on beaches all around the world as far away as South Africa and South America. The only breeding site in Europe is on Svalbard; they do not breed in Britain. Those that spend the winter in Britain, breed mainly in north-east Canada, Greenland and Siberia.

Where are they found in the UK?

Around 23,000 sanderlings winter around British coasts, where they are entirely restricted to sandy estuarine and open sea coasts.

Why are sanderlings of CONSERVATION IMPORTANCE?

Internationally important numbers of sanderling winter in the UK (i.e. more than 20% of the population of north-west Europe). Their occurrence in the UK is also very localised with over 50% of the population occurring in the ten most populated areas. The UK is just as important, if not more so, as a stopover point for birds on passage.

THE SANDERLING IN THE DURHAM AREA

How HEALTHY is the local population?

The sanderling is a fairly common winter visitor and passage migrant to the Durham area, though it is restricted in distribution by its specific habitat requirements.



STATUS: *Within Europe, the sanderling is regarded as being of Favourable Conservation Status. The sanderling is listed on Appendix II of the Bern Convention as a protected species whose habitat is in particular need of conservation and on Appendix II of the Bonn Convention.*

In Britain, the sanderling is classified as a Nationally Scarce Bird on the basis of the number of individuals who winter here and their clustered distribution.

The sanderling is listed on the EC Birds Directive.

Other action plans and statements covering issues relevant to the sanderling:-

(C) STRANDLINE***

(C) MUDFLATS***

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How much do we know about the sanderling in the DURHAM AREA?

Much of the information about sanderlings in the Durham area comes from the National Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) and from Durham University. WeBS surveys have been the principle source of distributional data in recent years. The majority of information regarding migration, origins and habitat utilisation has come from Durham University.

Studies of ringed birds at Teesmouth suggest that these birds come from Greenland. An increase in the number of sanderlings, and the number of other birds to the north of Crimdon in the Horden area may be associated with the cessation of coal waste tipping on beaches. It could also be the consequence of increasing levels of disturbance on the south side of the Tees.

WHERE has the sanderling been found in the Durham area?

The area around the mouth of the Tees, extending from Blackhall Rocks in the north to Saltburn in the south is of national importance for both wintering and passage populations of sanderlings. There are many prime sites for sanderlings in the local area, especially Crimdon and Hartlepool. There are other less important sites along the coasts of South Tyneside and Sunderland. These populations suffer very badly from disturbance.

Sanderlings are at RISK from:

DISTURBANCE - sanderlings are very vulnerable to disturbance which may be caused by dog walkers or users of off-road vehicles.

CHANGES IN NUTRIENT LEVELS IN WATER - sanderlings may be vulnerable to changes in nutrient levels, which may result from changes in sewage treatment along the north-east coast. This may affect the availability of their prey.

OVERFISHING - exploitation of shellfish, such as periwinkles and mussels, is likely to affect sanderling numbers.

ESTUARINE DEVELOPMENT AND LAND CLAIM - any

landclaim in estuaries for barrages, bunding and infilling poses a major threat to birds which depend on sandflats or saltmarsh for feeding. A decrease in the amount of food available will lead to fewer birds being supported there. They may be forced into sub-optimal habitat or into that already occupied by others, which increases competition and reduces food availability. Mortality during serious winter weather may be very high.

Sanderlings BENEFIT from:

REDUCED DISTURBANCE at feeding, breeding and roosting sites. The importance of various sites will differ according to the season and population concerned.

FURTHER RESEARCH - research, funded by Northumbrian Water Ltd is currently being carried out at Durham University into the impact of the sewage treatment improvement programme upon wildlife on the north-east coast. The study includes wading birds as well as eider ducks, terns, invertebrates and fish.

SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING OF SHELLFISH.

PROTECTION OF OPEN COAST composed of intertidal sandflats and rocky scars.

Important HABITATS for sanderlings include:

OPEN SEA COAST

INTERTIDAL SANDFLATS

STRANDLINE

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TARGETS

- 1** Maintain current numbers of wintering and passage sanderlings along the Durham coast. (ONGOING)
- 2** Monitor the numbers of sanderlings wintering and on passage along the coast of the Durham area. (ONGOING)
- 3** Monitor the effects of change in physical environmental factors. (ONGOING)
- 4** Reduce levels of disturbance at principal roost and foraging areas. (2003)
- 5** Increase local interest in wintering and passage birds on beaches. (ONGOING)

ACTION PLAN

ACTION	DATE	Possible PARTNERS	Meets TARGET No.
POLICY AND LEGISLATION			
1. Shoreline management plans, local plans, development plans, LEAPS and coastal management plans should have clear policies that ensure there is no net loss of intertidal sandflats and rocky scars for development.	ONGOING	DEFRA, EDC, STMBC, GC, EA	1
SPECIES MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION			
2. Implement measures to minimise disturbance at roosting and foraging sites through publicity and zonation policies on appropriate beaches.	2002	STMBC, EDC, SCC,	4
RESEARCH AND MONITORING			
3. Monitor and document the status of sanderlings.	ONGOING	DBC, Durham University, TBC, WeBS Partnership	2
4. Monitor the effect of the sewage treatment improvement programme on sanderling numbers.	ONGOING	NWL, Durham University, DBC, WeBS Partnership	2, 3

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ACTION PLAN

ACTION	DATE	Possible PARTNERS	Meets TARGET No.
RESEARCH AND MONITORING continued			
5. Monitor the impact of the cessation of coastal waste spoil despoilment on the sanderling in Durham.	ONGOING	Durham University, DBC, WeBS Partnership, EN	3
6. Continue studies of ringed populations to assess survival rates and lifespans of individuals.	ONGOING	Durham University, Local Ringers, EN	1, 2
7. Submit records to the Local Records Centre.	ONGOING	All Partners, Local Communities	2
ADVISORY			
8. Ensure that all the different organisations involved in sanderling studies in the Durham area work together.	ONGOING	All Partners - including INCA	1, 2, 3, 4
COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICITY			
9. Encourage local birdwatchers to send in records.	2001 onwards	DBC, DBAP, TBC	1, 5
10. Conduct winter guided walks for birdwatching along the coast.	2001 onwards	DBC, EDC, DCC, DWT, STMBC, GC, SCC, NT	5
11. Prepare publicity information as part of integrated coastal/marine interpretation package.	2002	CA, LAs, DBAP	5