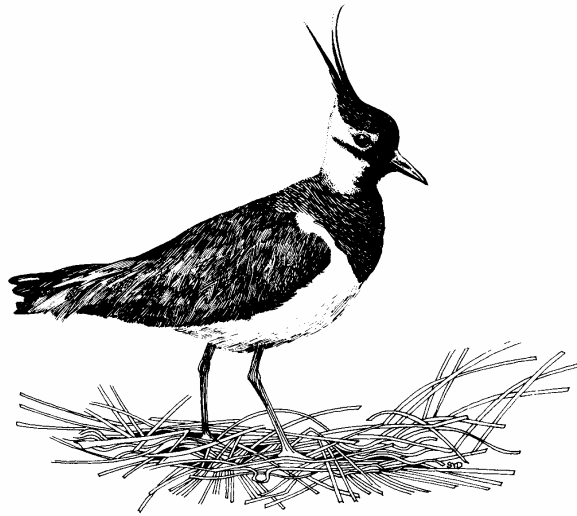




### Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*)



Lapwings are familiar and popular birds of open farmland and wet grassland habitats. They were once common and widespread, with pairs nesting on most farms in upland and lowland England. They have undergone a dramatic decline across the UK. The latest survey suggests a breeding population decline of 49% between 1987 and 1998 in England and Wales.

Surveys in Shropshire suggest that the population is now only one quarter of the 1987 figure – a decline of 75% - and it is still declining in large parts of the county.

Traditionally lapwing breed on wet meadows in floodplain areas, and wet rush pasture on the edge of moorland. They are also found on a number of farmland habitats such as wet meadows, spring sown cereal fields and fallow land (e.g. set-aside). Restored mining heaps, gravel pits and brownfield sites, and also specially managed nature reserves, are becoming increasingly important for lapwing.

Lapwings are early breeders, with first clutches often being laid in late March. They lay four eggs, and will relay if these are lost to predators, flooding or agricultural operations. The breeding season continues until mid-July.

In winter, the UK receives an influx of birds from the continent, so large wintering flocks on farmland are still a common sight. This gives a misleading impression to many people, who are unaware of the steep decline in the breeding population.

The Shropshire Targets for 2005 set in the previous edition of the BAP (2002) have not been achieved, and many of the Actions were not implemented, so concerted action is needed to achieve the targets set for 2010.

# Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

## 1 Objectives and Targets

### 1.1 Objectives

- A. In the short term, halt the decline and maintain the present breeding distribution of lapwing in Shropshire as estimated by the 1998 British Trust for Ornithology survey.
- B. In the medium term, increase both the numbers and range of breeding lapwing in Shropshire.
- C. Establish and maintain a comprehensive understanding of lapwing distribution, status and ecological requirements in Shropshire through research, survey and monitoring.
- D. Promote communication, education and awareness of the status and needs of the lapwing.

### 1.2 Targets

- Increase the current breeding population by 50% (from 700 to 1050 pairs) by 2010.
- Establish breeding lapwing on 60 farms participating in Agri-environment schemes - Environmental Stewardship (ES), Countryside Stewardship (CSS) and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) - by 2010.
- Prevent the extinction of Lapwing in the Upper Onny area and the Clun ESA.
- Increase the breeding lapwing population in the Clun Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) from 6 pairs (1998) and 5 pairs (2005) to 50 pairs by 2015
- Increase the breeding lapwing population in the Upper Onny area from 18 pairs in 2005 to 50 pairs in 2015.
- Extend the range back to the distribution published in 1992 (660 Occupied Tetrads) by 2015

## 2 Current Status

### 2.1 Importance

The lapwing is listed as a Species of Conservation Concern in the UK Biodiversity Programme, and is on the Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007. The species is undergoing a marked population decline. A national survey organised by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) revealed a 49% decline (from 123,000 to 65,000 pairs) in the breeding population between 1987 and 1998.

The influx of birds into the UK from the continent means that at times Britain may support 75% of the European wintering population.

This is one of 20 specified species of farmland birds included by the Government in its "Quality of Life" indicators, and restoring their populations is a Defra target in its PSA agreement with the Treasury.

# Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

## 2.2 Trends

A 1987 BTO survey located 119 pairs in a sample area of Shropshire. The same area was re-surveyed in 1998 but only supported 24 pairs: a decline of 80%. Lapwing have also undergone a contraction in their range, as only a third of the 1987 survey sites still held lapwing in 1998. The 1998 survey was repeated in 2003, but no significant change in the population was found.

Surveys in the Upper Onny area (2004-05) and the Clun ESA (2005) found that breeding success was insufficient to maintain even the current low populations, and concluded that lapwing will be extinct in both areas, except perhaps at one site, within five years, unless radical and swift action is taken to improve and increase habitat and breeding success.

The decline is largely due to loss of suitable nesting habitat and poor breeding success in an impoverished farmland habitat. This results in an ageing adult population. High levels of predation on the few remaining pairs are limiting the effectiveness of conservation action.

## 2.3 Population and Distribution

The *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire* records the lapwing as being a thinly distributed resident across much of the county. The 1987 survey found an average of 3.5 pairs per sampled square giving an estimated county population of 2,300 pairs. The results from the 1998 and 2003 re-surveys suggest the county population may now be around 700 pairs – only a quarter of the 1987 population.

In Shropshire lapwing breed on both extensively managed permanent grassland, and spring-sown cereals. Short swards with low spring densities of grazing animals, particularly cattle, are preferred, as are wet grasslands. Lapwing on arable or bare fallow fields will move chicks to nearby wet pasture where insect food availability is higher. Lapwing also nest on damp pasture in the hills. Restored mining heaps, gravel pits and brownfield sites, characterised by short vegetation and bare ground with pools, are becoming increasingly important nest sites.

## 3 Current Factors Affecting the Species

- Widespread loss and drainage of damp fields and lowland wet grassland due to a number of factors:
  - agricultural improvement from increased and more efficient land drainage infrastructure results in the loss of wet fields, more intensive sward management (higher stocking rates and earlier and more frequent silage cuts) and conversion to autumn cereals;
  - land drainage legislation that favours improvement of drainage with no mechanism for relaxation of standards.
- The earlier introduction of stock onto pasture in the spring and higher stocking densities, leads to increased trampling of nests.
- The widespread switch from spring sowing to autumn sowing of cereals reduces the area of suitable habitat available in the spring.

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- Simplification of crop rotations reduces the area of bare fallow in the spring.
- The loss of mixed farming, with spring-sown cereals and pasture in close proximity, results in a reduced area of suitable nesting habitat, and leads to reduced breeding success.
- Destruction of nests and chicks by farming activities
- Isolation and fragmentation of habitats and populations means that they are more vulnerable to chance events, and less able to defend themselves from predation
- High predation levels limit the effectiveness of conservation measures to protect nests from farming activities and restore habitat.

### 4 Current Action

#### 4.1 Policy and Protection

- The lapwing is listed as a Species of Conservation Concern in the UK Biodiversity Programme, and is on the Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern 2002-2007.
- The lapwing is viewed as a high priority species by the RSPB.
- Lapwing is one of 20 species on Defra's Farmland Bird Index. Defra is committed to reversing the long term decline in these species, as part of its Public Service Agreement with the Treasury. Annual monitoring reports are published by Defra
- Lapwing is a Target Species in all five of the Joint Character Assessments (JCAs) which together cover the whole of Shropshire, and which set the priorities for the Defra / RDS Environmental Stewardship. They provide guidance on the land management options that should be included in ES applications.
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#### 4.2 Management, Research and Survey

- The DEFRA Countryside Stewardship Scheme (CSS) provides grant-aid to farmers to encourage environmentally sensitive management. Options include reversion of arable to grassland and 'wetting-up' supplements that together can create suitable lapwing breeding conditions. This Scheme has been succeeded by the Environmental Stewardship (ES), but existing CSS agreements are continuing until they expire
- The DEFRA Environmentally Sensitive Area schemes in the Clun and Shropshire Hills includes payments for the re-wetting of pasture and controlled grazing, designed to benefit wading birds such as lapwing. This Scheme has been succeeded by the Environmental Stewardship (ES), but existing ESA agreements are continuing until they expire
- The Environmental Stewardship (ES) encourages maintenance of many environmental and habitat features through the Entry Level Scheme (ELS), while the Higher Level Scheme (HLS) includes several "prescriptions" to benefit lapwing.
- Ruralscapes, an independent Company which promotes the rural economy by assisting, supporting and building the capacity of persons and organisations who live, work or operate in rural areas, has succeeded the Countryside Agency's land management initiative in the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence. This project is continuing to promote the restoration of areas of lowland wet grassland for nesting lapwing, and monitor the number of lapwing in the area, and their breeding success.

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Ruralscapes now assists farmers manage their land for the benefit of Lapwing, and (to a lesser extent) Curlew and Snipe, and secure financial support from Agri-environment agreements with RDS, and, in the short term, Farm agreements with SWT

- The Ruralscapes Project is now developing similar work in north and east Shropshire, particularly around The Wealdmoors.
- SWT are entering into agreements with farmers to maintain and restore suitable habitat, and manage their farms sympathetically, prior to applying for acceptance into ES
- The Environment Agency has created wader scrapes for breeding lapwing as part of the River Strine Wetlands initiative, in partnership with DEFRA and RSPB, and at other sites in co-operation with SWT.
- FWAG actively promotes the Agri-environment schemes throughout Shropshire, and advise on farm management for the benefit of wildlife.
- Bare fallow for nesting lapwing is an option within ES ELS & HLS, and can be created on set-aside land on other farms if a derogation is obtained from RDS.
- The RSPB part funded a PhD student with Harper Adams University College to research breeding lapwing success on arable land, with particular reference to the Arable Stewardship Scheme. The results were published in 2002.
- BTO volunteers undertook a breeding lapwing survey on sample sites throughout the county in 1987 1998 and 2003. Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS) surveyed the Clun ESA for breeding lapwing (and other waders) in 1998.
- The Upper Onny Wildlife Group surveyed 122 square kilometres in the Shropshire Hills AONB in 2004 and 2005, but found only 19 – 18 pairs. The number of chicks was much less in 2005, and the level of breeding success is not sufficient to sustain the population.
- RuralScapes recorded a 34% decline over the three years 2003-05, a reduction from 58 to 38 pairs, during work in one of the county strongholds, around the Severn-Vyrnwy confluence and baggy moor.
- The Clun ESA was resurveyed in 2005, but only five pairs were found – less than in 1998. Again, the level of breeding success is not sufficient to sustain the population.
- The RSPB operated a Shropshire Lapwing Lifeline project from 1999 to 2005, using trained volunteers to visit farms and give advice to benefit lapwings. Each farm was given a written action plan.
- Since 2000 workshops with farmers, landowners and advisors have been held in different parts of the County
- SWT is actively co-ordinating a Lapwing Action Plan, and has undertaken fund-raising appeals for the purpose.

## 5 Key Habitats

- Lowland wet grassland
- Lowland farmland - especially mixed systems with pasture and spring cereals
- Upland unimproved and semi-improved rough pasture (particularly cattle pasture)
- Bare ground and pools associated with brownfield sites and gravel pits etc.

## 6 Complementary Plans

Shropshire Acid Grassland HAP  
Shropshire Arable Field Margins HAP  
Shropshire Floodplain Grazing Marsh HAP  
Shropshire Semi-improved Upland Rough Grassland HAP  
Shropshire Species Rich Grassland HAP  
Shropshire Snipe SAP  
Shropshire Curlew SAP

## Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Habitat / Species	Action Code	Action text	Location of action	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Assisting
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD AP 02	Establish monitoring arrangements to record the population, population change, breeding success and habitat usage for all BAP and PSA Target Bird Species on all farms covered by any Agri-environment scheme in Shropshire, and measure the effectiveness of such schemes.	Shropshire	2006	2007	NE	
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD AP 03	Monitor population, population change, breeding success and habitat usage for all BAP priority bird species on all CSS & ESA Farms in Shropshire until 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	NE	FWAG, RS, AONB, SOS, SWT, UOWG
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD AP 08	Develop an Action Plan to monitor population, population change and breeding success of all BAP ground nesting birds on sites not explicitly identified in the Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan by 2008.	Shropshire	2006	2008	SWT	
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD CA 09	Promote agricultural practice that minimises risk to the nests and broods of all BAP ground-nesting birds until 2015.	Shropshire Hills AONB	2006	2015	AONB	
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD CA 11	Actively encourage farmers to retain and increase the area of suitable breeding habitat for Curlew and Lapwing (including creative use of Set-aside), avoid destruction of nests and chicks, and undertake predator control until 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	NE	SWT, RS, UOWG, SOS,
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD CP 03	Produce general publicity and education materials, to raise the profile of Lapwing, Curlew & Snipe, and publicise their habitat requirements amongst farmers in the area by 2015.	Shropshire Hills AONB	2006	2015	AONB	
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD FI 01	Enter into agreements with farmers to maintain habitat for Curlew and Lapwing, pending farm applying to join an Agri-environment scheme by 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	SWT	RS, UOWG
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD FR 06	Seek the necessary resources to implement all the above actions.	Shropshire	2006	2015	SC	SWT

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Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD FR 07	Encourage farms with breeding Curlew and Lapwing to join the new Environmental Stewardship until 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	SWT	FWAG, NE, RS, AONB, SOS, UOWG
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD HC 01	Create 9 new wetlands / scrapes for Lapwing, Snipe and Curlew annually until 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	EA	SWT, RS, UOWG, AONB
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD HS 03	Manage the open moorland on Wild Moor as a tree-free zone for BAP ground nesting birds (area to be defined in NT Long Mynd Property Conservation Plan) until 2015.	Long Mynd	2006	2015	NT	LMBBP
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD SM 01	Introduce and maintain predator control operation for benefit of BAP ground nesting birds where appropriate at Rhos Fiddle and Long Mynd (SSSI) until 2015	Long Mynd, Rhos Fiddle	2006	2015	SWT	NT, LMBBP
Generic Birds Plan	SHR BRD SM 02	Together with Partners, develop and implement a strategy and programme of action to ensure Curlew and Lapwing do not become extinct in the AONB, particularly in the Upper Onny and Clun ESA by 2015.	Shropshire Hills AONB	2006	2015	AONB	
Lapwing	SHR LAP CA 01	Visit and advise farmers about Lapwing in the Clun ESA, Severn Vyrnwy Confluence Area and the Upper Onny Area annually until 2015.	Clun ESA, Severn Vyrnwy Confluence, Upper Onny Area	2006	2015	SWT	NE, RS, SOS, UOWG, UCCWG
Lapwing	SHR LAP HC 01	Create large scale prime sites for Lapwing, with scrapes, nesting areas, predator control and co-operation of farmers by 2015.	Shropshire Hills AONB	2006	2015	AONB	SOS
Lapwing	SHR LAP HS 01	Encourage cattle farming in the AONB, but take action to reduce trampling of nests by cattle through ESA & ESS ELS / HLS agreements by 2015.	Shropshire Hills AONB	2006	2015	NE	SWT, RS, SOS
Lapwing	SHR LAP HS 02	Encourage landowners to undertake Predator Control at all known Lapwing breeding sites annually until 2015.	Shropshire	2006	2015	SWT	



## Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Lapwing	SHR LAP RE 01	Commission the necessary research to identify the birds and animals that are responsible for the predation of Lapwing nests, and the action that is necessary to reduce these predator populations back to naturally sustainable levels, and publish the results by 2008.	Shropshire	2006	2008	NE	
Lapwing	SHR LAP SU 01	Repeat Tetrad Sample Survey (same Tetrads as 1987 / 1998 / 2003	Shropshire	2008	Ongoing	SOS	
Lapwing	SHR LAP SU 02	Monitor population, population change and breeding success in the Clun ESA, Upper Onny Area and Severn Vyrnwy Confluence area annually until 2015.	Clun ESA, Upper Onny, Severn Vyrnwy confluence	2006	2015	SWT	RS, UCCWG, UOWG,
Lapwing	SHR LAP SU 03	Identify breeding sites in Clun ESA, North Shropshire, Severn Vyrnwy Confluence Area, The Wrekin and Upper Onny Area annually until 2015.	Clun ESA, North Shropshire, Severn Vyrnwy Confluence, Wrekin, Upper Onny area	2006	2015	SWT, RS	UOWG, UCCWG,

### N.B.

1. The above Actions are specific to this species. In addition, the "Actions for All Bird Species", listed in the 'Generic Birds Species Action Plan', also have to be undertaken for this species.
2. Implementation of the Actions listed under the final Action, "Seek resources", is conditional on the resources being secured, and BARS reporting by some organisations is conditional partly on these further resources being secured, and partly on the continuing availability of trained volunteers.

### KEY TO ORGANISATIONS

AONB	Shropshire Hills AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Partnership
BTO	British Trust for Ornithology
FWAG	Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
LMBBP	Long Mynd Breeding Bird Project
NE	Natural England
RS	RuralScapes
SBP	Shropshire Biodiversity Partnership
SC	Shropshire Council
SOS	Shropshire Ornithological Society
SWT	Shropshire Wildlife Trust

UOWG	Upper Onny Wildlife Group
UCCWG	Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group

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**Plan last revised:** November 2008 by Fran Lancaster, Biodiversity Support Officer, Shropshire Council.

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# Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan