

BTO SURVEY OF BREEDING WADERS ON WET MEADOWS

by R.J. Fuller

Wet meadows on alluvial flood plains are probably the most threatened habitat in lowland Britain. The rate at which they are disappearing through the effects of land drainage is a cause for great concern. Breeding waders such as Snipe Gallinago gallinago and Redshank Tringa totanus which were once widespread along river valleys are becoming extremely scarce birds in many of the English lowland counties.

In order to comment effectively on drainage matters, conservation bodies must hold good information on the wildlife interest of each river valley and the remaining areas of unimproved grassland within it. In the case of waders we ideally need to know the size of breeding populations in different catchment areas as well as the precise localities which hold high densities. The BTO, with the full backing of the Nature Conservancy Council and the RSPB, is organising a project which hopefully will provide information of this type.

Pilot study fieldwork will be carried out in 1981 in two counties (Hereford & Worcester and Suffolk) with a view to launching the project nationally in 1982. Four 'key species' have been chosen: Lapwing Vanellus vanellus, Snipe, Curlew Numenius arquata and Redshank. The aim is to obtain estimates of the numbers of breeding pairs of these species on selected sites and also to encourage more extensive coverage of river valleys. Information on other wet meadow species, such as Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava and Shoveler Anas clypeata, will be welcomed. Standard recording cards will be available and if you would like to try these out on your local areas, or if you can help with the 1981 pilot survey in either of the counties mentioned above please contact: R.J.Fuller, BTO, Beech Grove, Tring, Hertfordshire (phone Tring (044282) 3461).

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Resignations

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