

# THE WSG SURVEY OF THE BREEDING WADERS OF SCOTTISH AGRICULTURAL LAND

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1983 was the final year of field work for the breeding wader survey and, as such, our main aim was to extend the coverage obtained in 1982. Although completed cards are still coming in, we feel it worthwhile to summarise briefly the results so far. Figure 1 shows the total coverage (1982 and 1983), with 1982's results in brackets, and indicates that we have been successful not only in extending coverage in the more intensively surveyed south and east, but in improving our sample sizes in the more remote west and north. There are indications already that regional analysis may reveal some interesting relationships. For example, Oystercatchers Haematopus ostralegus in dry pasture in the north-east occur at six times the densities found in the south-west and south-east, and a similar pattern applies to arable land.

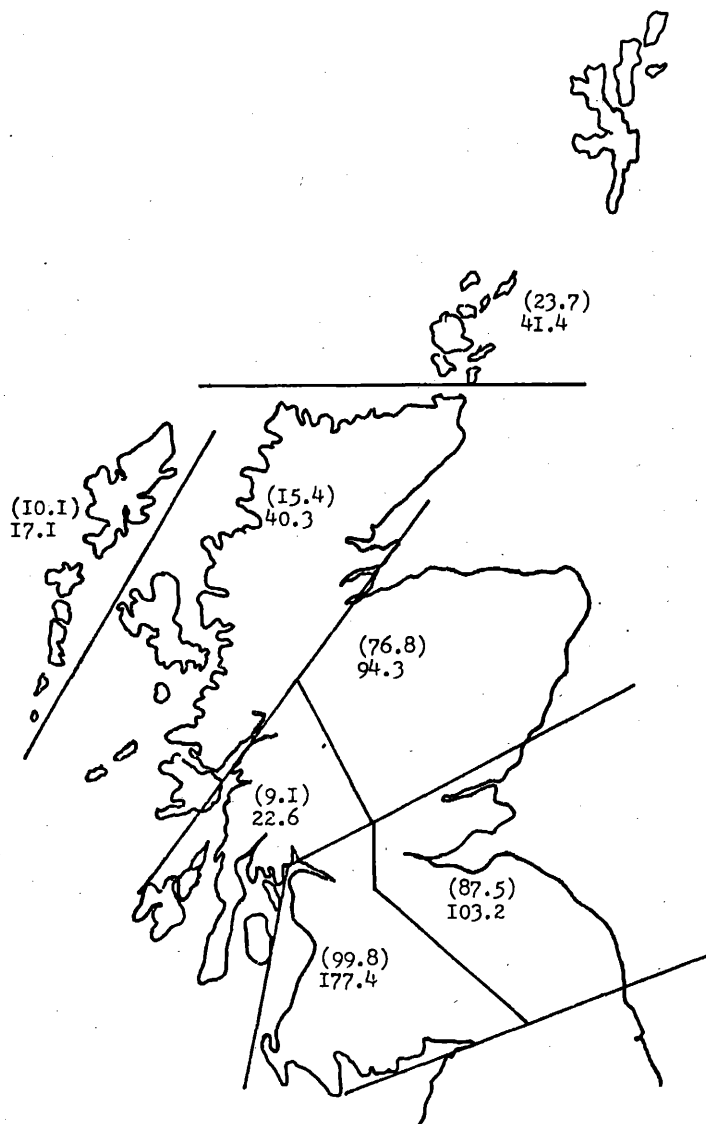


Figure 1. Observer coverage in 1982 (bracketed numbers) and 1983. All values are in km<sup>2</sup>.

Habitat differences (as distinct from regional differences) in nesting densities are also interesting. Whereas Oystercatchers and Lapwings Vanellus vanellus are comparatively catholic in their habitat preferences and breed on rough grazing, damp pasture and, to some extent, dry pasture, Curlew Numenius arquata, Redshank Tringa totanus and Snipe Gallinago gallinago are more demanding and occur almost exclusively on poorly drained and unimproved land. The conservation implications of these relationships are likely to be important. For example, over 90% of the Redshank found were confined to poorly drained land and, since Scottish breeding Redshank (unlike Curlew and Snipe) are uncommon outside agricultural habitats, it seems that this might well be the species most at risk from "improvement".

A more complete analysis of the data is currently in preparation and should appear in print in 1984. However, we should like to take this opportunity to thank all of those long-suffering WSG members who gave up their valuable time to help make this survey possible.