Bowland Breeding Wader Project
2019 Survey Report
The Bowland Wader Survey  2019

This year’s survey has only been possible because of input by the following volunteer surveyors:

Helen Turner, Mark Breaks, Frank & Barbara Hoyle, Alasdair McKee, Rodney Butterworth, Jean Roberts, Bill Caine, Ian Walker, Di Grimshaw, Martyn Roome, Annie Nelligan, Ged McKenna, Jenny & Ian Short, Martin Morgan, Derek Johnson, Ron Rhodes, Gideon Smith, Catherine Ramsey, Annabelle Cottam, Gavin Thomas, Joanne Bradley, David & Mark Shorrocks, Ken Maylor, Mark Edwards and Carol Bamber.

The RSPB are very grateful for the continued support and enthusiasm shown by you all, thank you.

Before and during the season, the RSPB has been undergoing reorganisation. Gavin Thomas, who most will know as the previous coordinator, has moved on to higher things, but he has continued to supply much needed help and advice.

Jeremy Sutton, Senior Conservation Officer, NW England, took over responsibility for the project in 2019 and has been equally helpful to me and has compiled this report for the benefit of you, the volunteers. We hope that this gives you a sense of the importance for your work and that you will feel inspired to continue as surveyors in 2020!

My role, as Voluntary Volunteer Coordinator (!) has only been one of communication, so has been very easy. So, here’s looking forward to next year!

Martyn Roome

The Bowland Breeding Wader Project

Bowland breeding wader surveys have been undertaken annually by RSPB staff and volunteers on around 30 farms scattered across the area. This allows us to monitor the effectiveness of our advisory and aftercare work, the effectiveness of stewardship schemes, and of conservation works undertaken by farmers, and the effect on of all of these on local trends in the breeding wader population.

Waders breeding on many of the farms that are in stewardship, who are working closely with us to maximise their wader habitat, are bucking the national trend of steep declines. More farmland being managed in this way is critical to securing a future for waders in Bowland, as sadly they are rapidly disappearing from many other areas of the UK. This short report summarises the results of the 2019 survey season.

Northern Upland Chain Local Nature Partnership Curlew Project

The prime, most valuable areas for curlew across the NUCLNP will be recognised, protected and well managed.

RSPB believe that this approach to curlew conservation in the LNP area (including Bowland), maximises any chances we might have of slowing population decline locally. By focussing on the ‘best’ areas we can use our resources in a targeted way to maximise benefits. We have therefore engaged fully with the project and its objectives.
National Trends for the 5 species surveyed

The long-term trends for all 5 species show a decline, although the short-term trends appear much better for lapwing, curlew and snipe.

All data from the BTO/JNCC BirdTrends Report, the most recently available data via this source, is for 2017 [https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birdtrends/2018](https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/birdtrends/2018)

The declines in all upland breeding waders are due to habitat loss as a result of afforestation and agricultural intensification (fewer nesting/feeding sites), at the same time as an increase in predation and (reduced breeding success) thought to be linked to the habitat changes. Within Bowland however, these changes have been less pronounced and this together with the farmers’ efforts to provide suitable habitat have led to a higher than average density of some species and notable hotspots in distribution of some species for example curlew. The data from our 2019 survey is shown below in map form, the mapped areas show farms where the density is ≥5 pairs/100ha, this is considered by RSPB to indicate a curlew hotspot population. It should be noted that the BTO estimates that there are 15,040 pairs of curlew breeding on the in-bye grasslands in England and it is likely that on the in-bye in the Forest of Bowland, the 140 pairs we have recorded, together with pairs on other farms not covered by the RSPB survey, would represent more than 1% of this English in-bye population.
The Bowland Curlew Hotspots, from the 2019 survey

Legend:
- Curlew Hotspot farms with Sprn*100ha
- Curlew farms meeting Sprn*100ha by area

Acknowledgements & Notes:
Creator: SSNIS
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RSPB is a registered charity.
Registered charity no. 211293.
The Bowland Graphs

The Overall trend – all species since 2013

Pairs, year on year

L. pairs = Max number of individuals recorded across the site between mid-April and late May divided by two

CU pairs = (0.71 * mean number recorded over three visits) + 0.10 - rounded to nearest pair

OC pairs = peak number of pairs seen on any one of the visits

RK pairs = mean number of birds (excluding flocks of six or more non-displaying individuals) recorded on visits made between mid-April and 20th May.

SN pairs = max number of drumming or chipping birds recorded on any of the three visits provided SN were at least recorded drumming in May
Farm by farm data, the highest performing farms for each of the five species are marked with an image of the bird (or two where appropriate)

Admarsh Farm – surveyor, Bill Caine

Alston Wetland – surveyor, Gavin Thomas

Barkin Gate Farm – surveyor, Gavin Thomas
Bell Sykes Farm – surveyor, Ron Rhodes

Botton Head Farm – surveyor, Martin Morgan

Broadgate Farm – surveyor, Bill Caine
Cobble Hey Farm – surveyor, Martyn Roome

Deep Clough Farm – surveyor, Jean Roberts
Harterbeck Farm – surveyor, Alasdair McKee

Heald Farm – surveyor, Ged McKenna

Heath Farm – surveyor, Ged McKenna
High House Farm – surveyor, Mark Edwards

Hyles Moor Farm – surveyor, Gideon Smith (not surveyed in 2016)

Landskill Farm – surveyor, Derek Johnson (not surveyed in 2018)
Whitray Farm – surveyor, Catherine Ramsey (not surveyed in 2017)

Winder Farm – surveyor, Carol Bamber
Coverage Map – The places surveyed in 2019
The RSPB and the Forest of Bowland

The RSPB has been working in Bowland for 39 years, and in 2019 following an internal restructuring we are finalising the new staff team for the area. The team are:

**Robin Horner, Area Manager** for the North West of England, Robin has worked on reserves for the RSPB since 1985, including; Site Manager at Fairburn Ings (12 years) and at Leighton Moss (15 years) followed by 10 years as an Area Reserves Manager covering the NW Estuaries and Saltholme.

**Jeremy Sutton, Senior Conservation Officer** for the North West, Jeremy has been “in patch” since January 2013, as the Conservation Officer for the North West. He also has 23 years’ wetland site management experience working for amongst others Castle Cement, National Trust and Lee Valley Regional Park Authority.

Jeremy’s team includes:

**Hilary McGuire, Conservation Advisor**, Forest of Bowland, Hilary previously worked on the RSPB Twite Recovery Project, and as an RSPB Nest Protection Officer. Hilary is from a farming background and her family still runs a mixed beef and arable farm in Canada. Hilary will be taking over the co-ordination of the wader surveys, providing support and advice to Martyn Roome as required.

**James Bray, Project Officer**, UU/RSPB Partnership, James leads our work to monitor and protect upland birds of prey on the United Utilities estate in the Forest of Bowland. James previously worked for BTO co-ordinating and conducting BTO Scotland’s fieldwork, training contract and volunteer fieldworkers, fieldwork health and safety, data analysis, and report writing as well as running BTO Scotland’s training programme.

**Colin Pringle, Conservation Officer**, Forest of Bowland. Colin has wide experience in habitat protection and land management with a range of conservation organisations, including experience working at landscape scale and involving extensive community engagement. Recent work with RSPB has included tropical forest protection in West Africa and wetland restoration in North West England, in both project management and technical advisory positions. Colin starts with us in January 2020.

In addition, we have team members based within the Morecambe Bay & Ribble Priority Landscape (MB&RPL) who may from time to time be working in Bowland, they include;

**Calum Booth, Conservation Officer MB&RPL**, Calum has worked for RSPB as the Marine Conservation Officer for the North West, Calum was previously employed by Natural England in Cumbria on a variety work streams including farm conservation advisory.

**Conservation Officer, Morecambe Bay & Cumbria**, (TBA), this role will focus on Cumbria working with partners including; the Lake District National Park Authority and Cumbria Wildlife Trust, to bring about real and lasting change for nature.

The Bowland Wader Project has previously been led by **Gavin Thomas** who continues to work for RSPB in the role of Ecologist (he hasn’t escaped, he will still be providing advice to us in Bowland).
This report has been produced by Jeremy Sutton for RSPB England with contributions from the following:

Martyn Roome,
Calum Booth,
James Bray,
Gavin Thomas
Alasdair McKee &
Liz Sutton

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