

Little Ringed Plover

Charadrius dubius



Description

Little Ringed Plover is a scarce summer visitor from Africa that spread from continental Europe as a breeding species during the 1930s.

The bird has sandy-brown upperparts and white underparts with black neck and head markings and a yellow eye-ring.

It frequents wetlands and water features in the district, where it breeds on shingle islands and waterside stones at some sites. The bulk of the population, however, breeds on post-industrial ground or any suitable extensive bare ground and mainly in the eastern part of Barnsley.

The nest site is usually on bare ground, but when the young hatch they require wet areas and pools for feeding.

Between July and September, most birds migrate out of Britain to overwinter in suitable habitats around the Mediterranean, North Africa and West Africa. Return migration is quite early, with many birds arriving back in March.

National Status

The first breeding record for Little Ringed Plover was in 1938 and the subsequent spread in England and Wales is one of the ornithological success stories of the 20th century. The present UK population is estimated at 600 pairs. The birds have adapted to man-made nesting areas and these have become their most favoured habitats. The present population is stable, although there is some concern for the long-term future of the species; gravel and mineral workings become exhausted and man-made sites are restored and put to other uses, so that areas where this species has bred through a succession of years may be lost forever.

Local Status

There is presently a fairly healthy population of Little Ringed Plover in the Barnsley area; the 16 pairs located in 2000 could possibly account for 3% of the national population.

Four pairs attempted breeding at RSPB Old Moor, five pairs at Grimethorpe on derelict industrial land and spoil heaps, and seven pairs on development land in the Dearne Valley. There is also a possibility that other suitable sites may be used, but these remain unrecorded.

Little Ringed Plover is protected in Britain under Schedule 1 and Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. It is an offence to kill or injure Little Ringed Plover or to disturb it while nesting.

Links with other Action Plans

HAP7 Floodplain Grazing Marsh

HAPI7 Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land

Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Much of the habitat on post-industrial sites has been lost, with the remaining sites being scheduled for reclamation works in the next few years. Little Ringed Plovers have also bred on shingle islands at RSPB Old Moor. Islands provided elsewhere in the Dearne have been lost as breeding sites through bad management, resulting in the invasion of vegetation. A large proportion of the Barnsley area breeding population has recently bred on land scheduled for development. These sites are only temporary, and if not developed in the near future will be lost through succession to pioneer vegetation unless appropriately managed.

Current Local Action

- RSPB has cleared some islands of vegetation at Old Moor.
- Recording by Barnsley Bird Study Group annually mainly within the lower Dearne valley.
- A survey of the borough's population was done in 2001 by volunteers and published by Barnsley Biodiversity Trust in 2008, entitled, *Birds of Conservation Concern*.

Proposed Local Action

- Extract information from the *Barnsley Bird Study Group Breeding Bird Survey* to provide populations and mapping of breeding Little Ringed Plover.
- In partnership with landowners, seek to improve habitats for breeding Little Ringed Plover.