

International Golden Plover 2003

Title

International Golden Plover Census 2003

Description and Summary of Results

The Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* is one of the most numerous waders in Europe. However numbers in the non-breeding season are not well monitored by the established coordinated counts of wetlands because an unknown proportion spends the winter on agricultural and other fields and open spaces rather than coastal wetlands. In 1993 just over 400000 birds were counted in October in parts of Germany and Denmark and one conclusion was that if it was to be repeated then at least the The Netherlands and countries around the Baltic should be included and preferably other areas of northwest Europe. Hence the repeat in October 2003 which included Britain and Ireland. Over 1 million birds were counted over the 7 countries which took part, with over 50% of these in Denmark and Germany combined.

In the UK numbers typically do not peak until November and the majority are found in widespread flocks but which are somewhat unpredictable in distribution. A full national census was therefore considered impractical (unlike in the Waddensee area where the birds are highly localised and concentrated). About 65000 were counted on WeBS counts and this was thought to be nearly complete. In addition, 159 observers submitted 305 casual records totalling 120387 birds, and this gave an overall estimate of about 143000 birds once those casual records which were duplicates of WeBS counts had been excluded. This count is not a new population estimate for October as there were likely to have been large gaps in coverage on lowland farmland.

In the Republic of Ireland ca 24000 were found but this too was thought to be an underestimate.

Methods of Data Capture

Observers were asked to count Golden Plovers at sites of their choice although these were often known wetland sites or known flock ranges of the species. They were asked to record: date, site number, site name, region name, country, number of plovers counted, number estimated. Coordinators were also asked to submit data on weather and accuracy to allow an evaluation of counting quality and any notes on behaviour, habitat or other site-related information.

In the UK two main sources of counts were: birds on the WeBS count – the count weekend coincided with the October date for this and, because the counts are done at high tide, they often included birds found on adjacent agricultural fields; and secondly a request via BTO regional organisers, RSPB staff and various websites and internet newsgroups for casual records of flocks of Golden Plovers for the week 8-14 October. Duplication of counts was

minimised by scrutinising grid references and where apparent duplicates occurred the higher was used.

Purpose of Data Capture

To provide counts or at least estimates of the numbers of Golden Plovers in NW Europe in October which was thought to be a bottleneck period for the species at least in continental Europe.

Geographic Coverage

The intention was to cover as many countries within the wintering range of the species as possible. In the event counts were received from Sweden, Poland, Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands, Britain and Ireland.

Temporal Coverage

October 2003 with 11 October selected as the priority date as it was one day after a full moon and coincided with existing coordinated counts on wetlands in UK and Waddensee. Counts were accepted from 8-14 October, with any from outside this treated as estimates.

Other Interested parties

The International Wader Study Group supported the count. Simon Gillings organised the count as part of his job on a post funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (on behalf of Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage, Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) and Environment & Heritage Service of Northern Ireland).

Organiser(s)

Simon Gillings organised the British contribution with other countries each appointing their own coordinator.

Current Staff Contact

webs@bto.org

Publications

The results of the whole international survey are in:

Rasmussen, L.M. & Gillings, S. 2007. Results of a coordinated count of Eurasian Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* in Northern Europe, October 2003. *Wader Study Group Bulletin* 114: 60-64.

The UK results were summarised in:

Gillings, S. 2006. European Golden Plovers in the UK in October 2003. *British Birds* 99: 206-208.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

BTO Windows network personal space.

Computer data -- outline contents

Computer data -- description of contents

Information held in BTO Archives

Notes on Access and Use

Other information needed

Notes on Survey Design

Specific Issues for Analysis