

Little Ringed Plover 1984

Title

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Description and Summary of Results

This survey was run in conjunction with the Ringed Plover survey but was a separate project.

Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* first nested in Britain at Tring Reservoirs in 1938 and breeding numbers then increased steadily, accompanied by a westward and northward range expansion. By 1950 there were about 30 pairs, 98 were found in 1959, and by 1967 223 pairs at 154 sites in 26 counties. In 1973, a survey of the species summering in Britain revealed at least 467 pairs at 261 localities. To find out what had happened since then the BTO sponsored a full national census of the species in the breeding season of 1984.

Of the more than 600 localities visited the species was recorded from 490 although 57 were regarded as stopover sites for migrants, and two were considered to be feeding sites with the birds almost certainly counted elsewhere. Information for a further 60 sites was inconclusive for a variety of reasons.

The increase in both numbers and distribution recorded in earlier surveys was sustained, but at a slower rate than previously. A minimum of 608 summering pairs (with a possible maximum of 631) was recorded from 370 sites -- an increase of just over 30% in 11 years (2.4% per annum), and a 40% or so increase in numbers of sites recorded with summering pairs. There were summering pairs in most administrative counties in England, with breeding proved in almost all of them. In Wales, 6 pairs were recorded from 5 sites, but there were no records from Scotland or Northern Ireland and only one from the Republic of Ireland.

Gravel and sand-pits, in all stages of development, accounted for approximately half of the sites, and supported 58% of the population. Other habitats included other pits and quarries, coal-mining spoil heaps with subsidence pools forming suitable feeding areas, reservoirs and various industrial habitats. Only 11 were located on river shingle, the original nesting habitat of the species in continental Europe until it began to expand its range in the 1930s.

A comparison of the ranges in 1973 and 1984 showed a decrease in the centre but expansion around the edges.

Methods of Data Capture

Little Ringed Plover nests are usually found on level areas of ground with varying amounts of stones, little or no vegetation and normally close to shallow water, with sandy or muddy edges for feeding. This survey aimed to count at all 'sites' where Little Ringed Plovers were thought to occur.

The aim was to complete the field observations with as little disturbance as possible. A minimum of 4 visits was suggested, on or near 21 April, 19 May, 16 June and 7 July 1984 -- these dates chosen to cover the whole nesting period.

Observers were asked to record all adults seen on each visit, but numbers were later interpreted in terms of pairs. For example, one incubating adult was counted as one pair of birds, and at a site where there were 6 sitting birds, it was assumed that 6 pairs were present, whether 12 adults were seen or not.

The data include all pairs known to have made scrapes and to have laid eggs in them, taking into account that some are double-brooded and that replacement nests are usually made if one fails. It also includes pairs whose behaviour suggested that they were nesting, even though no nest was located, and those seen regularly in the same area throughout the summer but never actually observed in territorial or courtship displays.

Data for 36 additional sites were collated from BTO Nest Record Cards and from information supplied by county recorders.

Purpose of Data Capture

To obtain an up-to-date estimate of the population size and range of Little Ringed Plovers in Britain building on results of previous surveys of this species which first colonised Britain in the 1930s.

Geographic Coverage

All of the range of the species in Britain, in practice primarily England.

Temporal Coverage

The breeding season of 1984 with 4 visits requested between mid April and early July.

Other Interested parties

The survey was organised, run and funded by the BTO.

Organiser(s)

Eileen Parrinder as a volunteer on behalf of BTO.

Current Staff Contact

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Publications

The main report of the survey is:

Parrinder, E. 1989. Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* in Britain in 1984. *Bird Study* 36: 147-153.

The survey was noticed in *BTO News* numbers 125, 129, 131, 138 and 153.

Available from NBN?

No.

Computer data -- location

None.

Computer data -- outline contents

N/A.

Computer data -- description of contents

N/A.

Information held in BTO Archives

1 archive box containing data cards and correspondence. All data and correspondence have been scanned.

Notes on Access and Use

Little Ringed Plover remains on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This means that a specific licence is required to visit or inspect nests.

Other information**Notes on Survey Design****Specific Issues for Analysis**