



# Lake District Breeding Wader Project

## Summary end of project report

March 2011

### Introduction

The Lake District Breeding Wader Project (LDBWP) has been a two and a half year Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership delivery project starting, September 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008, led by the RSPB and sponsored by the Lake District National Park Authority (LDNPA) and Natural England (NE) with support from the Environment Agency (EA).

The aim of the partnership project was to look and quantify the current population status of breeding waders in the LDNP (to define the 'distribution and abundance of breeding waders, as a measure of the health of the wildlife of the National Park') and seek to bring about positive management changes through targeted advisory work in remaining breeding wader 'hotspots' on in-bye and intake land. We knew from limited published data that breeding wading birds have been declining significantly within the LDNP in the past few decades.

### Headline achievements

Active projects were taken forward at Wet Sleddale and Kirkby Pool:

1. Area of wetland (by BAP habitat) in the process of restoration via Higher Level Stewardship:
  - Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh BAP: 35 hectares (Wet Sleddale), 28 hectares (Mr Robinson's), 24 hectares (Mr Jackson)
2. Area of wetland (by BAP habitat) in Higher Level Stewardship schemes to be approved on 1 April '11:
  - 14ha (Mr Pritt), 4ha (Mr Cleasby)

3. Future Higher Level Stewardship farms, warmed up via the Project Officer:
  - 18ha (Mr Winder, Wallend farm)
4. Area of scrapes:
  - Done: 500m<sup>2</sup> (Kirkby Pool), 375m<sup>2</sup> (Wet Sleddale)
  - Planned: 900m<sup>2</sup> (Kirkby Pool)
- 4 Ditch restoration/ re-profiling:
  - Done: 300 metres (Kirkby Pool)
- 5 Ditch creation
  - Planned: 360 metres (Kirkby Pool)

At present if all the farms above within the Kirkby Pool target area go into rewetting as planned there will be a contiguous block of 83 ha under rewetting prescriptions within the NP boundary. With farms outside the park in the Duddon Estuary added to this, the total increases to 150.19 ha within the target area.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

The project recruited 7 volunteers who all surveyed farms (10 in total) in the breeding seasons of 2009 and 2010.

## **TRAINING**

The volunteers were trained in 2009 and several farmers in the project areas were taken to the RSPB's Campfield marsh reserve to learn first hand about managing land for breeding waders.

## **BREEDING BIRD RESULTS**

Farms were surveyed for breeding birds at Wet Sleddale, Rusland valley, Kirkby Pool and Lickle valley. Surveys took place from the 18<sup>th</sup> April till the 19<sup>th</sup> June. Wet Sleddale currently supports all four breeding wading bird species of conservation concern (lapwing, redshank, snipe and curlew). Numbers of pairs have been steadily falling since surveys commenced in 1989. It is too early to establish whether the management interventions have reversed declines, but evidence on the ground shows that breeding wading birds are using the newly created features.

The Kirkby Pool target area within the LDNP supports remnant breeding curlew and lapwing. It is too early to establish whether the management interventions have reversed

declines but we are confident that large scale re-wetting and control of rush will encourage more pairs and a high productivity in the 2011 breeding season.

### **PUBLICITY**

The project has had articles in all the local papers and the most recent on rush bedding was also in the Farmer's Guardian. See photos below.

### **EXIT STRATEGY**

From April 2011, the RSPB Cumbria Wetlands project officer, Tonia Armer, will take over the breeding wader sites in the South Lakes area. A new RSPB Lakes High fells Futurescapes project officer will develop the work in the Bassenthwaite area.

### **WET SLEDDALE, SHAP**



### **KIRKBY POOL VALLEY**

**Moss Side Farm, John Robinson**



Norman Cooper of Troughton Hall and John Robinson of Moss Side Farm. Straw bale (left) and rush bales (right)

