

Man-made ditches in peatland

Martin Cliff



Peatland restoration work is vital for the future of golden plovers.

Want to know more?

Visit the **RSPB website** and search for:

[Saving golden plover in Wales blog \(2017\)](#)

[The story of Moel y Gaseg Wen blog \(2017\)](#)

[RSPB golden plover factsheet](#)

What you can do

RSPB food and farming:
[rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/campaign-with-us/food-and-farming.aspx](https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/campaigning/campaign-with-us/food-and-farming.aspx)

Help wildlife on your land:
[farmwildlife.info](https://www.farmwildlife.info)

Support the Nature Friendly Farming Network as a farmer or member of the public: [nffn.org.uk/](https://www.nffn.org.uk/)

The RSPB is the country's largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home.

www.rspb.org.uk

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The RSPB is a registered charity in England & Wales 207076, in Scotland SC037654.



case study

Golden plover Conservation project



North Wales Moors

The RSPB is working with conservation partners, farmers and other land managers to implement measures to improve the fortunes of the golden plover, a priority species for nature conservation in Wales. Breeding golden plover populations are now established across previously unoccupied/abandoned sites in North Wales.

A golden plover camouflaged as it shelters amongst the undergrowth.

The problem:

Over the last 50 years, golden plover numbers have declined and their range contracted.

In 2007, a survey suggested there were only 36 pairs in Wales – most of these at the Elenydd (Cambrian Mountains).

Historic drainage of blanket bogs and lack of grazing of upland habitats has been linked to the decline in numbers.

This means tall, coarse, tussocky vegetation grows, which limits feeding and nesting opportunities for the birds. Golden plovers also eat a lot of crane flies, and numbers of these insects decrease as peatlands dry out because of drainage and erosion.

The work involved:

Peatland restoration and establishing appropriate mixed grazing regimes is vital to reverse the declines. The RSPB has been working with farmers and other land managers to:

- Cut about 120 hectares of vegetation to provide short nesting areas and taller areas for shelter.
- Facilitate cattle grazing to manage overgrown vegetation.
- Shape 16 moorland pool edges to give the birds easier access.
- Block gullies and about 4,000 metres of moorland grips, so the peatland can hold more water.
- Re-wetting the blanket bog enhances water quality, reduces flood risk and encourages insects for the birds to feed on.

Geraint Davies



Grazing cattle are used to manage overgrown vegetation.

Martin Clift



Machinery is used to shape pool edges to allow easier access for birds to feed.

The future:

Upland habitats are important for golden plovers, but also for other species such as curlews and red grouse. Well managed upland areas also help improve drinking water quality by naturally filtering the water, store more carbon in the soil helping to tackle climate change and reduce the risk of flooding in the valleys. Future policies should encourage the right mix of land management including cattle grazing and habitat restoration.

“By working together we can enhance the habitat for golden plovers. With the introduction of cattle to the hill we have seen immediate results with nesting pairs now using previously unoccupied sites.”

Geraint Davies, Fedw Arian Uchaf