

SPECIES ACTION PLAN: Little Ringed Plover
(*Charadrius dubius*)

**Associated
Species Action
Plans**

Black redstart

1. Current Status

This diminutive wading bird is a summer visitor to Britain from central Africa, where it spends the winter months. Its strident territorial calls issued in slow winged, bat-like, display enlivens visits to seemingly lifeless post-industrial sites in the Black Country.

**Associated
Habitat
Action Plans**

Urban
'wasteland'

The first recorded British breeding record for this species was in 1938. The UK population has since been estimated at between 650 and 825 pairs. There are at least five summering locations in the Biodiversity Action Plan area where suitable habitat exists.

This species primarily favours man-made habitats in Britain. Places such as: gravel pits, gravelly islands in pools or reservoirs, vacant post-industrial sites with standing water, old mining complexes, sewage works and recently reclaimed ground are readily colonised.

2. Current factors affecting species.

A number of factors affect this species:

- Reduction of suitable nesting sites, through development or vegetation growth.
- Predation of eggs and young reducing breeding success or causing failure to raise successful broods.
- Excessive disturbance, although birds will tolerate some human presence (e.g. at sand and gravel extraction sites and urban parks). This disturbance may help deter daytime predators to some extent.
- Many post industrial sites are awaiting re-developed and may only be suitable for this species for a few seasons.
- Canada geese may play a destructive role at some sites by inadvertently trampling on eggs.

3. Current Action.

Wolverhampton MBC, together with local ornithologists, are currently assessing the options for protecting a breeding site of this species in Bilston.

3.1 Legal status

The little ringed plover receives special protection under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

3.2 Management, research and guidance

A licence must be obtained from English Nature to visit nest sites.

Little ringed plovers feed on small insects and mud dwelling invertebrates and need access to shallow water for feeding. Chicks use isolated clumps of vegetation to hide from predators. Management to maintain sparsely vegetated areas and to create or enhance shallow pools may therefore be needed. Such work should be carried out between October and February.

Areas of bare shingle may be important in retaining or attracting this species. The absence of vegetation is also important. Areas can be created using fine material, ideally pea sized gravel, spread on areas of at least 0.2 ha, although larger areas are likely to be more successful.

Research is urgently required on the locations of sites where long-term habitat creation can be undertaken to create shingle islands suitable for nesting together with shallow pools and scrapes for foraging. Such sites could be secured through the planning process as compensation for the loss of nearby sites to development, where retention is not feasible.

It is also important that breeding sites are identified and made known to Local Planning Authorities so that the presence of this protected species can be taken into account at an early stage in the planning process. However, breeding bird populations are often variable with perhaps 5 pairs breeding one year and none the next.

Investigation is needed into the possibility of using nest protection cages/ frames at the more vulnerable sites similar to the model used successfully for lapwings. Little ringed-plovers are vulnerable to predation by crow, foxes and other predators and appropriately designed cages should be used on known sites.

4. Action Plan Objectives and targets

Objective	Target
1. Establish population status in Birmingham and the Black Country.	2002
2. Maintain existing breeding populations and range in Birmingham and the Black Country by managing permanent sites and protecting temporary sites for at least that season.	Ongoing
3. Increase breeding populations by 3 pairs.	By 2006
4. Support research into little ringed plovers using post industrial sites.	By 2003

5. Proposed action with partners to meet objectives

ACTION	POTENTIAL DELIVERERS		YEAR							Meets objective number.
	Lead	Partner	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2011	
5.1 Policy and legislation										
Seek the inclusion of effective measures for the conservation of the little ringed plover in the preparation of Unitary Development Plans and other policy documents.	LAs	EN, WT	As UDPs and other policy documents are produced.							1
5.2 Species management and protection										
Manage vegetation on little ringed plover breeding sites by winter management works.	WT, Owners	LAs, BTCV, SRBS			•	•	•	•		1,2
Manage access to breeding sites.	LAs, Owners				•	•	•	•		1
5.3 Advisory										
Disseminate research and survey information on urban little ringed plovers to landowners, conservation organisations and local authorities.	EN, WMBC	WT, LAs, FWAG, RSPB	•	•	•					1,2
Ensure records of this species are made available to Local Planning Authorities.	ER	LAs, EN, WT	•	•	•					1
Undertake suitable survey work to establish population and range in the Birmingham and Black Country, targeting former industrial sites.	WMBC	WT, LAs, LO	•	•	•					3,4
Establish monitoring at key sites to determine any change in status.		WT, LAs, LO	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	3,4
5.5 Links to other action plans										
Urban 'wasteland'.										

6. Co-ordination and review.

This Biodiversity Action Plan will be implemented over 10 years with a first review after 5 years. A group will be set up to co-ordinate implementation and to report to the Biodiversity Steering Group. This group will meet at a minimum on a yearly basis.

Review will be carried out in conjunction with related Habitat and Species Action Plans as appropriate.

Review will consist of measuring achievement of targets. The group will, with the support of the Steering Group, develop and implement appropriate monitoring methods which will inform the review process.

The Action Plan will be revised and updated in the light of review results and any relevant changes in circumstances and/or additional information which becomes available during the review period.

In line with national guidance, the Steering Group will report to the UK Steering Group.