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POSTER

A case study of the impacts of wind farm construction on breeding Golden Plovers

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Upland areas within the UK host many bird species of conservation importance and also provide a significant wind resource away from densely populated areas. This means they are often deemed suitable for wind farm development. The extent to which this overlap may impact on breeding upland species at the landscape scale depends on the response of birds to individual developments. We investigated the impacts of a wind farm on breeding European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* at a site located on blanket bog in the north of Scotland. Covering a 5-year period before, during and after construction repeat surveys of the wind farm site and surrounding area were used to assess any changes in abundance, distribution and breeding success with adult colour ringing providing additional information. Effects during construction consisted of a limited decrease in occupancy close to the wind farm infrastructure. Post-construction birds were lost from most of the area formally occupied within the wind farm. There was no evidence for changes in breeding success within the wind farm and we suggest that losses may have occurred directly through displacement and/or indirectly due to low recruitment of new pairs into territories vacated, either through displacement or natural mortality. Distribution and colour ring data suggest that displaced pairs did not resettle in areas immediately adjacent to the wind farm. If these pairs continued to breed they may have been displaced beyond the radius of our survey area. As the main decreases occurred in the period after construction it is possible that a behavioural avoidance of turbine infrastructure is a key explanatory factor.