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**Ecology and conservation of birds in upland and alpine habitats**

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**Waders in the uplands – why are changes so patchy in space and time?**

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Of the 17 wader species breeding in the British uplands the great majority have declined since the mid-1990s, and indeed have been declining since further back in time. Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* have shown some of the largest declines of all birds breeding in Britain. Why should this be so?

This paper explores the nature of these declines, and considers spatial and temporal patterns in changes. The most widely cited causes are: habitat change due to agricultural intensification, drainage and forestry (including forest edge effects); direct and indirect influences of sheep and deer grazing; muirburn; acidification and /or eutrophication; localized recreational disturbance; increases in generalist predation; spread of renewable energy developments; climate change; and factors outwith the breeding grounds. Little has been published on possible impacts of vegetation homogenization (emerging from repeat-surveys of work done around 50 years ago), small mammal population fluctuations, disease, changes in soil composition, invertebrate assemblage and population dynamics, and abandonment of land management activities.

Perhaps rather alarmingly, we still know very little about the ecology and habitat use of most waders in the uplands beyond a few specialist studies. There is a dearth of experimental data, and even the well-monitored populations suggest a complexity of factors, some of which are confounding. By drawing on previous studies, this paper provides some pointers to new work.