

## 4.4 Golden Plover

### 4.4.1 Current Status

Golden plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*) is a species listed on the Annex I of the European Birds Directive and also listed on the Amber list of birds of conservation concern. Globally the species is in decline<sup>24</sup> with the Breeding Bird Survey (2014)<sup>25</sup> showing the population for golden plover in the UK declined by 25% between 1995 and 2013.

The distribution of golden plover within the Biosphere is likely to be limited to the uplands, particularly of the of the Core and Buffer zones during the summer breeding season. During the winter months they move to both the Solway and Ayrshire coast. The current status of the population in the Biosphere is not well understood as the species is not well recorded.

### 4.4.2 Ecology and Habitat Requirements

Golden plover is a species which breeds in the uplands and winters in the coastal regions on mudflats and sandflats. In the uplands it occupies a variety of habitats which provide forage and shelter, such as bogs and heathland with high abundances of sphagnum moss and short heather. Golden plover is a ground nesting species and it shows a preference for nesting in short sward vegetation (up to 15cm). In the UK it has an affinity with managed grouse moors, where sward height is being kept relatively low by muirburn. The diet of a golden plover consists predominantly of insects, earthworms, spiders and some plant material (berries and seeds).

### 4.4.3 Concerns

- Loss of suitable habitat
- Predation of nests and adults
- Susceptibility to severe weather conditions
- Disturbance of nesting sites

### 4.4.4 Conservation Objectives

- Encourage recording of golden plover to improve knowledge of current breeding population size and distribution.
- Maintain and enhance the breeding golden plover population in the Biosphere.
- Reduce disturbance through raising awareness of the species through interpretation.
- Establish numbers and distribution of breeding golden plover through surveys.

<sup>24</sup> BirdLife International 2012. *Pluvialis apricaria*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 2015.2. Available at [www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org)

<sup>25</sup> The Breeding Bird Survey 2014

<http://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u16/downloads/reports/bbsreport14.pdf>

## 4.4.5 Management

In addition to management measures detailed for the relevant habitats in the previous sections (see Table 1), golden plover require specific management actions to halt further decline and support existing populations.

The recommended management actions for golden plover are:

- Predator control, with opportunities for funding through SRDP.
- Maintain a suitable low sward in existing breeding sites.
- Reduce the sward height in new areas where this would not compromise the provision of other important habitats (eg. blanket bog, purple moor grass and rush pasture).

## 4.4.6 Example Projects

- SNH site condition monitoring and specific studies such as the Monitoring of Moorland Fringe Biodiversity report (2014)<sup>26</sup>
- BTO volunteer Breeding Bird Survey

## 4.4.7 Opportunities

- Open Habitat Mapping by Forestry Commission Scotland could be used to target areas for open habitat restoration and condition improvement.
- Creation and enhancement of upland habitat networks.
- SRDP moorland management funding.
- Wader surveys to establish breeding numbers and distribution.

## 4.4.8 Further Information

Breeding Bird Survey Scotland data available at: <http://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/bbs/latest-results/population-trends>

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<sup>26</sup> Scottish Natural Heritage Commissioned Report No. 456. Monitoring of moorland fringe biodiversity: the bird communities of the interface between conifer plantations and moorland in the Galloway Forest Park and their relationships with moorland fringe habitats (2014).  
[http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned\\_reports/456.pdf](http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/456.pdf)