

UK SPA SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP 17 January 2002

The Statutory Conservation Agency/RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS)

Background on the process

The Statutory Conservation Agency/RSPB Annual Breeding Bird Scheme (SCARABBS) agreement was made in 1998 with the aim of providing a framework for a collaborative programme of regular national surveys of species that are not effectively covered by other national monitoring schemes.

Surveys aim, in a few cases, to census most of the British population, but generally are sample surveys of suitable habitats broadly within the known range of the species. Amongst other uses, the surveys allow national population estimates to be derived, which can then be used in the site designation process. The scheme builds on previous individual species national surveys dating back to the early 1980s and, in general, aims to repeat national surveys every ten years. Some species, however, are surveyed on a more regular basis.

Recent surveys under the scheme include Hen Harrier, Cirl Bunting and Capercaillie in 1998, Spotted Crake, Twite and Ring Ouzel in 1999 and Red Kite in 2000. The current timetable of surveys under the Agreement runs until 2005 (Appendix 1).

Current and planned activity

All activity under the scheme was cancelled in 2001 due to the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in February. The national survey of Peregrine was not undertaken. This has created the need to review the current SCARABBS program to ensure that the species that should have been covered in 2001 are covered as soon as possible within the scheme while having a minimal knock-on effect on the schedule for 2002 onward.

A meeting of the SCARABBS Working Group in May 2001 reviewed the current timetable of surveys. It was agreed that Peregrine would be surveyed in 2002, while Golden Eagle and Nightjar (both planned for 2002) would be deferred to 2003. Other species planned for 2002 survey would still be surveyed; Bearded Tit, Chough, and Whimbrel (only a partial survey of Whimbrel will take place in 2002).

In addition to changes in the current timetable, it is recognised that other aspects of the scheme require development, especially in agreeing a timetable of national surveys beyond 2005.

A number of considerations will influence this, in particular, the timing of surveys in relation to statutory reporting needs, whether additional species need to be covered by the scheme, and whether sampling approaches for some species could be improved to aid in site evaluation, also whether there is still a need for special surveys for some species *e.g.* Curlew, in view of BBS. RSPB and JNCC are currently reviewing the species covered by the scheme, and RSPB is developing a possible schedule for the period 2002-2014. Both of these activities are yet to be completed.

Implications for the future development of the UK SPA network

Many of the species covered by the scheme are listed on Annex I of the Birds Directive. The work programme of the SPA Scientific Working Group already includes consideration of national surveys for species that have been surveyed since 1997 (the data cut-off point of the SPA review). These include Spotted Crake; an Annex I species. The delay in surveys for some of the widely dispersed raptors - Peregrine and Golden Eagle - will delay further re-consideration of the SPA suites for these species, especially the former as the SCARABBS survey is to include comprehensive coverage of several areas previously not well surveyed.

Re-consideration of all of the other species to be covered in the remaining years of the scheme is already integrated into the work programme of the SPA Scientific Working Group and discussions will follow as and when data for these surveys become available.

Recommendations

In light of the activity outlined above, it is recommended that the UK SPA Scientific Working Group:

- ◆ **Agree** a forward plan to deal with the results of the 1999 surveys of Spotted Craneⁱ, Ring Ouzelⁱⁱ and Twiteⁱⁱⁱ (information papers to be submitted separately by JNCC/RSPB).
- ◆ **Agree** to defer further consideration of review of SPA suites for Peregrine and Golden Eagle until after the next surveys for these species are complete and have been analysed (anticipated in mid 2003 for Peregrine and early 2004 for Golden Eagle).
- ◆ **Support** continuation of the SCARABBS Agreement beyond 2005, and aid in the further development of the scheme.

Appendix 1. Indicative timetable for survey and monitoring of some breeding birds until the year 2005

SPECIES	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Red-throated diver Shetland survey 1983				NS										NS	
Black-throated diver NS 1985				NS	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	NS	*
Slavonian grebe	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP*
Bittern	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Greylag geese (north Scottish population only)									NS						
Common scoter					NS										NS
Goldeneye	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*
Red-breasted merganser NS 1987							NS								
Goosander NS 1987							NS								
Red kite ²	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	**	**	NS*	**	**	**	**	**
White-tailed eagle	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS
Marsh harrier	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	NS	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	NS
Hen harrier NS 1988	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	NS	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Montagu's harrier	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*
Golden eagle		NS										NS			
Osprey ³	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP*
Merlin NS 1983-1984			NS	NS									NS	NS	
Hobby						NS	NS								

SPECIES	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Peregrine	NS										NS				
Black grouse		W-NS			NS	NS									NS
Capercaillie			NS	NS									NS	NS	
Grey partridge				BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/GC	BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/G	BBS/G
Spotted crane	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP
Corncrake NS 1988			NS	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP*	NS	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP*
Avocet	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP
Stone-curlew	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*
Dotterel NS 1987-1988							NS	NS							
Golden plover						NS	NS								
Black-tailed godwit	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP
Whimbrel NS 1982-1986	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP
Curlew ¹										(NS)	(NS)				
Greenshank					NS	NS									NS
Red-necked phalarope	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*	RBBP	RBBP*
Sandwich tern NS 1985-1987	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*
Roseate tern NS 1985-1987	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*
Arctic tern NS 1985-1987	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*
Little tern NS 1985-1987	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*	SMP+	SMP+*
Barn Owl NS 1982-1985				NS	NS	NS	NS								
Short-eared owl					NS	NS									
Nightjar		NS										NS			
Woodlark NS 1986	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP
Ring Ouzel									NS						
Cetti's warbler	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP

SPECIES	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Dartford warbler NS 1984	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	NS	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	RBBP	NS	RBBP
Bearded tit		NS										NS			
Crested tit NS 1980			NS	NS									NS	NS	
Chough		NS										NS			
Twite									NS						
Scottish crossbill			NS	NS									NS	NS	
Snow bunting							NS	NS							
Curlew	NS	NS	NS	*	*	*	*	NS	*	*	*	*	NS	*	*

NS = National Survey, one of the aims of which would be to produce a national population estimate. This might be derived from either a complete or sample survey.

W - NS = Welsh Survey

* = low annual input

** = medium annual input

DM = development of survey methodology

RBBP* = Rare Breeding Birds Panel together with low annual input

BBS/GC = Breeding Bird Survey and Game Conservancy monitoring

SMP+* = Seabird Monitoring Programme together with low annual input

¹ = The Breeding Bird Survey may provide adequate coverage for Curlew. Need for national survey to be reassessed after a few year's BBS operation.

² = In Wales, effective complete annual census authorised by Welsh Kite Trust.

³ = Coverage of whole population currently achieved by Scottish Raptor Study Group and RSPB, reported through RBBP.

ⁱ ms in press

ⁱⁱ ms accepted for publication in *Bird Study*

ⁱⁱⁱ Wotton, S.R., Langston, R.H.W. & Gregory, R.D. *in press* The breeding status of the Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus* in the UK in 1999.