

## A6.61b Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* (non-breeding)

### 1. Status in UK

See section A6.61a.

### 2. Population data

	Population sizes (individuals)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
<b>GB</b>	250,000	2,500	54,439 (22% of GB total)
<b>Ireland</b>	200,000	2,000	12,794 (6% of all- Ireland total)
<b>Biogeographic population</b>	1,800,000	18,000	67,233 (4% of biogeographic population)

*GB population source: Cayford & Waters 1996*

*All-Ireland population source: Way et al. 1993*

*Biogeographic population source: Rose & Scott 1997*

### 3. Distribution

The global distribution, taxonomy and population structure of Golden Plovers is outlined in section A6.61a.

The Golden Plover is partially migratory in Britain and Ireland and wholly migratory elsewhere in its range. In winter, Golden Plovers are found in the western maritime parts of Europe, especially Britain, Ireland, France and Iberia, with smaller numbers in the Mediterranean basin. Non-breeding birds occur as far east as Turkey and the southern Caspian, and south to north and north-west Africa (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Flocks occur throughout much of lowland Britain and Ireland, although England is the main wintering ground for north European birds, with British breeding birds being joined by immigrants from Scandinavia, Iceland and western Siberia (Byrkjedal & Thompson 1998).

Concentrations occur from the Firth of Forth south to Tyneside, between Morecambe Bay and the Dee across to the Humber, in Lincolnshire and in Fenland, and on the south-west England peninsula. In Ireland, the major wintering grounds are in the north-east and along the south coast. In extreme weather, birds move south-westwards and may even leave Britain and Ireland altogether (Kirby 1995b). Most large flocks are found close to, or on the coast, with relatively few occurring inland, apart from some significant numbers in central England, East Anglia and the Shannon lowlands (Lack 1986). Golden Plovers occur at traditional wintering grounds where they are found in particular 'flock ranges'.

Grassland is the most important feeding habitat, with earthworm-rich permanent pastures preferred over leys and arable (Fuller & Youngman 1979), although in Fenland and north Northumberland most winter flocks occur on stubbles, recently ploughed or sown fields. The intertidal zone is also an important feeding habitat, especially in Scotland, Ireland and northern England. Birds roost on arable land, damp grassland and intertidal areas.

#### **4. Population structure and trends**

The north-west European Golden Plover wintering population (comprising *P. a. apricaria*) is estimated to be 1.8 million birds (Rose & Scott 1997). This population is declining (Rose & Scott 1997) although it is poorly monitored (Delany *et al.* 1999). Indeed, a decline has been noted in Britain and Ireland since the 1950s for reasons that are unclear. Increased afforestation and predation in the breeding range, and agricultural intensification of both breeding and non-breeding habitats are thought to have been significant contributory factors (Byrkjedal & Thompson 1998).

Totals wintering in Britain and Ireland are estimated to be 250,000 (Cayford & Waters 1996) and 200,000 (Way *et al.* 1993) respectively, consisting largely of birds of British, Irish and Icelandic origins, with smaller numbers from Scandinavia and breeding areas further east.

#### **5. Protection measures for population in UK**

##### **SPA suite**

In the non-breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Golden Plovers supports, on average, 67,233 individuals (calculated using WeBS January site totals for the period 1992/93 to 1996/97 – see section 4.4.1 and Appendix 2 for further explanation). This total amounts to about 22% of the British population, about 6% of the all-Ireland population, and about 4% of the international flyway population. The suite comprises 22 sites at which Golden Plover has been listed as a qualifying species (Table 6.61b.1).

#### **6. Classification criteria**

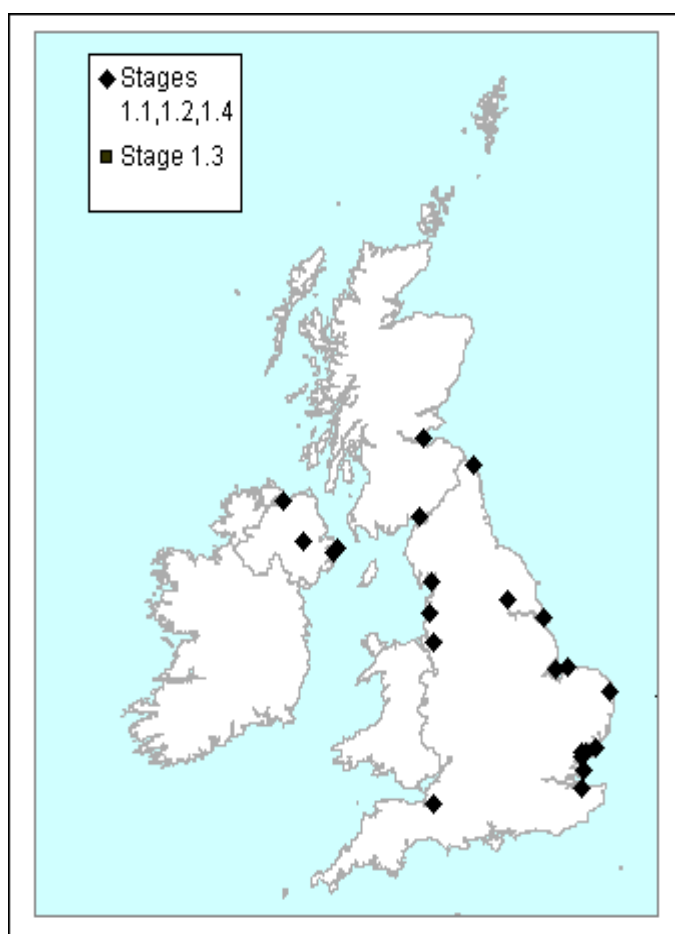
All 22 sites in the UK known to support more than 1% of the national population of Golden Plover were considered under Stage 1.1. All were selected after consideration of Stage 2 judgements.

The suite is distributed throughout the main centres of the winter range of Golden Plovers in the UK, from the Firth of Forth in the north, to sites in Northern Ireland, and on the west and east coasts of England. All sites are multi-species SPAs, of importance also for a range of other waterbirds. There is a long recorded history of occupancy at most of these sites (Prater 1981).

As the selection of sites under Stage 1.1 resulted in a suite which gives comprehensive coverage of the population and range of non-breeding Golden Plover in the UK, it was not considered necessary to select additional sites using Stage 1.4.

Golden Plover are monitored where they occur on wetland sites, but due to current reliance on the UK's Wetland Bird Survey (the principle monitoring scheme for non-breeding waterbirds in the UK), some important concentrations regularly occurring on agricultural habitats are not routinely counted. Work is being undertaken to address these monitoring needs.

### Distribution map for non-breeding Golden Plover SPA suite



**Table 6.61b.1 – SPA suite**

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Abberton Reservoir	3,714	0.2	1.5	1.1
Blackwater Estuary	7,247	0.4	2.9	1.1
Breydon Water	5,040	0.3	2.0	1.1
Colne Estuary	2,530	0.1	1.0	1.1
Firth of Forth	2,970	0.2	1.2	1.1
Foulness	3,359	0.2	1.3	1.1
Hamford Water	4,118	0.2	1.7	1.1
Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast	29,235	1.6	11.7	1.1
Lindisfarne	5,300	0.3	2.1	1.1
Lough Foyle	4,891	0.3	2.5 (Ire)	1.1
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg	5,298	0.3	2.7 (Ire)	1.1
Lower Derwent Valley	6,000	0.3	2.4	1.1
Mersey Estuary	3,070	0.2	1.2	1.1

<b>Site name</b>	<b>Site total</b>	<b>% of biogeographical population</b>	<b>% of national population</b>	<b>Selection stage</b>
Morecambe Bay	4,097	0.2	1.6	1.1
North Norfolk Coast	2,667	0.2	1.1	1.1
Outer Ards	2,079	0.1	1.0 (Ire)	1.1
Ribble and Alt Estuaries	4,277	0.2	1.7	1.1
Somerset Levels and Moors	3,029	0.2	1.21	1.1
Strangford Lough	6,526	0.4	3.3 (Ire)	1.1
The Swale	2,862	0.2	1.1	1.1
The Wash	11,037	0.6	4.4	1.1
Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	6,121	0.3	2.5	1.1

<b>TOTALS</b>	67,233 (in January)	3.7%	21.8% 6.4% (Ire)
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