

A6.76 Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola* (breeding)

1. Status in UK

Biological status		Legal status		Conservation status	
Breeding	✓	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	General Protection Schedule 1(1)	Species of European Conservation Concern	SPEC 3 Unfavourable conservation status (declining) but not concentrated in Europe
Migratory	✓	Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985	General Protection	(UK) Species of Conservation Importance	Table 4
Wintering	✓	EC Birds Directive 1979	Annex I Migratory	All-Ireland Vertebrate Red Data Book	

2. Population data

	Population sizes (pairs)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
GB	10	1	10 (100% of GB population)
Ireland			
Biogeographic population	298,800	2,988	10 (<0.1% of biogeographic population)

GB population source: SNH

Biogeographic population source: Hagemeyer & Blair 1997

3. Distribution

Globally, breeding Wood Sandpipers occur throughout the northern Palearctic, mainly in the boreal and sub-Arctic (taiga) zones, although they become scarcer in the south. The species breeds from Scotland and Scandinavia in the west, across Fennoscandia, northern Russia, to Kamchatka and the shores of the Sea of Okhotsk. The species is monotypic. Wood Sandpipers are migratory, with those birds breeding in north-west Europe wintering throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and those breeding in eastern Europe and Siberia wintering in India, Indo-China, Malaysia and Australia (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

Within Europe, Wood Sandpipers breed in Scotland and Denmark in small numbers, but are mainly found throughout Scandinavia, the Baltic States and across northern Russia (Hagemeyer & Blair 1997; Cramp & Simmons 1983).

In Britain, they breed only in the Highlands of Scotland, and then at only a few widely scattered locations (Gibbons *et al.* 1993; Ogilvie & RBBP 1999a). Wood Sandpiper breeding habitat is primarily flark fens (fens of complex structure with many pools and *Sphagnum* hummocks), open mires, and pine bogs (Nikolaev 1998). In the southern part of the range, lakeshore meadows, and riverbanks in heather moorland, are also used for nesting (Hagemeyer & Blair 1997). In Britain, open boggy moorland with scattered pools, and marshy areas are favoured (Thom 1986; Nethersole-Thompson & Nethersole-Thompson 1986).

4. Population structure and trends

Four biogeographical populations of Wood Sandpiper have been described (Rose & Scott 1997). Of these, two occur in Europe. The European/West African population breeds in northern Europe (including Britain) and winters locally in north Africa, and more continuously across western and central sub-Saharan Africa. The population is estimated at over 1,000,000 individuals. Birds that breed further east in western Siberia belong to the South-west Asia, Eastern and Southern African population (between 100,000–>1,000,000 individuals). These winter mainly in the Middle East and eastern and southern Africa (Rose & Scott 1997).

The total estimated European population is 298,842–412,474 pairs (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Within north-west Europe, the largest numbers occur in Finland, which holds an estimated 250,000 pairs. Sweden holds an estimated 75,000 pairs and Norway 30,000 pairs (Tucker & Heath 1994; Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Smaller populations occur in Belarus (3,100 pairs) and Estonia (1,500 pairs), and very small, scattered populations occur in Iceland, northern Britain, and eastward from Denmark and northern Germany to the Baltic states (Tucker & Heath 1994; Hagemeijer & Blair 1997).

Since 1970, Wood Sandpipers have declined in Finland, and elsewhere where small populations occur along the southern extent of the species' range. However, the populations in Norway and Sweden are now thought to be stable. The main reasons for declining populations are thought to be loss of breeding habitat from wetland drainage, peat extraction and afforestation, and factors influencing winter survival in Africa (Cramp & Simmons 1983; Tucker & Heath 1994; Hagemeijer & Blair 1997).

In Britain, an average of 10 pairs has been recorded breeding annually between 1993 and 1997, although the population has fluctuated between two and fifteen pairs since 1987 (SNH unpublished; Ogilvie 1999). In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the species declined dramatically in southern Sweden, and became extremely rare in some parts of its southern range where it had once been more common.

5. Protection measures for population in UK

SPA suite

In the breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Wood Sandpiper supports, on average about 10 pairs¹. This amounts to the whole of the British breeding population. Wood Sandpipers do not breed in Northern Ireland. The suite contains less than 0.1% of the international population (numbers in the UK are very small in comparison to those breeding in northern Scandinavia and Russia). The SPA suite total is contained within three sites (Table 6.76.1) where Wood Sandpiper has been listed as a qualifying species.

¹ Calculation of site totals and population coverage for Wood Sandpipers is problematic. At any site, breeding is often difficult to confirm, and additionally, site and national totals vary considerably from year-to-year. The totals and proportions presented here should thus be regarded as indicative rather than exact.

6. Classification criteria

All sites regularly supporting more than 1% of the national breeding population of Wood Sandpiper were considered under Stage 1.1, and three sites in northern Scotland were selected after consideration of Stage 2 judgements.

All the sites in the suite have a high degree of naturalness, and the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands and the River Spey-Insh Marshes are multi-species SPAs. Achanalt Marshes, however, has been selected solely for breeding Wood Sandpipers. Since the 1959 re-establishment of Wood Sandpipers in Scotland, the sites have a long history of occupation (Batten *et al.* 1990).

Distribution map for breeding Wood Sandpiper SPA suite

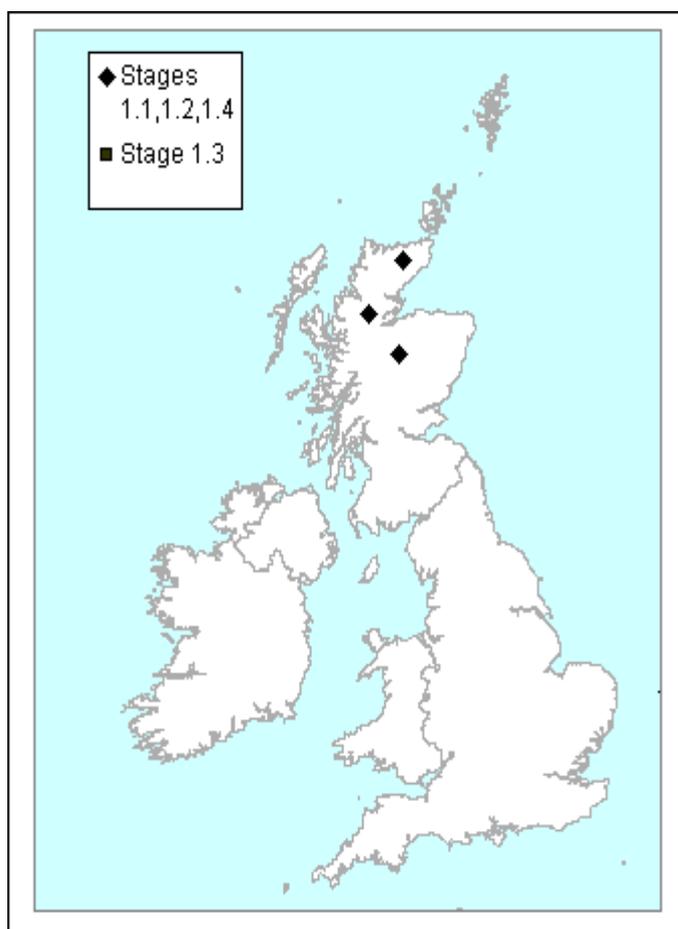


Table 6.76.1 – SPA suite

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical	% of national population	Selection stage
Achanalt Marshes	3	<0.1	30	1.1
Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands	5	<0.1	50	1.1
River Spey - Insh Marshes	2	<0.1	20	1.1
TOTALS	10	<0.1%	100%	