

B.T.O. ENQUIRY - RINGED PLOVER BREEDING CENSUS 1973.

Results for Northumberland and North Durham.

Coverage for this enquiry extended to the whole of the coastline between Berwick-on-Tweed and Tynemouth (including the offshore islands) and all of the principal rivers in Northumberland, with several inland lakes, reservoirs, sand and gravel workings, former collieries and other miscellaneous sites in the two counties also being visited. Of a total of 121 pairs of Ringed Plover found all but one were in Northumberland.

Breakdown of the results.

The stronghold of the species is undoubtedly the Lindisfarne N.N.R. with 33 pairs this year and the coastline between Beadnell and Foxton with 28 pairs. Elsewhere long stretches of beach were often without Ringed Plovers or only produced small numbers. Coastal sites produced a total of 85 pairs (1 in County Durham).

Inland, the Coquet proved to be, predictably, the most important river with 16 pairs between Sharperton and Hepple, and at the Caistron Gravel Works the only parts covered in detail. Elsewhere the species was either absent or only represented in very small numbers as can be seen from the results in the Table below. The River North Tyne west of Bellingham was, unfortunately, not covered in any detail and this is an area where Ringed Plovers have certainly nested in the past. A total of 30 pairs were found at riparian sites in Northumberland.

Of the miscellaneous sites checked, including many of the sand pits along the south side of the Tyne, Ringed Plovers were only found at Colt Crag Reservoir (1 pair), Font Reservoir (2 pairs), near Fenwick Colliery (1 pair) and at an opencast site at Hauxley (2 pairs).

Disturbance.

In the coastal areas this is becoming an increasing problem with several instances of known breeding areas holding reduced numbers (or no birds at all) as a result of picnicking and human disturbance generally. Even at the Lindisfarne N.N.R. reduced numbers on previous years is partly blamed on the increasing popularity of the area to day visitors. Six pairs of Ringed Plovers were found nesting in rocky habitats, away from the popular sandy beaches and it is speculative to hope that the species may perhaps be able to adapt to some extent to the increasing pressures on its natural habitat by exploiting this less familiar niche.

Whilst human disturbance is undoubtedly responsible for the gradual abandonment of formerly suitable coastal nesting sites, numbers of Ringed Plovers may have been lower this year in some breeding areas. This was noted mainly at some inland sites not unduly affected by disturbance, e.g. sand quarries in North Durham, where the species has been noted in previous years but was absent this season.

TABLE

Showing the areas covered in Northumberland and North Durham, together with the number of breeding pairs found.

<u>Coastal.</u>	<u>No. of pairs.</u>
Holy Island	11
Farne Islands	10
Coquet Island	3
Spittal - Cheswick Sands	nil
Goswick Sand Rigg - Guile Point	12
Guile Point - Budle Bay	10
Budle Point - Beadnell Lime Kilns	2
Beadnell Lime Kilns - Foxton	28
Foxton - Amble	nil
Amble - Cresswell	1
Cresswell - North Blyth	7 (2 on coastal links).
Blyth - Tynemouth	nil
Whitburn, Co. Durham	1
	85 pairs
<u>Inland.</u>	
<u>R. Tweed.</u>	
Berwick - Carham	2
<u>R. Till / Breamish</u>	
Tillmouth - nr. Wooler	1
Powburn (river gravel workings)	3
<u>R. Glen / Bowmont Water / College Burn</u>	nil
<u>R. Coquet</u>	
Sharperton - Hepple	12
Caistron River Gravel Workings	4
<u>R. Tyne.</u>	
Newburn Bridge - Warden	nil
<u>R. North Tyne.</u>	
Warden - Bellingham	nil
Emmethaugh	1
<u>T. South Tyne</u>	
Warden - Haydon Bridge	nil
Haydon Bridge - Haltwhistle	3
Haltwhistle - County Border	nil
<u>R. West Allen</u>	nil
<u>R. Irthing</u>	
Gilsland - Shankend	3
Redsike	1
	30 pairs.

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* Miscellaneous sites.

Opencast site, Hauxley	2
Nr. Fenwick Colliery, Backworth.	1
Colt Crag Reservoir	1
Font Reservoir	2
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	6 pairs.

TOTAL 121 pairs.

* To save space only those miscellaneous sites where Ringed Plovers were present are shown.

List of Contributors.

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* Miscellaneous sites.

2	Opencast site, Hawley
1	Mr. Fenwick Colliery, Backworth
1	Golf Club Reservoir
2	Pont Reservoir
6	pairs

TOTAL 121 pairs.

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