

## A Helping Hand

Many factors influence the success of breeding birds, including food supply, predation and the weather. Limiting our disturbance to these birds will help them face these natural pressures.

Disturbance can cause eggs to be chilled, or taken by predators such as crows.

**Please help our ground-nesting birds, especially between 1 March and 31 July, by:**

- keeping yourself (and your dog) to main tracks;
- moving away quickly if you see disturbed or distressed parent birds;
- encouraging others to do the same.

**Thank you**



for birds  
for people  
for ever



Forestry Commission  
England

Working at the heart of the New Forest National Park



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## Ground-nesting birds in the New Forest

Key facts and how you can help

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Redshank by John Buckingham



**The New Forest National Park is home to a range of special birds which nest on the ground.** These birds lay their eggs and raise their chicks on the Forest's open heathlands and wetlands, which makes them more vulnerable to disturbance than birds that nest in trees.

The wet habitats of the New Forest contain very important populations of four breeding waders (birds with long legs that often feed in shallow water). Wetland restoration has left their habitat in good condition, but to give these birds the best chance of success we need to limit disturbance to them during the breeding season.

This leaflet gives some interesting facts about the four waders and information on how you can help when you are out and about in the Forest.

The New Forest heathlands are also important for other birds such as the Dartford warbler, nightjar and woodlark, which also nest on or close to the ground. Following the guidance in this leaflet will also help protect them.



## Lapwing

The lapwing is also known as the peewit because of its distinctive call. Once very common, its noisy aerial display is a herald of spring.



## Curlew

Our largest wader, the curlew feeds on coastal mudflats during winter, then comes inland to our moors and heaths to breed in spring.



## Snipe

This quick-flying secretive bird uses its long bill to probe for earthworms. Its camouflage makes it very difficult to see.



## Redshank

This red-legged wader makes a tent out of the grass growing up around its nest. Sadly, this is now a rare sight in the New Forest.

**A 2004 survey of these birds in the New Forest indicated that since 1994:**

- **curlews** have declined by 25%
- **snipe** have declined by 29%
- **redshanks** have declined by 24%
- New Forest populations of these birds are increasingly important.

## Heaths and wetlands

The heathlands of the New Forest have been managed by people for centuries. Animal grazing and traditional cutting and burning maintain it today in good condition for the rare and threatened wildlife that lives here. Each year, around 150 sites covering 400 hectares (1,000 acres), are agreed with Natural England and commoners for burning. Without this, the heaths would eventually become woodland.

The National Park contains some of the most important and rare wetlands in Europe – as much as 75% of the UK's lowland bog habitat. Wet valleys, or mires, are essential for wading birds. Here they probe for worms and other invertebrates beneath the surface.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The **lapwing** has a shorter bill than other waders, and can live to over 20 years.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Incubation takes a month, but within hours of hatching the tiny **curlew** chicks can run around.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The male **snipe** displays by making a 'drumming' sound in flight. It dives down steeply so that the air vibrates its outer tail feathers.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The **redshank** is sometimes called the 'warden of the marsh' because its loud alarm call alerts other birds to danger.

