

# Monitoring grassland waders breeding in Germany

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Until now, only rough estimates have been made of the sizes and trends of most of the populations of meadow birds that breed in Germany. In this paper we describe a new approach to the monitoring of such populations: Counting Site Monitoring. It is based on regular and irregular counts of meadow birds in predefined counting sites and we use it to describe population trends in German meadow birds over recent decades. Altogether we analysed 26,258 counts of breeding meadow birds from 2,177 counting sites. The populations of Dunlin *Calidris alpina schinzii*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* and Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa limosa* have significantly and severely decreased in Germany and those of Dunlin and Ruff are now so small that extinction can be expected soon. Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* and Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* have undergone significant but less severe population declines. Eurasian Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus* increased until 1997 but have since decreased significantly. Redshank *Tringa totanus* is currently the only species showing a significantly positive population trend.

Trends differed greatly between habitats. On the Wadden Sea islands, the populations of all meadow birds have increased. On the mainland salt marshes and on the inland clay marshes, trends have differed between species, but on the Baltic coast and in inland habitats all species have shown negative trends. New estimates (means for 2000–2004) for some meadow bird populations in Germany are: Eurasian Oystercatcher 29,600 pairs, Dunlin 28 pairs, Ruff 44 females (strongly declining), Black-tailed Godwit 5,950 pairs, Eurasian Curlew 3,950 pairs, and Redshank 14,400 pairs.