

A6.106 Annex I and migratory species for which no SPAs have been selected

This section outlines the reasons why SPAs have been not been selected for certain species that are either migrants (or partial migrants) and/or are listed on Annex I of the Directive. The latter species are indicated by bold facing. See Appendix 2 for the derivation of the list of regularly occurring migratory species in the UK.

1. Wintering and passage waders

A number of waders pass through the UK on migration to/from breeding grounds in the Arctic or Scandinavia, and more southerly wintering areas. The migration of these species is irregular and often varies in volume considerably between years. Sites used are not always predictable. For the following migratory species it has not been possible to locate internationally significant concentrations that occur on a predictable basis: Spotted Redshank *Tringa erythropus*, Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*, Little Stint *Calidris minuta*, Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*, and – the least predictable – Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*.

Jack Snipe *Lymnocyptes minimus* winters in the UK and the species is arguably the most poorly known of all regularly occurring British birds in terms of knowledge of population size (10,000–100,000 individuals – Cayford & Waters 1996), and trends (unknown). There are no known concentrations. An EU action plan is under development for the species since it is an Annex II species with an unfavourable conservation status. A major element of this plan will be to improve knowledge and monitoring of the species.

2. Breeding waders

Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* have colonised Britain during the twentieth century and the species is especially associated with exposed sand and gravel banks. It has accordingly benefitted from the development of minerals and aggregate extraction in lowland England and Wales and is especially associated with this habitat. The population is relatively small and there are no known internationally important concentrations.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus* formerly bred in the UK in very small numbers, but there have been no recent breeding records.

Woodcock *Scolopax rusticola* are widely, but locally, distributed across Britain and Ireland, occurring in woodlands. They occur at low densities. Especially given the large numbers of this species occurring in continental Europe (Britain holds between 1%–4% of the European total), there are no known concentrations of international importance. Both breeding and wintering Woodcocks occur on many SPAs classified for other species within the UK network.

Common Sandpipers *Actitis hypoleucos* breed widely in upland Britain and Ireland. They are territorial waders occurring adjacent to streams and other flowing water. There are no known concentrations of international importance, although the species occurs incidentally in most upland SPAs classified for other montane and sub-montane birds.

Britain lies on the northernmost edge of the European range of **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* which is essentially a Mediterranean species. The species has

regularly occurred in the breeding season at one site since 1995 (Ogilvie and the Rare Birds Breeding Panel 1998,1999). There are no current, or likely future, concentrations of this species at levels of international importance.

3. Rails

Moorhens *Gallinula chloropus* are widely distributed across Britain and Ireland (other than in north-west Scotland). Britain is particular important in terms of the European conservation of this species. Indeed, Britain and Ireland hold 35% of the European population, with smaller numbers also in France, The Netherlands and Spain (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). The range (and numbers) of Moorhen declined between 1968–1972 and 1988–1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). There are no known internationally important concentrations in the UK, though Moorhens occur incidentally in most wetland SPAs classified for other waterbirds.

Water Rails *Rallus aquaticus* are locally distributed across the UK. Britain and Ireland lie on the edge of the European range and together hold only a small proportion of the European population (*c.* 1.5%). Although traditional sites are used, there are no known concentrations of European importance, but census data are very poor.

4. Wildfowl and other waterbirds

Although formerly widespread in historical times (Boisseau & Yalden 1998) **Cranes *Grus grus*** became extinct in Ireland by the 14th century and by about 1600 in England. It has recently recolonised England with regular nesting occurring since 1981, and birds resident throughout the year. The area of recolonisation is an SPA, but Cranes have not been listed as a qualifying species there because of uncertainty surrounding the viability of the breeding population, which is known to be derived from a very small number of birds and includes at least one sibling pair (Taylor *et al.* 1999). Consequently, the population may be at risk of suffering inbreeding depression. These birds also behave in a manner that is different from other Cranes in Europe since they are largely sedentary within their breeding area, although they do occasionally wander within East Anglia during spring and autumn. The reasons for this are not clear. It may be that the area provides for the birds requirements year round or this aberrant behaviour could have resulted from the possible inbreeding depression described above.

Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* are partial migrants in the UK. They nest locally and colonially across the whole of Britain and Ireland. Britain holds about 9% of the European total and the island of Ireland a further 3%. None of the colonies occurring in the UK exceed 1% of the European total.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* occurs irregularly as a non-breeding vagrant. There are no concentrations of the species. Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* breed in the UK, but as a result of introduced stock (Ogilvie & the Rare Breeding Birds Panel 1999b). There are no obligations for SPA designation for non-native birds. A few natural vagrants occur irregularly.

Smew *Mergus albellus* occur regularly in the UK at a small number of wetlands, although numbers are very low relative to the major concentrations in The Netherlands and elsewhere in continental Europe. No SPAs have been selected for Smew because levels of occurrence, even at sites with the largest numbers, fall significantly below the threshold of 50 used as a minimum in selecting sites for wintering waterbirds (see section 5.1.2).

5. Raptors and owls

No SPAs have been selected in this review for **White-tailed Eagle** *Haliaeetus albicilla* for reasons outlined in section 5.6.2. **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* nest largely on arable land in eastern England. No SPAs have been selected for this species because the only regular breeding area is largely comprised of intensively managed arable farmland within which precise nest locations vary considerably between years. This has prevented the identification of concentrations and delineation of suitable site boundaries. Nevertheless, Montagu's Harriers are monitored in their regular nesting area and, as mechanisms are currently being developed to enable the classification of temporary and mobile habitats such as arable land, the species will remain under review."

Although the British populations of a number of birds of prey are particularly significant in European terms, (15% of Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, 11% of Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*), the dispersed nesting of the following species means that it has not been possible to identify sites holding concentrations of European importance for Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Kestrel, Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, and Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*. All these species occur in significant numbers on many UK SPAs classified for other species.

Following a period of regular breeding in Shetland between 1967–1975, **Snowy Owls** *Nyctea scandiaca* now occur only sporadically in the British uplands. There have been no breeding attempts since 1975.

6. Grebes and seaducks

Both Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena* and Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis* are rare breeding birds, whilst Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* occur much more widely across the UK. There are no known concentrations of European importance for these grebe species.

7. Birds using the marine environment

A number of migrant seabirds regularly pass through British and Irish waters, sometimes in very large numbers. Their protection needs, relative to the Birds Directive, are the subject of a separate review (see section 2.2). These species include: Great Northern Diver *Gavia immer*, Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*, Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*, Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*, Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*, Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*, Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides*, Glaucous Gull *Larus hyperboreus*, **Black Tern** *Chidonias niger*, and Little Auk *Alle alle*.

8. Passerines

Many of the terrestrial birds that breed (or winter) in the UK are migrants or partial migrants. They generally have wide distributions across Britain and Ireland. They rarely aggregate in large numbers and sites holding concentrations of European importance (or, in the case of the Annex I species, of national importance) have not been identified for the following species: Stock Dove *Columba oenas*, Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*, Swift *Apus apus*, Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*, Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, House Martin *Delichon urbica*, Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, **Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis*, Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*, Skylark *Alauda arvensis*, Shore Lark *Eremophila alpestris*, Tree Pipit *Anthus*

trivialis, Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*, Rock Pipit *Anthus petrosus*, Water Pipit *Anthus spinoletta*, Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Pied (White) Wagtail *Motacilla alba*, Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*, Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*, Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*, Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Redwing *Turdus iliacus*, Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*, Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*, Sedge Warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*, Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*, Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus*, Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*, Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Goldcrest *Regulus regulus*, Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva*, Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*, Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*, Rook *Corvus frugilegus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*, Serin *Serinus serinus*, Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, Siskin *Carduelis spinus*, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, Redpoll *Carduelis flammea*, Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Lapland Bunting *Calcarius lapponicus*, Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*, Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla* and Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*.

Many of these species are subject to monitoring through the Breeding Bird Survey (Noble *et al.* 1999) and other relevant schemes. National Biodiversity Action Plans exist for several of the scarcer species and these are listed in Table 6.1. All these species are liable to occur – some in significant numbers – at many UK SPAs classified for other species.

9. Vagrants and scarce migrants

A number of species are not rarities as defined by the British Birds Rarities Committee, yet occur on an infrequent basis in the UK. These are usually only seen individually and at unpredictable locations.

Accordingly, no SPAs have been selected for the following species: Mediterranean Shearwater *Puffinus yelkouan*, Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens*, Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia*, **Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*, Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*, Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*, Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*, Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*, Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*, Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria*, Pallas's Warbler, *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*, and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*.