

## A6.5a Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* (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	
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
<b>GB</b>	70	1	37 (53% of GB population)
<b>Ireland</b>			
<b>Biogeographic population</b>	6,058	60	37 (0.6% of biogeographic population)

GB population source: Ogilvie et al. 1996

Biogeographic population source: Hagemeyer & Blair 1997

### 3. Distribution

The Slavonian Grebe has a near circumpolar, boreal range, from Iceland in the west, through central Asia and North America, as far as the Great Lakes region. There are two sub-species, the nominate (*P. a. auritus*) being that which occurs within the Palearctic (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992).

Slavonian Grebes are patchily distributed in western Europe. Most occur in Fennoscandia, with smaller numbers in Iceland, the Baltic States and the UK (Hagemeyer & Blair 1997). Breeding range is linked to the occurrence of small, often shallow, eutrophic lakes with sparse emergent vegetation, although in the northern parts of its range the species will use more oligotrophic lakes with little or no emergent vegetation (Cramp & Simmons 1977). In the UK, breeding occurs solely within Scotland, with birds nesting in the Highland and Grampian regions (Gibbons *et al.* 1993; Thom 1986; Ward & Hewitson 1999).

The species is migratory throughout its range, with birds moving mainly to inshore seas and estuaries close to their breeding range during winter months (Cramp & Simmons 1977). There is some evidence that birds return to the same breeding lochs in different years, and some British birds are found on breeding lochs during milder winters (Ward & Hewitson 1999).

The preferred nesting sites of Slavonian Grebe in Britain are those lakes with high water quality and extensive marginal sedge-beds *Carex rostrata* (Summers & Mavor 1995), together with abundant Three-spined Sticklebacks *Gasterosteus aculeatus* (the main food). The requirement for clear water has been related to the efficiency of catching fish (Summers & Mavor 1995).

#### **4. Population structure and trends**

Throughout Europe, the range of the Slavonian Grebe has expanded during the 20<sup>th</sup> century apparently because of the eutrophication of lakes from human activity (Cramp & Simmons 1977). However, there have been local declines, especially in eastern areas. Short-term fluctuations are probably linked to severe weather (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). The total European population is estimated to be about 6,058 pairs (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997).

In the UK, breeding was first recorded in 1909 (McGhie 1994), and numbers gradually increased to about 80 pairs in the late 1970s (Batten *et al.* 1990; Thom 1986; Ward & Hewitson 1999). Following a decline through the 1980s, and another peak of nearly 90 pairs in 1990 the population has again declined in the last decade, with only 42 pairs recorded in 1998 (Crooke *et al.* 1993; Ward & Hewitson 1999). Factors influencing the British population include poor productivity and perhaps winter survival. Productivity varies between breeding sites (Batten *et al.* 1990; Crooke *et al.* 1993; Ward & Hewitson 1999). Clearly, the influence of the different factors that affect nesting productivity vary according to local circumstances.

#### **5. Protection measures for population in UK**

##### **SPA suite**

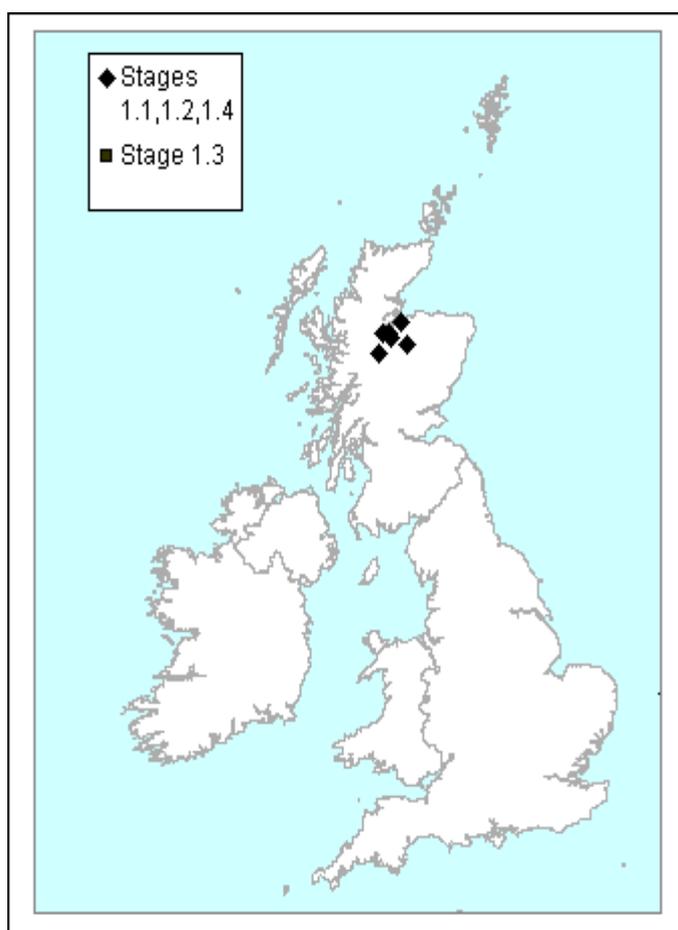
In the breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Slavonian Grebe supports an average of 37 pairs. This amounts to 53% of the British breeding population. The species does not breed in Northern Ireland. The suite contains about 0.6% of the international population (a consequence of numbers in the UK being small in comparison to the larger numbers in Scandinavia). This total is contained within six sites (Table 6.5a.1) for which Slavonian Grebe has been listed as a qualifying species.

#### **6. Classification criteria**

All sites in the UK that were known to support more than 1% of the national breeding population of Slavonian Grebe were considered under Stage 1.1, and all but Loch Oire were selected after consideration of Stage 2 judgements. Loch Oire was not selected because it had failed to support any breeding pairs in five breeding seasons from 1996 to 2000.

The sites within the SPA suite cover the principal breeding areas within the core range of the Slavonian Grebe in Britain (Summers & Mavor 1995; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). They all have high breeding success (subject to annual variation) and a long history of occupancy. The lochs comprising the SPAs are generally characterised as being shallow and mesotrophic, fringed by extensive areas of sedge-beds and other emergent vegetation. Many are surrounded by moorland with scattered pinewoods and/or broadleaf deciduous woodlands. All sites have a high degree of naturalness.

### Distribution map for breeding Slavonian Grebe SPA suite



**Table 6.5a.1 – SPA suite**

Site name	Site total	% of biogeographical population	% of national population	Selection stage
Loch Ashie	1	<0.1	1	1.1
Loch Flemington	5	<0.1	7	1.1
Loch Knockie and Nearby Lochs	5	<0.1	7	1.1
Loch Ruthven	14	0.2	20	1.1
Loch Vaa	5	<0.1	7	1.1
North Inverness Lochs	7	0.1	10	1.1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>53%</b>	