

## A6.74a Redshank *Tringa totanus* (breeding)

### 1. Status in UK

Biological status		Legal status		Conservation status	
Breeding		Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	<b>General Protection</b>	Species of European Conservation Concern	<b>SPEC 2</b> Unfavourable conservation status ( <b>declining</b> ) and concentrated in Europe
Migratory	✓	Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985	<b>General Protection</b>	(UK) Species of Conservation Importance	Table 4
Wintering	✓	EC Birds Directive 1979	<b>Annex II/2 Migratory</b>	All-Ireland Vertebrate Red Data Book	

### 2. Population data

	Population sizes (pairs)	Selection thresholds	Totals in species' SPA suite
<b>GB</b>	30,600	306	1,660 (5% of GB population)
<b>Ireland</b>	4,400	44	No SPAs selected in Northern Ireland
<b>Biogeographic population</b>	59,000	590	1,660 (3% of biogeographic population)

GB population source: Piersma 1986

All-Ireland population source: Gibbons et al. 1993

Biogeographic population source: Rose & Scott 1997

### 3. Distribution

Redshanks have a wide, albeit fragmented distribution across temperate and steppe Eurasia, from Iceland in the west, through continental Europe and central Russia to the Russian Far East (Smit & Piersma 1989; Cramp & Simmons 1983). Small numbers breed in North Africa and in the Middle East, whilst a separate group breeds from Kashmir, through northern India to Tibet and Tien Shan (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Redshanks are highly migratory; at the end of the breeding season they move south to non-breeding areas. In the western part of their range they occur on most of the coastline of Europe and Africa, whilst in the east they occur around the coasts of India and south-east Asia as well as extensively inland along major river systems (Cramp & Simmons 1983).

Redshanks are polytypic, with six sub-species described by Cramp & Simmons (1983). Of these, two occur in Europe. The nominate race, *T. t. totanus*, occurs throughout north-western Europe, with the UK population representing the north-western edge of this range. *T. totanus robusta* breeds in Iceland and the Faeroes and moves in winter to the UK and the coasts of north-west Europe. The remaining four sub-species occur in Asia west of the Urals. Some

authorities (*e.g.* Engelmoer & Roselaar 1998; Wetlands International 1999) consider that those breeding in Britain and Ireland comprise the race *T. totanus britannica*.

In Europe, Redshanks breed in nearly all countries. However, they are most abundant in the countries of eastern Europe, Britain and Ireland, Scandinavia and the Low Countries (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Throughout its European distribution, the species breeds on inland and coastal wet grasslands and coastal saltmarshes.

Redshank breed locally across most of the UK. Highest breeding densities are found on the East Anglian and north-western coasts of England where nesting occurs on saltmarshes and on adjacent wet grassland habitats. Some of the highest breeding densities occur on machair habitats in the Western Isles of Scotland and the Inner Hebrides, as well as on low-intensity agricultural land in Orkney and Shetland (Fuller *et al.* 1986; Davidson *et al.* 1991; Shepherd & Stroud 1991; Brindley *et al.* 1998), and certain areas of managed coastal grassland (Everett 1987; Davidson 1991).

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

Seven biogeographical populations of Redshank have been described (Rose & Scott 1997). Of these, two occur in Europe. Both the nominate race *T. t. totanus* and the Icelandic race *T. t. robusta* are considered as separate biogeographical populations. The size of the former is estimated at 177,000 individuals (*i.e.* 59,000 pairs) and the latter at 109,000 individuals (*i.e.* 36,300 pairs) (Rose & Scott 1997). The European breeding population presented by Hagemeijer & Blair (1997) comprises both biogeographical populations and so is not used in this review.

Within Europe, Redshanks have shown a moderate decline in abundance since the 1970s, mainly as a result of agricultural intensification and the loss of important wet grassland breeding sites (Tucker and Heath 1994). In none of the seven EU countries reviewed by Hötter (1991) were Redshank populations considered to be increasing and the species is known to be one of the most sensitive to the effects of agricultural intensification (Bientema *et al.* 1997).

This European trend has been reflected within the UK, with contractions in breeding range being most notable in north-eastern and central Scotland, and inland southern England (O'Brien & Smith 1992; Gibbons *et al.* 1993). Surveys of a number of coastal sites in Wales found a 58% decrease in the breeding population between 1985 and 1991 (Griffin *et al.* 1991), while on saltmarshes in England declines ranging from 20–76% were found over a similar period of time (Cook *et al.* 1994, 1995). There was a 72% decline on Common Birds Census plots between 1972 and 1996, although sample sizes are now low (Crick *et al.* 1998).

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

##### **SPA suite**

In the breeding season, the UK's SPA suite for Redshank supports, on average, 1,660 pairs. This amounts to about 5% of the British breeding population. Within an all-Ireland context, there have been no SPAs selected in Northern Ireland. The suite contains about 3% of the international population. The SPA suite total is contained within four sites (Table 6.74a.1) where Redshank has been listed as a qualifying species.

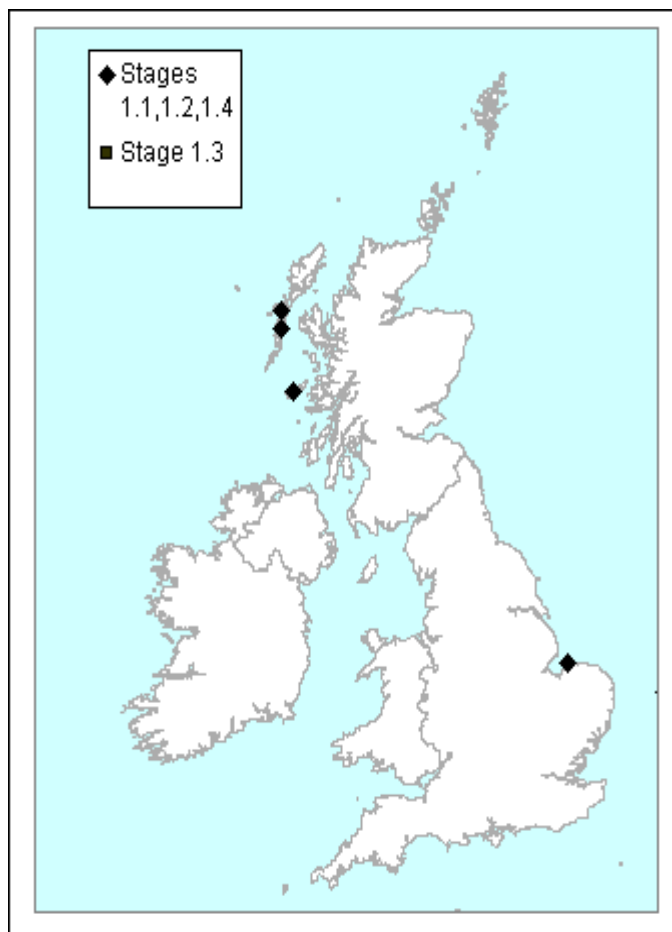
## 6. Classification criteria

The single Redshank breeding site in the UK known to support more than 1% of the international breeding population (North Norfolk Coast) was considered under Stage 1.2, and was selected after consideration of Stage 2 judgements. Consideration of additional coverage using Stage 1.4 was made given that the UK holds about 40% of the EU Redshank numbers, that Redshank is a SPEC 2 species (that has an unfavourable conservation status and is concentrated in Europe), and is declining across most of its European range. Accordingly, the three sites with the next largest breeding populations were reviewed against Stage 2 judgements.

These sites (North Uist Machair and Islands, South Uist Machair and Lochs, and Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh (Tiree Wetlands and Coast)) were selected for inclusion by virtue of their high population densities (possibly the highest in Europe – Fuller *et al.* 1986; Shepherd & Stroud 1991), and as a contribution to the maintenance of the European range of Redshank.

All the sites in the suite have a long recorded history of occupation. Each is a multi-species site. The three Stage 1.4 sites are additionally of significance for holding a diverse assemblage of breeding waterbirds, the composition of which is unique to the machair habitats of western Scotland and western Ireland.

### Distribution map for breeding Redshank SPA suite



**Table 6.74a.1 – SPA suite**

<b>Site name</b>	<b>Site total</b>	<b>% of biogeographical population</b>	<b>% of national population</b>	<b>Selection stage</b>
North Norfolk Coast	700	1.2	2.3	1.2
North Uist Machair and Islands	470	0.8	1.5	1.4
South Uist Machair and Lochs	350	0.6	1.1	1.4
Sleibhtean agus Cladach Thiriodh (Tiree Wetlands and Coast)	140	0.2	0.5	1.4

<b>TOTALS</b>	1,660	2.8%	5.4%	
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