

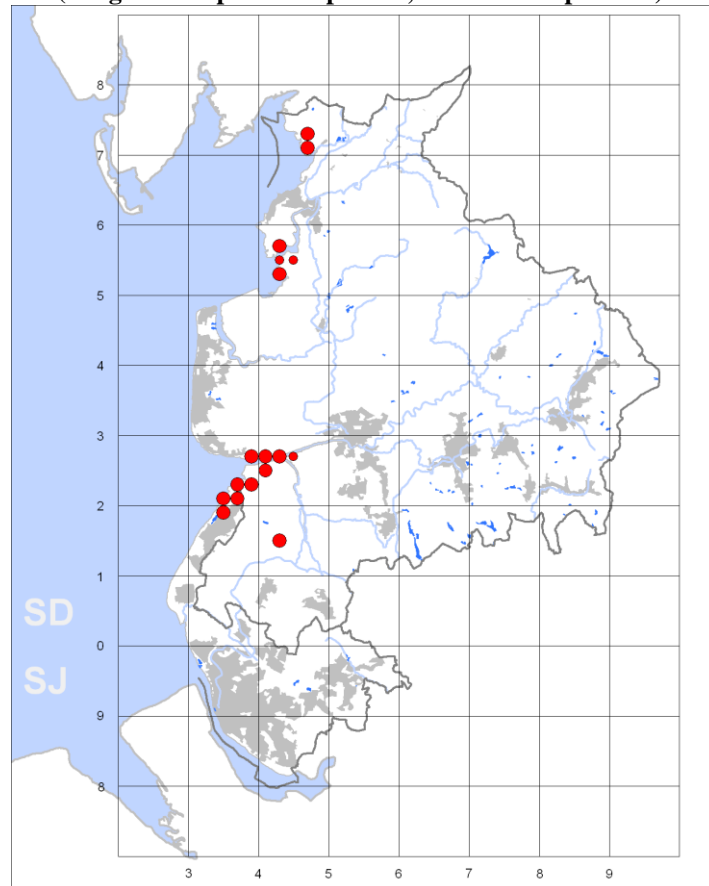
AVOCET *Recurvirostra avosetta*

Breeding

The arrival and spread of the Avocet as a Lancashire breeding species was as sudden as it was unexpected. Although there were a few, mostly brief, coastal records of one or two birds in spring and summer during the 1997-2000 survey no evidence of a breeding attempt was observed; however, a pair nested successfully at the Eric Morecambe complex in 2001.

During 2002-07 annual breeding became established there and at Marshside and Martin Mere, and these three sites remained the core of our increasing breeding population during the present survey.

Figure 1. Avocet: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).



The breeding distribution map shows confirmed or probable nesting in 14 tetrads and possible breeding in three adjacent ones (Fig.1). In addition to the three main sites regular nesting spread to Hesketh Out Marsh from 2009 and two pairs bred on Banks Marsh in 2010 and on Warton Marsh on the Ribble north shore in 2011; two pairs nested unsuccessfully in the Sunderland Point area in 2011.

The breeding population is estimated at 150 pairs, based on full counts at all the main sites. Roughly speaking, two-thirds of these breed on either side of the Ribble with Martin Mere and the Eric Morecambe complex accounting fairly equally for the remainder. Perhaps surprisingly, in view of their recent colonisation, Lancashire thus supports almost 10% of the total British population.

Productivity is frequently very poor, however, as the species seems peculiarly vulnerable to the vicissitudes of drought and flood, as well as to avian and mammalian predators, and it is not clear to what extent the Lancashire population continues to rely on immigration from elsewhere to maintain and grow.

Winter

Avocets were recorded in eleven tetrads during the winter season, all either in or close to breeding areas.

Most of our breeding Avocets and their offspring have normally left the county by early autumn, and the great majority of these winter records actually refer either to birds lingering late or returning to breeding areas in February. The sole exception was one at Cockerham on 2 January 2010; Avocets therefore remain winter rarities in Lancashire.

BM

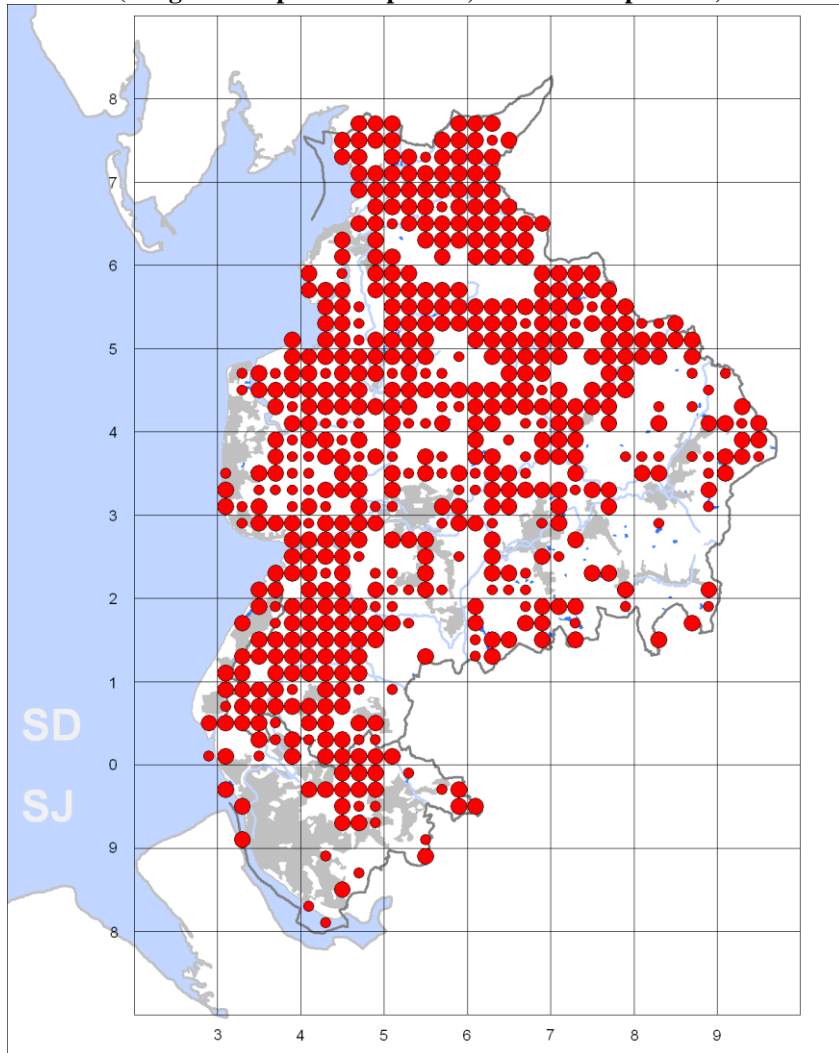
OYSTERCATCHER *Haematopus ostralegus*

Breeding

Confined to coastal dunes and beaches a century ago, breeding Oystercatchers began expanding into inland regions all across western Europe during the early twentieth century. In Lancashire this movement initially involved range extensions up the main river systems, especially the Lune, Wyre and Ribble, the birds nesting on riparian shingles. From these infiltration routes the population expanded outward from the 1970s into farmland habitats throughout the county, often a long way from large water

bodies. In the meantime the original coastal population had declined, due to disturbance and development, to such an extent that by the turn of the present century most coastal-breeding Oystercatchers nested on nature reserves.

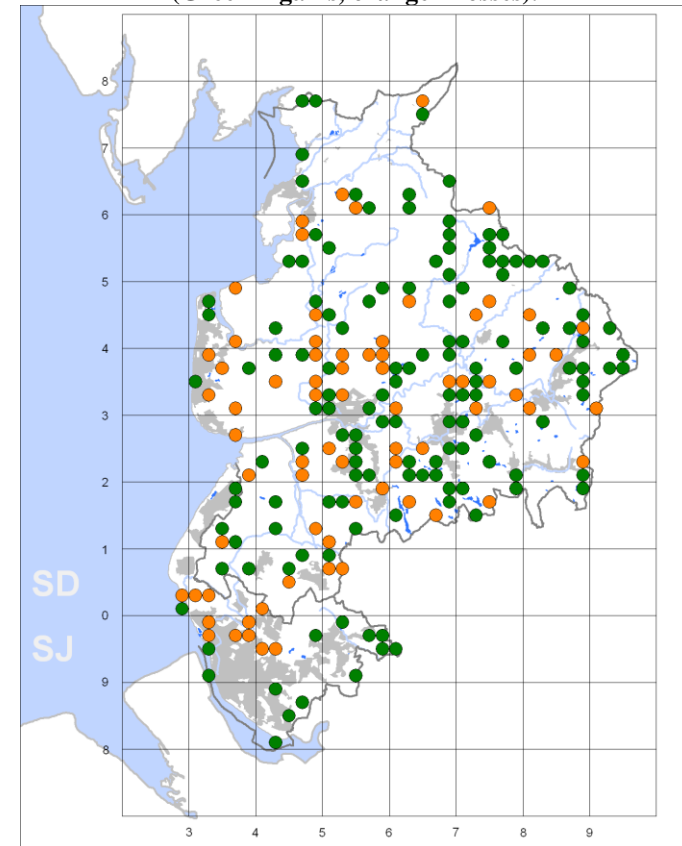
Figure 1. Oystercatcher: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).



Oystercatchers were found in 567 tetrads during 2008-2011, 61% of the county total, revealing a further extension of their breeding range by 12.6%

(Fig.1). They were absent or sparsely distributed on the higher fells, in urban areas, in Rossendale and in the lowlands from St. Helens north to Preston.

Figure 2. Oystercatcher: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011.
(Green = gains, orange = losses).



There has been a limited spread into urban and industrial areas along the coast, with evidence of nesting on waste ground and flat roofs, including the roof of the Jaguar factory at Halewood since 2008, but most of the 136 tetrads gained were in the inland areas of the east (Fig.2). The 83 lost tetrads were widely scattered, but with some clustering in the south-west and centre of the county.

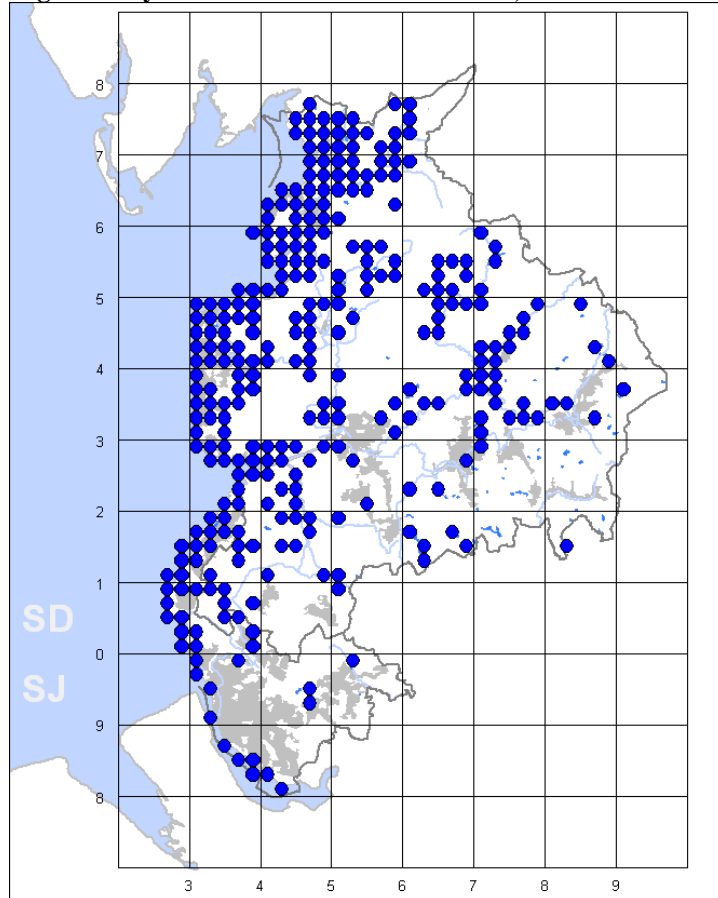
The population is now estimated at 2200 pairs, roughly 4 pairs per occupied tetrad.

Winter

Oystercatchers largely abandon their inland breeding areas in Lancashire in the autumn, many moving to our own coastline where they are joined by larger numbers of winter immigrants from Scotland, northern Europe and Iceland, feeding mainly on cockles on the offshore sandbanks.

The winter distribution map shows presence in 303 tetrads, 32.1% of the county total (Fig.3).

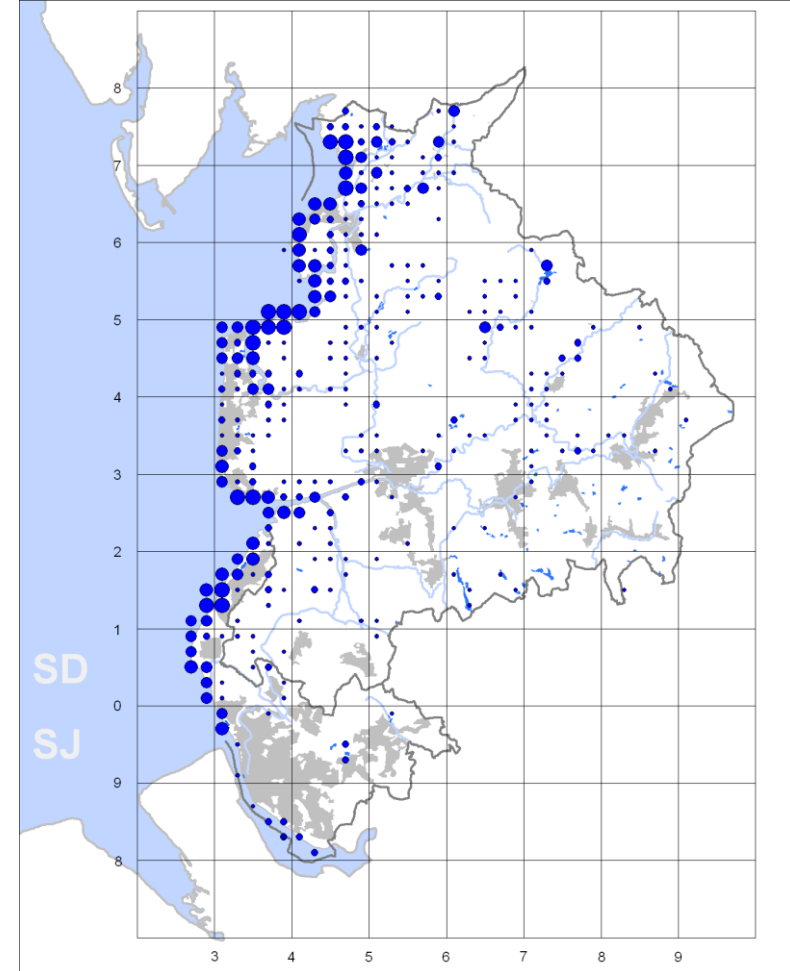
Figure 3. Oystercatcher: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



These were heavily concentrated on the coast and the coastal plain, although some were to be found inland, mainly along the main river valleys. The relative abundance map clearly demonstrates that the vast majority winter on or very close to the coast, with the largest counts throughout

Morecambe Bay and on the Ribble Estuary between Birkdale and Lytham (Fig.4). Morecambe Bay is the most important estuary in Britain for wintering Oystercatchers, with the Ribble not far behind.

Figure 4. Oystercatcher: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 3200-20000; 750-3199; 100-749; 20-99; 1-19

Counts of 2000 or more were recorded in 25 tetrads, the largest being 20000 at Carnforth/Jenny Brown's Point, 5718 at Pilling, 5470 at Knott End/Preesall Sands and 5100 at Heysham in Morecambe Bay, and 5000 at Granny's Bay, Fairhaven and Ainsdale on the Ribble.

The average WeBS peak count for the three estuaries during the survey period was 47000, clearly showing the scale of immigration and representing almost 15% of the British wintering population.

BM

GOLDEN PLOVER *Pluvialis apricaria*

Breeding

The Lancashire distribution of this charismatic moorland wader appears to have increased by 15% in the past ten years, with breeding being proven or probable in 47 tetrads and possible in a further 15 (Fig.1).

Figure 1. Golden Plover: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).

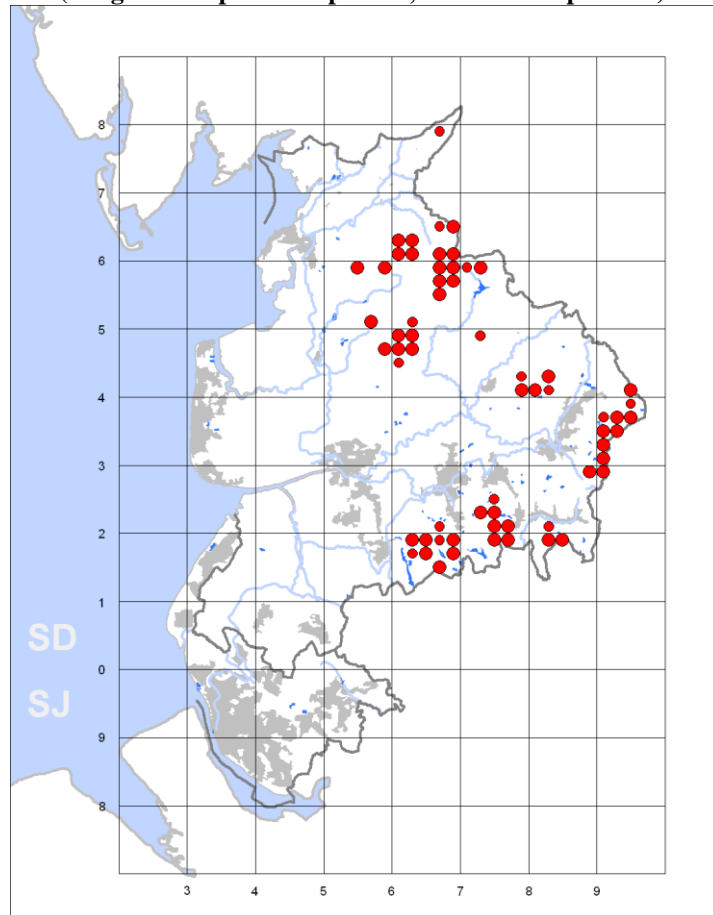
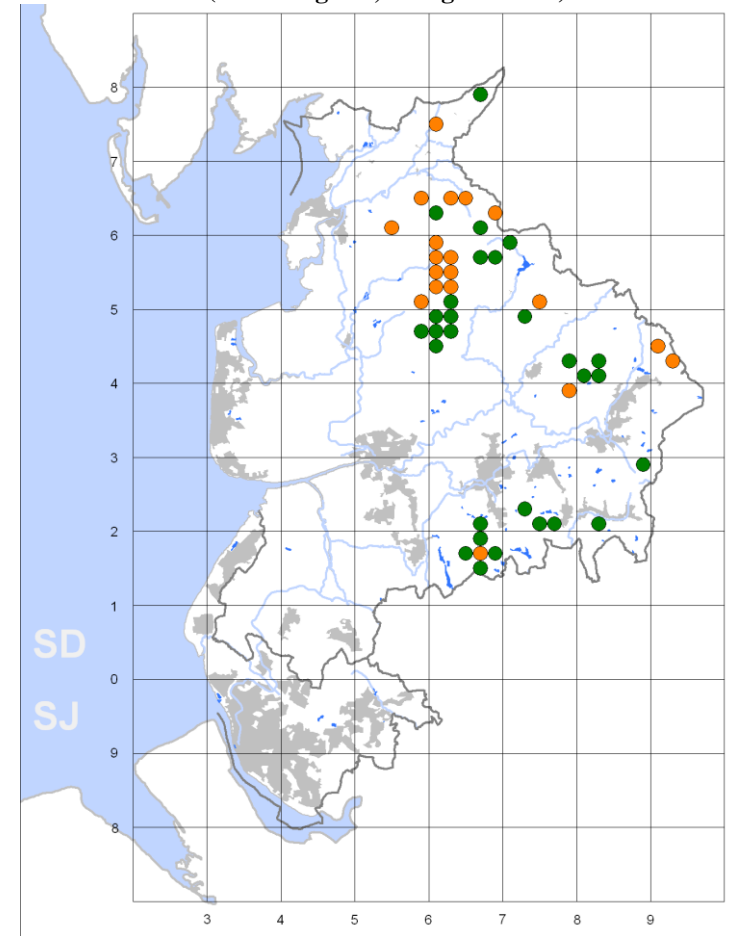


Figure 2. Golden Plover: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011.
(Green = gains, orange = losses).



However, it is not an easy species to monitor once incubation is underway and caution in recording flocks of migrating northern-breeding birds which often use the Lancashire uplands as stopovers is also required. It is perhaps safer to conclude that there appears to have been little change in its breeding status since 1997-2000.

There have been some subtle changes in its distribution, however; increases were evident in the West Pennine Moors, Rossendale and Pendle, but in Bowland a shift from the central to southern fells was apparent – which

is surprising given the amount of management on the Abbeystead Estate which should suit this species (Fig.2).

Breeding numbers on the western half of the West Pennine Moors have increased steadily from just one or two pairs during 1990-1994 to an average of five pairs during the 1997-2000 atlas survey and a record eight pairs in 2010 during the present survey.

Distribution on the South Pennine Moors has changed little since 1997-2000. Although only 25 pairs were recorded during 2008-2011 in comparison to the 44 pairs identified during a thorough JNCC survey in 1990, differences in coverage and methodology between the two surveys mean it would be ill-advised to assume a population decline of that degree.

Some 40 pairs were estimated on the Bowland Fells during the present survey in comparison to 50 pairs during 1997-2000, while up to four pairs were located on Leck Fell where no birds were found in the earlier survey. The 2008-2011 results indicate that the population in the Pendle area has increased three-fold to some eleven pairs between surveys, while increases were also evident in Rossendale which has seen a rise from around ten to 14 pairs.

Overall, however, the Lancashire population appears to have remained stable at an estimated 100-120 breeding pairs.

Winter

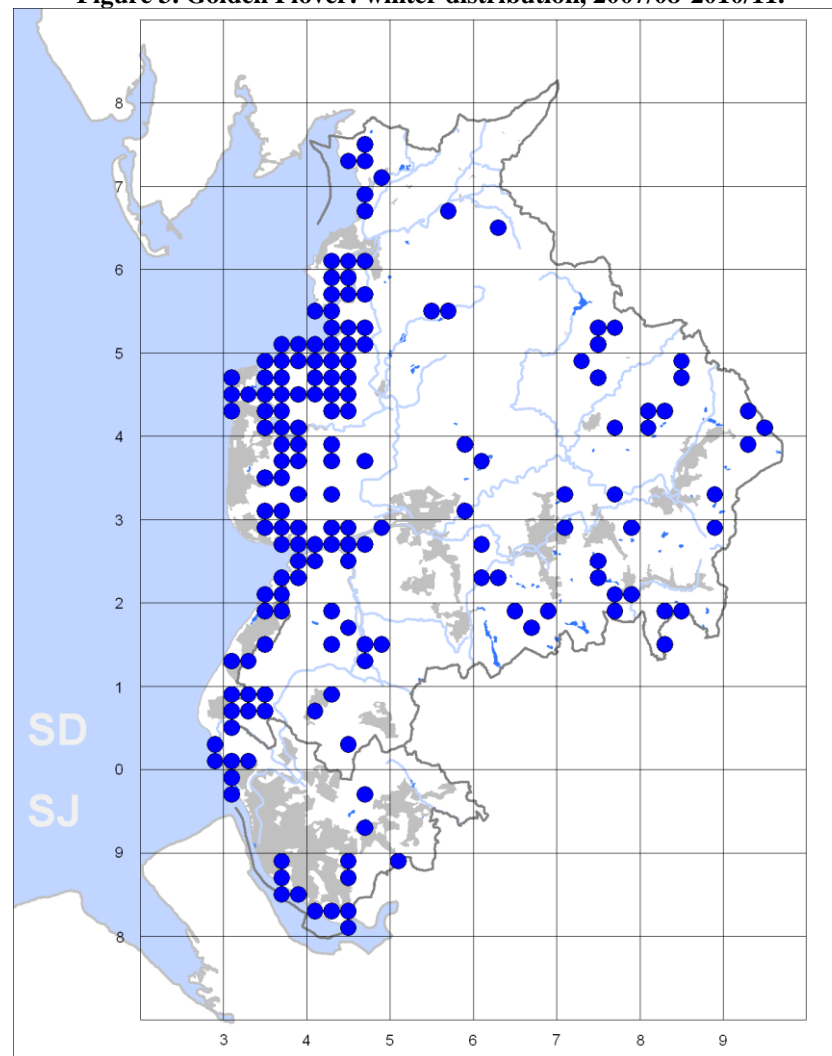
Lancashire's wintering Golden Plovers are essentially birds of the lowland mosses, coastal grasslands and saltmarshes and were recorded in 166 tetrads during 2007/08-2010/11 (Fig.3).

Small numbers do winter inland in east Lancashire, particularly if conditions remain mild, but the distribution and size of these flocks has undoubtedly decreased in recent decades. Inland peak counts of 100 or more were recorded during the winter period on only three sites, near Slaidburn, on Pendle Hill and at Withnell Fold. However, as with many wader species, it isn't clear how many mapped wintering records may have related to birds returning to the breeding grounds during February.

The overwhelming majority of birds are found on the coast, in particular the estuaries of the Lune and Ribble (Fig.4). The five-year average peak count on the Lancashire section of Morecambe Bay to 2010/11 was 2639; almost all are recorded on the Lune Estuary, where counts of 1000 or

more were recorded from eleven tetrads, including 4500 at Glasson, 3100 at Sunderland Point, 2500 at Pilling and 2390 at Cockersand.

Figure 3. Golden Plover: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.

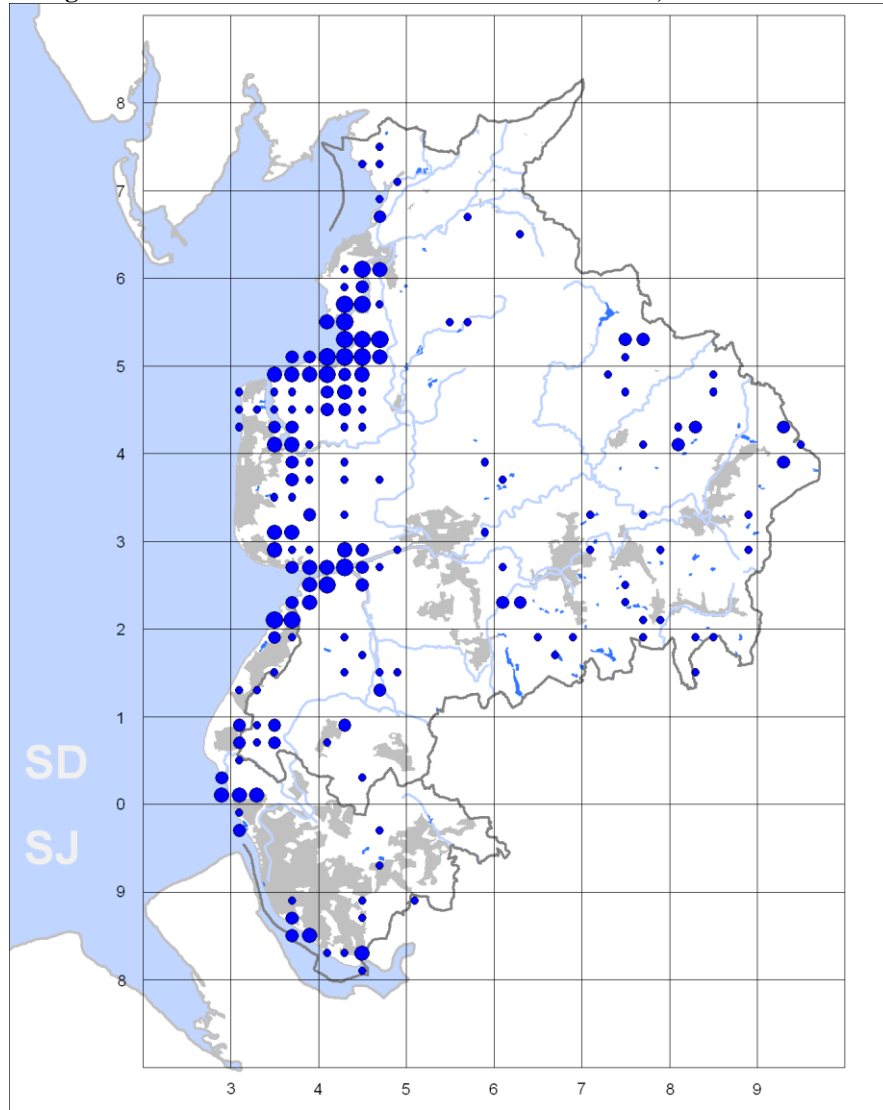


The Ribble Estuary is nationally important with a 5-year peak mean count up to 2010/11 of 4630 with Marshside and Crossens Inner Marshes being the favoured sites; 6610 were seen there in January 2008, a record WeBS count for Lancashire.

The county hosts an estimated winter population of 8500, over 2% of the 400000 nationally, but numbers can vary considerably from year to year, particularly if hard winters bring in additional birds from the continent.

SJM

Figure 4. Golden Plover: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.

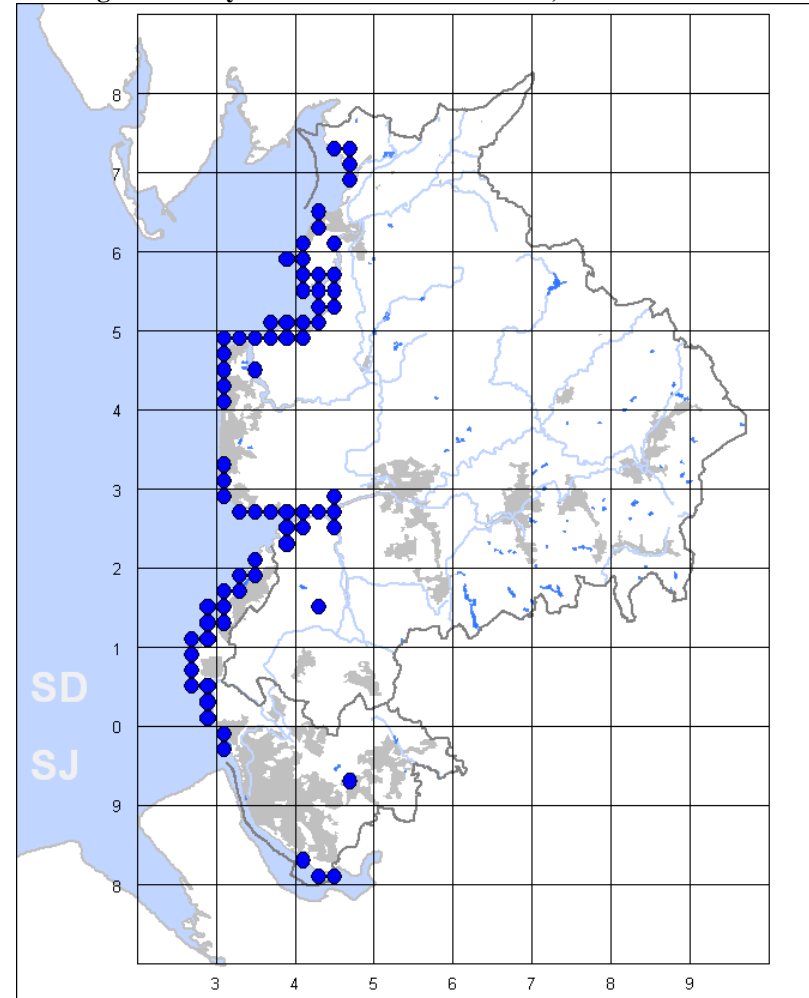


Dot size in descending order: 1000-4500; 300-999; 50-299; 1-50

GREY PLOVER *Pluvialis squatarola*

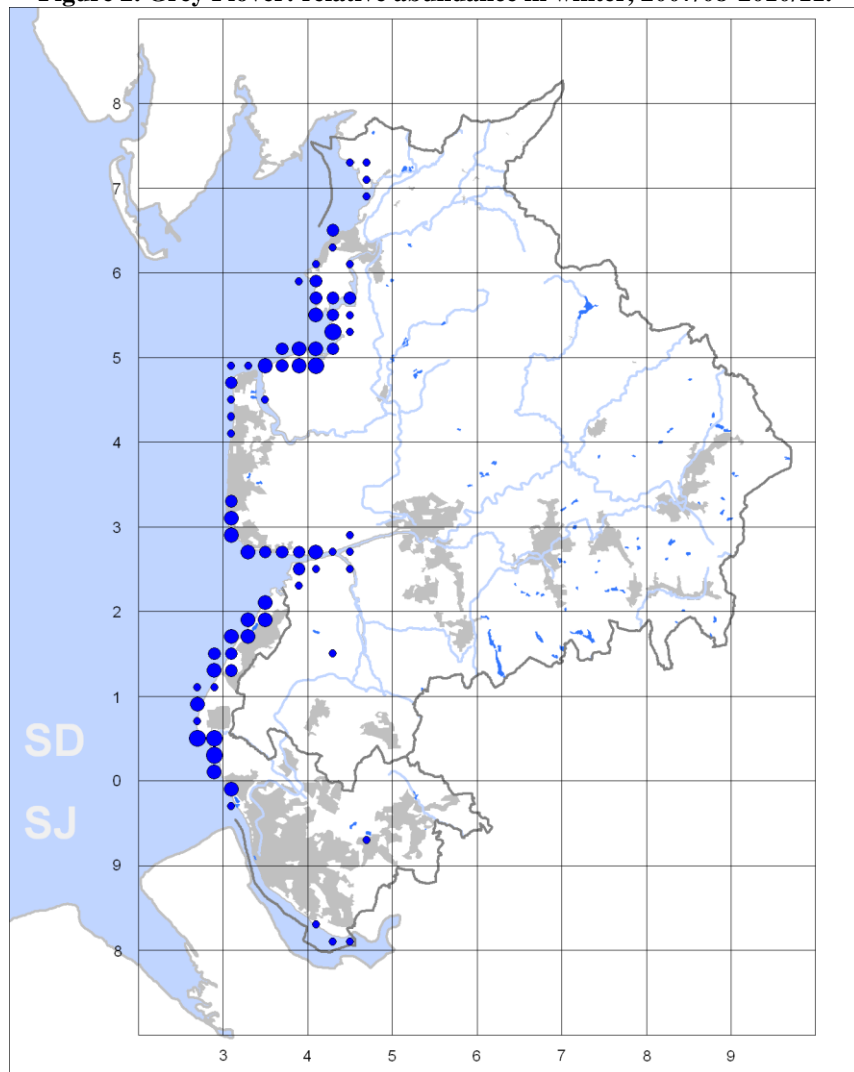
Grey Plovers are found more or less continuously on the shores of the Merseyside and Lancashire coasts in winter; they were recorded in 74 tetrads during 2007/08-2010/11 (Fig.1). This species has always been rare inland and there were just two such records during the atlas survey, at Prescot Reservoirs and Martin Mere. Both of these occurred in early to mid-November and were presumably passage migrants rather than genuinely wintering birds.

Figure 1. Grey Plover: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



The largest concentrations occurred on the sandy intertidal habitats of the Alt Estuary between Blundellsands and Formby Point, and on the north Fylde coast between Knott End and Cockerham, with slightly smaller numbers on the Ribble coast from Southport to Blackpool (Fig.2). Few were seen at either end of the county on the Mersey Estuary or the northern end of Morecambe Bay.

Figure 2. Grey Plover: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order:430-2250; 100-429; 10-99; 1-10

By far the largest count during the atlas period was 2250 at Formby Point/Cabin Hill with flocks exceeding nationally-important numbers also recorded at Hightown, Lytham, Pilling and Cockerham.

Numbers wintering nationally decreased steadily from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, probably as a result of climatic amelioration allowing more birds to winter in continental Europe. This decline has been particularly severe in Lancashire, especially on the Ribble where average peak counts have plummeted from around 7000 to 3000 during this century.

Nonetheless, Lancashire remains a nationally important area; an average peak of 4770 birds was recorded during 2007/08 to 2010/11, representing around 11% of the British population.

SJW

LAPWING *Vanellus vanellus*

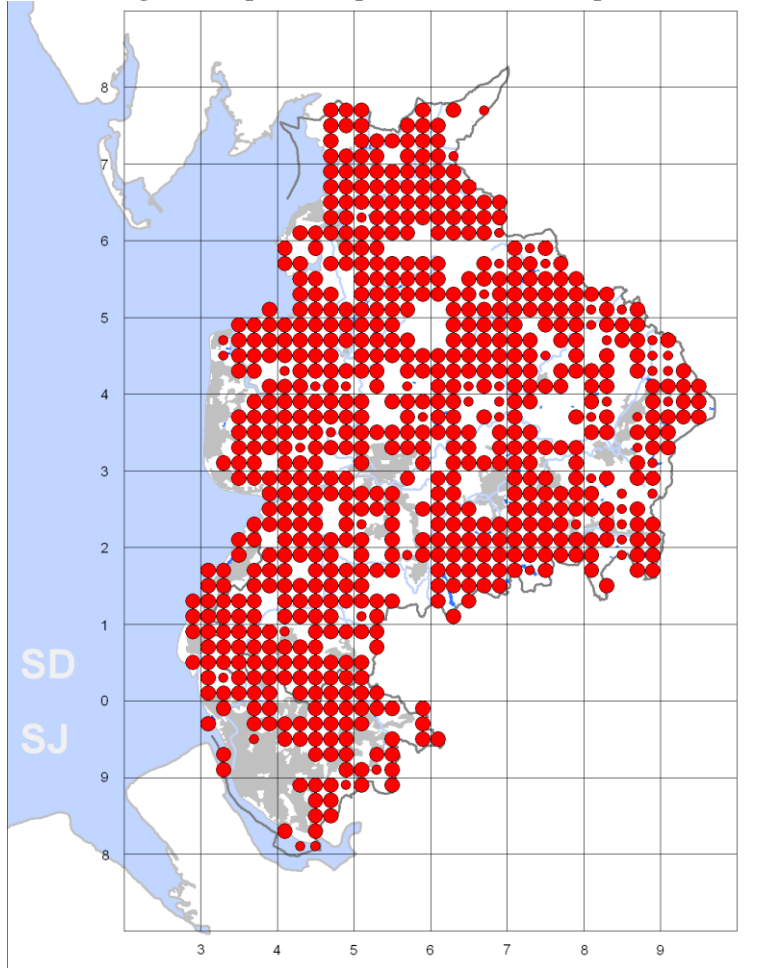
Breeding

While many parts of Britain have seen a crash in the Lapwing breeding population since the early 1990s Lancashire's birds have experienced a less dramatic decline, and the county remains a national stronghold for the species both as a breeding and a wintering bird.

The national population fell by 56% during 1970-2010 and by 36% since 1995. The present survey of Lancashire recorded confirmed or probable breeding in 720 tetrads, 77% of the total and a range contraction of 7.1% (Fig.1).

Lapwings were absent from urban areas and the highest moorlands but also from some lowland areas, particularly to the south and north of Preston. Seventy-eight tetrads were newly occupied by Lapwings since 1997-2000, while 131 were apparently abandoned (Fig.2). Although losses were spread throughout the county they were most noticeable in areas of east Lancashire, Chorley and the Leck Fell area, and on the fringes of Liverpool, Blackpool and Blackburn. The only clear-cut cluster of newly-occupied tetrads was in the Hodder Valley.

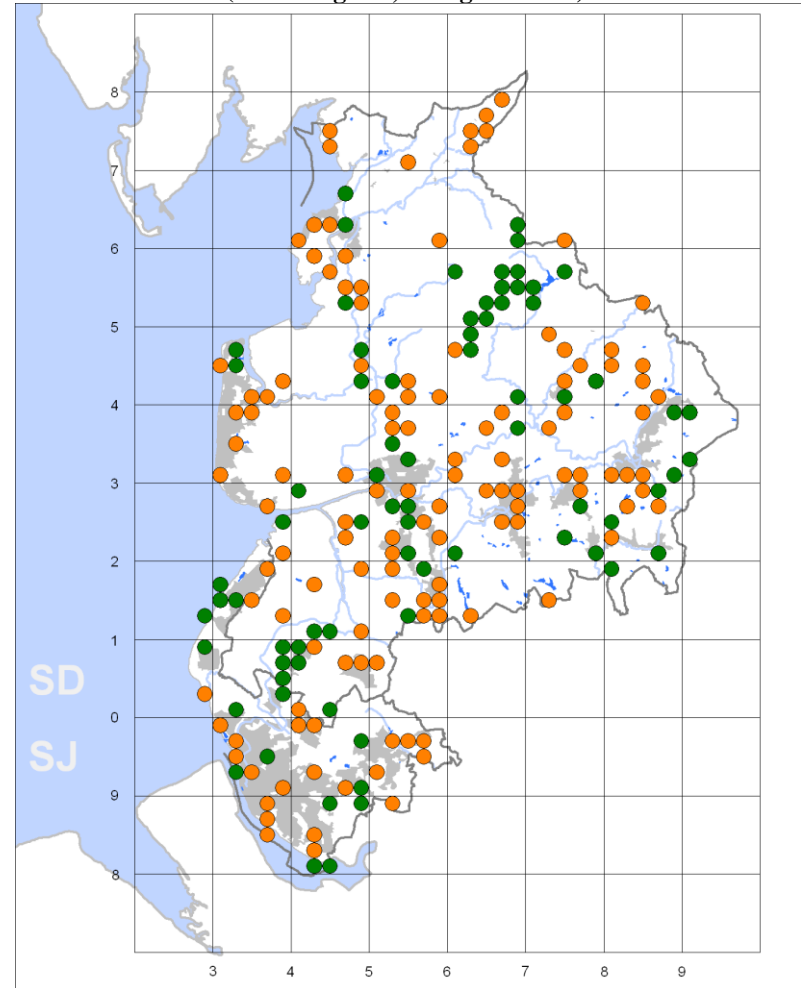
Figure 1. Lapwing: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
 (Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).



Densities in occupied tetrads were 2.5 times higher in the west than the east but similar in the north and south of the county. Although the bulk of the population nests on farmland, nature reserves and other specially managed sites have played an important role in conserving Lapwings; peak counts of breeding pairs during 2008-2011 included 101 at Martin Mere, 98 on Marshside/Crossens inner marshes, 57 on the Carnforth marshes, 56 on the upper Lune, 35 on Newton Marsh, 33 at Leighton Moss and other Silverdale sites, and 31 at both Belmont Reservoir and Hesketh Out Marsh.

The breeding population was estimated at 6500 pairs, roughly 5% of the British population.

Figure 2. Lapwing: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011.
 (Green = gains, orange = losses).

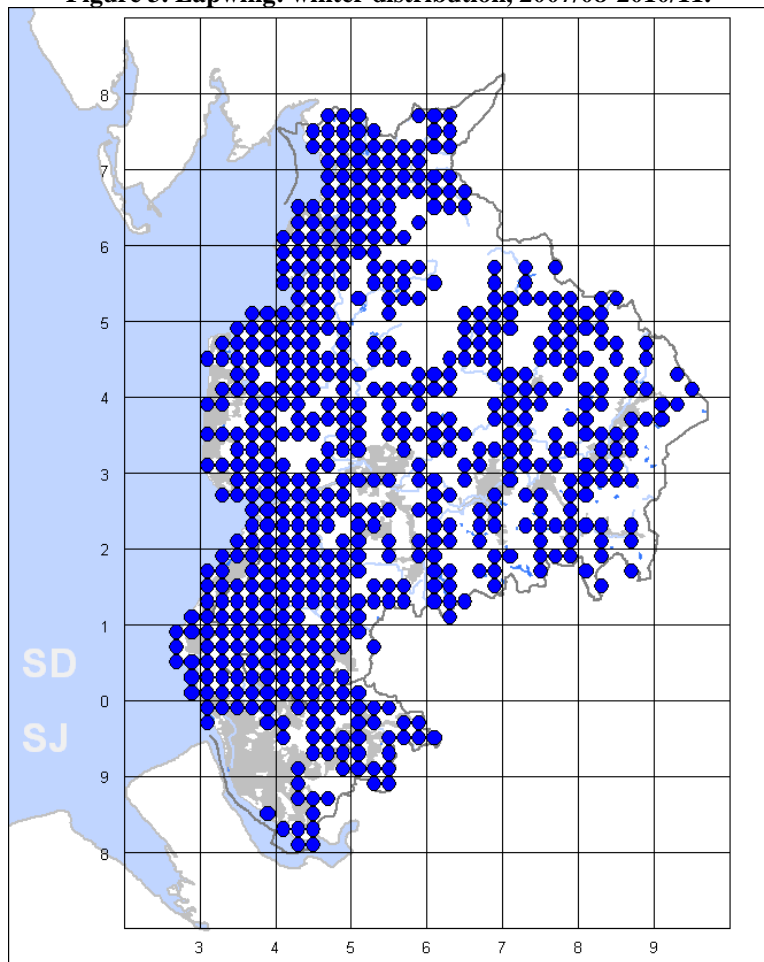


Winter

Ringing recoveries suggest that the majority of Lancashire's breeding Lapwings migrate south or south-west in autumn to winter in Ireland, France or Iberia. Their numbers are more than replaced by massive influxes from

October onwards of birds from further north in Britain and from northern and central Europe.

Figure 3. Lapwing: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



The winter distribution map shows presence in 615 tetrads, 65.1% of the county total, significantly fewer than in summer and with a strong concentration in the western half of the county (Fig.3). Lapwings are very thinly distributed or absent in most upland areas.

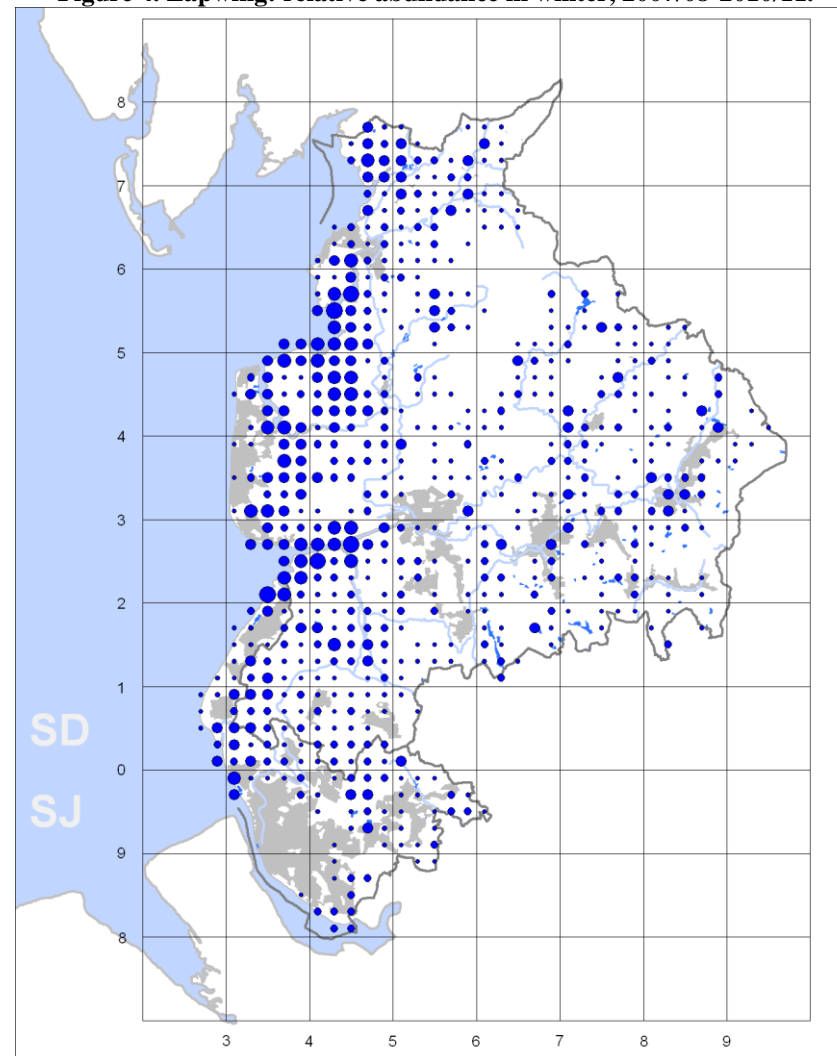
The relative abundance map further demonstrates that the species is heavily concentrated in the coastal west, in particular around the Ribble, Lune and Wyre Estuaries (Fig.4). Counts of 1000 or more were made in 51 tetrads

with the largest 12000 on Longton/Hutton/Freckleton Marshes, 7900 on Hesketh Out Marsh, 7500 at Glasson and 7000 at Marshside.

The total wintering population is estimated at 35000 individuals, based on the five-year mean WeBS totals, slightly more than 5% of the total British population.

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Figure 4. Lapwing: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.

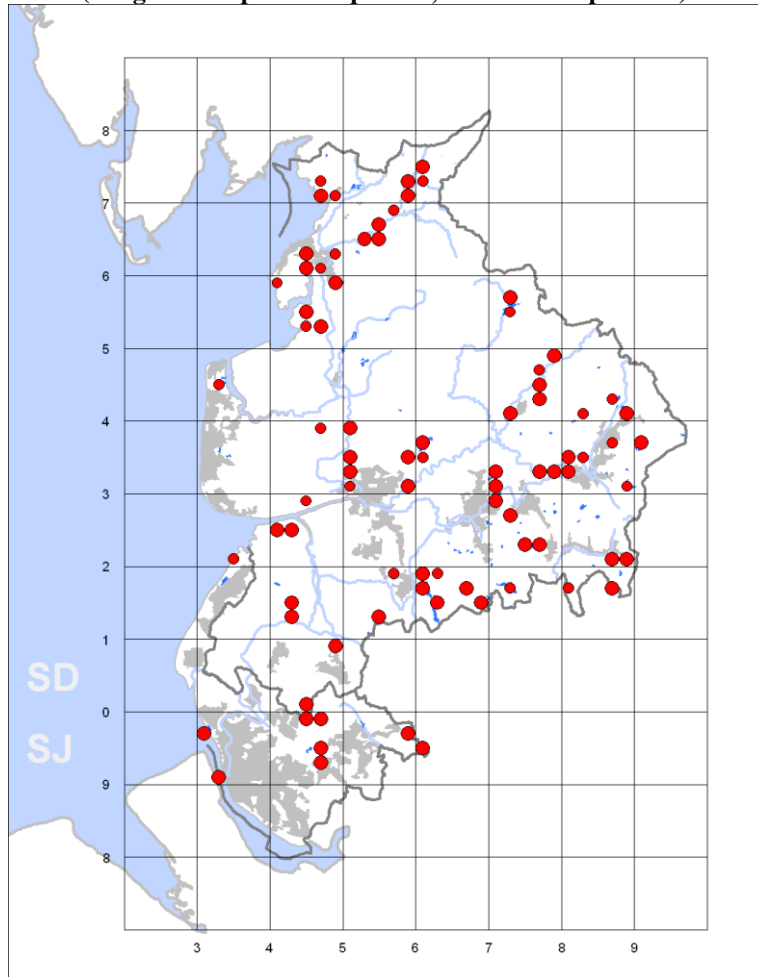


Dot size in descending order: 6200-12000; 1500-6199; 250-1499; 50-249; 1-49

LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius dubius*

Little Ringed Plovers first bred in Lancashire as recently as 1970 at three sites in the south-west and one on the West Pennine Moors, but have slowly expanded their range ever since. They were proven or thought probably to be breeding in 57 tetrads during 2008-2011, 6% of the county's tetrads (Fig.1). This represented a 50% increase in range in the space of a decade as only 38 tetrads were occupied during 1997-2000.

Figure 1. Little Ringed Plover: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).

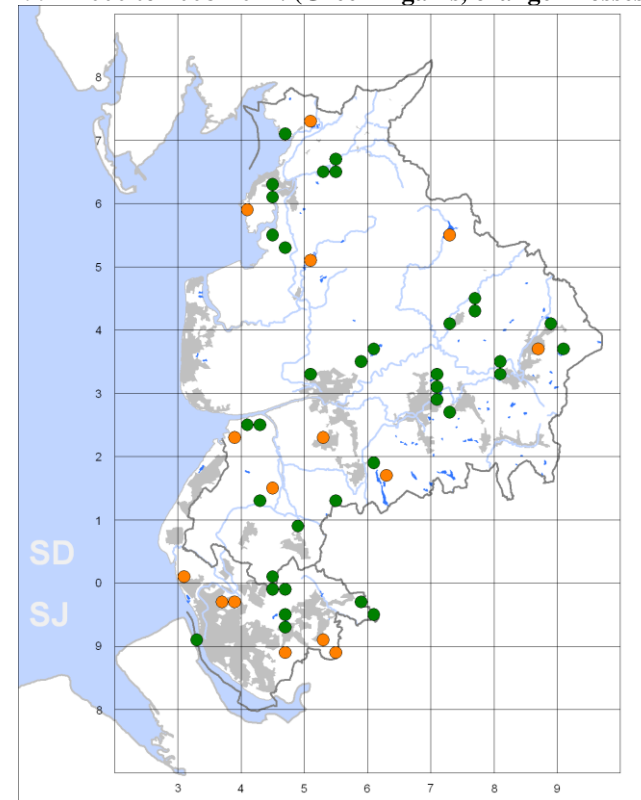


In addition, breeding was thought possible in 25 tetrads (eight in 2000) but it is likely that most of these were either birds on migration or wandering in search of suitable breeding sites or mates.

The records were divided fairly evenly between the east and west and north and south of the county but their distribution is constrained by the availability of suitable habitat on old pits, reservoirs, river gravels and ex-industrial sites. This undoubtedly largely accounts for their absence throughout Bowland except at Stocks Reservoir and the extensive farmland south of Preston, but the lack of any confirmed breeding anywhere in the Fylde is perhaps more puzzling.

Perhaps surprisingly, because of the ephemeral nature of their breeding habitat, Little Ringed Plovers have been lost from only 16 tetrads since 2000, six of them in Merseyside but with no clear pattern elsewhere (Fig.2).

Figure 2. Little Ringed Plover: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011. (Green = gains, orange = losses).



These were far outweighed by gains in 38 tetrads, eight of which were in Merseyside just outnumbering the losses. Two other areas produced clusters of gains: north Lancashire and east Lancashire especially between Blackburn and Burnley.

Most tetrads held one or less frequently two pairs but a handful of sites supported more in at least one survey year: Anglezarke Reservoir and Alston Reservoirs three pairs, Belmont Reservoir five pairs, the River Lune between Wenning Foot and Leck Beck seven pairs, Stocks Reservoir possibly up to six pairs and Brockholes twelve pairs. Adding the totals from these hotspots to an estimated average of 1.25 for other occupied tetrads yields a county population estimate of 100 pairs, double that of 2000. This represents 8% of the British breeding population, and Brockholes alone (in 2011 and 2012 at least) supports 1% of the British population.

SJW

RINGED PLOVER *Charadrius hiaticula*

Breeding

Ringed Plovers nested commonly on the Lancashire coast in the nineteenth century but increasing human disturbance due to the growth of seaside towns was already beginning to make an impact and by the mid-twentieth numbers were reduced, so that by 1997-2000 coastal breeding was restricted to a few isolated pockets. This was partly compensated for by the spread of breeding inland – first noted in 1947 – mainly on reservoir edges and the Lune gravels.

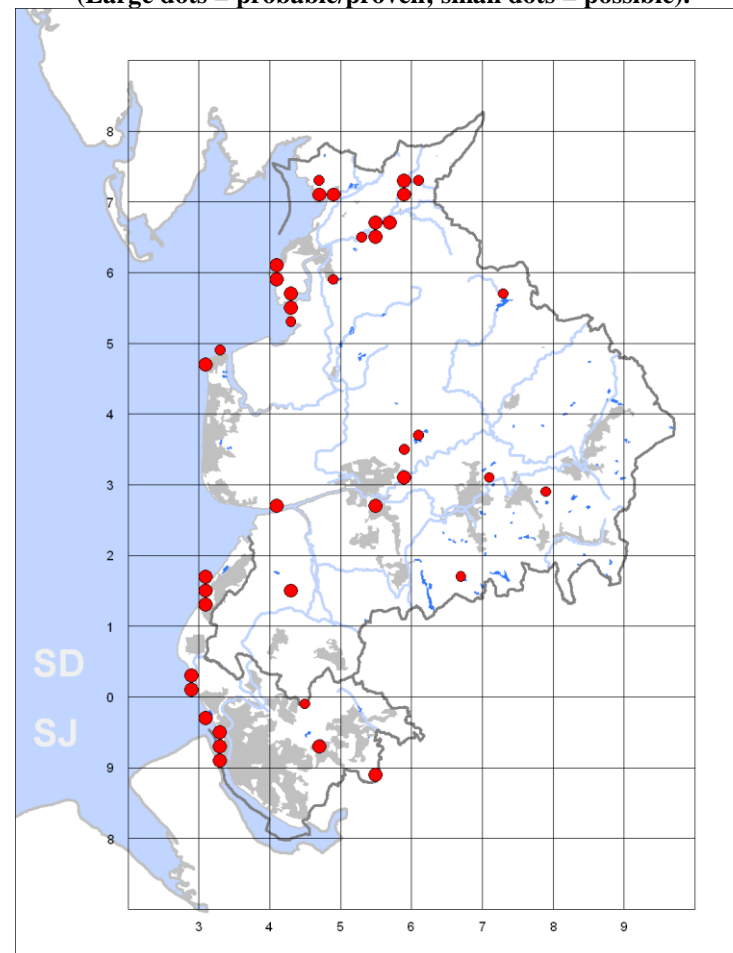
This picture remained essentially the same during 2008-2011 although the steady decline in distribution and population size continued during the first decade of this century.

Breeding Ringed Plovers were proven or probable in 27 tetrads, an 18% decline from 33 in 2000; the number of possible breeding pairs remained at ten tetrads (Fig.1). A total of 17 probable/proven records were on the coast with clusters in the Liverpool docklands, Southport, Sunderland Point to Heysham and Carnforth; five tetrads in the Lune Valley was the only other concentration.

None definitely bred anywhere in the eastern half of the county, where three tetrads, at Stocks and Belmont Reservoirs and on the upper Lune, had been occupied in 2000 (Fig.2). Other losses occurred principally elsewhere in

the Lune Valley and in the Silverdale/Carnforth area. The nine newly-occupied tetrads were widely scattered.

Figure 1. Ringed Plover: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).



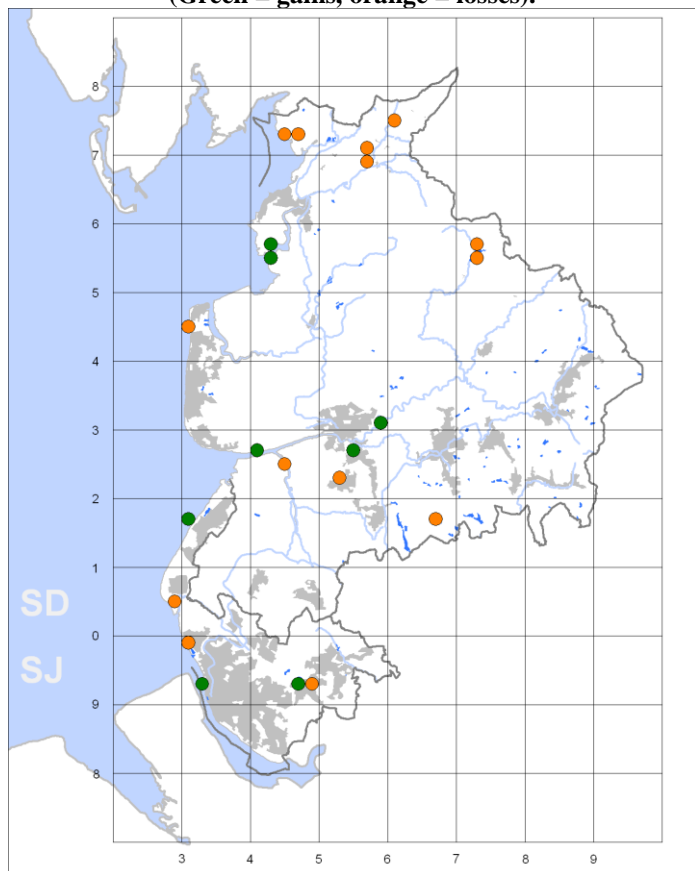
The county population was estimated at 80 pairs in 2000, breeding in four main areas: up to 16 pairs at Carnforth Slag Tips, 15 on the shore between Hightown and Southport, ten in the Liverpool Docks, including at Seaforth, and eight on nine pairs on the Lune gravels.

All these sites remained extant in 2008-2011 but all had declined. During the current survey period Carnforth supported a maximum of twelve pairs, the Lune and the south Sefton coast four each, and the Liverpool Docks

three. This was compensated for to some extent by the increasing importance of Martin Mere, where up to six pairs nested, and the colonisation of Brockholes by three pairs. Cleveleys and Rossall on the Fylde coast, and Heysham held two pairs in at least one year. Three pairs bred in SJ58P, a tetrad largely in Lancashire, but the actual breeding site, Lingley Mere is in Cheshire. These birds are thus excluded from the county total which is now estimated at 50 pairs, a little under 1% of the British population.

the county, at Altham in December 2010 (Fig.3). Other inland records were at Prescott Reservoirs, Martin Mere, Longton Marsh and Brockholes.

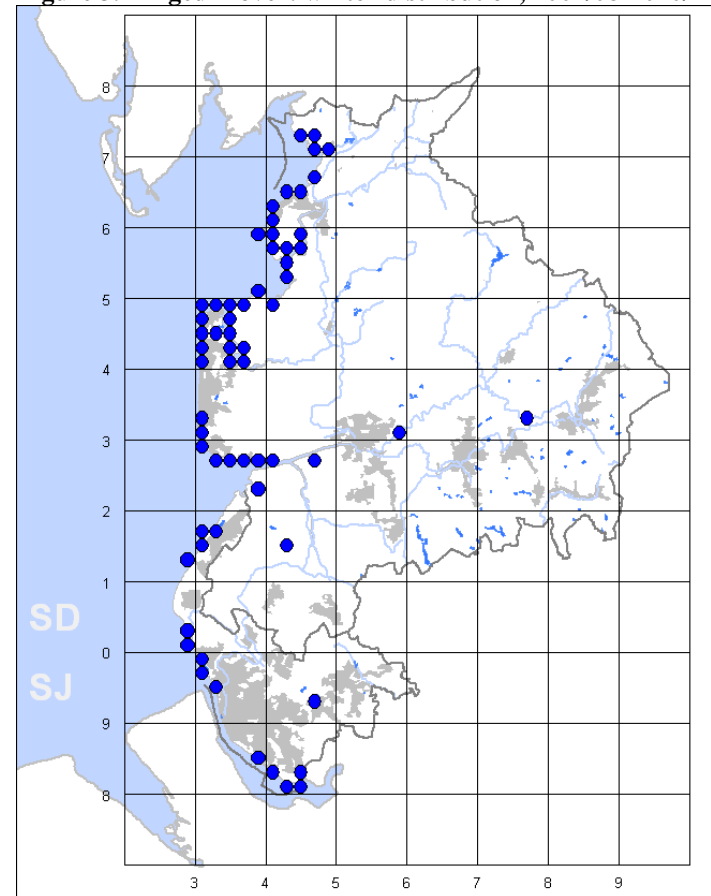
Figure 2. Ringed Plover: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011. (Green = gains, orange = losses).



Winter

Ringed Plovers were located in 62 tetrads during the winter survey, all but five of them on the coast; there was only one record anywhere in the east of

Figure 3. Ringed Plover: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



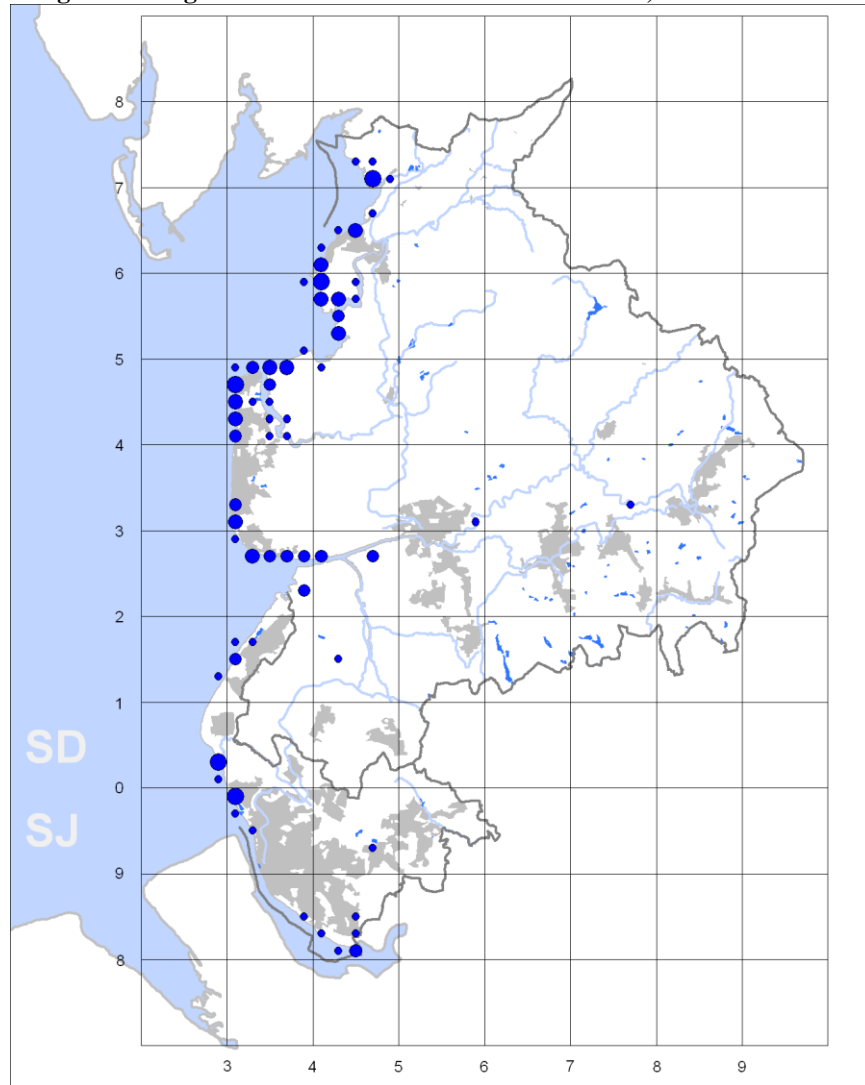
Records were distributed more or less evenly throughout the Merseyside and Lancashire coasts with just three obvious gaps in Blackpool, around Southport and at Formby Point. However, the largest flocks were concentrated in four areas: at Blundellsands and Hightown on the Alt Estuary, and in Morecambe Bay on the north Fylde coast between Rossall Point and Pilling and at Heysham, Morecambe and Carnforth (Fig.4).

Although large numbers of Ringed Plovers continue to be found on the Lancashire coast on spring and autumn passage, the number remaining over winter fell by more than 50% between the mid-1990s and the early years of

this century. Numbers were more or less stable during the four winters of this survey but a count of 106 at Hightown was one of only five of more than 50 made anywhere; the average combined WeBS total for our three estuaries was 200, a little less than 4% of the British population.

SJW

Figure 4. Ringed Plover: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 50-106; 20-49; 10-19; 1-9.

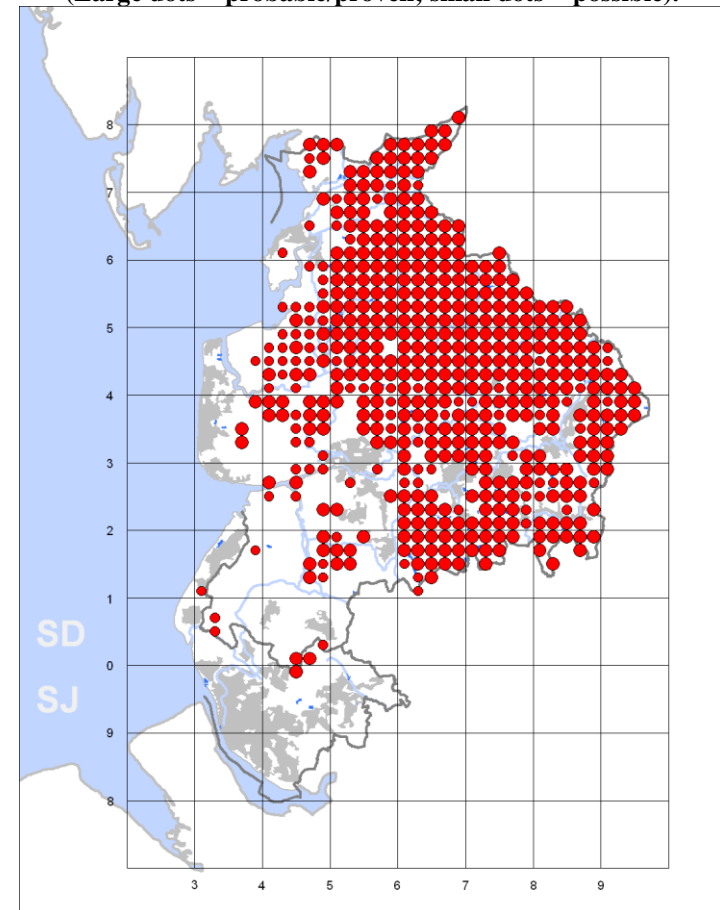
CURLEW *Numenius arquata*

Breeding

Although the national breeding population fell by 44% between 1995 and 2010 the present survey results indicate that Curlews are holding their own in Lancashire; their bubbling song remains a constant feature of our moorlands.

Curlews were proven or probably breeding in 430 tetrads during 2008-2011, indicating a barely detectable decline in their breeding range since 1997-2000 (Fig.1). Birds were possibly breeding in another 93 tetrads, meaning they were present in the breeding season in 46% of all tetrads.

Figure 1. Curlew: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).

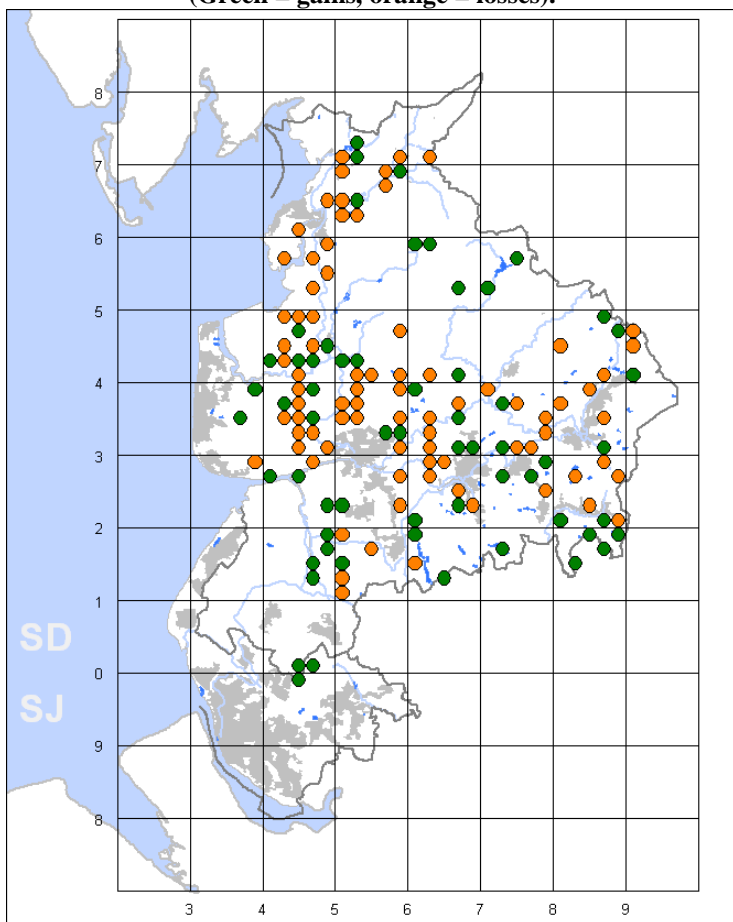


Their distribution included virtually all the moorland areas of Bowland, east and north Lancashire, the West and South Pennines and Rossendale, outside of urban areas.

Only 40 probable/proven records were in the western third of the county. Historically, breeding was much more frequent in the lowlands but this declined as a result of agricultural intensification in the latter half of the last century, although they still survive in low numbers in some areas of West Lancashire, Chorley and the Fylde.

Although the broad range has remained unchanged this century, there have been some significant changes in distribution within it (Fig.2). Very

Figure 2. Curlew: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011.
(Green = gains, orange = losses).



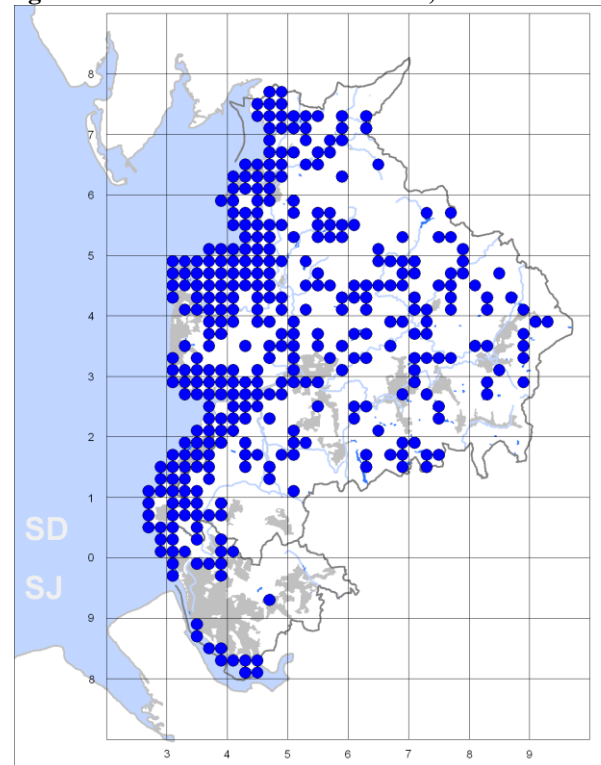
few changes occurred in the core upland areas. Losses outnumbered gains in the western half of the county as the lowlands and some upland fringes continued to be abandoned, most notably on the south-western edge of Bowland, eastern Fylde, the Ribble Valley east of Preston and other parts of east and north Lancashire. However, many of these losses were recorded as possible breeding only during 1997-2000 and it is unlikely that they have affected the overall population significantly. Against the trend, three tetrads on the edge of Merseyside in the Rainford/Bickerstaffe area were newly occupied.

The population was estimated at 3000 pairs, roughly 4.5% of the British population.

Winter

Curlews were recorded in 356 of tetrads during 2007/08-2010/11, 37.7% of the county total (Fig.3).

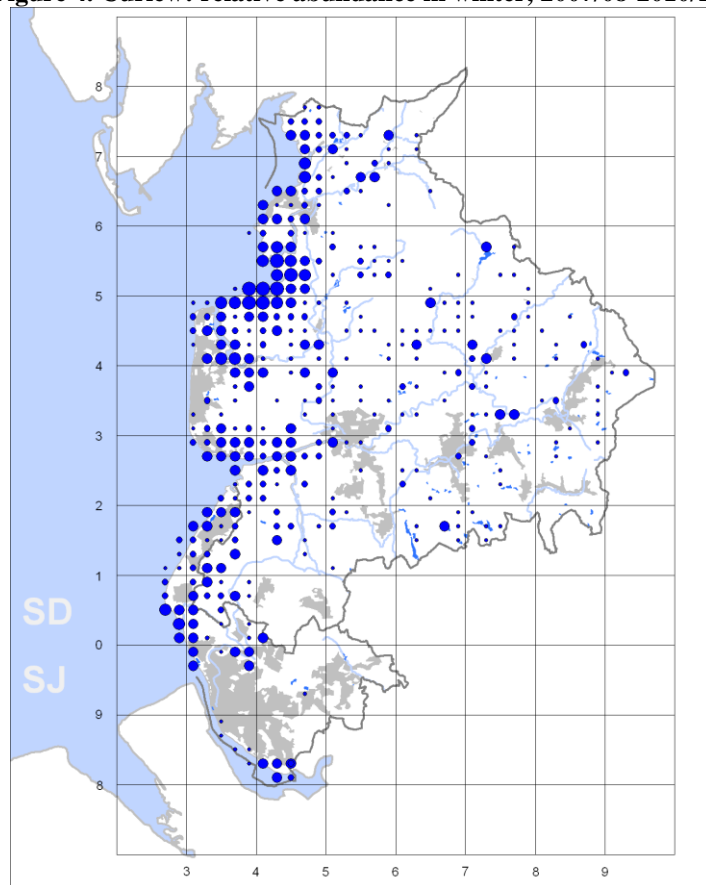
Figure 3. Curlew: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



Their distribution was predominantly coastal and almost a complete inverse of the breeding season as birds largely vacate those inland fells where they nest.

In reality, although a few do remain there, the number of mapped records in the east of the county probably related to returning breeding rather than overwintering birds. Where they do remain there seems to be little correlation with any obvious relief features and they are probably more dependent on suitable feeding habitat of unimproved pasture or poorly drained fields and fell-sides. As with other moorland waders, Curlews move inland to search for territory from mid-February and this may grossly exaggerate their 'winter' presence.

Figure 4. Curlew: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 1400-4130; 500-1399; 50-499; 10-49; 1-9

The winter density map shows that the north Fylde section of Morecambe Bay, around Pilling and Cockerham and the Lune Estuary, holds the greatest concentrations in our region (Fig.4). The combined five-year average to 2010/11 for the Lancashire parts of Morecambe Bay, the Ribble and Alt Estuaries was 10579. This was 7.5% of the British total, further emphasising the county's importance in both winter and summer for this species.

Counts of 1000 or more were made in nine tetrads, all of them in Morecambe Bay with the largest 4130 at Cockerham and 2200 at Cocksand/Sunderland Point.

GH

BLACK-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa limosa*

Breeding

Successful nesting was first confirmed in Lancashire on the Ribble marshes in 1984 and up to three pairs of the continental sub-species *limosa* have been present there since 1988, breeding on Newton Marsh – although with limited success. Two males and a female nested unsuccessfully in 2008, while perhaps the same birds were present, apparently without attempting to breed, during the following three summers; in 2012 only a lone displaying male was present and it seems that the species is heading for extinction as a breeding bird.

Up to 500, presumably mostly second-calendar-year birds, also spend the summer in the county; as in winter these are Icelandic birds of the *islandica* sub-species.

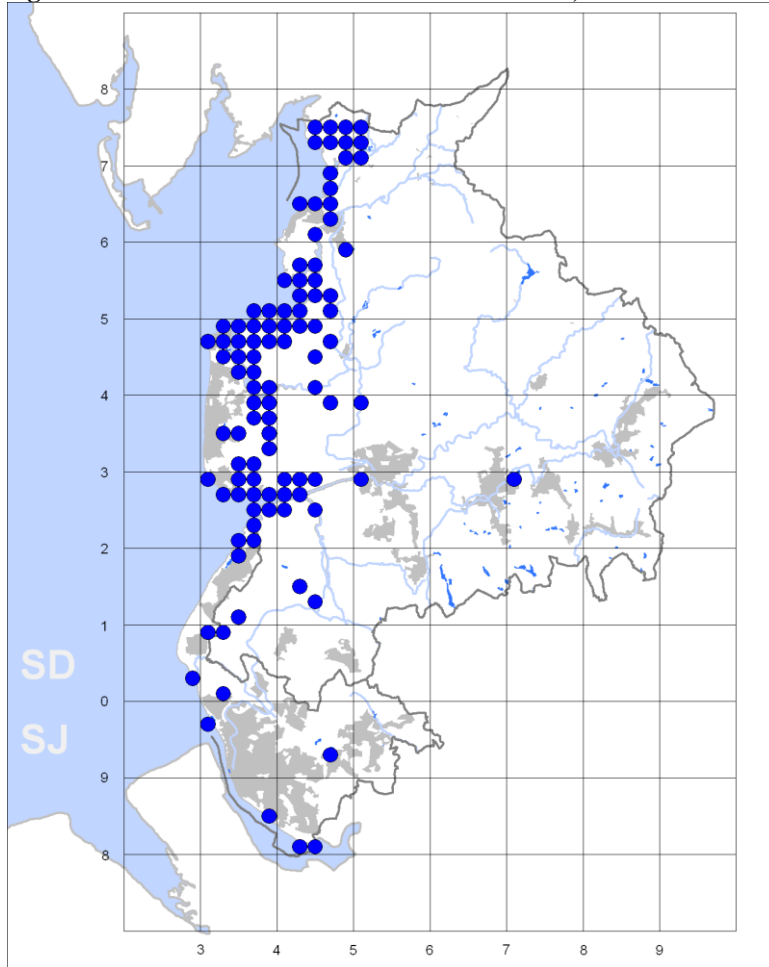
Winter

Black-tailed Godwits were relatively scarce in Lancashire until the 1960s brought a large, steady increase in both numbers and distribution. Like Bar-tailed Godwits their main distribution is essentially coastal but they are found in very different habitats, favouring coastal salt- and fresh-marshes rather than sand-flats. As a result they are found most commonly from the Ribble Estuary northwards.

They were found in 100 tetrads, about 11% of the county total, during 2007/08 to 2010/11 (Fig.1). All but one of these – at Rishton Reservoir – were in the west of the county, and few were at any distance inland. The main

exception to this was Martin Mere, although very small numbers were also seen at Prescott Reservoirs, Preston Dock and Myerscough Quarry.

Figure 1. Black-tailed Godwit: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



Both banks of the Ribble Estuary have always been the main site in terms of numbers but birds are more widely distributed in Morecambe Bay, where Black-tailed Godwits are found throughout the north Fylde coast, Lune Estuary and in the Silverdale area.

They are most numerous at Marshside, the Eric Morecambe complex, Leighton Moss, Morecambe and Middleton. Martin Mere is the only inland

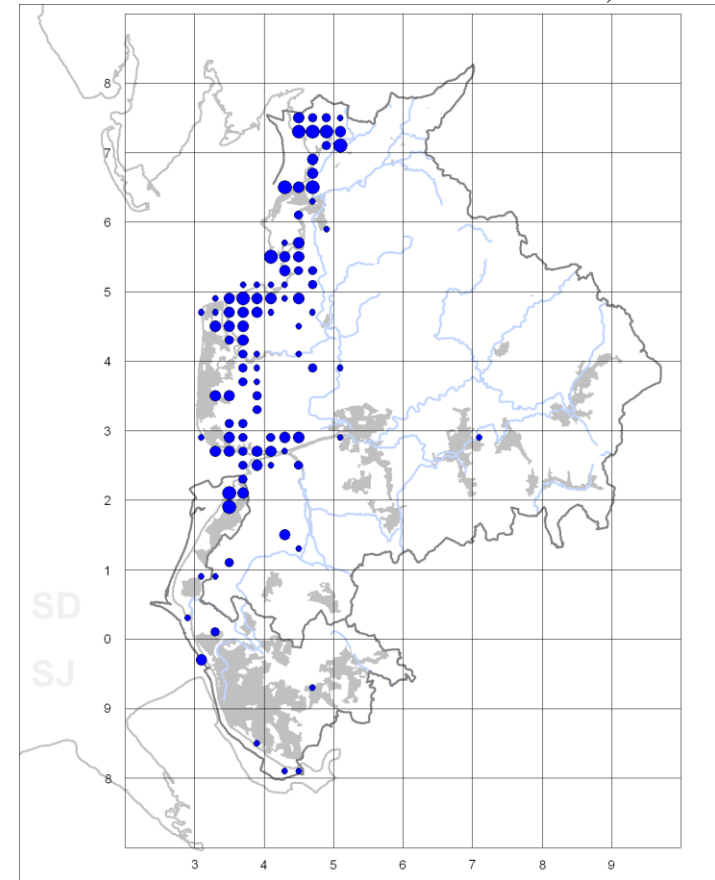
site of any significance, while most of the Alt Estuary's birds are seen at Seaforth (Fig.2).

Throughout the twenty-first century counts have always been far more variable on the Ribble than on Morecambe Bay or the Alt, where numbers have risen steadily, but on average the Ribble held two and half times more birds than the other two combined during the atlas period (Fig.3).

The county total ranged between 3791 and 7482 between 2007/08 and 2010/11 and averaged 5241, around 10% of the British and 7% of the international flyway populations.

SJW

Figure 2. Black-tailed Godwit: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 470-2050; 100-469; 10-99; 1-9

BAR-TAILED GODWIT *Limosa lapponica*

Summer

The appearance of sizeable flocks of Bar-tailed Godwits during June and early July, some time after wintering birds have departed, has long been a feature on the Lancashire coast. These birds are predominantly first-summerers in non-breeding plumage and in active wing-moult, although a few non-breeding adults are probably also present. Numbers fluctuate in line with the 'small rodent cycle' on the breeding grounds in the previous year.

A few are recorded in Morecambe Bay but most are on the beaches of the Ribble Estuary to the south of Southport and more especially on the Alt Estuary between Formby Point and Seaforth. The largest counts during the atlas period were 1100 at Seaforth in June 2009 and 400 or so at Warton in June 2010.

Winter

Bar-tailed Godwits were found in 73 tetrads during 2007/08 to 2010/11, occurring virtually continuously on the coast between the Mersey mouth and the Cumbrian border with just single outlying coastal records on the inner Mersey Estuary at Garston and the inner Ribble on Longton Marsh (Fig.1).

Not surprisingly, for a species that is associated almost entirely with sandy intertidal habitats in winter, there were just two inland records: at Fishmoor and Prescott Reservoirs.

The largest numbers were seen throughout the Ribble and Alt Estuaries and in Morecambe Bay in the Middleton-Sunderland Point-Glasson area (Fig.2). The largest single count was 12400 at Formby Point/Hightown.

The WeBS counts achieve more or less 100% coverage for Bar-tailed Godwits. At the end of the twentieth and in the first few years of this century the county total ranged from 15000 to 33900 but began to fall sharply just prior to the atlas survey. Nonetheless, during 2007/08 to 2010/11 the average winter population was 12671, 33% of the British and more than 10% of the international flyway totals, emphasising the continuing importance of all three of our estuaries for this species.

SJW

Figure 1. Bar-tailed Godwit: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.

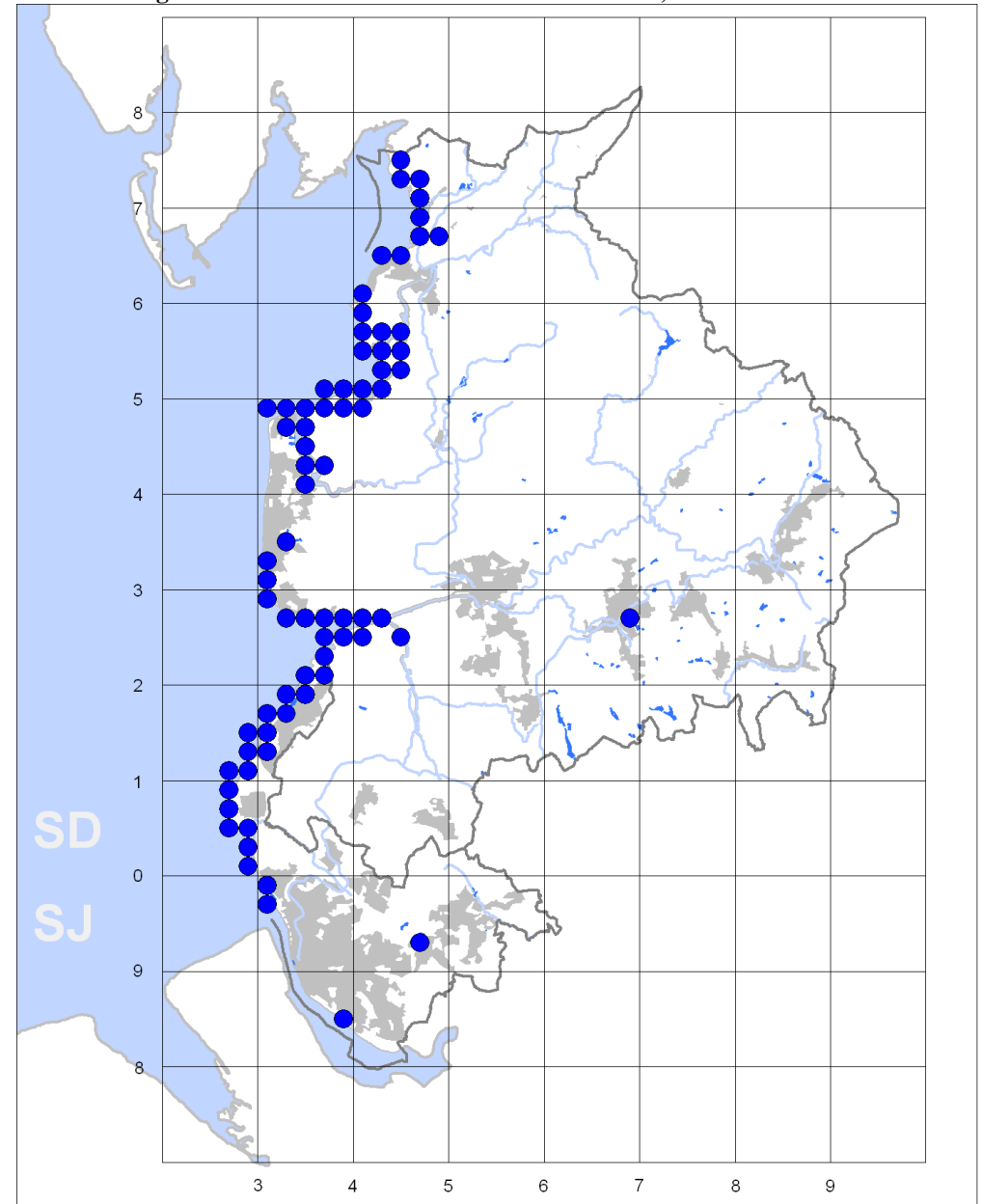
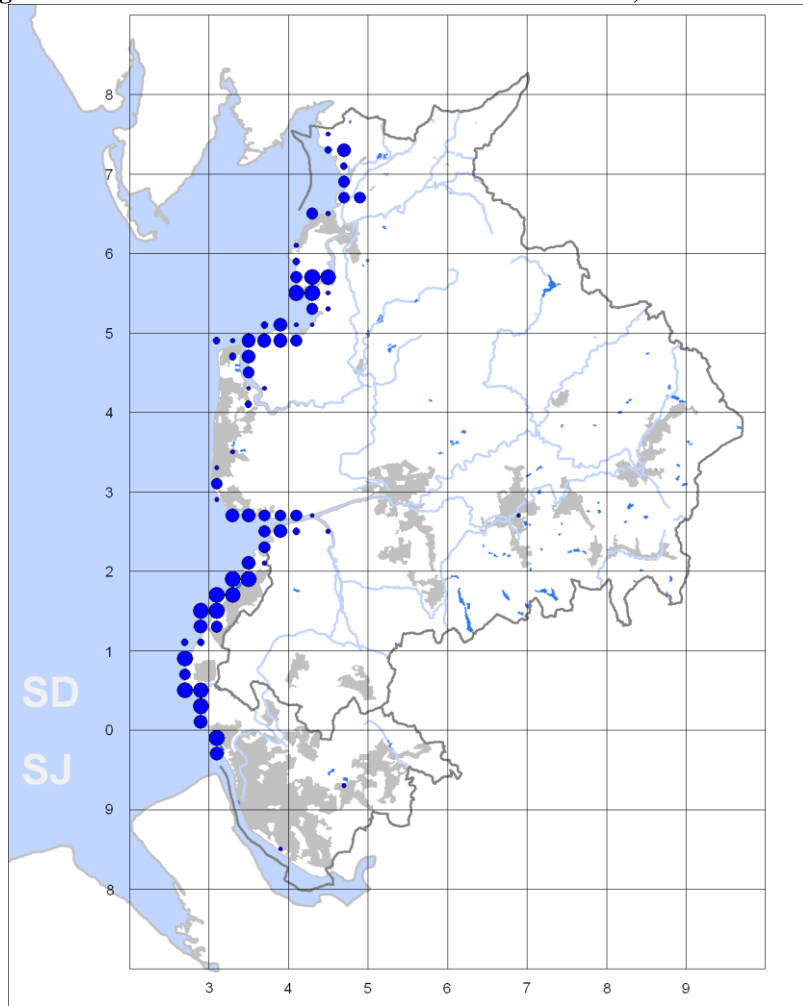


Figure 2. Bar-tailed Godwit: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.

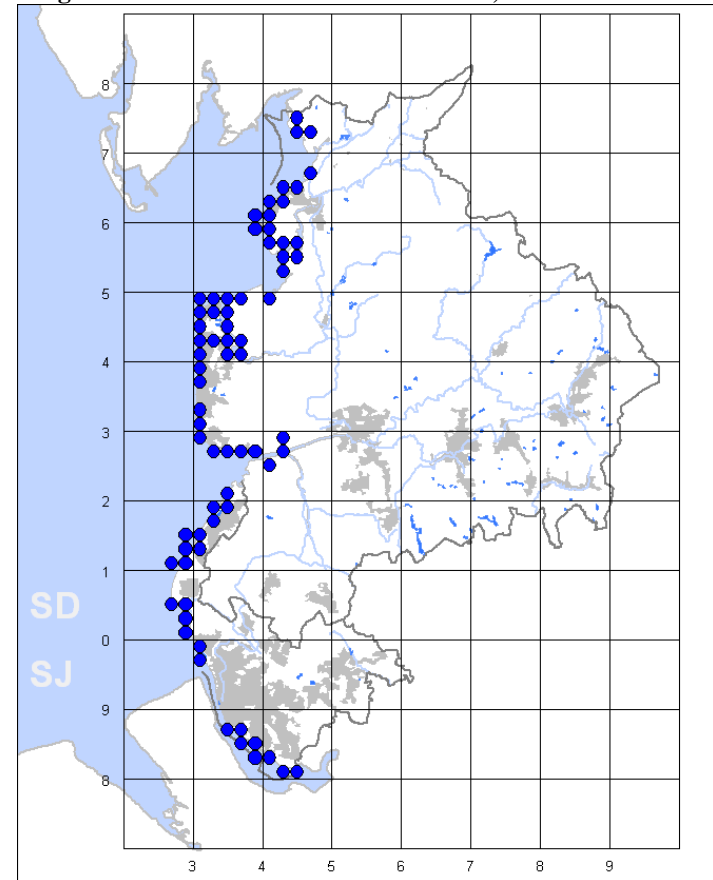


Dot size in descending order: 1200-12400; 380-1199; 30-379; 10-29; 1-9

TURNSTONE *Arenaria interpres*

Turnstones were found almost entirely on the coast in a total of 71 tetrads (Fig.1). Their range spanned more or less the whole of the Merseyside and Lancashire coasts from the Mersey Estuary in the south to the north of Morecambe Bay.

Figure 1. Turnstone: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



However, this gives a somewhat false view of their distribution, which was patchy rather than continuous like other common wader species, as most birds were found on small areas of rocky shore or artificial equivalents.

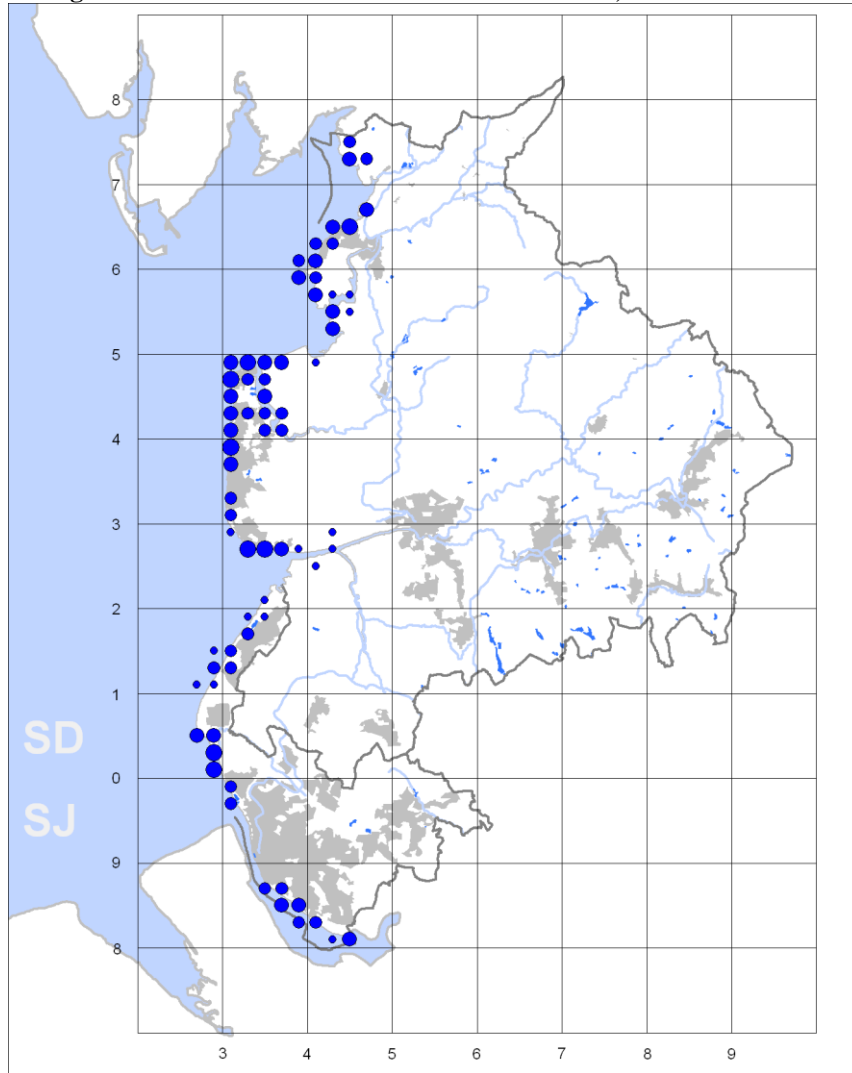
The largest numbers were in two main areas of Morecambe Bay, at Fleetwood/Rossall Point and between Cockerham and Morecambe (Fig.2). Further south there were two additional clusters, at Lytham and Hightown, with more moderate numbers on the inner Mersey Estuary.

Numbers have been in decline both nationally and locally for some time and the twenty-first century has witnessed a roughly 50% fall on all three of Lancashire’s estuaries. This decline appears to have levelled out, possibly actually showing some sign of recovery, during the atlas survey, but numbers

remain relatively modest, averaging 895 during 2007/08 to 2010/11, a fairly insignificant 2% of the British population.

SJW

Figure 2. Turnstone: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 100-415; 25-99; 5-24; 1-4

KNOT *Calidris canutus*

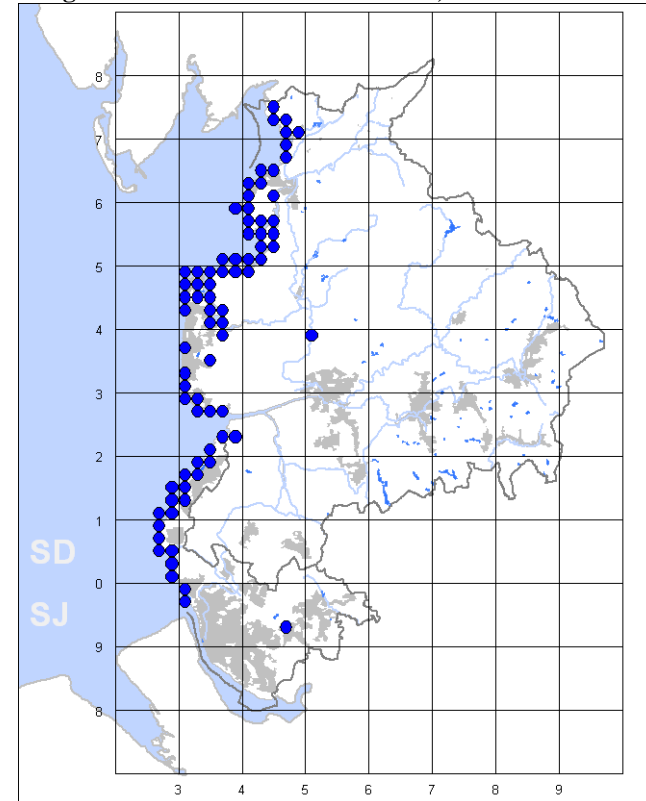
Summer

The Ribble and Alt Estuaries, and less frequently Morecambe Bay, have long held flocks of Knots, predominantly first-summer birds in active wing moult, during June and July. The largest counts during the atlas period were 5000 on the Ribble and 1750 in Morecambe Bay in 2008, and 12000 at Seaforth in 2009.

Winter

Knots were recorded in 77 winter tetrads with just two inland records, at Prescott Reservoirs and Myerscough Quarry, the latter an early November passage bird (Fig.1).

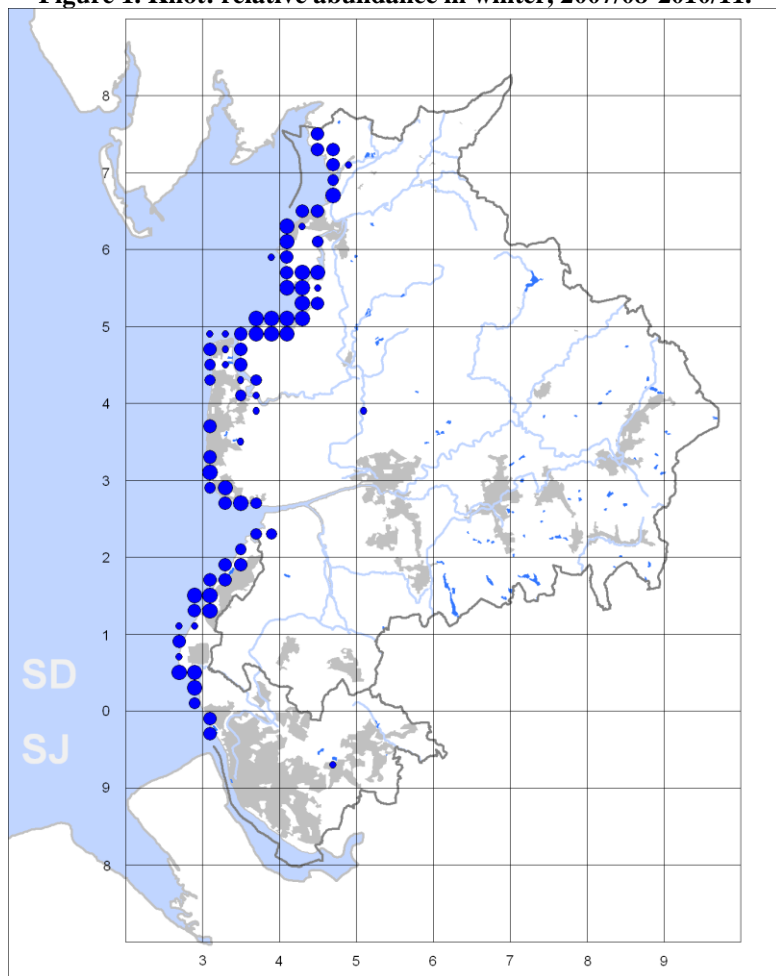
Figure 1. Knot: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11



Coastal presence from Merseyside to the Cumbrian border was virtually continuous, interrupted only by the inner Mersey and urban Blackpool.

The relative abundance map (Fig.2) reflects the major roost sites rather more than the main feeding areas but shows the broad areas where most birds were located: the Alt Estuary between Blundellsands and Formby Point, the Ribble Estuary around Southport and Lytham St. Anne's, and the north Fylde coast and Lune Estuary between Pilling and Morecambe.

Figure 1. Knot: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 3200-48300; 500-3199; 100-499; 1-100

Nationally, numbers have been relatively stable for 25 years or so but there have been signs of a decline in Lancashire during this century. This appears to have been most dramatic in Morecambe Bay where average numbers have fallen by perhaps as much as 50% in the space of ten years, although there were some signs of recovery during the atlas period. Numbers have also fluctuated on the Alt, again showing an upward trend most recently, while the Ribble's 25% decline has been more or less steady.

Despite this, the Lancashire estuaries remain a key national site; the average combined peak count during the atlas survey was 84000, 25% of the national and 19% of the international flyway populations.

Counts of 5000 or more were made in 16 tetrads during 2007/08 to 2010/11, the largest of which were 48300 at Formby Point, 22-23000 at Middleton and Hest Bank and 20000 at Hightown.

SJW

RUFF *Calidris pugnax*

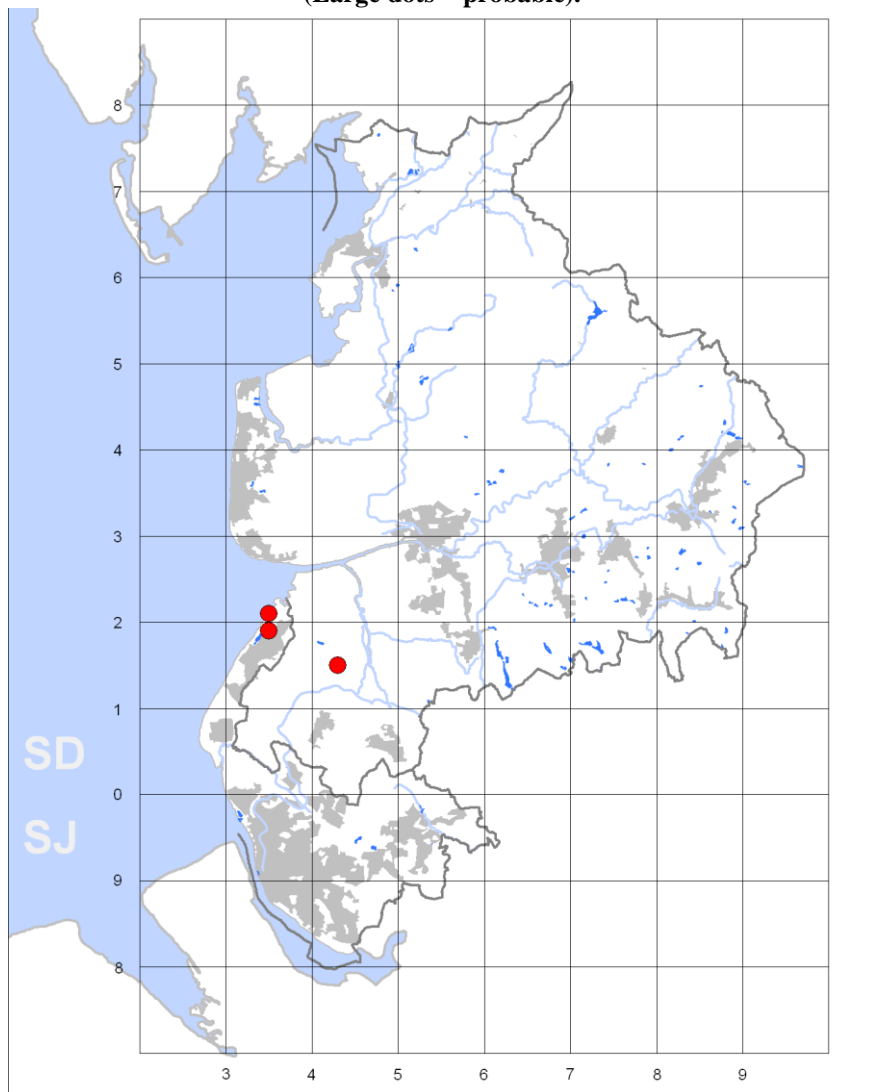
Breeding

The last proven breeding record in Lancashire was on the south Ribble marshes in 2002 but lekking behaviour continues to be recorded in most years and breeding was thought probable during at least two years of the atlas survey.

Two lek sites have always predominated, Marshside and Martin Mere but possible breeding behaviour was also noted on Newton Marsh in 2008 and 2011.

The largest leks recorded during 2008-2011 were of seven males and five females at Marshside in June 2008 with twelve males there in 2011; two birds at Martin Mere in 2009 were also classified as probable breeders (Fig.1).

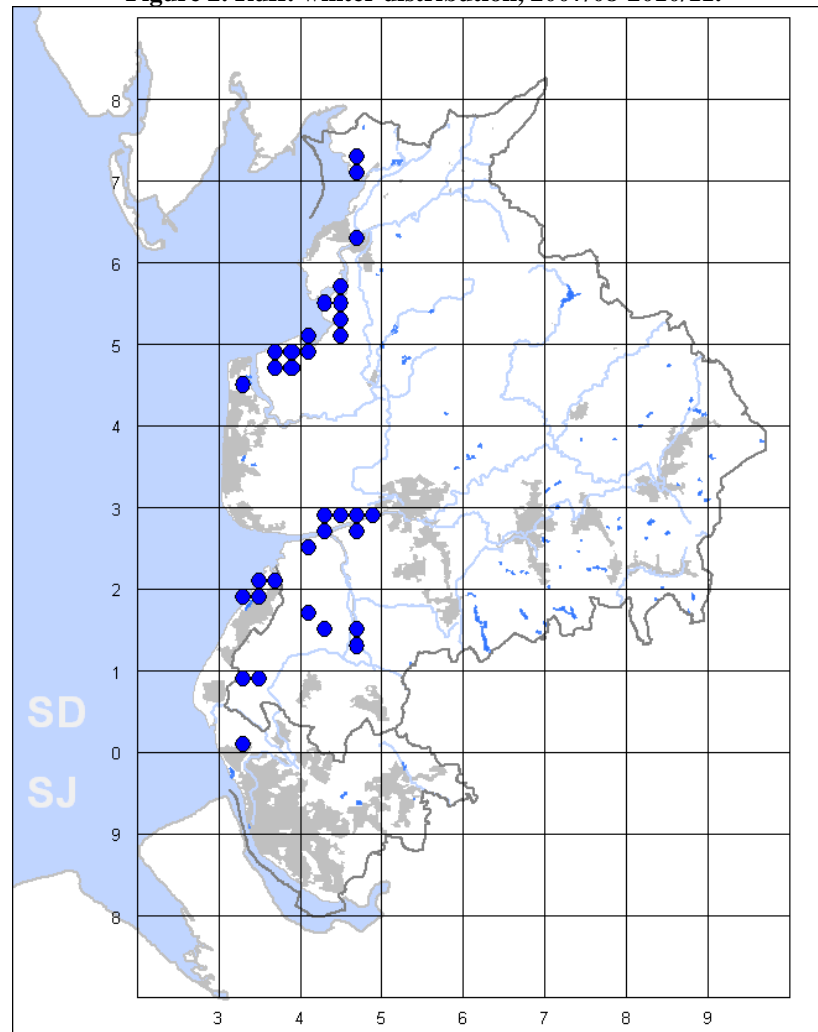
Figure 1. Ruff: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable).



Most records were of ones and twos and more than 60% of all birds recorded were seen at just two sites, Martin Mere with a peak count of 80 and Marshside/Crossens with a peak of 46. Almost 20 records elsewhere occurred in early November and were possibly migrants rather than wintering birds, further accentuating the importance of the two main sites. The only other area consistently holding wintering Ruff was the north Fylde coast in the Pilling/Preesall area, where up to five were present in most years.

The average winter population was estimated at 100 individuals.

Figure 2. Ruff: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



Winter

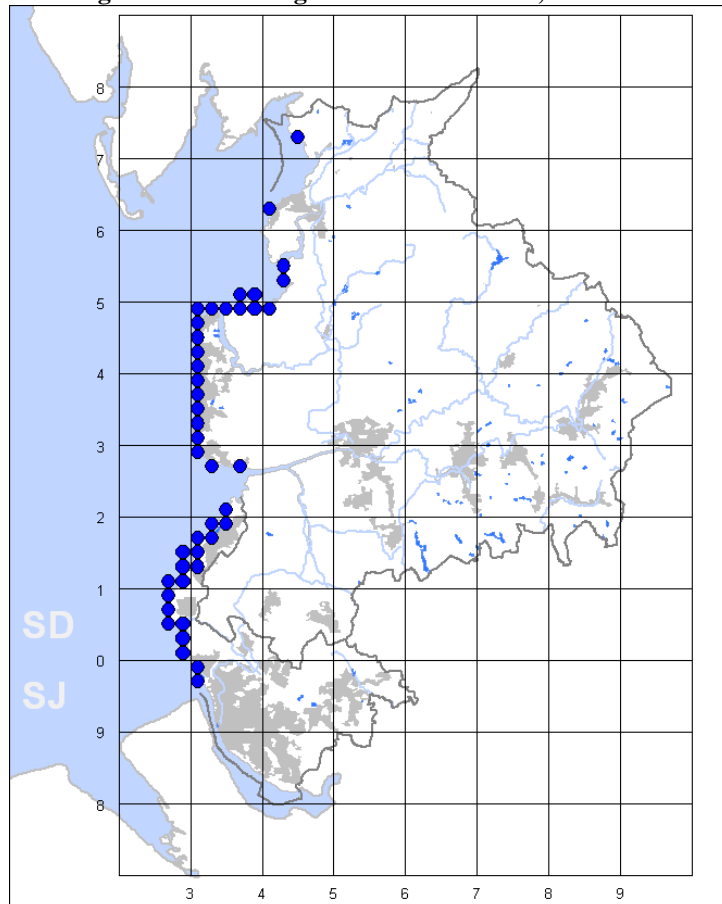
Ruff were recorded in 33 tetrads during 2007/08 to 2010/11, all of them in the western third of the county (Fig.2).

SANDERLING *Calidris alba*

Sanderling were present in 43 tetrads during the winter atlas survey, all of them on the coast (Fig.1). They had a far more restricted distribution than our other most numerous wintering waders, being more or less entirely confined to sandy beaches.

One notable feature was their presence throughout the urbanised Sefton and west Fylde coasts. Although birds were found in significant numbers on all three estuaries they were virtually absent anywhere in Morecambe Bay to the north of the north Fylde coast, with the largest numbers located on the Alt Estuary between Blundellsands and Formby Point, the Ribble Estuary around Southport and Lytham St. Anne's, and at Fleetwood/Rossall. (Fig.2).

Figure 1. Sanderling: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



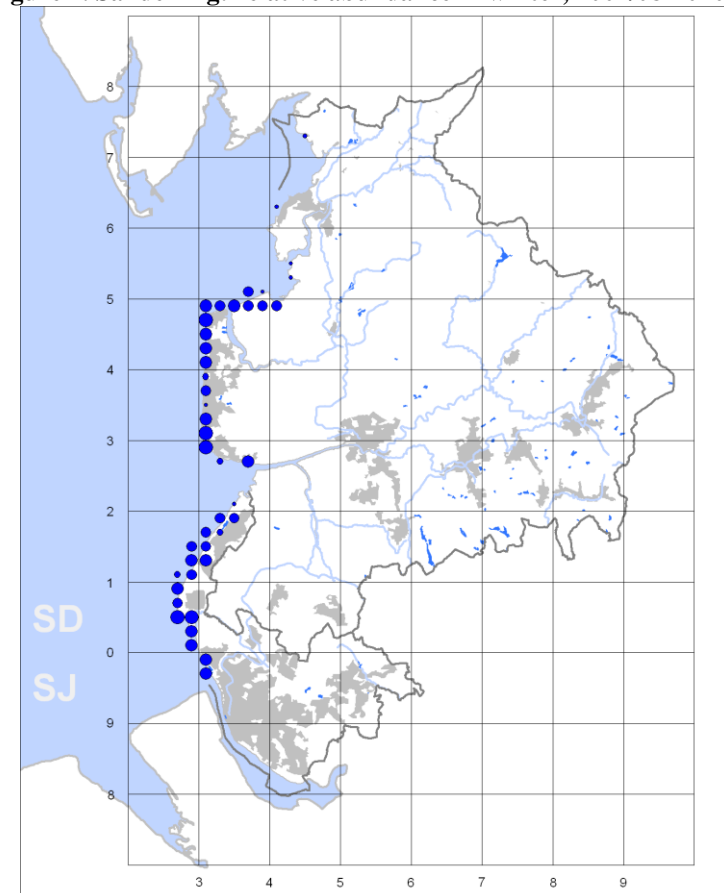
Reflecting the national trend, Sanderling numbers in Lancashire have shown a steady increase throughout the present century, most noticeably on the Ribble Estuary where average numbers have more than doubled over the past ten years.

The average peak winter count for the county as a whole during 2007/08 to 2010//11 was 4900, 30% of the British population.

Internationally-important flocks of 1200 or more birds were present in five tetrads during the survey period with the largest counts 2200 at Lytham St. Anne's, 1700 at Formby Point and 1400 at Rossall Point.

SJW

Figure 2. Sanderling: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



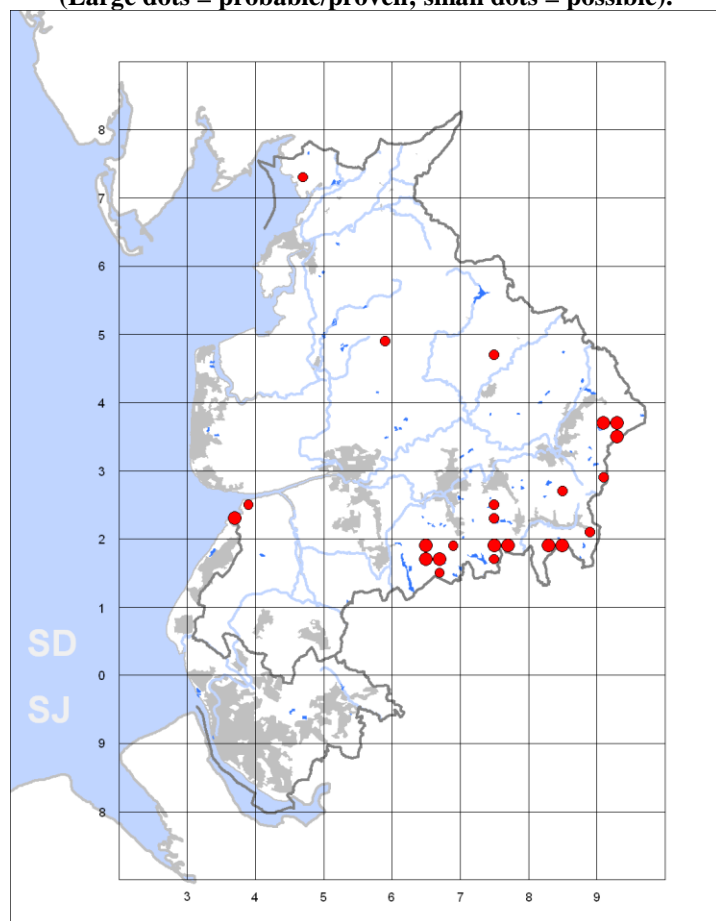
Dot size in descending order: 1200-2200; 160-1199; 50-159; 15-49, 1-14

DUNLIN *Calidris alpina*

Breeding

Although the total of 23 tetrads in which Dunlin were recorded during the 2008-2011 breeding seasons was only one less than that of 1997-2000, the proportion of tetrads in which breeding was found to be proven or probable fell by 35% from 17 to eleven (Fig.1). However, Dunlin can be an extremely difficult species to monitor, meaning that the mapped distribution may well represent an underestimate and that any changes in range are at best uncertain.

Figure 1. Dunlin: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).



Most records came from known regular breeding localities. The Lancashire breeding haunts comprise two quite different habitats. One or more pairs nested on the south Ribble marshes during 2008-2011 and one may have done so on Carnforth Marsh, but as previously the majority were found in the uplands.

Up to five pairs were located in the Bowland Fells during 1997-2000 but just two birds were found in suitable habitat during 2008-2011 – although the species could very easily be overlooked in the vastness of Bowland. Birds recorded in the breeding season at Stocks Reservoir in most years probably relate to locally-breeding birds.

The high moorland plateaux of the West and South Pennine Moors and Rossendale are the breeding strongholds of Dunlin in Lancashire. Up to six pairs were located in each of the four main areas; namely the western section of the West Pennine Moors around Belmont, the Wet Moss/Musden Head Moor plateaux in the east of the West Pennine Moors, the Cowpe Moss/Scout Moor area of south Rossendale and the Boulsworth Hill section of the South Pennines. It is estimated that these four areas probably held over 20 pairs during the present survey, although the presence of birds in the breeding season in former breeding haunts on Worsthorne Moor, Haslingden Moor, central Rossendale and above Whitworth most probably indicated additional breeding pairs.

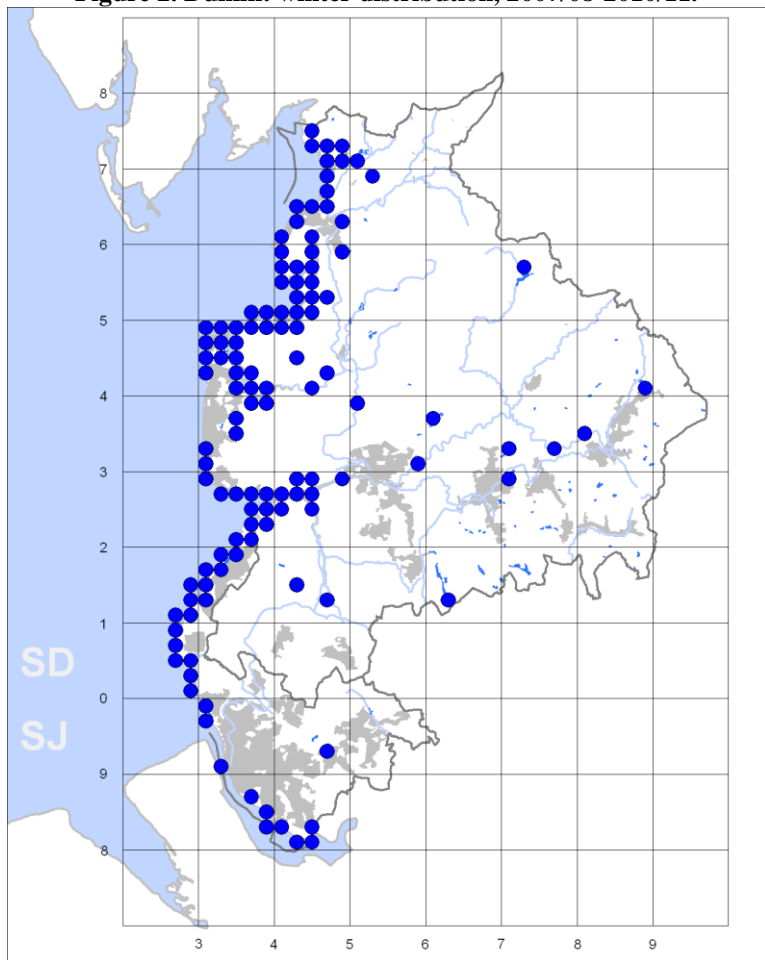
The main four upland plateau sites were estimated to hold up to 40 pairs at the time of the 2007-2010 survey but that figure was largely derived from a more systematic survey in 1990 that located 15 pairs in the Lancashire section of the South Pennines, an area where only three pairs were located during the present survey. Comparable surveys around Belmont found a small decline from six to eight pairs in 1990-94 to five during 2008-2011.

In the absence of standardised exhaustive surveys of all upland sites it can only be assumed that the county breeding population is a minimum of 25 pairs.

Winter

Dunlin were recorded in 121 tetrads, 13% of the county total, during 2007/08-2010/11 (Fig.3). Almost all of these were on the coast but there was a scatter of midwinter records at inland reservoirs, probably mostly during hard weather. However, these inland records were mostly singles and the overwhelming majority of birds were on the coast (Fig.3).

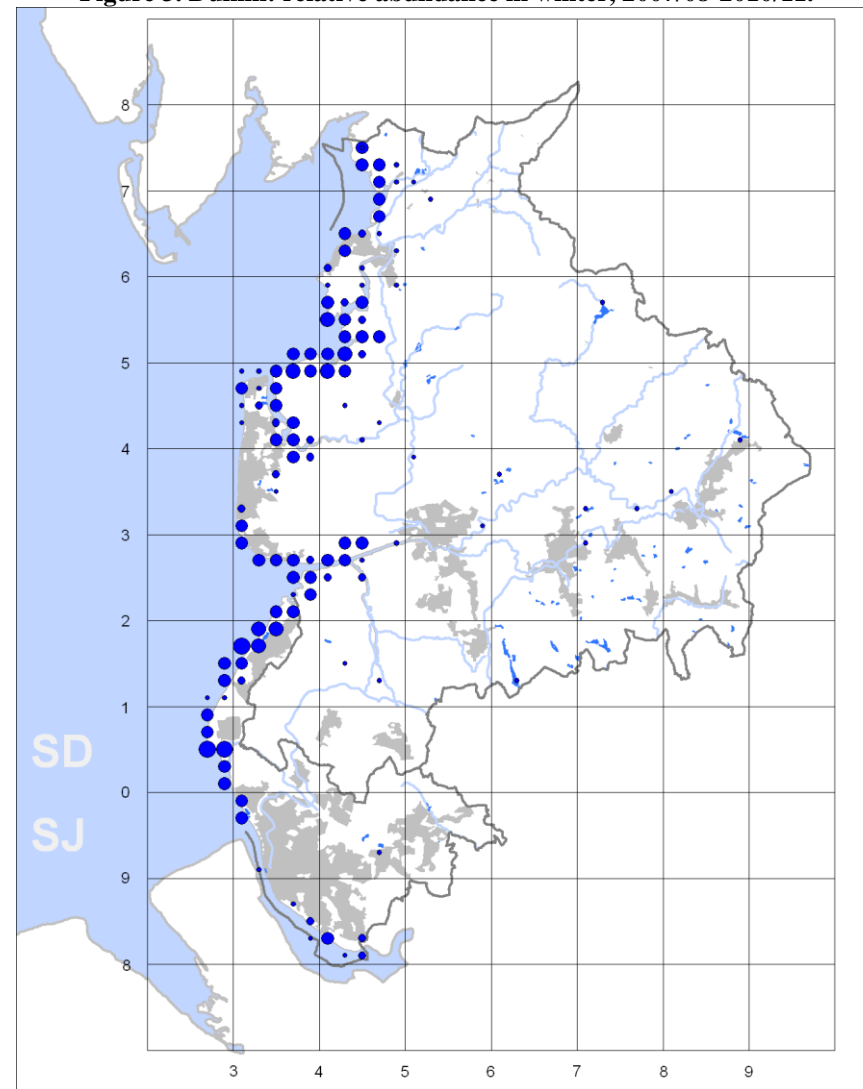
Figure 2. Dunlin: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



During the winter survey, some 30 tetrads recorded day-counts of at least 1000 birds. The largest numbers were on the Sefton Coast, the Ribble Estuary, the north Fylde coast and the Lune Estuary, including peak counts of 16000 at Cabin Hill/Altcar Rifle Ranges, 12000 at Birkdale and 4577 at Cockerham; the largest count from the Lancashire section of the Mersey Estuary was 950 at Speke.

Lancashire's estuaries are of considerable international importance for wintering Dunlin and the species is a 'designated feature' of both the Ribble and Alt Estuaries and Morecambe Bay Special Protection Areas.

Figure 3. Dunlin: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 9500-16000; 3500-9499; 200-3499; 50-199; 1-49

The county's winter population, derived from combined peak winter WeBS counts, averaged 39196 during 2007/08 to 2010/11, representing 11% of the British and 3% of the international flyway populations.

Nationally, winter numbers have been declining since the 1990s, thought to be due to birds remaining on the Dutch Wadden Sea due to milder

continental winters, and winter numbers in Lancashire have roughly halved in this period. This trend was partially reversed nationally, however, during the relatively cold 2009/10 and 2010/11 winters, and these years also saw resurgent numbers in Lancashire, especially on the Alt and Ribble Estuaries.

SJM

PURPLE SANDPIPER *Calidris maritima*

Purple Sandpipers have never been common anywhere in Lancashire due to the county's general lack of their favoured rocky shore habitat. They are seen annually in winter but are extremely localised, frequenting mussel beds and roosting on training walls and other artificial coastal structures.

In the recent past they were most numerous at Seaforth, where a dozen or so regularly roosted with Turnstones until the mid-1990s when habitat changes on the Turnstones' feeding grounds on the Wirral side of the Mersey caused them to desert the area.

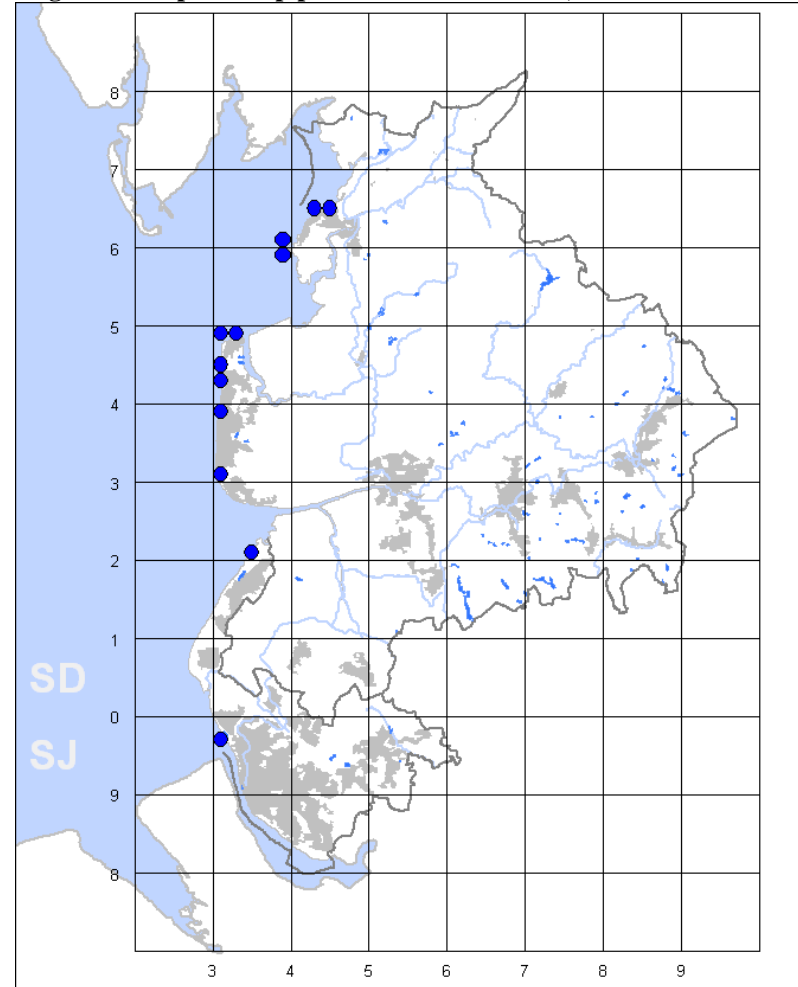
Nowadays, although they were recorded in twelve tetrads during the winter survey (Fig.1), they are only seen regularly in two areas, Heysham and Morecambe and the coast around Rossall Point and Fleetwood. During 2007/08 to 2010/11 up to three were seen on the Heysham wooden jetty and the Morecambe stone jetty with presumably some interchange between the two sites. Up to two were also seen annually at Rossall and Fleetwood Marine Lakes.

Birds wandering from Fleetwood probably accounted for casual records at Pilling, Cleveleys and Blackpool, although the origins of singles at Marshside and Crosby Shore are less obvious.

The peak population size during the survey was five.

SJW

Figure 1. Purple Sandpiper: winter distribution, 2007/01/8-2010/11.



LITTLE STINT *Calidris minuta*

There were a number of records of migrants during both atlas periods; all of the winter atlas period records came in early November and none stayed for more than a day or so.

SJW

GREY PHALAROPE *Phalaropus fulicarius*

There were three records within the winter atlas periods during 2007/08-2010/11, at Seaforth and Greta Foot on the Lune in 2009, and at Lytham in 2010, but all were in November or the first week of December and were presumably all migrants rather than genuinely wintering birds.

SJW

COMMON SANDPIPER *Actitis hypoleucos*

Breeding

The national Common Sandpiper population underwent a 41% decline between 1970 and 2010 but this appears to have slowed more recently, falling by only 7% since 1995. After their disappearance from the lowlands by the middle of the last century the Lancashire population trend has been poorly understood but it is not a species that has registered any major alerts.

During the present survey Common Sandpipers were recorded as breeding or possibly breeding in 131 tetrads, 14% of the county total (Fig.1).

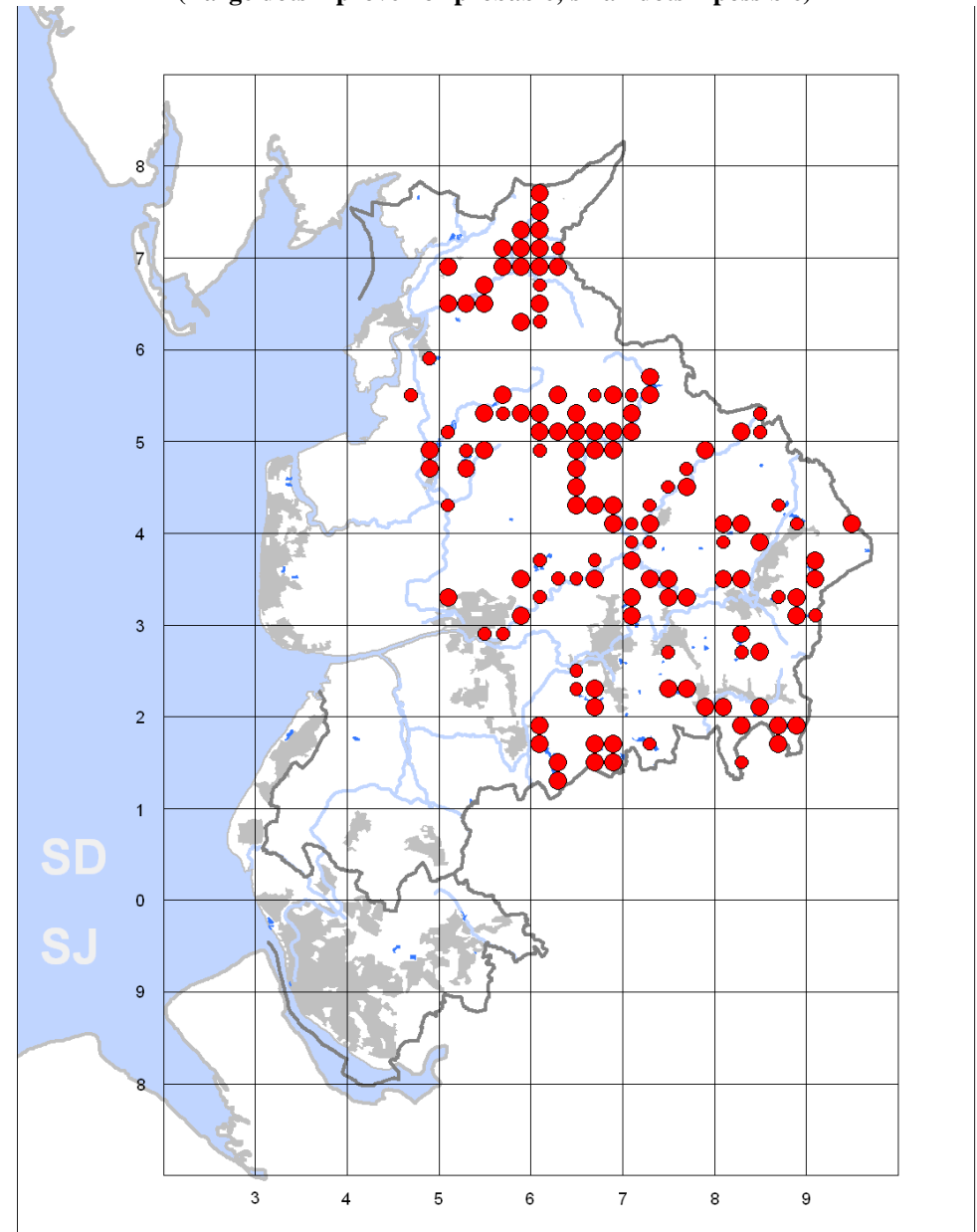
This indicated a 7% range contraction since 1997-2000 but this needs to be treated with some caution. Although their distinctive flight, skimming low over water on flickering wings, and their anxious 'swee-wee-wee' call make them easy to locate, much of their habitat is inaccessible and it is possible that this may account for some of the apparent gaps in their distribution.

They nest on natural watercourses but also occupy niches provided by man-made reservoirs. Our upland areas have plenty of both. The vast majority of records during 2008-2011 were in the eastern half of the county with the most westerly on the Wyre at Cabus.

Both newly-occupied and apparently-abandoned tetrads were scattered throughout the county but there was a noticeable cluster of losses on the upper Ribble (which also reported the largest proportion of possible-only tetrads), the reason for which is not known (Fig.2).

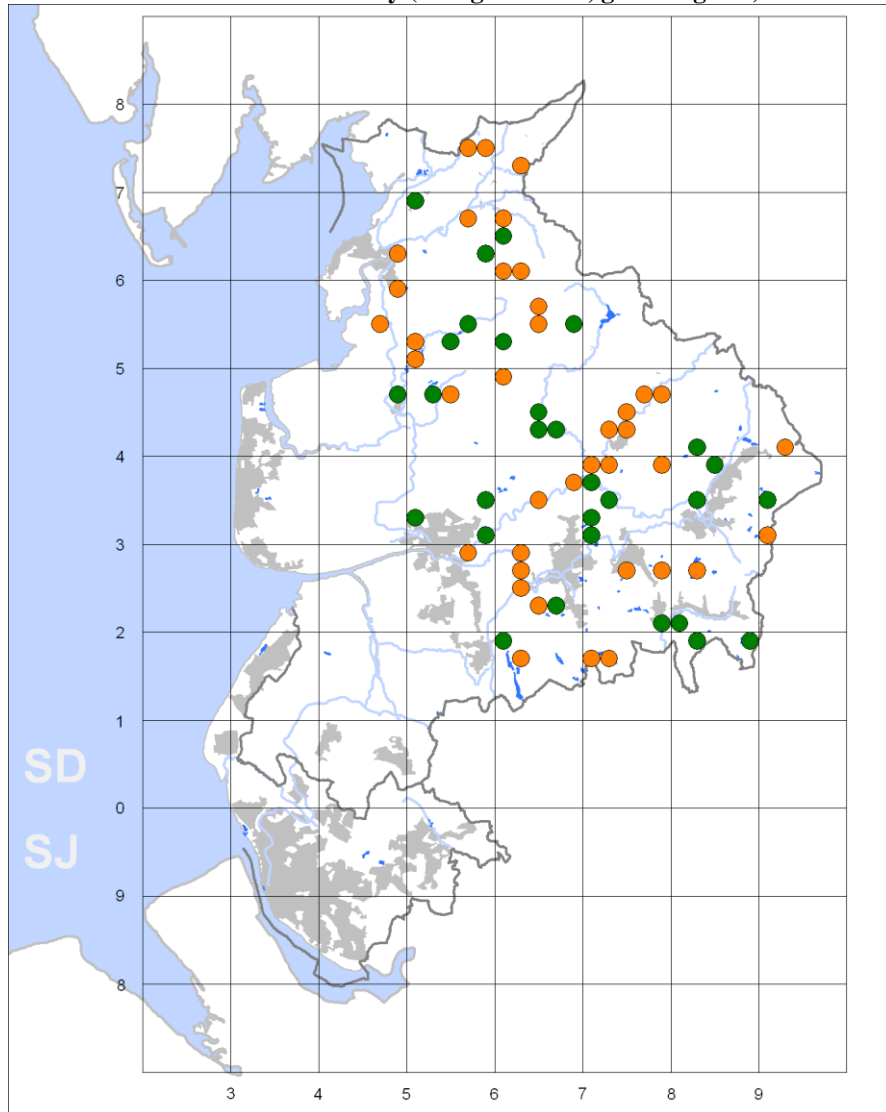
Most tetrads were reported as supporting one or two pairs but eight held three or more, including four pairs at Brockholes on the Ribble and Aughton and Arkholme on the Lune, and six pairs at Belmont Reservoir. The average density was around 1.5 pairs per occupied tetrad, giving a county population estimate of 200 pairs, a little less than 1.5% of the British population.

Figure 1. Common Sandpiper: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = proven or probable; small dots = possible)



For most county birdwatchers Common Sandpipers are most familiar as passage migrants and large numbers of post-breeding birds were seen during the summer atlas months with a highest count of 39 on the Wyre Estuary at Shard Bridge/Skippool Creek in July 2008.

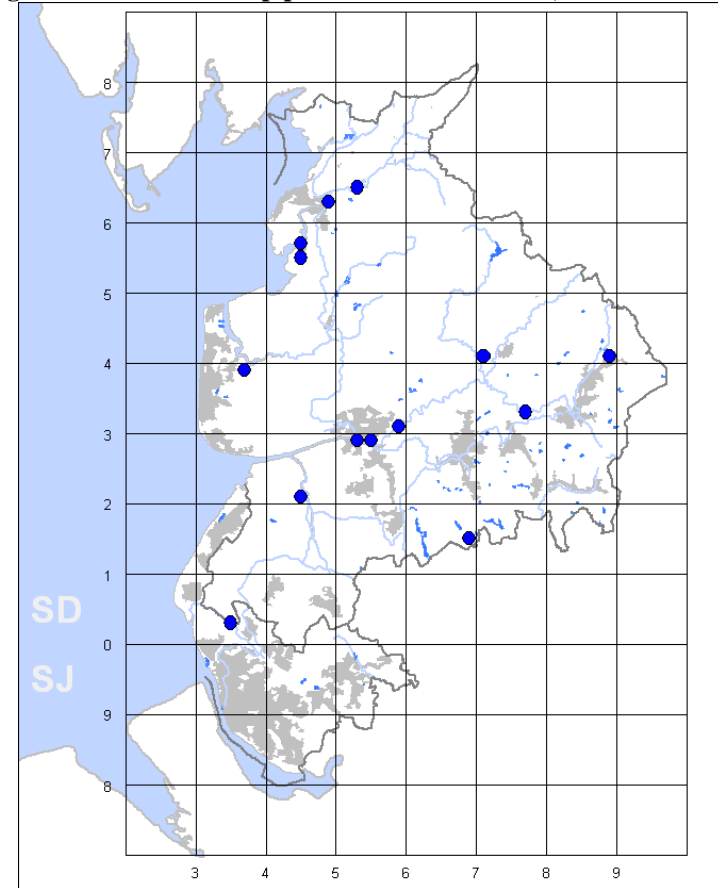
Figure 2. Common Sandpiper: change in breeding distribution since 1997-2000 survey (orange = losses, green = gains)



Winter

Prior to the 1960s records were uncommon but wintering Common Sandpipers are now seen regularly in small numbers in Lancashire. Birds were recorded in 14 tetrads during 2007/08-2010/11 (Fig.3).

Figure 3. Common Sandpiper: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



The Rivers Lune and Ribble accounted for more than 50% of these records but others were dispersed across the breadth of the county, both inland and coastal. Although all but three were in freshwater locations, six were well away from breeding areas: on the Alt at Maghull, the Lune Estuary at Glasson/Conder Estuary, the Wyre at Little Singleton and the Douglas at Tarleton.

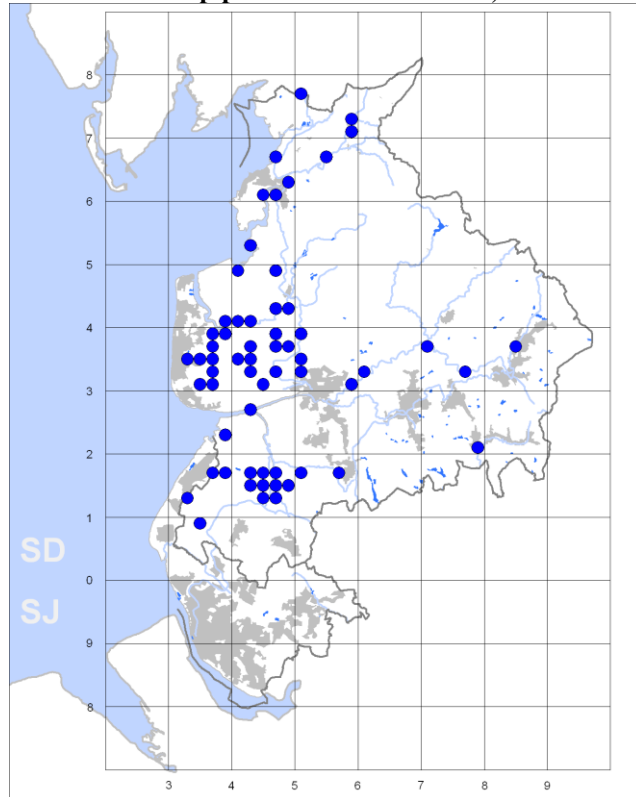
Given that individual birds are inclined to wander within winters and some are known to return to broad sites in subsequent years, the average county winter population is estimated at no more than five. However, the mean British winter population is only 73, so Lancashire supports a significant percentage of these.

GH

GREEN SANDPIPER *Tringa ochropus*

Green Sandpipers were recorded in 60 tetrads during the winter atlas survey, all but five of which were in the west of the county (Fig.1).

Figure 1. Green Sandpiper: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



However, eleven of these records were in November and may have included late migrants rather than truly wintering birds. Nonetheless, this was

a somewhat surprising result as in recent years no more than ten have been reported annually.

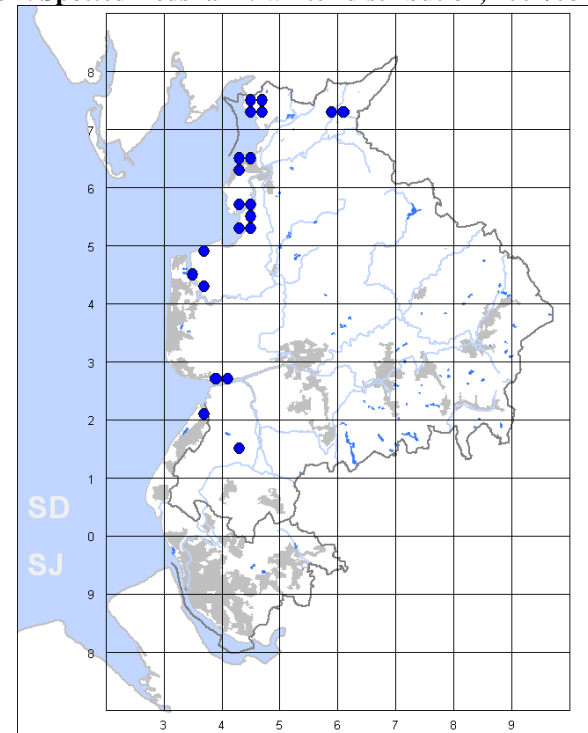
The vast majority, probably all, of winter records come from running water habitats, in contrast to autumn and spring migrants which are more often found on still waters. A notable exception to this was up to six on Banks Marsh at both ends of the winter in 2008. Most other records involved single birds but there were midwinter counts of twos at six sites and three on the Ribble at Brockholes.

There is undoubtedly a significant degree of duplication of records both within and between winters as birds probably occupy fairly large territories and are known to be site-faithful year after year. The wintering population is therefore estimated at 20.

SJW

SPOTTED REDSHANK *Tringa erythropus*

Figure 1. Spotted Redshank: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



Although Spotted Redshanks were recorded in 21 tetrads during the winter atlas period this gives an exaggerated picture of their Lancashire status as almost half of these records probably involved late migrants (Fig.1).

Apart from one at Martin Mere and one or two on the upper Lune at Arkholme, all midwinter records were on the coast. Up to three were seen annually on the Eric Morecambe complex, at Morecambe and at Glasson/Conder Pool, and singles in one winter at least at Marshside/Crossens, Banks Marsh, Barnaby's Sands, Cockersand, Aldcliffe Marsh and Jenny Brown's Point.

Taking into account probable duplication of records between Morecambe and the Eric Morecambe complex and annually-returning site-faithful wintering birds it is likely that no more than a dozen individuals were seen during the four-year survey period and that the average population is no more than eight. However, small as this figure is, it represents almost 10% of the British wintering population.

SJW

GREENSHANK *Tringa nebularia*

Greenshanks are fairly common migrants on Lancashire's estuaries and wetlands, moving between breeding territories in Scotland, Fennoscandia and northern Russia and wintering grounds in West Africa; they are more numerous in autumn than in spring in Lancashire. Although some late autumn passage birds frequently linger into November only very few normally overwinter with us, most of these at a small number of regular estuarine sites.

The winter distribution map shows occurrence during 2007/08-2010/11 in 29 tetrads (Fig.1). Apart from four tetrads in the upper Lune Valley near Arkholme all were on or close to the coast, the majority from the Ribble northwards. The main clusters were on the Eric Morecambe complex, the Lune Estuary in the Conder-Glasson area, the Wyre Estuary and the Inner Ribble at Warton and Hesketh Out Marshes. The only records further south were at Marshside, Seaforth and Martin Mere.

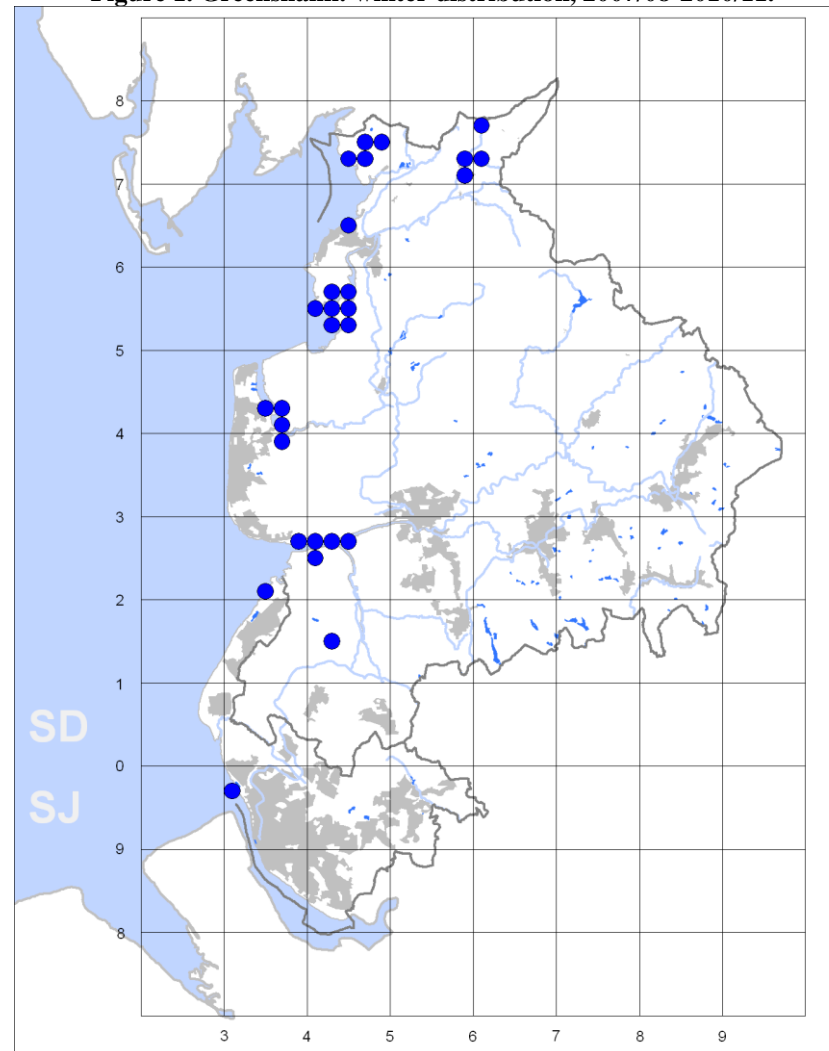
Numbers of Greenshanks in all locations were very small, allowing for the reasonable assumption that many of the November birds, nearly half of the total, are late migrants soon destined to move on. Peak counts during the Atlas period were three at the Conder Estuary and Sunderland Point in

January-February 2008 and February 2009, five on Hesketh Out Marsh on January 2009 and three on the Eric Morecambe complex in December 2009.

The population estimate was of fewer than five individuals in an average winter, based on totals published in the annual Lancashire Bird Report.

BM

Figure 1. Greenshank: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.

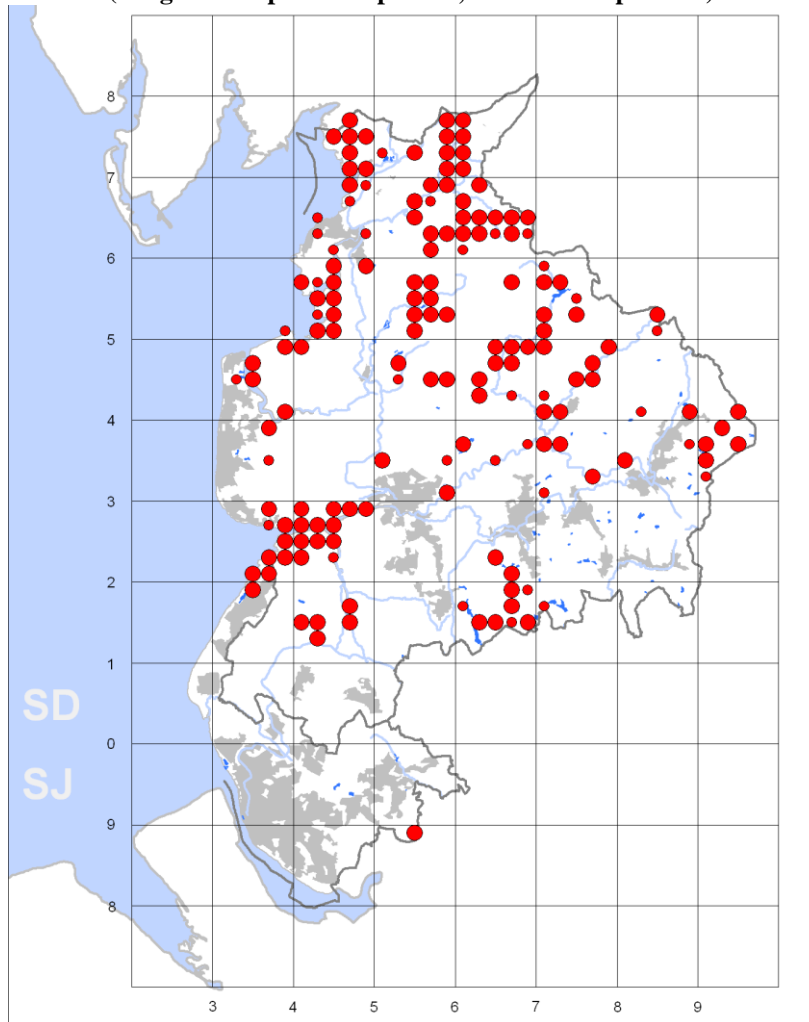


REDSHANK *Tringa totanus*

Breeding

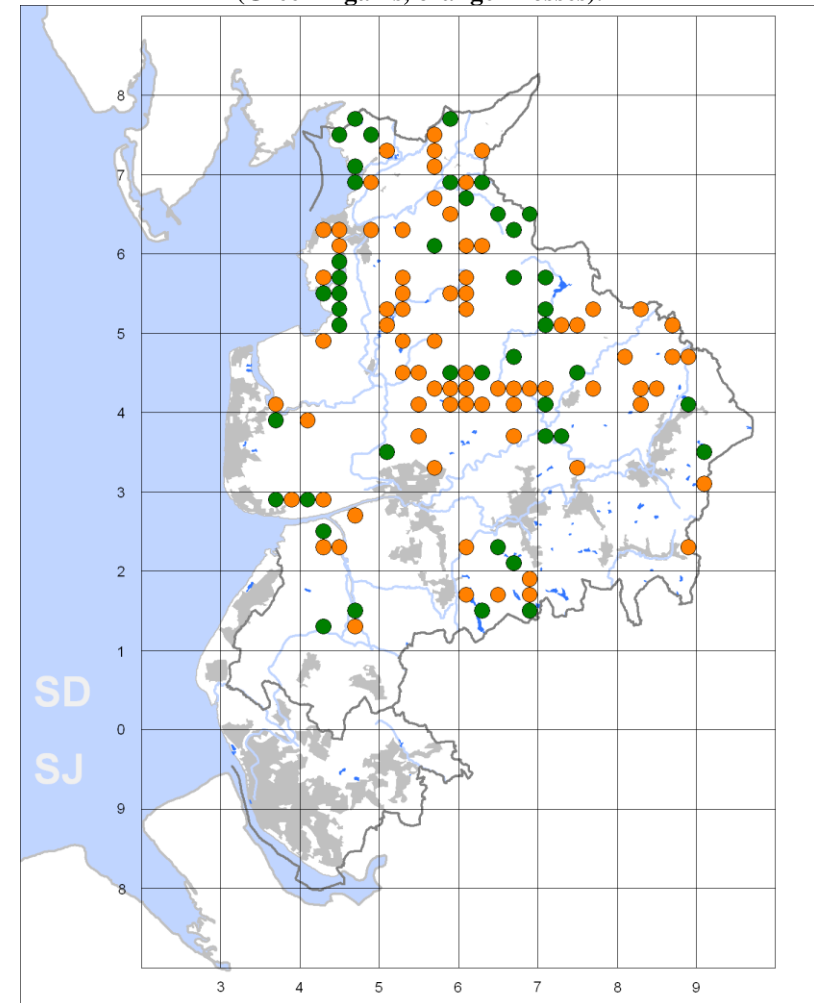
Redshanks were recorded as probably or proven breeding during 2008-2011 in 126 tetrads, indicating a 22% decline in breeding range since 1997-2000 (Fig.1). This is in close accordance with the 39% decline in the UK population that occurred between 1995 and 2010.

Figure 1. Redshank: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).



Redshanks breed in damp grassland in both fresh and saltwater habitats and in both lowland and upland areas. This produces a fairly well dispersed distribution within the county but with concentrations on the Ribble and Lune Estuaries, the Carnforth saltmarshes, the Lune Valley, the West Pennine Moors and in Bowland, and smaller populations in the South Pennines and the upper Ribble Valley. With the exception of five tetrads in and around Martin Mere they were absent from West Lancashire and the Fylde.

Figure 2. Redshank: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011.
(Green = gains, orange = losses).



The Forest of Bowland has always been a very important breeding area where, as in other upland areas, breeding takes place on in-bye fields. There is a suspicion that the survey effort there was not as comprehensive during 2008-2011 as it had been in 1997-2000 but it is nevertheless worrying that the majority of apparently-abandoned tetrads were in Bowland, especially in the south (Fig.2). Newly-occupied tetrads were spread more widely but with small clusters both north and south of Lancaster.

Few Redshanks now breed in the wider countryside outside of in-bye areas, many of which are managed under Stewardship schemes for breeding waders, and they are increasingly dependent on nature reserves and other designated sites. Peak breeding totals during 2008-2011 included 18 pairs at Martin Mere, 62 on the Eric Morecambe complex, 57 on Marshside and Crossens Inner marshes, 50 on Marshside and Crossens saltmarshes, 54 on the Lune Estuary 47 on Hesketh Out Marsh and perhaps as many as 100 on Banks Marsh.

The population was estimated at 750 pairs, 3% of the British total.

Winter

The winter distribution of Redshank is very different to that of summer with more than 90% of the 229 occupied tetrads in the western half of the county, predominantly on the coast (Fig.3).

There were few inland records, mostly on the Lune and Ribble and some wetland sites in the Fylde and West Lancashire. Redshanks return to breeding grounds as early as mid-February and this probably produced an exaggerated picture of the winter distribution. The upland breeding areas of Bowland and the West Pennine Moors are largely abandoned in winter.

Tetrads on the Lune Estuary and Seaforth (where birds that feed on North Wirral Shore roost) held the largest numbers, followed fairly closely by the Ribble Estuary and the north Fylde coast, with the Lancashire sections of the Mersey Estuary very much in third place (Fig.4).

The average peak WeBS count during the atlas period on the three main estuaries, Morecambe Bay and the Ribble and Alt, was 10700, almost 9% of the British population. Peak counts were 8784 in Morecambe Bay, 3289 on the Ribble and 1450 on the Alt.

GH

Figure 3. Redshank: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.

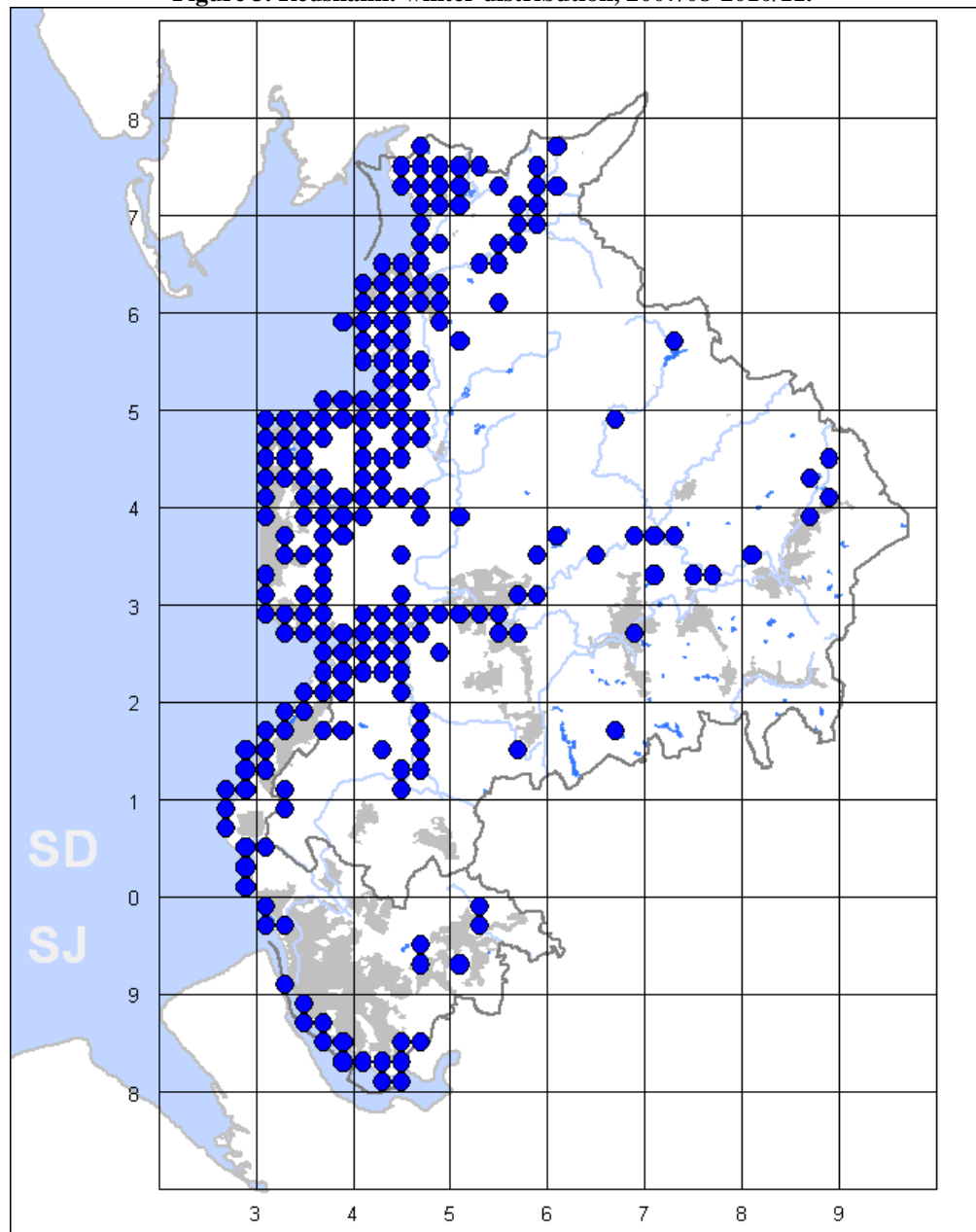
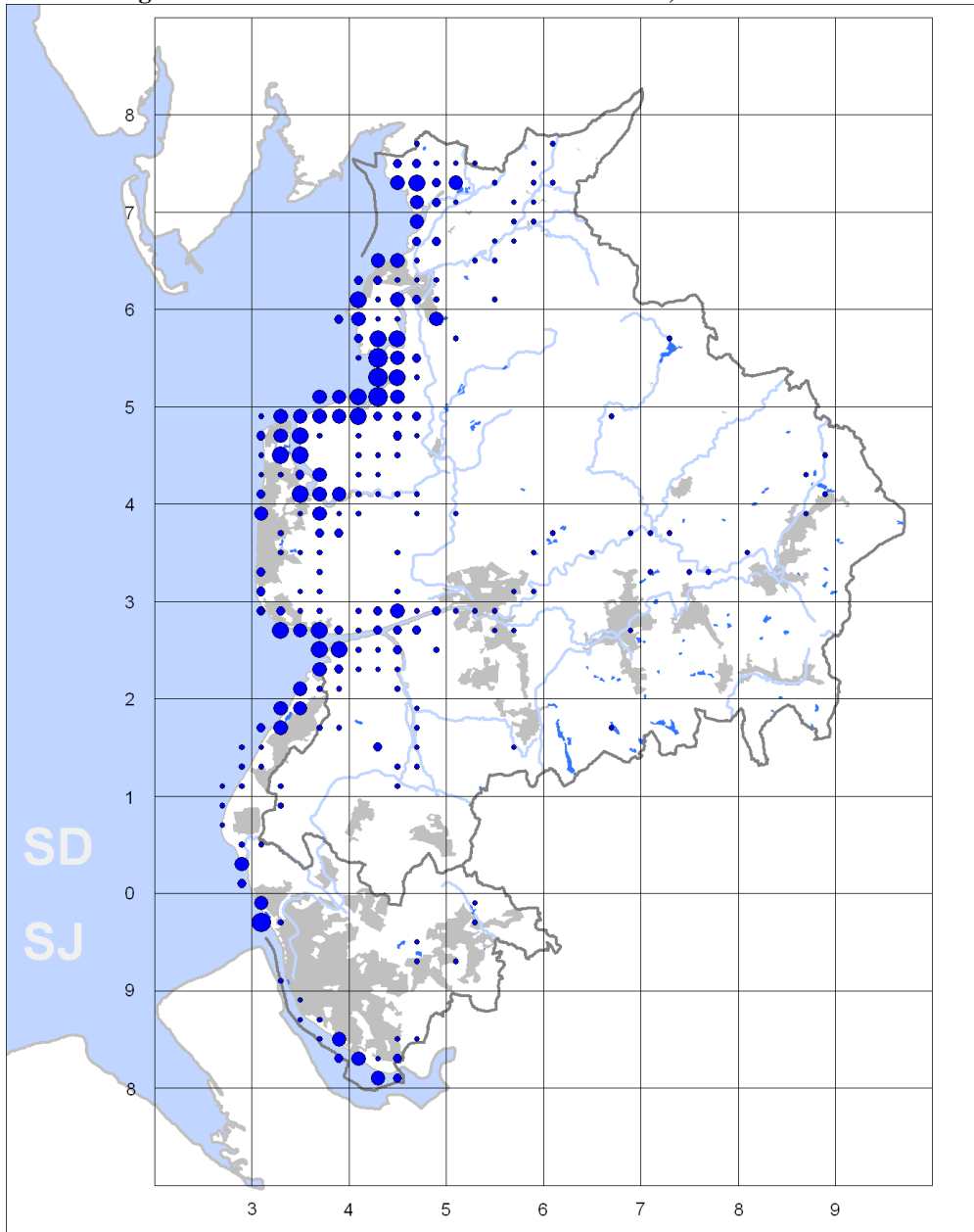


Figure 4. Redshank: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.

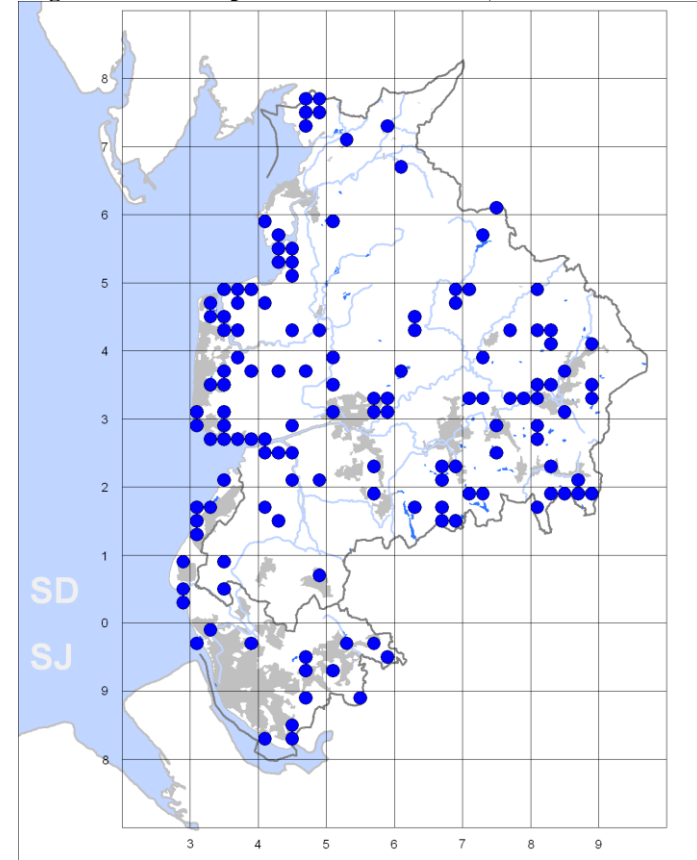


Dot size in descending order: 1200-2030; 500-1199; 150-499; 25-149; 1-24

JACK SNIFE *Lymnocyptes minimus*

Jack Snipe are amongst our most widely distributed waders in winter and were found in small numbers on coastal and inland wetlands throughout the county – in 133 tetrads or 14% of the county total (Fig.1).

Figure 1. Jack Snipe: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



However, this is an extremely difficult species to monitor and it is very likely that the mapped distribution represents a significant underestimate. This is particularly the case away from well-watched coastal sites and nature reserves, which may account at least in part for the apparent gaps in distribution in central, east and north Lancashire. Very few Jack Snipe were recorded on timed visits with 122 out of the total of 133 registrations relying on additional roving records. For this species, probably more than any other,

the distribution map may be as much a map of observer effort as of the actual distribution of birds.

Although a majority of records were in the west of the county, particularly on the coastal marshes of the Ribble, Wyre and Lune and around Leighton Moss, clusters were also recorded in the West Pennine Moors, Rossendale and Burnley areas.

Most records were of one or two birds with just 18 counts of four or more, the largest of which were 15 at Cabin Hill, eight at Buckshaw Village, seven on Birkdale Green Beach and at Lytham St. Anne's Nature Reserve, and six at Fairhaven, Brockholes, Alston Wetland, Cranberry Moss and Sutton Moss (St. Helens).

SJW

LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER *Limnodromus scolopaceus*

One of two juveniles that had been first seen on the south Ribble Marshes in September 2009 overwintered and was last seen at Marshside on 1 May 2010.

SJW

WOODCOCK *Scolopax rusticola*

Breeding

This mysterious woodland wader would go largely unrecorded were it not for the males' crepuscular roding display flight; this is the standard way to assess territories and nearly all breeding records for the atlas related to display.

However, the breeding population is certainly in excess of the number of roding males as males can mate with successive females which can lead to an underestimate of the number of breeding females. Needless to say, territories will have been missed in tetrads not fully covered by dusk visits but this was also the case during the last survey.

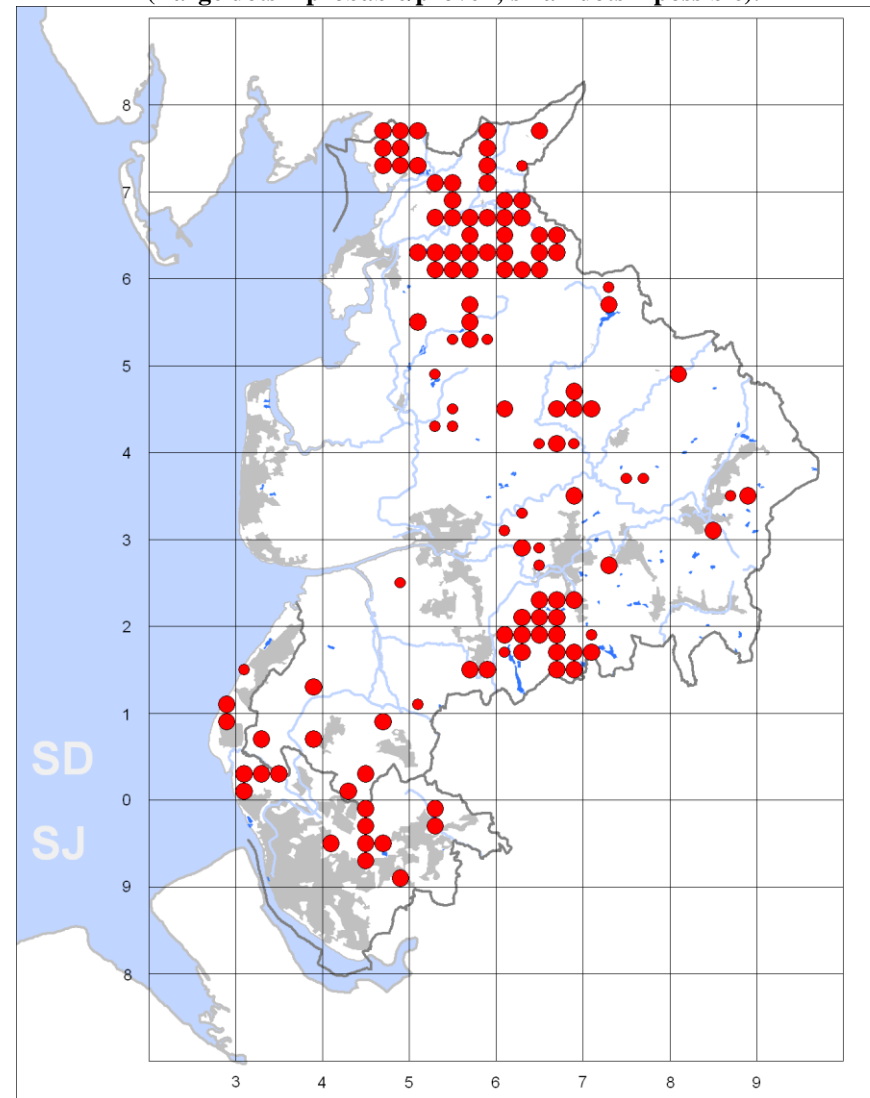
Birds were located in 120 tetrads, covering 13% of the county total and indicating an almost 20% decline in range since 1997-2000 (Fig.1).

There were clear concentrations in the Silverdale area, the Lune Valley, northern Bowland, the West Pennine Moors and the wooded estates of Knowsley, Little Crosby, Ince Blundell and Croxteth near Liverpool.

Elsewhere, the scattering of breeding records also showed an association with large estate woodlands such as those around Abbeystead,

Browsholme Hall, Scarisbrick Hall and Towneley Hall. Absence from others such as Bleasdale, Huntroyde, the Douglas Valley, and particularly the Hodder Valley around Whitewell, was surprising, but might relate to lack of dusk visits by observers.

Figure 1. Woodcock: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).

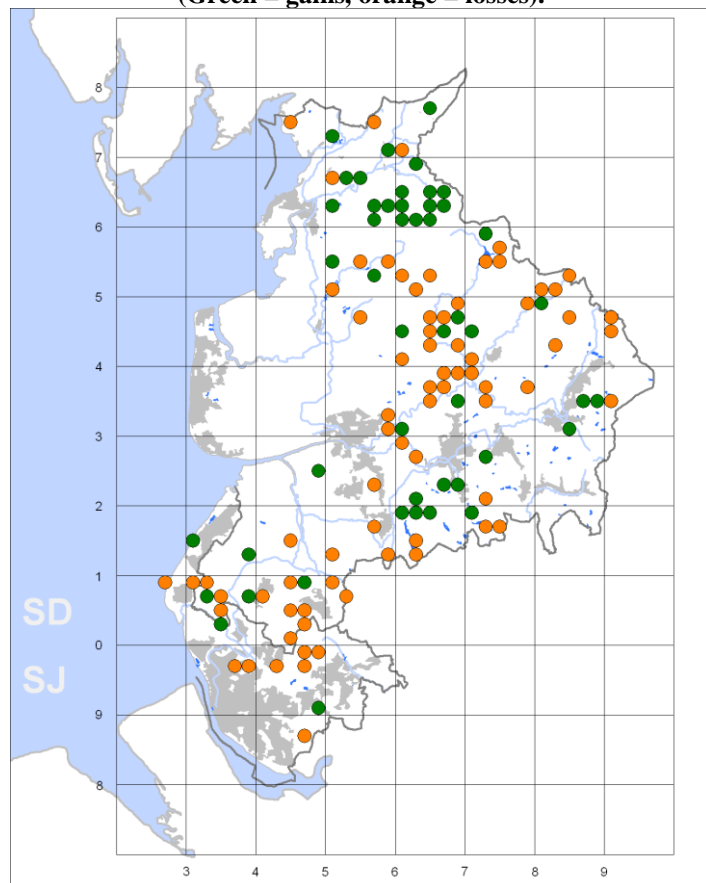


Breeding concentrations included 16 roding males in the Silverdale area in 2009, ten in Knowsley Park in 2010 and eight in the Belmont area in 2009.

The breeding range has contracted by 20% since 1997-2000 with notable apparent losses in the Ribble Valley, south Bowland and the south-west moorlands (Fig.2).

The national population was estimated at 81000 males in 2003, following the first specific survey of this species. Our atlas survey was not so systematic and judging the size of the population is fraught with difficulty but it is thought to number approximately 200 males, a reduction from the 1997-2000 estimate of 300.

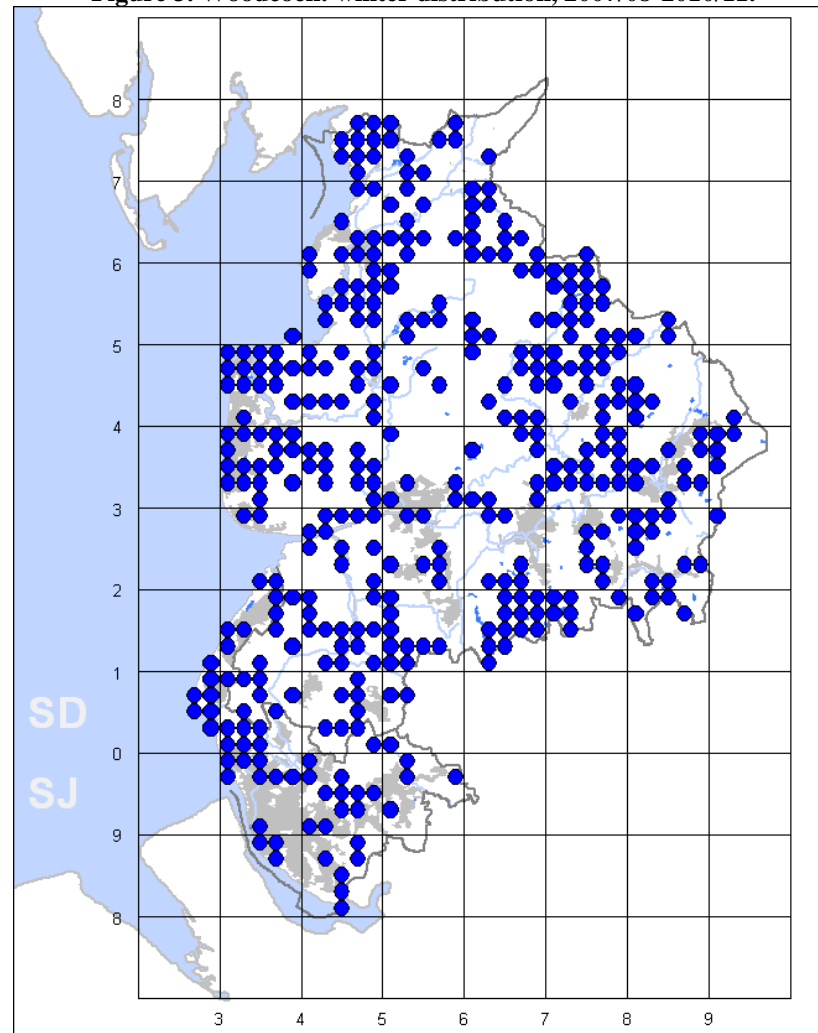
Figure 2. Woodcock: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011.
(Green = gains, orange = losses).



Winter

Woodcock were recorded in 391 tetrads, more than three times the summer range and covering some 41% of the county total (Fig.3).

Figure 3. Woodcock: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



Most records were in single figures and, in contrast to the breeding distribution, came from across the county including the Fylde, urban areas and the lowlands that generally lack breeding Woodcock. Wintering, and particularly migrating, birds can be encountered almost anywhere, from

woodland both large and small, moorland, rough fields, hedgerows and even in urban parks and gardens. Some of the highest tetrad counts were of 13 near Myerscough, 16 near Abbeystead, 64 in two tetrads at Belmont and 90 in Knowsley Park.

Most wintering birds, largely from Scandinavia, Russia and the Baltic states, arrive in November. Significant numbers of immigrants swell the largely sedentary breeding population as considerable numbers either remain to winter in Lancashire or pass through as further hard weather continues to push birds west.

Woodcock are a highly prized quarry species and reports of birds flushed by beaters during Pheasant shoots include up to 50 regularly in Knowsley Park during the 2007/08 and 2008/09 winters and 83 at Belmont in January 2008 – numbers which hint at the size of Lancashire’s wintering Woodcock population that would otherwise go largely undetected.

It is very difficult to assess the size of the wintering population as birds constantly pass through the county in response to weather conditions both at home and abroad. However, it is thought typically to vary between 5000 and 10000; this represents roughly 0.5% of the national population.

SJM

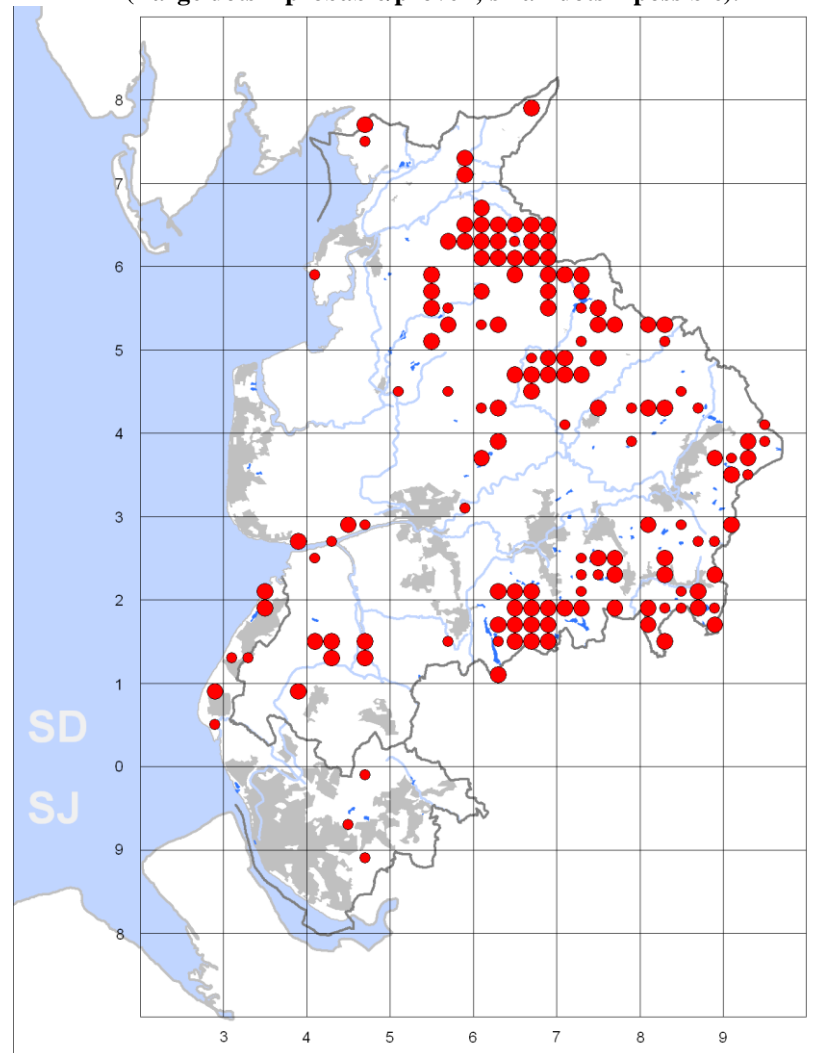
SNIPE *Gallinago gallinago*

Breeding

The breeding population of Snipe in the Lancashire lowlands underwent a severe decline in the last decades of the twentieth century, in line with a fall of 61% in the national population between 1982 and 2002. The national population increased by 23% during 1995-2010 however, but this recovery has not been reflected in survey data from Lancashire.

The species was described as an abundant nester throughout the county in the early 1950s, and the 1968-72 Atlas found breeding Snipe in 40 widespread 10km squares. This had contracted to 33 squares in the 1988-91 New Atlas, with significant losses in the lowland west, particularly in the Fylde, a breeding stronghold of the species as recently as the 1950s.

Figure 1. Snipe: breeding distribution, 2008-2011.
(Large dots = probable/proven; small dots = possible).

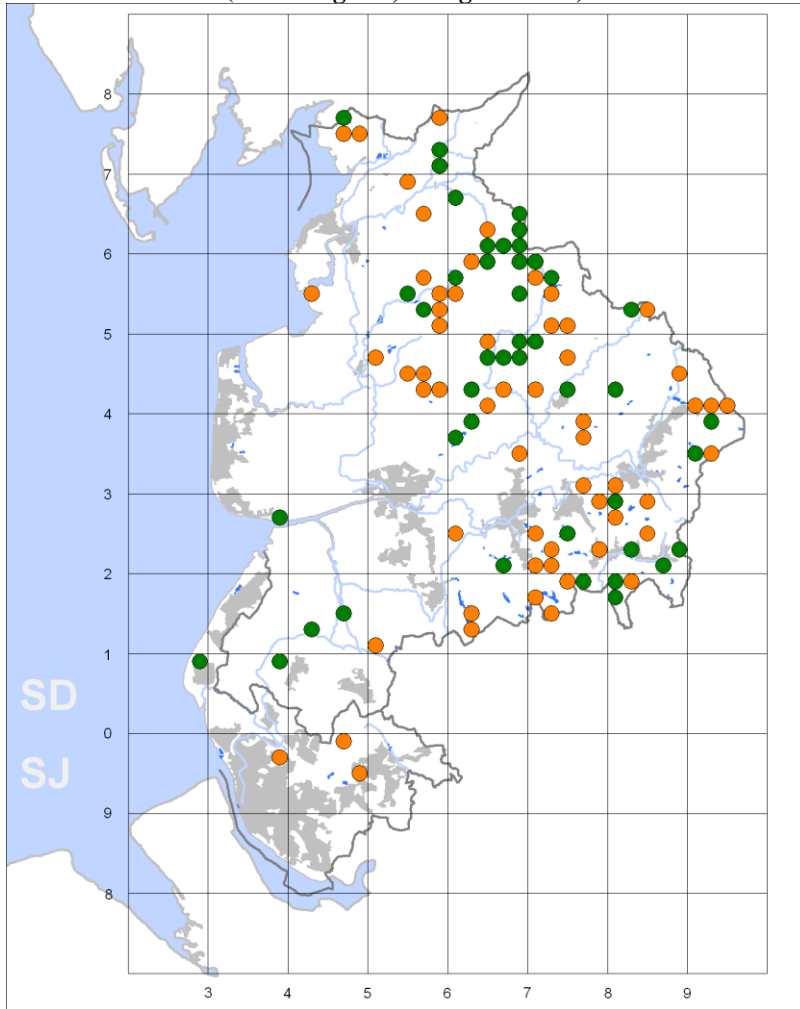


The contraction in the Snipe’s Lancashire breeding range has continued into the present survey period, albeit at a slower rate; proven or probable breeding was found in 100 tetrads, a range decline of 12.3% (Fig.1). Just eleven of these were in the western lowlands and the species has been lost completely in the Fylde. The population remains heavily concentrated on the rushy fields and wet moorlands of Bowland and the West Pennine Moors.

Both newly-occupied and apparently-abandoned tetrads were scattered throughout the current breeding range but with losses proportionately a little higher in the Rossendale and Burnley areas (Fig.2).

Breeding Snipe are notoriously difficult to monitor unless specifically targeted and it is possible, perhaps probable, that the assessment above understates their breeding distribution; similarly the population estimate of 375 pairs may be something of an underestimate.

Figure 2. Snipe: changes in breeding distribution, 1997-2000 to 2008-2011.
(Green = gains, orange = losses).

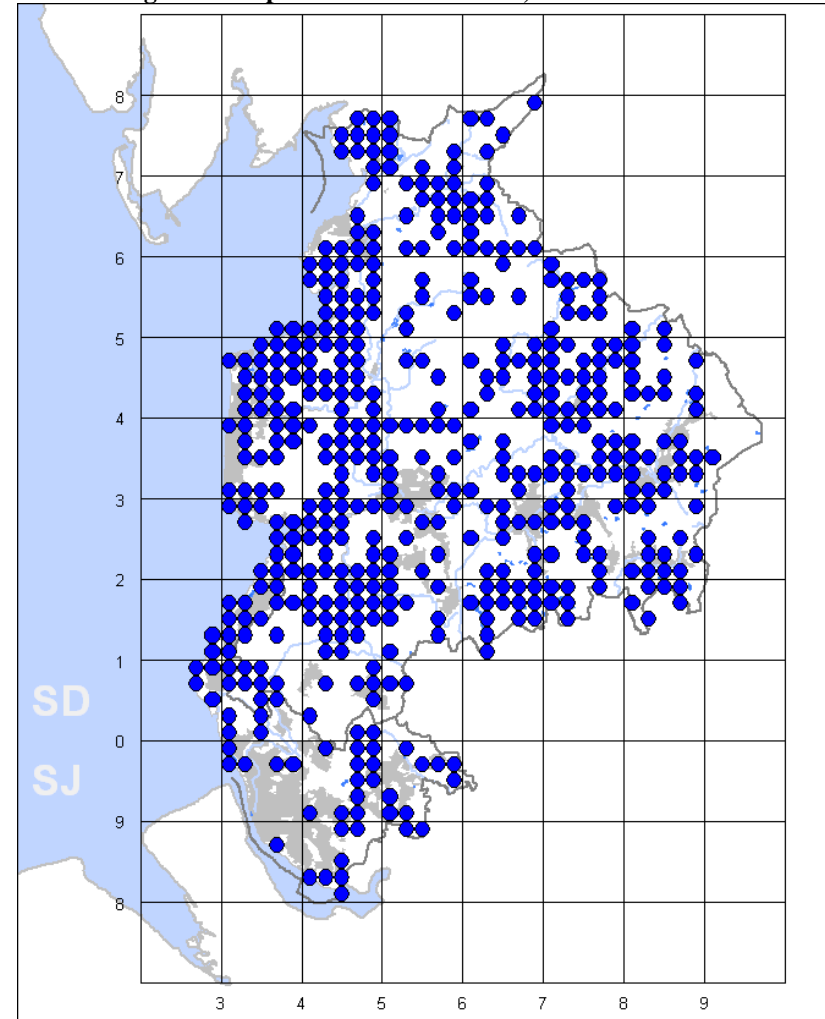


Winter

Although counts of Snipe on passage and in winter have generally decreased since the 1980s, Lancashire remains a significant wintering area for the species, with substantial immigration by birds from northern and eastern Europe.

Winter distribution is very different to that of summer. Snipe were found in 477 tetrads, 50.5% of the county total, during 2007/08-2010/11 (Fig.3).

Figure 3. Snipe: winter distribution, 2007/08-2010/11.



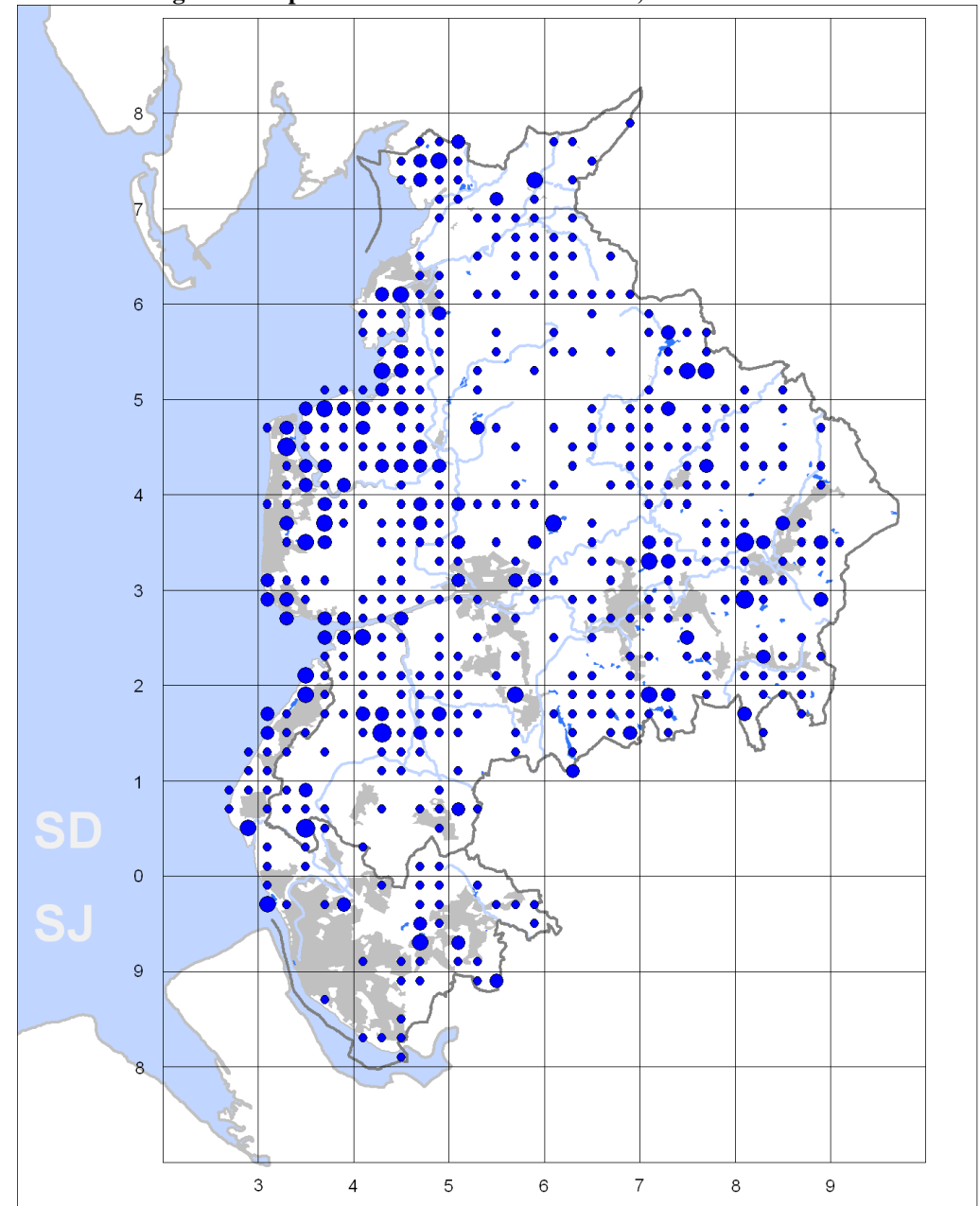
Although most of these were in the lowlands, especially in central and north Fylde, around the Lune Estuary and on the south-west coast and mosslands, they remained very widespread in the eastern half of the county.

The highest densities were found throughout the county, again with a slight bias towards western coastal and inland marshes (Fig.4). Counts of 50 or more were returned from 23 tetrads during the survey period, with four of 100 or more: at Marton Mere, Martin Mere, Hameldon Hill and the highest 160 at Grove Lane Marsh, Padiham.

The population was estimated at 8500, a little less than 1% of the national total.

BM

Figure 4. Snipe: relative abundance in winter, 2007/08-2010/11.



Dot size in descending order: 100-200; 50-99; 15-49; 1-14