The system of waterfowl counting in the United Kingdom: collecting key information for the conservation of waterfowl species

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Effective conservation requires targeted action based on high quality data. The British experience in protecting waterfowl habitats is outlined. There is a long history of collaborative monitoring of waterfowl in the UK (Cranswick et al. 1997b; Mitchell et al. 1997; Rees & Bowler 1997). A network of volunteer ornithologists undertake monthly counts on wetlands throughout the United Kingdom. This data is collated by the Wetland Bird Survey (WeBS) a partnership of the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), (Waters et al. 1996a). Summary results are published annually (e.g. Cranswick et al. 1995; Waters et al. 1996b; Cranswick et al. 1997a) whilst detailed information is used to protect key sites under national legislation (as Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and where appropriate, under international treaties (as Ramsar sites or as EEC Special Protection Areas). Data on population levels and trends (Prys-Jones et al. 1994; Kirby 1995; Kirby et al. 1995; Cayford & Waters 1996) are used to advise the UK government on any necessary changes in protected status, as well as to fulfill UK international obligations and to contribute to international databases. The co-ordination of the scheme is undertaken by BTO and WWT on behalf of the other WeBS partners.

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Further Reading