

# EURASIAN WIGEON *Anas penelope* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

## DESCRIPTION

The male wigeon has a red head with a yellow orange crown stripe and predominantly grey body with a pink breast whilst the female is rufous brown on the head, breast and flanks. This species is almost entirely herbivorous, either grazing on vegetation just under the surface of the water or on land where the stems and leaves of a variety of plants are taken. Wigeon prefer to breed in areas of open shallow fresh water with submergent or floating vegetation and nest on the ground in areas of thick cover usually within 250m of open water. The average clutch size is usually 8-9 eggs.

## LOCAL BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANCE

Wigeon were first recorded breeding in the Yorkshire Dales National Park in 1955. Since that date there have been annual breeding attempts. There were an estimated 20 breeding pairs in the National Park in 1992 but as many as 30 pairs may have nested in some years. The national breeding population is estimated at 300-500 pairs, with the National Park population constituting around 6% of this total. Sites with more than 1% of the UK breeding population are classed as being of national importance. Wigeon are considered to be a local priority species because evidence suggests that the number of breeding pairs and breeding success have declined considerably in recent years.

## NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY IMPORTANCE

The wigeon is currently on the Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern in the UK due to the nationally important number of birds that winter in the UK and because over 50% of the UK non-breeding population occur at 10 or fewer sites.

## CURRENT ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & THREATS

At the key breeding site in the National Park, the number of breeding wigeon has been monitored by members of the Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group for a number of years. The number of breeding pairs has been fairly constant at around 10-11 pairs. There are concerns that there has been a decline in recent years with the number of successfully fledged young being very low. Although the exact reasons for this are not clear it may be related to unintentional disturbance as a result of increased recreational activity. A survey carried out in 1990 suggested that walkers using the footpath around the reservoir edge, especially those with dogs that were not on a leads were causing disturbance to breeding wigeon and teal. There needs to be a review of previous studies of the effects of disturbance and an assessment of the current recreational use at this site in order to determine the cause of the poor breeding success. A management plan should then be produced and positive conservation measures developed to increase the breeding success of wigeon.

There has never been a complete systematic survey of breeding wigeon in the National Park. In order for the true status of breeding wigeon to be determined, a systematic survey of all known and possible sites needs to be carried out. Any potential threats at these breeding sites will also need to be identified.

## AIMS OF THE SPECIES ACTION PLAN

- To maintain the current population of breeding wigeon in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.
- To increase the breeding success of wigeon at the key breeding site.

## OBJECTIVES

To achieve these aims we need to:

- Survey the current and historical breeding sites to determine the current population status of wigeon in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and identify any threats to breeding areas by 2004.
- Determine the reasons for the poor breeding success of wigeon at the key site in the Yorkshire Dales National Park by the end of 2003.
- Implement management prescriptions to increase breeding success at the key breeding site by 2005.

## ACTIONS & TARGETS

To achieve these objectives the following actions should be carried out and the targets achieved within the time-scale given:

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>3 year cost £</b>
Determine the current distribution and status of breeding wigeon in the Yorkshire Dales National Park.	2004	1,000
Review existing data to determine the causes for the decline in breeding success of wigeon at the main breeding site. If necessary undertake further research to determine the cause.	2003	1,000
Depending on the outcome of the above, identify positive conservation actions that can be implemented in order to maintain the current breeding population of wigeon (10-11 pairs) and to increase the breeding success at the main breeding site.	2005	5,000
Identify any threats at other breeding wigeon sites and determine appropriate conservation actions.	2004	Officer Time

**WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTION PLAN?**

<b>Lead Agency</b>	<b>Key Partners</b>
Yorkshire Dales Upland Bird Study Group	Yorkshire Water Landowners and managers Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority Royal Society for the Protection of Birds English Nature Moorland Association Moorland Gamekeepers Association