



Pintail

Anas acuta

Status

Amber listed: BR, WI, WL, SPEC 3 (V)
Schedule 1/II of WCA 1981
Annex II/1 of EC Wild Birds Directive

National monitoring

Rare Breeding Birds Panel.
WeBS.

Population and distribution

Pintails were first recorded breeding in Inverness-shire in 1869. They are an occasional breeding bird with a scattered distribution in the UK (88–91 *Atlas*). A high proportion of wintering pintails are found at a few important sites including the Dee estuary, the Mersey estuary, the Wash and Morcambe Bay (WeBS 1992–93). The wintering population both in the UK and in north-west Europe increased between the 1960s and the 1980s. Several factors contributed to the population increase, such as the development of man-made habitats, for example gravel pits and reservoirs, a series of relatively mild winters, increasing water eutrophication, increasing numbers of refuges and the shortening of the hunting season in some other countries (Kirby et al 1995). There are currently estimated to be 8–42 pairs of pintails breeding and 28,100 individuals wintering in the UK (*Population Estimates*).

Ecology

Pintails breed close to water, which can be shallow lowland lakes and marshes or upland lochs and moorland pools. A clutch of 7–9 eggs is laid between mid-April and late June. There is a single brood and the young fledge by early August. In winter, pintails occur mainly on estuaries, where their most important food is the mollusc *Hydrobia*, but they are also found on inland floodplains.

Breeding season survey

See *Dabbling and diving ducks* in the generic survey methods section.

Winter survey

See the generic methods section on WeBS counts.

References

Kirby, J S, Salmon, D G, Atkinson-Willes, G L and Cranswick, PA (1995) Index numbers for waterbird populations. III. Long-term trends in the abundance of wintering wildfowl in Great Britain, 1966/67–1991/92. *J. Applied Ecology* 32: 536–551.