

Counter Hill – ground nesting birds

In the spring and early summer, listen out for the sound of curlews and lapwing in the sky and look for them landing to forage in these fields.

Spending the winter on coastal estuaries and water bodies, curlews come to the uplands to breed on moors, rough pastures, unimproved hay meadows and bogs, arriving in February/ March to select their nest sites, and nesting and rearing their young between April and July.

They like to choose rough ground and tussocky vegetation, so the unimproved reedy pasture on Counter Hill to the right of this path rising up to Draughton Moor beyond with its heather and tussocky grass suits them. It also provides good nesting sites for Lapwing.



During the breeding season adult **Curlews** feed on earthworms, leatherjackets, beetles, spiders and caterpillars, using their long slender bills to extract them from the ground. Curlew chicks feed on surface insects and spiders.

The UK's breeding population of curlews is of international importance, estimated to represent more than 30 per cent of the west European population. Sadly though, the UK population has declined by some 40% between 1995 and 2008, so we need to do all we can to protect their nesting sites on the Yorkshire moors together with their food sources.

Lapwings are a farmland bird which have suffered significant declines recently and is now a 'Red List' species. Known also as the 'Peewit' in imitation of the calls it makes, its proper name describes its 'wavering' flight. The bird's black and white appearance and round-winged shape in the air make it distinctive, even without being able to see its splendid crest, visible when it is on the ground. Lapwings feed on worms and insects. The permanent unimproved rough pasture going up to Counter Hill suit them well as a place to nest.

