Supporting guidance for Creation of Wader Scrapes

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For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page .

Introduction

Wader scrapes are shallow depressions that are constructed in fields to benefit wading birds. They are designed so that they hold water for only part of the year.

They can be very important feeding sites for the chicks and adults of farmland waders such as lapwing and redshank as their gently-sloping edges support large numbers of invertebrates.

Lapwing – Credit: Andy Hay – © RSPB images

What needs to be done?

Aim to create scrapes where there are known to be breeding wading birds.

Excavate a minimum area of 20 square metres per scrape, measured from the lip of the excavated area, not the area holding water at any particular time. The more you can create the better.

Shallow water and muddy edges provide the best feeding opportunities for birds. Aim to vary the depth across the scrape with a maximum depth of 45 centimetres.

Create gently sloping edges to increase the area of muddy edge that will be exposed as the spring progresses and the water level drops.

Linear or irregular shapes are best as these provide more edge compared with a round feature of the same area.

Excavated spoil may be spread thinly over the surrounding field, unless a bund is required to retain the water. It is important that any such bund is only very slightly higher than the surrounding land.

In order to be effective as feeding areas for waders, leave scrapes unfenced - some grazing of vegetation at the edge of the scrape, and some limited poaching, will keep scrapes more accessible for adults and chicks.

Wader scrape – Credit: RSPB

Maintenance

Scrapes tend to re-vegetate and in-fill over a period of years. Cattle may also be used at some sites to keep the scrapes open; at others, there may be no alternative to re-excavation. Where scrapes are directly linked to sluices, the rate of in-fill may be managed – at least in part – by controlling water levels.

To keep the edges of scrapes open, with no build-up of rushes or rank grassland you may occasionally need to mow the edges.

Where should I locate a scrape?

Create scrapes in fields that are managed under options for breeding waders. This means the fields will already have been identified as good for breeding waders, away from forest edges.

In fields managed under the Wader grazed grassland and Wetland management options, you can claim the management payment over the whole area, including those areas where scrapes have been created.

In fields managed under the Wader and wildlife mown grassland option, you cannot claim the management payment over the same area as the created wader scrape, as this option is only available on mowable grassland.

Consider soil type and the presence of existing wet areas and drains. Water levels in scrapes may go down as spring progresses, and they may dry out completely by late summer. To be effective they need to hold water from 1 March to 31 May or into late June if possible.

We recommend you place scrapes in existing areas where the water table is likely to be near the surface.

Avoid creating scrapes on very free draining soils or areas with a low water table as they are unlikely to retain water.

Consider areas to avoid, such as sites that are already valuable wildlife habitats, or archaeological features. Avoid, for example, digging up an area of species-rich grassland or wetland to create a scrape.

Do not place scrapes close to existing watercourses or drains. If in doubt, consult the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). Otherwise, for clarity, a consent from SEPA is not required for the creation of wader scrapes.

You are only permitted to create wader scrapes within existing wetland, where that is the preferred site, if you meet the following criteria:

- the site chosen is species-poor wetland, and you provide information and photographs stating that an appropriate location has been chosen that will not damage sensitive habitats
- your Agri-Environment Climate Scheme application is targeting waders and therefore, you are also undertaking wader management options

Further information

- Scrape Creation for Waders (RSPB)
- Scrape Creation for Wildlife (RSPB)
- Grazing Land Management (Working for Waders)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Whole page	General text tidying up
Where should I locate the scrape?	Text added referring to how to claim with what management options.

Previous versions

Previous versions of this page

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