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Redshank



R. Wilmshurst (rspb-images.com)

The redshank has a red bill and red legs, and shows white on its wings and tail in flight. It is often seen perched on fence posts during the breeding season.

CALENDAR

Breeding season:

Early April to end of June.

Nest:

On the ground within a small tussock or hollow of grasses or sedges.

Winter:

Redshanks migrate to coastal areas after the breeding season.

HABITAT

The redshank breeds on wet grasslands on upland and lowland farms, and on saltmarshes. In Northern Ireland, most breed on the wet grasslands of Lough Erne and Lough Neagh. They winter in coastal areas, particularly mudflats and rocky shores.

DIET

Adults on the breeding grounds feed on earthworms, beetles, spiders and aquatic insects. Chicks feed mainly on midges and flies found at the edges of ponds and ditches. In winter, they also feed on molluscs, shrimps and small crabs.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE REDSHANKS?

- Retain areas of damp or wet grassland. Create wet areas by blocking drains and small ditches in suitable areas. Damp soil provides feeding opportunities, and shallow open water found in scrapes or ditches is particularly important for feeding.
- Create a mosaic of vegetation heights around open water, to encourage breeding. Tussocky sedges and grasses provide valuable nesting sites.
- Use appropriate levels of grazing to maintain short grassland for feeding, with tussocky sedges, rushes or grasses for nesting. Cattle are better able to cope with the wet ground conditions and are more likely to create a variable sward than sheep.
- Low stock rates in fields used by breeding redshanks are beneficial in April and May to minimise nest trampling.
- Retain unimproved pasture.
- Try not to allow pastures to become overgrown with rushes. Redshanks benefit from small, scattered stands of rush, but levels above 30% cover are detrimental both to bird numbers and productive grazing.

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



The RSPB,
Northern Ireland HQ,
Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 7QT.
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Redshank distribution

Data provided by *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1988–1991*. British Trust for Ornithology, Scottish Ornithologists' Club and Irish Wildbird Conservancy (now known as Birdwatch Ireland).



Filled dot = breeding

Open dot = present during the breeding season