



Habitat Guide - Breeding Waders of Wet Meadows 2021

Please see the Habitat Recording Form and Survey Instructions for details of habits categories/types.

The following photographs provide examples to illustrate the different habitat types you may encounter on your survey.

Grassland type:

- **Improved** - typically a uniform height sward and green in colour.
- **Semi-improved** - green in colour, often with areas of tussocks/rushes.
- **Unimproved** - Often species rich, lots of wildflowers, not ploughed/cropped but grazed managed.

Grassland examples:

- **Hay Meadow (unimproved)** - Tall uneven (or mown) sward with many wildflowers, light green in colour.
- **Silage (improved)** - Tall uniform thick (or mown) sward, with few, if any, wildflowers, dark green in colour.
- **Grass Ley (Improved)** - Typically grass or a mixture of grass and herb seed (such as clover) sown in the spring to fertilise the soil prior to a cropping, and grazed with livestock.



Improved (foreground)



Semi-improved (foreground)



Unimproved Rough grass



Grass Ley



Unimproved Hay Meadow



Silage (just mown)

Sward/vegetation structure (grass only – excluding rushes):

- **Uniform** - over 75% of the field is either 'Tall' vegetation or 'Short' vegetation
- **Tussocky** - (of grass or rushes)
- **Fine, Patchy** – less than 75% of the field is either Short (15cm), with many inter-dispersed small patches (smaller than 2m by 2m) of Tall or Short vegetation (fine, tussocky structure).
- **Coarse, Patchy** – less than 75% of the field is either Short (15cm), with most patches of Tall or Short vegetation being larger than 2m x 2m (coarse, patchy structure).



Uniform



Patchy





Fine, Patchy







Coarse, patchy

Rush or Juncus – tall spikey plant often found in damp habitats

	
Rush/Juncus	Rush/Juncus in semi-improved grassland

Crop types:

- Cereal - Winter/spring cereal - uniform in height/colour, typically bluish green, planted rows.
- Root / Other - including Maize, fodder crops, ploughed or emerging crop/re-seeded

	
Young Cereal crop	Other - Grass ley (recently planted)
	
Root crop	Other - Cereal stubble

Other Habitats:

- **Bog** - Very wet grassland (or mixed semi-aquatic vegetation), difficult to walk through without sinking.
- **Wetland scrapes** - Often on nature reserves or former gravel pit sites. Narrow ‘spits’ of land or small exposed islands within inland water bodies, with shallow margins and low vegetation or bare ground.
- **Examples of unsuitable habitat** – includes scrub, woodland, urban/recreational and other land uses.



Wetland scrapes

Bog

Guide to Lapwing Plots

Lapwing Plots are fallow areas of land in agricultural/cropped areas that have been left uncultivated to encourage breeding Lapwing. They are usually sited in large open arable fields away from woodlands, tall hedges and overhead wires, and often away from public Rights-of-Way to avoid disturbance. They are a minimum of two hectares in size (although some can be larger or whole fields) and can be located within a crop, or within 'set-aside' vegetation. They are required to be left fallow from mid-March to mid-July. The Plots may look different as the breeding season progresses and bare soil is likely to be weeded over by summer.

Due to rotational cropping, they are often located in different fields from year-to-year, so it is imperative you establish where they are currently located prior to the surveys. The landowner/farmer should be able to tell you where they are currently located when you initially ask for access permission. We can help you identify the relevant landowner who to contact by emailing: breedingwaderswm2@bto.org

	
Lapwing Plot bare soil (late winter)	Lapwing Plot sited in an oil seed rape crop (spring)
	
Lapwing Plot sited in a Barley field (summer)	Lapwing Plot weed growth (summer)