

## JACK SNIFE RINGING REPORT WINTERS 20/21 AND 21/22



This report covers these two winters and summarises the counts and catches of Jack Snipe at SWT Cathkin Marsh, East Kilbride and Windlaw Marsh, Glasgow.

The methods employed followed those of all previous years, where we walked around these sites dragging the net and once over suitable habitat the net was dropped and checked for roosting snipes.

We also had the opportunity to use mist nets on one occasion at Cathkin, 08.11.2020 when we put nets up the night before and opened them before dawn on the 8<sup>th</sup>. A good catch of 8 new Jack Snipe and 6 Common Snipe but it meant we didn't get a site count for the Jacks that morning.

SITE				
	DATE	COUNT	RINGED	RE-TRAPPED
Cathkin Marsh	18.10.2020	61	26	2
	08.11.2020	-	8	0
	13.12.2020	26	8	0
	20.12.2020	27	7	2
Windlaw Marsh	24.10.2020	5	3	0
Cathkin Marsh	24.10.2021	5	1	0
	07.11.2021	1	1	0
	19.12.2021	1	1	0
	27.02.2022	7	3	1
Windlaw Marsh	07.11.2021	7	2	0
	20.11.2021	7	5	0
	19.12.2021	1	1	0

Due to the lockdown caused by Covid-19 we were not able to visit the sites in the spring of 2021.

Due to limited numbers of available ringers and poor weather we managed far fewer visits than we normally do however we are able to show once again the effect grazing has on Cathkin. When grazed and equally importantly the ground is disturbed, far more Jack Snipe are attracted to and winter in, Cathkin Marsh. Winter 20/21 saw a UK mainland record count of 61 individual Jacks flushed on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2020 and good numbers remaining well into mid-winter.

Conversely without the grazing in 2021 the site was hardly used by Jack Snipe despite significant effort to create suitable areas but cutting back some of the vegetation. With the benefit of hindsight, we think the area cut was less suitable anyway and that the cut was too short.

**Windlaw Marsh**, which is never grazed held similar numbers of birds over the two winters. This site was also better in the past but management, in the past, to raise the water level has limited the habitat for Jack Snipe in the long term.

We were able to cut back some of the dense and taller vegetation ourselves, but this is not sustainable in the longer term.

### **Re-traps.**

Since this project started, February 1994, we have now ringed over 1,000 Jack Snipe.

Despite this significant total we have still never had one of birds recovered or recaptured by someone else! This is a staggering statistic given the species is legally shot over all of Europe and Russia. We have however caught a Dutch ringed bird early in the project.

The single (1:20) geolocator we retrieved, showed us that our wintering Jacks move East in the Spring spending time in The Low countries and Denmark before flying to Russia, West of the Urals, to breed. The return journey in the autumn is further north through Scandinavia and down into Scotland from the North-East and back to this area to winter again.

In addition to the counts we make, we also gain information on what these birds are doing by generating our own re-traps. An analysis of these 160 re-traps has shown that the majority of birds in the autumn are still on passage to wintering areas further West or South (probably), although we see turnover throughout the whole winter the birds that are present from late November until early February are more likely to be wintering in these two sites. Mid-February and March see a return passage but on a much smaller scale either due to a different return route in the Spring or simply due to overwinter mortality.

The five re-traps generated in the past two winters (all at Cathkin Marsh) are well down on an "average" winter, but we made far fewer visits and there were fewer birds in winter 21/22.

I will give these in full below, they fit in with the pattern summarised above.

**18.10.2020 (28/61)**

NW77675 ringed as an adult at Windlaw 21.10.2018.

NW77962 ringed as an adult Cathkin 24.11.2019.

These two birds show the between winter fidelity of our wintering birds which was the inspiration for the geolocator project.

**20.12.2020 (9/27)**

NW77936 ringed as a first winter at Cathkin on 18.10.2020 (62 days)

NW77995 ringed as a first winter bird at Cathkin 13.12.2020 (7 days)

A typical pattern in that some birds stay for a few days or longer while the majority of the birds have moved off the site.

**27.02.2022 (4/7)**

NW77937 ringed as an adult at Cathkin on 18.10.2020.

The following three images (of this individual) show the plumage characteristics of an adult bird, fresh dense good quality and rounded primary tips and tail feathers, as well as heavily spotted



under-tail coverts.



We are keen to continue this project at both these sites for as long as we can!

I'd like to thank all the CRG members and volunteers for making this study possible, esp. on the cold wet days, and for the Scottish Wildlife Trust and Glasgow Ranger Service for permissions to ring on their sites.

Iain Livingstone 20.08.2022.