



# Spotted crane

## *Porzana porzana*

### Status

Amber listed: BDM, BR  
SPEC 4 (S)  
Schedule 1 of WCA 1981  
Annex I of EC Wild Birds Directive

### National monitoring

Rare Breeding Birds Panel.  
WeBS.

### Population and distribution

Spotted cranes are rare breeding birds in the UK. They inhabit fens and larger wetlands and before the extensive drainage of wetlands in the 18th and 19th centuries, it is thought that they were much more common (88–91 *Atlas*). Between one and 20 pairs of spotted crane currently breed in Britain (*Population Estimates*).

### Ecology

The spotted crane breeds in swamps and fens with a high water table. The advertising call of the male is a loud, nasal, 'quek', likened to the sound of a whiplash or water dripping into an empty barrel. The call is usually heard at night, is given repetitively and can continue until after dawn. In calm weather, this call is sometimes audible up to 5 km away (*BWP*). Spotted cranes are monogamous and once a male has mated he will no longer call (N Schaffer pers comm). Eggs are laid mid-May to early August and the last young will fledge by mid-September (*Red Data Birds*).

## Breeding season survey – population

The following survey method will only give an indication of population size, rather than the actual number of breeding pairs.

#### Information required

- maximum number of birds heard calling on any one visit
- maximum number of different birds heard across all visits
- a map showing the boundary of the survey area and location of calling birds.

#### Number and timing of visits

Three visits, one in the first half of May, the second in the second half of May, and the third in the first half of June.

#### Time of day

From half an hour after sunset up to 0200.

#### Weather constraints

Avoid cold, wet and windy conditions.

**Sites/areas to visit**

*Carex* beds, *Juncus*/*Scirpus* marsh, *Glyceria* beds, wet grassland and occasionally reedbeds.

**Equipment**

- 1:25,000 OS map of the area to be visited
- Schedule 1 licence.

**Safety reminders**

Always inform someone where you are working and what time you expect to return. Take extra care when working close to water and, if any boat trips are necessary, make sure you wear life-jackets.

**Disturbance**

Use existing paths, banks or causeways (if on foot) or dykes (if travelling by boat) as much as possible.

**Methods**

Establish enough listening points for the listener to be within 500 m of any suitable habitat. Listen for five minutes at each point and record as accurately as possible the position of any calling bird on a map and the time at which it was heard. The far-carrying call may be heard from more than one listening post, so double-counting is a potential problem. If you are unsure of a crane's location, revisit some of your listening points.

Report the maximum number of birds heard calling on any one visit, and the maximum number of different birds heard across all visits. Calculate the latter by assuming that birds recorded 500 m or more apart on different nights are separate individuals.

