

Lapwing

Vanellus vanellus

Other names: Peewit, Green plover, Chewit, plus many other local names.



Description

The lapwing is a familiar and recognisable bird of farmlands and wetlands. Identifiable by its long upward-pointing head crest and black and white plumage, it can often look iridescent green and purple in bright sunlight. In flight, they are easily recognised by very broad, round wingtips.

Early in the breeding season, male birds perform dramatic aerobatic displays, flying over their territory slowly and then tumbling down through the air; wings making a humming or lapping sound. Their characteristic high-pitched call ('pee-wit') advertises their presence to potential mates.

From early spring, females can be seen on their nests which are often simple shallow scrapes in the mud or sand. In late spring, you may be lucky to spot their cute, fluffy chicks leaving their nests to find vegetation which is more suitable for finding prey.

Lapwings are very protective, and will mob intruders and predators that threaten their eggs or chicks by either flying at the intruder or by performing a distraction display to lead the intruder away from the nest.

Lapwings are known by many different names including peewit and green plover.

What they eat

Lapwings feed mainly at night on soil invertebrates such as worms, spiders, wood-lice and insects.

Where and when to see them

- Lapwing can be seen all year round in the UK.
- In breeding season they prefer spring sown cereals, root crops, permanent unimproved pasture, meadows and fallow fields. They can also be found on wetlands with short vegetation. In winter they flock on pasture and ploughed fields.
- During breeding season, listen out for its distinctive call, a wheezy mournful 'peewit'.

Legal status

Lapwing is Red Listed under UK Birds of Conservation Concern. They are also listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act, 2016, as a Species of Principal Importance in Wales. Make sure you take great care not to disturb them or their nests.

Field signs to look for

If you cannot see the actual bird, the call of the lapwing is probably the biggest clue to them being present.

Similar species

The lapwing is very distinctive so is unlikely to be confused with other species, but watch out for other members of the plover family. Lapwings have broad, rounded wings whilst other plovers have more pointed wings. No other waders have the long head crest characteristic of this species.



Did you know?

The latin name means 'willowing fan' and possibly refers to its flapping flight. The collective noun for a flock of lapwing is a 'deceit'. If you are particularly interested, there are lots of theories on the internet as to why this is the case.

Other surveys

Big Garden Birdwatch: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/birdwatch/>

BTO Surveys: <https://www.bto.org/volunteer-surveys/birdtrack/surveys>

Links

ARKive: <https://www.arkive.org/lapwing/vanellus-vanellus/>

RSPB: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/lapwing/>

The British Trust for Ornithology (BTO): <https://www.bto.org/about-birds/species-focus/lapwing>

The Wildlife Trusts: <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/birds/wading-birds/lapwing>

