

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius*



Sociable Lapwing (© www.birdlife.org).



Background

Sociable Lapwing breeds in northern and central Kazakhstan and south-central Russia, dispersing through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Egypt, to key wintering sites in Israel, Eritrea, Sudan and north-west India. The species is semi-colonial when breeding, nesting on grassland steppes where vegetation is short. Conversion of such habitat for arable use and a change in grazing patterns are thought to be behind historical declines of the species.

In northern Kazakhstan, a decline of 40% during 1930-1960, was followed by a further halving of numbers during 1960-1987. Although recent surveys suggest the population is larger than once feared, at an estimated 11,000 mature individuals, it is clear that the species has suffered a very rapid decline and range contraction. Current threats are hard to identify, but it is thought that illegal hunting during migration and on the wintering grounds may be of primary concern.

Actions being implemented

- 1. Surveys** have been conducted across range states to enhance our understanding of species distribution.
- The **satellite tagging** of nine birds has provided new insights into the species migration and information feeds into a website which has proved popular with birdwatchers across its range. Hunting in Syria has been identified as a major threat with measures being implemented to control it.
- A study team from the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan recently recorded the **largest flock** of Sociable Lapwing in Kazakhstan since 1939, with over 500 individuals.
- The inaugural meeting of the **International Sociable Lapwing Working Group** was held in Palmyra, Syria in March 2011. The meeting reviewed the **International Single Species Action Plan**, reached agreement on conservation measures required by each country, and planned cross-border actions to protect the species across its extensive range. More focus is now on in-country partners undertaking work and developing funding applications.



Left; Workshop supported by Swarovski Optik in 2011. Right; Sociable Lapwing fieldwork activity.

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