

**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 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. The **satellite tagging** of nine birds has provided new insights into the species's 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.
2. 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.
3. The inaugural meeting of the **International Sociable Lapwing Working Group** was held in Palmyra, Syria in March 2011. The group agreed on conservation measures required by each country, and planned cross-border actions to protect the species across its extensive range.

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