

Red Alert from Finland - Number of Threatened Bird Species Increases

Title

December 2010 proved to be a very sad month in Finland in terms of bird protection. The new Red List, indicating which species are threatened, showed that the number of threatened bird species in Finland had increased by almost 70%. Birds are one of the best known animal groups in Finland (which has 248 breeding species) and the only group for which long-term population trends are recorded, for each species. The number of threatened bird species is now 59 (up from 35 at the last assessment in 2000), with 30 species listed as near-threatened. Among mire-breeding species, 8 are now listed as threatened, up from just one a decade ago. Mire drainage which took place decades ago is still affecting these species, even in protected areas. In total, almost 5 million hectares of mires and bogs have been drained by ditching ? this is some 55 % of the total area of peatlands in Finland. A large-scale restoration of mires is one factor needed to ensure a future for mire-breeding species. Mire birds also depend on wetlands during their non-breeding season, and the rapid decrease of some species such as the Ruff cannot be explained solely by habitat changes in Finland. This alarming situation thus also reflects on the condition of wetlands in wintering grounds and migration stopovers. Common wetland-breeding birds such as the Pochard, Horned Grebe and Garganey are also decreasing. There is a lack of political will and therefore lack of resources for inland wetland management, which reduces the relevance of Natura 2000 wetlands for birds in Finland. Not all new from the Red List is negative however - relative to 2000, the number of threatened forest birds has decreased slightly, and common farmland birds such as the Partridge are doing much better than they were. A current focus for Finland should be on restoration of mires and better management of wetlands. BirdLife Finland and other NGOs will aim to lobby these into political agenda. Parliamentary election takes place in Spring 2011. [BirdLife Finland website](#)
