



**THEME:**

Environment

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**MATCH FUNDING:**

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government; Peatland Restoration; and the Bannister Charitable Trust.

**LEAD PARTNER:**

RSPB NI

**PROJECT PARTNERS:**

RSPB Scotland, BirdWatch Ireland, NI Water, Butterfly Conservation and Moors for Future.

**Start Date:** 01/01/2017

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## SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

### Project Case Study: Cooperation Across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB) - Birdwatch Ireland

#### Project partner Update

Since 2017, CABB project partner Birdwatch Ireland has been surveying key sites in Counties Sligo and Donegal to assess populations of breeding waders. These surveys are providing important current data on species like lapwing and dunlin, which are known to be in decline across Ireland.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions from early April to mid-May, the survey season was shorter than usual and this may have an impact on the robustness of results. A total of 168 breeding pairs of waders were recorded across 17 sites; 111 pairs of lapwings, nine pairs of oystercatchers, 13 pairs of ringed plovers, 26 pairs of snipe and nine pairs of redshanks.

Despite being the most numerous and widespread species, numbers of lapwings still show an overall decline over the last four years. This is due largely to the loss of suitable breeding habitat at Inch, but worrying declines were also noted at several smaller sites. Sadly, no breeding dunlins were noted this year. None of the sites surveyed have had breeding dunlins since at least 1996.

An additional upland survey was also done at five selected sites, also in Donegal and Sligo. Breeding territories for six species of waders were recorded, including common sandpiper, snipe and curlew. The CABB project recently reported that two curlew chicks hatched from a nest at Meentygrannagh containing four eggs. The pair were regularly observed foraging close to the nest for the first two weeks. The male then brought the chicks in a north easterly direction, where they remained for a further week. Sadly one dead chick was located during a walkover the following day. Mammalian predation (potentially badger) is thought to be the most likely cause, and the adult male abandoned the site within 24 hours.

When COVID-19 restrictions have permitted, the project officer has familiarized herself with the habitat and wildlife. There have been reports of a golden eagle, hen harrier and even a red throated diver spotted on the land. As part of efforts to improve and maintain the habitat and its biodiversity, grazing of the nature reserve land within the SAC has continued.



*Fence protecting lapwing chicks at Maghergallan*

*Credit: Michael Bell*