

Species Action Plan: Twite – *Carduelis flavirostris subsp. Bensonorum/pipilans*

Current Status and Importance

- The Twite is an IUCN Red Listed Species due to a rapid population decline in recent years.
- The South Pennines hold the remaining English population which now stands at around 100 pairs.

Habitat

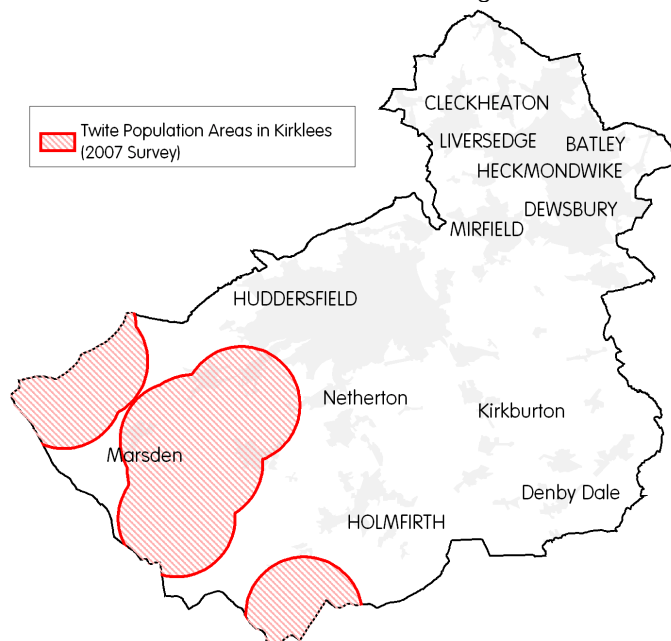
- The Twite breeds in moorland areas between April and September and over-winters on the coast of eastern England in salt marshes and coastal grasslands.
- During the breeding season, Twite nest in Upland Heath and feed on wildflower-rich grassland on the upland fringe.



© Sean Gray (www.grayimages.co.uk)

Distribution

- Present across Northern Europe and Central Asia.
- The UK population is found predominantly in Scotland and Northern England.
- The remaining English population is concentrated in the South Pennines Special Protection Area (SPA), including parts of Kirklees.
- Within the SPA the RSPB estimates that the breeding population has declined by 90% over the last 20 years. There are 18 known breeding sites remaining with around 100 pairs in total (based on 2008 survey).
- The majority of these colonies fall within the upland area between Huddersfield, Halifax and Rochdale in the Greater Manchester, Calderdale and Kirklees Local Authority areas. This area has been referred to as the 'Twite triangle'.



© Crown Copyright. All Rights Reserved. Kirklees Council, Licence Number 100019241.

Twite Population Areas identified in Kirklees

Conservation Issues

Three key factors are believed responsible for the decline in the Twite population:

- Loss of suitable bracken, tall heather and/or bilberry used as nesting habitat.
- The decline of flower-rich hay meadows and unimproved grasslands in the areas surrounding the Twite colonies, which limits food supply at crucial times during the breeding season.
- Loss of pioneer salt marsh at wintering sites on the east coast of England.

Objectives

- As part of the England Twite Recovery Project maintain the existing population size and number of colonies through protection of current nesting and feeding sites.
- Increase the population through the provision of new nesting habitat and seed-rich feeding sites within 2.5 km distance of the existing colonies.
- Increase both population size and range (number of colonies) through creation of new nesting habitat and seed-rich feeding sites close to extant colonies
- On the wintering grounds the project will ensure that creation of new pioneer saltmarsh is incorporated into all managed realignment sites

Target areas for habitat management and creation

- Within feeding range of existing twite breeding colonies.

Targets

- Reverse the population decline by 2013.

Key Links and Organisations

- Site protection: Kirklees Council; Natural England.
- Management and restoration: RSPB Twite Species Recovery Project; Environmental Stewardship in Kirklees: Natural England, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group.
- Monitoring: Twite Species Recovery Project.

See Also

- [UKBAP Twite Species Action Plan](#)
- Twite Species Recovery Project contact: Kerry.Gowthorpe@rspb.org.uk
- Kirklees Habitat Action Plans: Grasslands: Semi-natural Pasture; Meadows and upland Heathland (available at www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity)