

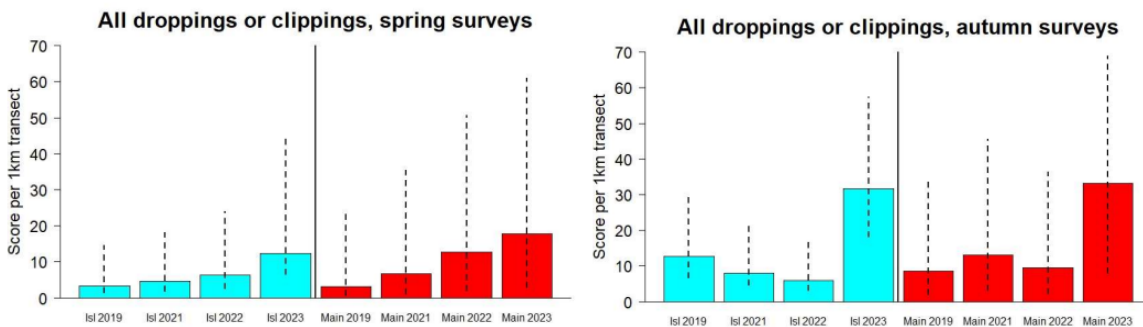


Summary of Orkney's 2023 Wildlife Monitoring Report

The Key Points

- Most successful year for Hen Harrier nests since the Orkney Native Wildlife Project (ONWP) began.
- A great year for the Orkney vole, with activity signs higher than in all previous years across Mainland and Island sites.
- For the third year in a row, overall wader nest success rates at Mainland sites were at least 100% higher than in 2019.

Orkney Voles



Activity signs for the Orkney vole continued to increase in 2023. The report finds an approximate 200% increase in signs of vole activity during surveys taken in Autumn from 2019 to 2023. Although signs of Orkney vole activity have increased both on mainland and islands, mainland sites (red bars) have seen a stronger and more sustained growth each year since 2019 in spring.

The Orkney vole population isn't easy to record, and it would be impossible to conduct a literal head count. They're small and spend most of their time concealed in grass tunnels. To help us get a better picture, we record 'signs of Orkney vole activity' instead. We look for droppings and grass clippings within suitable habitat. Each location we record is scored on whether we find signs of vole activity, and their type and freshness.

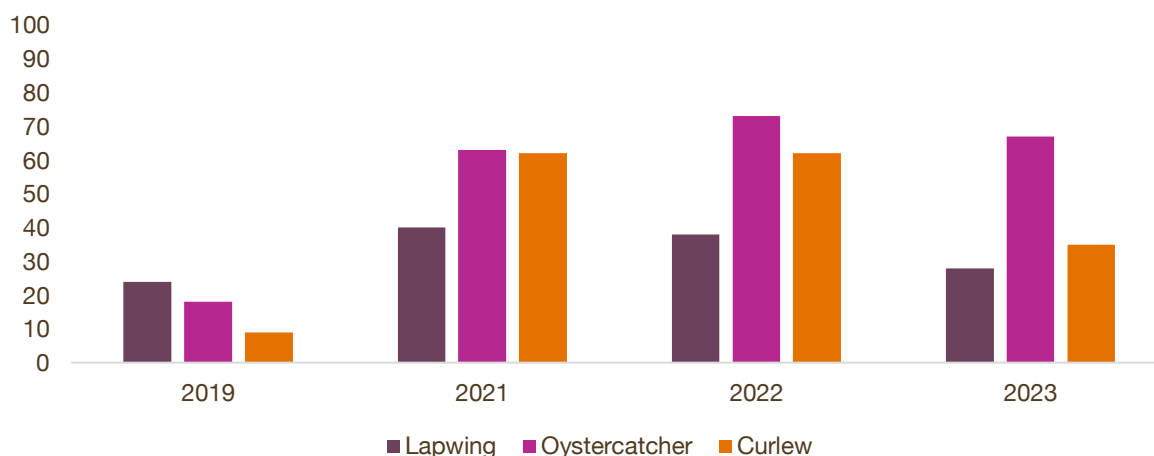
Breeding Waders

Wader nest success rates are influenced by many things including weather, land use and predation pressure, which can vary substantially between years. Despite a slight drop in 2023, nest success rates were still higher than in 2019 when the Orkney Native Wildlife Project began,

and more than 3-times higher for Curlew and Oystercatcher. However, locally there is still a noticeable increase since 2019 when the Orkney Native Wildlife Project began.

Nest success rates (%) on Orkney mainland and linked isles				
	2019	2021	2022	2023
Lapwing	24%	40%	38%	28%
Oystercatcher	18%	63%	73%	67%
Curlew	9%	62%	62%	35%

Nest success rates (%) on Orkney Mainland & Linked Isles



Hen Harriers (Raptor)

Hen Harrier nest success rates in 2023 were the highest since the Orkney Native Wildlife Project began in 2019. This data was collected and provided to the ONWP by the Orkney Raptor Study Group.

Nest success rates (%) on Orkney mainland and linked isles					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Hen Harrier	36%	61%	65%	61%	82%

Wrap-Up

While there are several factors that play into nest success rates for all species, one constant over the past five years has been the removal of invasive non-native stoats from the Orkney mainland and linked isles, whose numbers are likely to have peaked during 2019 at the start of the ONWP. Looking at over five years of data, we are confident that the ONWP's work is having a positive impact on the breeding success of native ground nesting birds and Orkney voles.