

Where is the black-tailed godwit?

Policy to protect meadow birds is not working

The policy to protect meadow birds such as the black-tailed godwit is not working. In the past 20 years, the value of the grants paid to farmers to protect meadow birds has increased from €4.2 million in 2001 to €33.4 million in 2020. But the number of breeding pairs of black-tailed godwits has fallen over the same period from 60,000 to 30,000. Eight times as much money for half the number of black-tailed godwits.

What are our conclusions?

We calculated how much land was covered by the measures farmers took to protect meadow birds such as the black-tailed godwit. Measures are taken on only 15% of all suitable meadowland. Farmers do not take measures on most of the land that is suitable for meadow birds.

We also looked at how effective the various measures were. We found that nest protection measures were the most popular. However, these measures are not of much benefit to meadow birds. Raising the water table and digging ditches to hold surface water are more effective. But farmers rarely take such measures. We concluded that the most effective measures were hardly ever taken.

Why did we audit meadow birds?

The Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality awards grants to farmers who take measures to protect meadow birds. But the number of meadow bird is steadily declining. There are, for instance, far fewer black-tailed godwits, which breed mainly in the Netherlands, than in the past. We therefore investigated whether the minister had effectively regulated the protection of meadow birds.