

Nocturnal Wader Survey

Launched in winter 2025 with support from the New Forest Biodiversity Forum, the Nocturnal Wader Survey is a collaborative project between Wild New Forest Guided Tours, Tommy Saunders at Lulla Ecology and Nigel Jones and his team. The study aims to improve our understanding of the New Forest's nocturnal wading birds — particularly Woodcock, Snipe, and Jack Snipe — and to assess how these species use the landscape after dark.

The New Forest is unique in supporting extensive open lawns and grazed habitats, surrounded by ancient woodland and heath. These areas are thought to provide vital feeding grounds for waders through the winter months. Our survey compares these grazed Forest lawns with privately managed land used for pony pasturing and low-intensity agriculture, to assess how different management approaches influence wader activity and abundance.

Fieldwork takes place under licence during the night and involves mapping key feeding sites and ringing birds where possible to gather data on age and condition. This information will help us understand how birds use the Forest throughout the winter and the wider importance of these habitats within their annual cycle.

The 2025-26 season marks the first year of what we hope will become a long-term monitoring programme, building a valuable dataset that can help guide the management and protection of nocturnal wader feeding sites across the New Forest landscape.