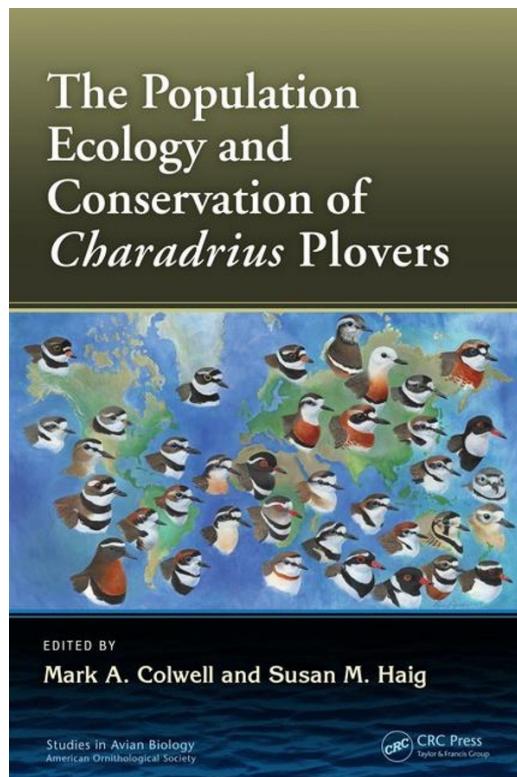


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COUNTING PLOVERS IS NOT ENOUGH: GET ACTIVE IN MONITORING TOO THREATS AND ACTIONS!



Mark A. Colwell and Susan M. Haig., 2020. The Population Ecology and Conservation of Charadrius Plovers. Edited by CRC Press – Taylor & Francis Group, New York, 342 pp

We all know the critical state of conservation in which the Italian Charadriids are, first and foremost the Kentish Plover. This last species, in particular, requires strategic to tactical actions at different scales, carried out both by expert researchers and by local groups, often socially and culturally heterogeneous: the latter strategic because they are functional to the protection of this species in the (beach) conservation front lines. It is time, therefore, that expert ornithologists train and support volunteers and collect data not only on demographic and ecological variables (i.e., density, status, phenologies of plovers), but also on all those related both to the human dimension and related conflicts (e.g., density of predators, dogs, people, entrapping litter; dynamics among social targets) and to the effectiveness of project management (how useful are the local solutions adopted?).

The text edited by Colwell and Haig is a handbook that every local conservation project group aimed at protecting plover nesting sites should study carefully. If the first chapters provide a bio-ecological framework of the Charadriid species worldwide, some of which are at the brink of extinction, chapters 6, 9 and 11 report a review of the many possible approach-

es and solutions to be implemented in the conservation 'theaters' where conflicts between these species and people occur: e.g., direct surveillance of nests; placement of cages, fences, panels, and anti-predator silhouettes; improvement of habitat suitability; communication with critical unaware social targets (such as dog owners, fishermen, and beachgoers who trample on dunes and nests); direct and indirect control of predators and many other solutions, even extremely creative. This review is accompanied by a rich bibliography that reports evidence on the effectiveness (or not) of each category of action. In particular, Table 6.1 (pages 129-131) should be the reminder for actions declined by each local group on plover nesting sites!

I think of the many debates on the conservation of the Kentish Plovers, also in Italian contexts: these meeting are useful but often too focused on the status and trends of the species and on conflicts of competence between institutions and associations (still human dimension!). Perhaps it is time to better use the scarce and precious time that remains to conserve this species by concretely adopting many of the actions suggested in this text. Many local groups already implement these actions: from this book they can acquire further opportunities to experiment and test with other techniques. Ultimately, the message suggested by these chapters is to act and then monitor in the broadest sense: not only the biological target (the Kentish Plover or other species in decline), but also the

threats (pressure indicators; how many dogs? How many people on the dunes? How many predators? How much beach litter trapping the beach?) and, finally, verify the effectiveness of the actions using specific indicators of response.

A final consideration: in the face of hundreds of international citations reported in the text, I found only (sic!) one reference to Italian authors. A stimulus to our ornithologists (especially those working in the conservation front lines) to publish more (and not only in local journals) the results of their monitoring, successes and (why not?) failures: Avocetta hosts a Conservation Evidence column and wait for evidence!

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