Abstract

*Precociality has large energy demands on a freshly hatched chick which must start to feed itself and face environmental factors more than altricial nestlings. The Northern Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) is a suitable model species for presenting the precocial problems of shorebirds (Charadrii), a typical precocial group of birds. A better understanding of the lapwing chick's problems in different habitats will deepen our knowledge about ecological constraints and adaptations of precocial shorebirds and, at the same time can be very helpful for determining the rules of effective conservation of endangered species.*

The chick size, growth, condition and survival are influenced by egg volume but also by the quality of the parents during the 35 day period that the chick needs to achieve fledging. A Lapwing chick's mortality is highest during the first 10 days of its life due to all of the further mentioned factors, which are even stronger in the critical and delicate period of the chick's life after hatching. Lapwing chicks forage non-selectively on the most abundant and available types of prey found on the soil surface, in soft mud or shallow water. Their diet consists of various types of invertebrates, particularly earthworms, beetles and other groups of insects. The proportion of particular food components varies significantly with chick age, time in season and habitat. Lapwing families search for moist to waterlogged habitats with short vegetation. Different types of pastures play an important role. To reach these places, chicks may have to undergo a distant and difficult movement shortly after hatching. Chick survival is negatively affected by unfavourable weather including too low or too high temperatures and rain. Predation is significant but until now the least explored phenomenon. Red Fox and crows are referred to as the most frequent predators. The current management of agriculture landscape plays an important role in influencing lapwing numbers, breeding success and productivity and it is considered the main reason for an Europe-wide decline in lapwing abundance which, despite a series of conservation actions, has not stopped so far. This emphasises the urgent need for a better understanding of lapwing chick problems in order to improve the effectiveness of their conservation.

Any planned research specialising in lapwing chick survival should focus particularly on one or more of these problems: lapwing brood movement and habitat preferences, food supply and chick food preference and analysis of composition and influence of predators.

Key words: *precociality, shorebirds, Northern Lapwing, chick's problems, growth, condition, survival, food, climatic factors, predation, influence of agriculture, conservation options.*