



# **Camlad Valley Community Wildlife Group**

**Celebrating wildlife in Churchstoke, Hyssington and the Priest  
Weston area**



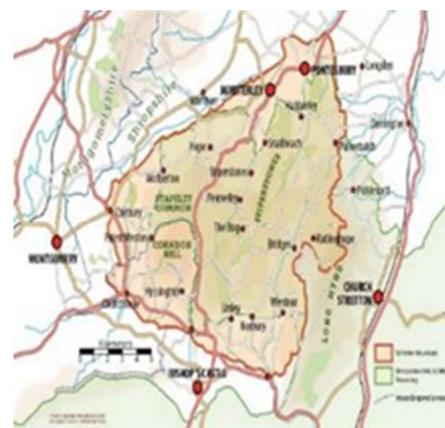
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# 1 An introduction to the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme

The Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country is a beautiful upland area that crosses the Welsh English border between the Shropshire Hills and Montgomeryshire. The Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) is a five year programme of work (ending in March 2018) to raise awareness of, enhance and celebrate local history and wildlife. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Scheme brings together local people, groups, organisations and professionals from England and Wales, and covers an area bounded by the settlements of Churchstoke, Chirbury, Minsterley, Pontesbury, Bridges, Wentnor and Norbury. Further information on the LPS is available through the website: <http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/>



The 199km<sup>2</sup> Scheme area is bounded by the parallel ridges of the Long Mynd and the Stiperstones with the prominent Corndon Hill to the South West

The public consultation carried out during the development phase of the LPS highlighted the commitment of local people to wildlife conservation. Subsequently, in 2013, when the Scheme was launched, this gave rise to the development of two, new local Community Wildlife Groups - one group was formed in the Rea Brook catchment and the other in the Camlad river catchment (for information on the other CWGs in South Shropshire, please visit: <http://www.shropscwgs.org.uk/>).

Now in its final year, the Camlad Valley Community Wildlife Group continues to take action to conserve key species in the LPS area, through ongoing monitoring and surveys. Surveys, such as those of the iconic Curlew, are crucial to our understanding of population trends and provide baseline data which informs intervention attempts to reverse local declines. The data is now feeding-in to the national lowland picture.



Moth surveying at The Bog Mine site

Following the example of other CWGs in Shropshire, the Camlad group is given a voice in order to develop interest in other wildlife, and as with Curlews, these too have helped to establish the status of key wildlife species and their habitats.

As the LPS enters its final year there is a growing emphasis on project legacy and supporting the groups' moves towards greater independence.

## 2 Curlew, Lapwing and Other Bird Surveys

### 2.1 Objectives

Bird Group members were asked to find out where Curlew and Lapwing occur in the breeding season, record behaviour indicative of breeding, and record other species, most of which are of nature conservation importance (i.e. they are Target Species for Government Agri-environment Schemes operated by Natural England or the Welsh Government, or they are on the *Red List* or *Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern* in England or Wales because they have suffered large declines in the last 25 or 50 years, and / or are Target Species in one of the national Biodiversity Action Plans).

In addition to Lapwing and Curlew, the target species were:-

- Kestrel
- Red Kite
- Barn Owl
- Grey Partridge
- Snipe
- Skylark
- Meadow Pipit
- Cuckoo
- Dipper
- Swift (nest sites only)
- Yellow Wagtail
- Dunnock
- Wheatear
- Stonechat
- Spotted Flycatcher
- Tree Sparrow
- Linnet
- Bullfinch
- Yellowhammer
- Reed Bunting

This was the fourth year in which a bird survey was carried out in this part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) area. It complements surveys carried out by the Upper Onny Wildlife Group since 2004, and it is intended to repeat it annually, to monitor long-term population trends for key species, as well as establish the current population and distribution.

### 2.2 Methodology

The part of the LPS area covered by this Community Wildlife Group has been divided up into 20 tetrads (2x2 kilometre squares, each made up of four of the one-kilometre squares shown on Ordnance Survey maps). A map showing these tetrads, and the reference code, is attached (Appendix 1).

People who agreed to help were allocated a square / tetrad, and requested to survey it once during each of three specified two week periods, around 1 April, 1 May and 15 June.

- The first period follows the arrival of Lapwing and Curlew back on the breeding grounds. This is the best time to find breeding Lapwing (first egg date is usually around 1<sup>st</sup> April).
- The second period is the best time to find breeding Curlew (first egg date is usually around 30<sup>th</sup> April).
- The third period is timed to find any Curlews that have successfully hatched and still have chicks. It is also the best time to find the Other Target Species.

Participants were provided with detailed survey instructions, and a large scale map of the tetrad (the map filled an A4 sheet of paper) for each survey. The methodology has been unchanged since 2014.

A training meeting was arranged for those that wanted one, on Sunday 26 March. Members felt that a feedback meeting was unnecessary, so a Curlew map with the results of the first two surveys was emailed on 11 May, and results for the year were presented at a public meeting on 25 October.

Survey work was carried out in 18 of the 20 tetrads, and members spent over 100 hours on it, the best effort since 2014.

### **2.3 Curlew**

The map on page 5 has been compiled from the survey maps, and other reports received of Curlews in the area. It summarises the estimated number and location of territories.

The methodology requires observations of a pair together, or a single bird on two of the three surveys, to confirm a territory. However, Curlews often have large territories, and may be seen a kilometre or more from their nest site, so interpretation of the observations is sometimes difficult, unless singing birds are seen or heard concurrently. If that does not happen, the methodology requires the analysis to produce the lowest population estimate consistent with the records, in this case 7 pairs (2 – 3 in Wales, and 4 – 5 in England, the uncertainty being due partly to the pair in SO29S being right on the border, and therefore possibly in either country. There was no evidence of the possibility of an additional pair just south of Hyssington.

Two squares were not surveyed, but no Curlews have been found in SJ20Q in any previous year, and a casual record was received of the pair in SJ20W.

The observations were passed on to the LPS Nest Monitoring Project, to assist the nest finder.

Evidence was found of a fledged young in the area.

Not surprisingly, it takes a few years to build up a complete picture of the Curlews in the area, but that has partly been achieved. The survey in 2018 should help consolidate the picture, although establishing accurate estimates and trends is made more difficult as some squares have not been surveyed every year.

Well over 100 Curlews have been colour-ringed at the Dolydd Hafren Montgomery Wildlife Trust Reserve on the River Severn near Welshpool since March 2015, and four were found breeding in the area, one near Owlbury, one near Hockleton and two near Marton.

**From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Curlew population in the area in 2017 is 7 breeding pairs (2 – 3 in Wales, and 4 – 5 in England), compared with 7 – 8 breeding pairs (2 – 4 in Wales, and 4 – 5 in England) in 2016, 6 - 8 breeding pairs (2 - 3 in England, and 3 – 6 in Wales) in 2015, and 9 – 13 breeding pairs (4 – 6 in England, and 5 – 7 in Wales) in 2014.**

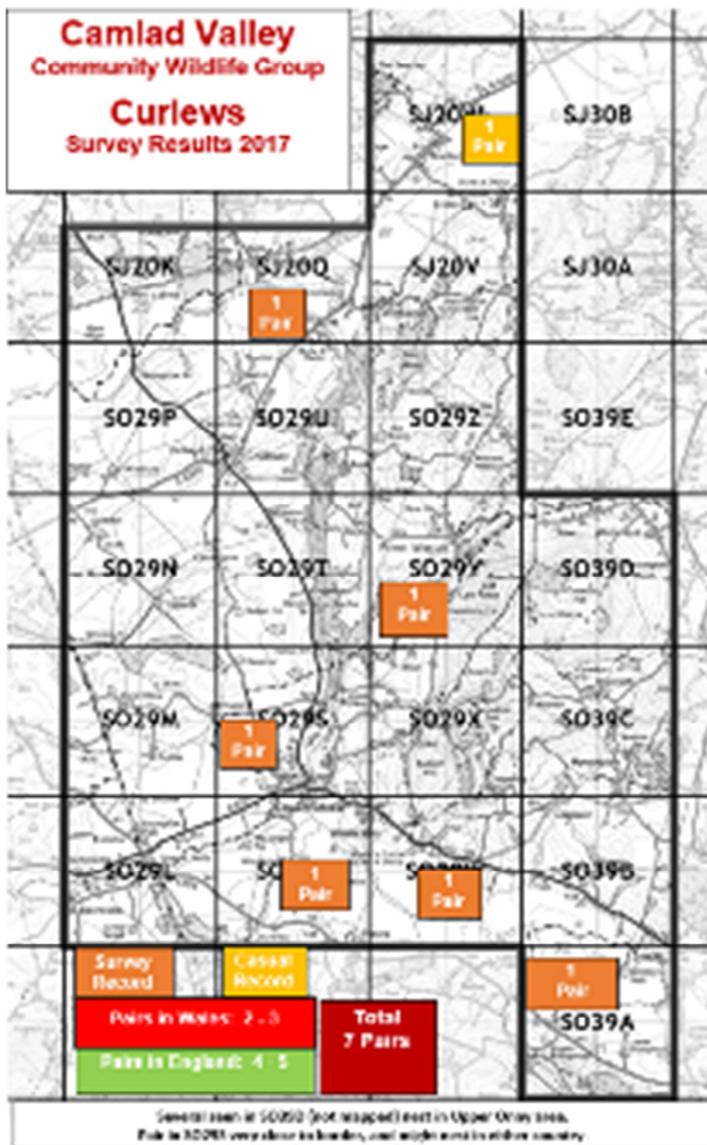
**The survey should be repeated in 2018, to clarify the number of pairs actually present and the location of nest sites and foraging areas, and work towards regular monitoring to establish a population trend.**

## **2.4 Lapwing**

There were an estimated 5-6 pairs of Lapwing in two groups; 2-3 were in wet meadows near the Camlad, and 3 were near Corndon Hill. There were six pairs at the former site last year, two in 2015 and one there in 2014. The 3 pairs near Corndon are believed to have been displaced from Lower Stapeley farm (in SO39E), in the Upper Onny area, because the ground was too dry. The outcome of the nests is not known.

None were found at two sites on arable farmland in England, in SO29N and SO28T. Four pairs were found in this area in 2016, one in 2015 and three pairs in SO29M in 2014.

It is important to survey squares every year, even if no Lapwings were found in the previous year, as they are mobile, following farm crop rotation to find bare earth or spring crops..



From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Lapwing population in the area is 5-6 breeding pairs (all in Wales), compared with 10 - 12 breeding pairs (6 – 8 in England and 4 in Wales) in 2016, only 2 pairs (both in Wales) in 2015, and 4 - 5 pairs (probably one in Wales) in 2014.

## 2.5 Anecdotal Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

Members of the Bird Group who live in the area, and other local residents, say that Lapwings and Curlews are less common now than they used to be. Some members talked to local farmers in the course of their surveys, and they too said that Lapwings and Curlew are less common now than they used to be. Lapwings have apparently declined much more than Curlews.

## 2.6 Other Target Species

The other Target Species recorded during the surveys are summarised in Table 1 below.

The summary table shows the maximum count for each species on any one survey in each tetrad. This may under-record some species, but the alternative – adding all the counts together – would lead to considerable double or triple counting of some individual birds.

Note that members were asked to record individual birds, not pairs (so at some locations both the birds in the pair were recorded, and in the final survey some recently fledged juveniles may have been recorded as well).

**Table 1. Other Target Species - Summary**

Tetrad	Maimum Number of Each Species Recorded on Surveys in each Tetrad (Individual Birds)													
	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheat-ear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer
SJ20 K						1								
SJ20 Q	1	4		1										
SJ20 V						1								
SJ20 W	Square not surveyed													
SO29 L	Square not surveyed													
SO29 M	(No target species recorded)													
SO29 N	(No target species recorded)													
SO29 P	1			3		17								
SO29 R	5	1	1			1			2				2	3
SO29 S	2	1		3		2			6	2		2	1	6
SO29 T									3					1
SO29 U						1								
SO29 W	(No target species recorded)													
SO29 X				1		1	2		2		1			
SO29 Y		2		2		3			3				2	1
SO29 Z									1					
SO39 A	6	1			3	2			1					2
SO39 B		1												
SO39 C	(No target species recorded)													
SO39 D	2					3		1						1
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>

As expected in a survey of this type, the expertise of members, and the time they had available to undertake the surveys, varied considerably. The survey squares also vary considerably, in accessibility and terrain. The “detectability” of the birds themselves also varies considerably, according to prevailing weather conditions, time of day, stage in the breeding cycle, and the normal behaviour of each species. Thus the survey results will give an indication of the species present, and perhaps their habitat preferences, but only a very small proportion will have been recorded.

It will be seen that Skylark, Dunnock and Yellowhammer are widespread and fairly numerous, and the remaining species that were found are present only in their specific habitats, and in small numbers.

Snipe is now very rare as a breeding bird, but many come for the winter, and many more pass through in April and May on their way to breeding grounds further north. The three recorded in SO39A during the first survey were probably passage birds.

Cuckoo has been a *Red List* species on the *Birds of Conservation Concern* in the UK since 2009, but it was again recorded in one tetrad, on Corndon Hill.

Red Kites were seen in five tetrads, compared with seven in 2016, six in 2015 and two in 2014. No evidence of breeding was reported, but given the rapid spread and population increase (over 30 pairs in Shropshire now – the first successful breeding for 130 years occurred as recently as 2006), it is likely that breeding will become a regular occurrence in the near future.

Unsurprisingly, four of the more scarce Target Species were not recorded at all during the surveys – Barn Owl, Grey Partridge, Dipper or Yellow Wagtail - but, surprisingly, no Swift (nest sites), Stonechat, Linnet or Reed Bunting were recorded either.

Two Spotted Flycatcher were recorded in SO29S.

## 2.7 Lapwing and Curlew in the LPS area

As a result of the declines observed in their area, and in the hope of reversing them, the Upper Onny Wildlife Group (UOWG) actively supported the bid for funding for the LPS, and proposed the development of Community Wildlife Groups across the whole area. The Rea Valley CWG, and the Camlad Valley CWG, have been formed as a result of LPS support and promotion. Both groups have been carrying out bird surveys since 2014. The total number of Lapwing and Curlew found by the three CWGs in the LPS area in 2017 is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Lapwing and Curlew in the LPS area 2017**

<b>CWG Area</b>	<b>Lapwing</b>	<b>Curlew</b>
<b>Upper Onny</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>28 - 30</b>
<b>Rea Valley</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9 - 11</b>
<b>Camlad (England)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4 - 5</b>
<b>Camlad (Wales)</b>	<b>5 - 6</b>	<b>2 - 3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>22 - 23</b>	<b>44 - 48</b>
<b>NB The apparent discrepancy is due to one pair in the Camlad being right on the border, and therefore counted as possibly in either England or Wales</b>		

### **(Estimated Number of Breeding Pairs)**

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group has been doing this work since 2004. In those 14 years,

- Lapwing, after an initial decline from the number found in 2004 (19 pairs), recovered after intensive conservation work, but a subsequent decline returned the population in 2014 to the same number as 2004, with a further fall to 13 – 15 pairs in 2015, 14 pairs in 2016 and only 9 in 2017

- Curlew has shown a steady decline from an estimated 38 pairs in 2004 to only 28 – 30 in a slightly larger area now – a loss of 29%, almost one-third, in only 14 years.

## **2.8 Links with the LPS Curlew Nest Monitoring Project**

UOWG also proposed the establishment of a Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project within the LPS programme. 97% of the people who responded to the public consultation on the bid supported action to reverse the decline in the Curlew population.

In 2015 and 2016, the LPS Project monitored over 30 curlew nests to discover the reason that Curlew are failing to breed successfully. Over that time only 3 nests managed to get beyond egg stage each year. During the 2016 season the three nests that successfully hatched chicks were surrounded by protective electric fencing. No chicks or eggs survived from the nests monitored and the major cause of failure was predation. Foxes were found to be the main predator. As a result, nests were protected using an electric fence in 2017. The results are described in more detail in the next section of this Report.

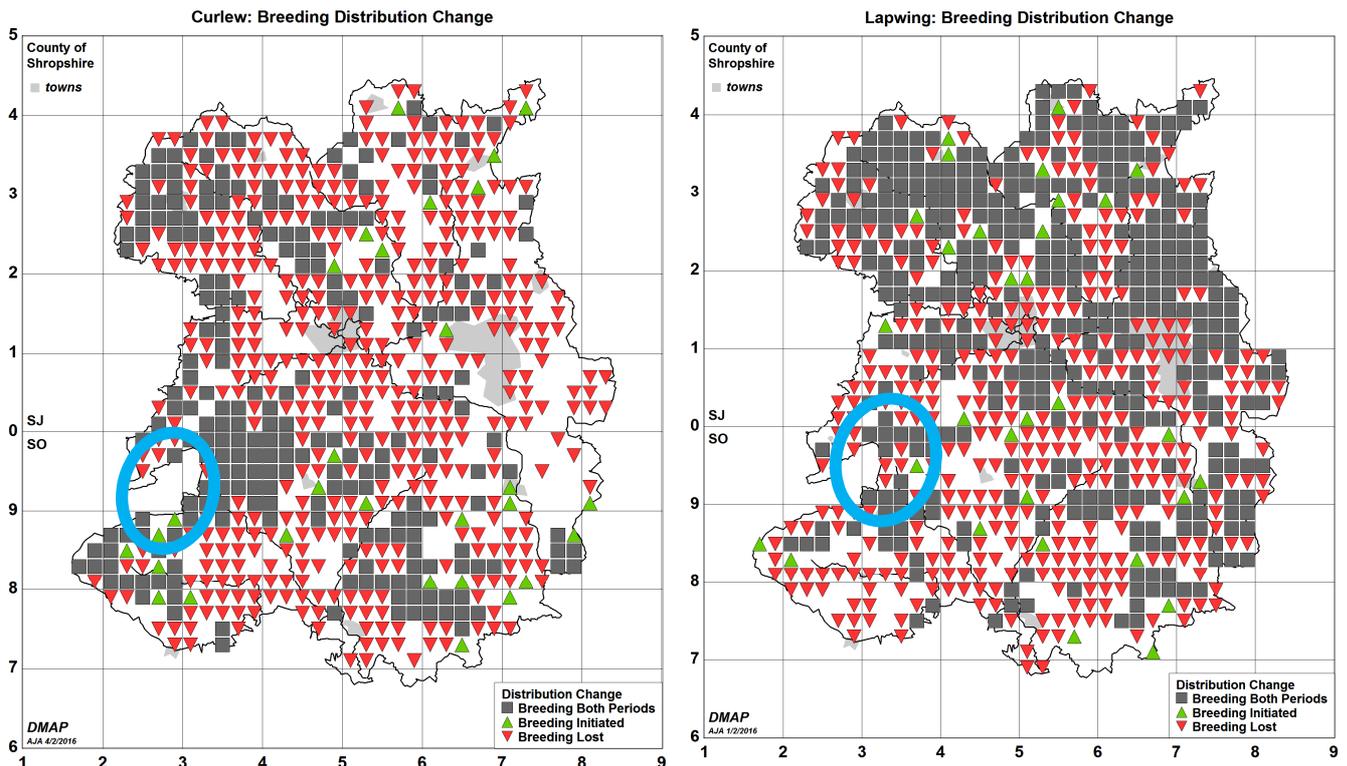
Observations of Curlews by the Rea Valley Bird Group were passed on immediately to the nest finder, to help the effective targeting of his work. Two of the nests found and monitored in 2017 were in the Camlad Valley area.

## **2.9 Decline of Lapwing and Curlew**

Lapwing and Curlew are in decline, across the UK, in England and Wales, in Shropshire and in the LPS area. Objective evidence for this comes from Bird Atlas work. The distribution maps showing the results of the recent 2008-13 survey in the tetrads in the LPS area can be compared with the same area on the maps shown in *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire*, based on six years fieldwork 1985-90, and published in 1992. Both sets of maps have been compiled on the same basis, with similar amounts of fieldwork effort, so the decline is undoubtedly real.

The maps show tetrads where each species was found in both Atlas surveys (grey squares) and tetrads where it was found in the earlier period, but not the more recent period (red downward triangles). Surveys including counts complement these maps. The county Lapwing population has fallen from about 3000 pairs in 1990 to only about 800 now. The Curlew population has fallen from about 700 pairs in 1990 to about 160 pairs in 2010 (a 77% decline for both species).

The approximate location of the LPS area is shown by the blue oval. It will be seen that the LPS area is the county stronghold for Curlew



Other evidence for the decline of Lapwing and Curlew can be found on the website of the British Trust for Ornithology [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

The LPS area holds about one-quarter of the Shropshire Curlew population. Action to reverse the declines must start by improving the breeding success of the remaining pairs, so conservation action in the LPS area is vital.

Such action is also being taken nationally. Both species have been designated as UK Biodiversity Priority Species by the Government, as part of its commitment to international biodiversity targets, precisely because of the rapid decline, and both species are now on the *Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern 4*, published in December 2015.

In England, both species nest on farmland, and the Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (part of the system of payments to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union) included rewards for farmers for sensitive management of habitat on their farms, and providing other environmental benefits. Farmers applying to join had to take into account the habitat requirements of a number of birds, including Lapwing and Curlew, if they breed on or near the farm, or use land there for feeding. HLS included specific prescriptions, and payments, for Lapwing and Curlew habitat, if the farmer wanted to take them up. Many farms in the LPS area will benefit from HLS agreements for 10 years from the date of signing, the last in 2014.

The data provided by the Upper Onny Wildlife Group, on the location and habitat of these priority species, helped Natural England (the Government Agency responsible both for achieving the Biodiversity targets, and administering the Environmental Stewardship Scheme) to target its limited resources more effectively to achieve this objective.

HLS has now ended, and has been replaced by Countryside Stewardship, a new environmental land management scheme with similar objectives and targeting, from 2016 onwards.

In Wales, Lapwing and Curlew have both been designated as Principal Biodiversity Species in the Welsh Government's Biodiversity Action Plan. Bird Atlas work has been undertaken at the 10km square level, rather than the 25 times greater resolution at tetrad level, so no information is available about change in the Welsh part of the LPS area. Population monitoring for the two species is carried out by specific surveys, but none have taken place in recent years.

The higher level farm payments scheme in Wales, Glastir, has been revised, as part of the new Common Agricultural Policy being implemented through the Rural Development Programme 2014-20.

## **2.10 Use of CWG Survey Results**

Most importantly, the survey results are made available to Natural England, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Welsh Government.

In England, they show the importance of particular areas for these species, which will hopefully encourage farmers to manage their land more sensitively, and provide Natural England with objective evidence to judge individual farm applications to join Countryside Stewardship, the new environmental land management scheme, enabling them to target the use of their limited resources more effectively. A letter was sent to Natural England in 2016 supporting an application for Countryside Stewardship from one farm in the area, based on the Group's survey results.

The results also reinforce and supplement the results from other Community Wildlife Groups operating in the Shropshire Hills, which together now cover well over 500 square kilometres, around two-thirds of the Shropshire Hills AONB. These results help inform the AONB Management Plan, which has recently been revised to cover the five years 2014 – 19.

Previously, records at tetrad level were supplied to Shropshire Ornithological Society for incorporation into the Shropshire Bird Atlas. The Atlas project completed six

years fieldwork 2008-13, and the results will be published in a new county Avifauna, *The Birds of Shropshire*, around the end of 2018.

Coupled with the results of other surveys, the results may also contribute to the identification of potential new County Wildlife Sites. These sites are monitored by Shropshire Wildlife Trust, which encourages the landowners to manage them so they retain their value for wildlife.

In Wales, discussions will take place with Montgomery Wildlife Trust about the use of the results to identify potential local Wildlife Sites in Montgomeryshire, and how to use the results to promote conservation of the species.

In the LPS area, the Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project has been established to assess the reasons for poor breeding success of Curlew, by finding nests, protecting them and monitoring their outcome, then taking action to reverse the decline. The CWG survey results helped target the initial nest-finding. The results will also help identify the farmers and landowners who have Curlews nesting on their land, and whose support is essential if breeding success is to be improved. The Nest Monitoring Project is described in the next section.

## 2.11 Recommendations

*Natural England and the Welsh Government are recommended to encourage farmers with breeding Lapwing or Curlew on or near their land, to join the appropriate agri-environment scheme, utilising the appropriate options to maintain and enhance the habitat for these priority species*

## 2.12 Acknowledgements

Most importantly, thanks to the Group members who undertook the survey work:-

Hilary Berry, Jonathan & Beryl Bronner, Clive & Ros Burns, Hazel Cribb, Sally Currin, Peter Fenner, Trevor Holden, Mary Napper-White, Huw Prole, Chris Radford, Rob Rowe, Sandy Scott, Iain Smith and Steve Wright.

Thanks also to:-

- Matt Cotterill of Natural England, who provided the survey maps.
- Joe Penfold, LPS Community Officer, who organised all the Bird Group meetings and distributed information to members.
- 

### **2.13 Summary 2017**

*This report summarises a successful fourth year for the Bird Group. Members showed a high level of commitment in carrying out the surveys.*

*Eighteen of the 20 tetrads were surveyed, and we now have a better understanding of the population and distribution of Lapwing and Curlew, and the status of the Other Target Species.*

*The populations in the Camlad Valley area are estimated at 5 - 6 pairs of Lapwing (all in Wales), and 7 pairs of Curlew (2 – 3 pairs in Wales).*

*The Curlew results helped locate nests being monitored to assess the reasons for poor breeding success in the LPS area, and protect them. Curlew chicks fledged from one nest.*

*This is valuable information for the conservation of these species. Further survey work in future years will add to this baseline, and establish population trends in the area.*

### **2.14 Plans for 2018**

The Bird Group intends to repeat the Bird Survey next year. New participants are needed, so we hope to recruit new members.

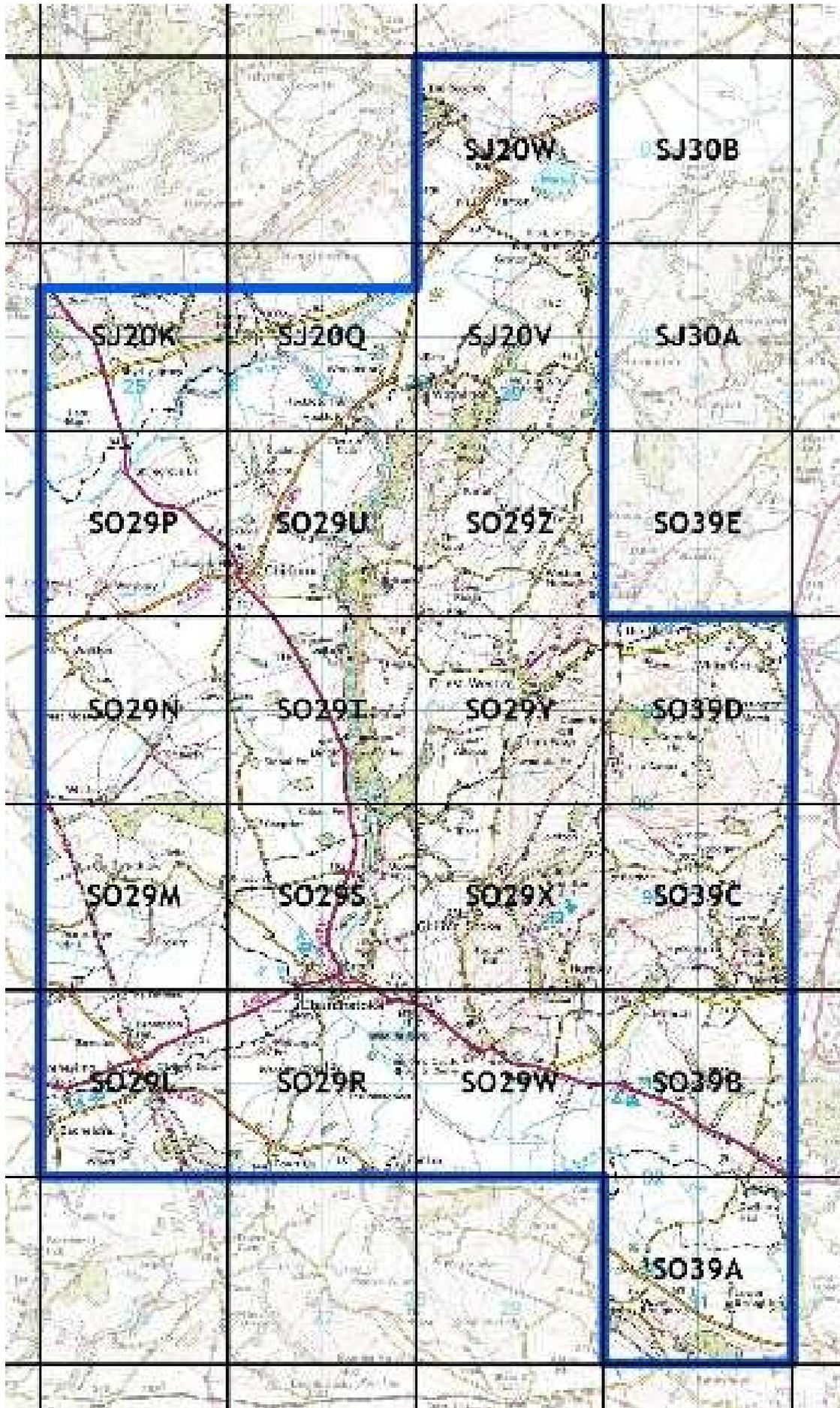
Consideration will be given to developing other activities, similar to those operated by other Community Wildlife Groups. Nest box schemes for Woodland Birds, Barn Owls and Dippers may be developed, if there is sufficient support, and a programme of local bird walks and other events may be held. The possibilities will be considered at Bird Group meetings in the course of the year.

Everyone interested in birds is welcome at all meetings and events. A Programme will be published after the Annual Public Meeting. Details can also be found and downloaded from the joint website for all the Community Wildlife Groups in the Shropshire Hills, [www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk](http://www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk), and the Landscape Partnership Scheme Website [www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk](http://www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk).

Leo Smith

January 2018

Appendix 1. Map of Survey Area, showing Square Boundaries and Tetrad Codes





# Curlew Country

Working to help the recovery of the Eurasian Curlew.

[www.curlewcountry.org](http://www.curlewcountry.org)

**Curlew Country would like to thank all the Community Wildlife Group bird surveyors for their ongoing work to identify changes in adult curlew population numbers and for their support for the Curlew Country Project**

## 3 Curlew Country Project Report 2017

### 3.1 Nest Monitoring

2017 has been an exciting year for the Curlew country Project. Following two years of close nest monitoring with cameras and data loggers, in which no chicks fledged in the LPS area, this year we have seen evidence of successful fledglings.

In order to maintain a stable population, the productivity of Curlew still needs to be increased, ideally to 2 – 3 times its current level. This small change is still a big step forward, and suggests that intervention methods are starting to work.



Photo courtesy of AV Cross



*Breeding Success within the Curlew Country Focus Area*

This season we fenced as many nests as possible, to provide some protection from mammalian predators. This resulted in 30 chicks hatching successfully. Unfortunately due to the chicks need to feed, they leave the nest and protected area after just a few days. This leaves them vulnerable once again to predators, as well as to farming operations. Lethal fox control was trialled over approximately three

blocks of land. It was used more intensively and away from the trial blocks, to protect the final remaining chicks, when all others had been lost.

Nest Success	
Total eggs laid	73
Total eggs hatched	30
Chicks fledged	(min) 1 – (max) 3 *

\*5 additional chicks fledged from eggs incubated under licence

### 3.2 Licence to Incubate Eggs:

2017 saw Curlew Country gaining a licence to incubate eggs for the first time, with the intention of placing them back in the nest at the point of hatch. Some of the chicks however were left without nests to return them too, as they had been predated. This resulted in 5 chicks being reared independently and successfully released and observed.

### 3.3 Colour Ringing Continues:

Over 100 Curlew have now been colour ringed by ornithologist Tony Cross with Curlew Country support. The project is getting increasing information back from over wintering sites, helping to increase our knowledge of the movements. If you see a colour ringed Curlew,



*Colour Ringed Curlew, photo courtesy of AV Cross*

please send details to [avcross@btinternet.com](mailto:avcross@btinternet.com)

### 3.4 Farm Business Analysis:

This work continues and our findings and feedback are already being provided to policy makers. Curlew Country is working with a farming partners, a farm business advisor and Natural England to discover the true costs of supporting breeding curlew on different types of farm. It is hard to fit the existing agri-environment schemes to the needs of curlew on the ground, despite great efforts in this respect from our local stewardship officer. Analysing the farming loss in detail will help to understand what is really needed by farmers to support these birds.

### 3.5 Curlew Cam:

Our first live nest camera was a great success, attracting both national and international attention. As well as gripping audiences, it provided insight into the nesting habits of these secretive birds. Clips can be seen our website, [www.curlewcountry.org](http://www.curlewcountry.org)

### **3.6 Work with Farmers:**

The inaugural farmers' group meeting has been held and plans for steering the future of the project are starting. Curlew Country now has the support of around 60 local farmers and landowners in the area, without which the project wouldn't have been able to achieve the successes of the past year.



*Chicks hatched from a protected nest, photo courtesy of Amber Bicheno*

### **3.7 Arts Projects:**

A Case For Curlew has been taking place over the spring and summer months, engaging families and children on the plight of curlew. The farming reminiscences project is ongoing, collecting memories of curlew within the local landscape.

### **3.8 Training and Visitors:**

Curlew Country has had numerous visitors to the project area wanting to find out more about how nest monitoring works, or gaining some hands on training on how to locate nests themselves. These visitors have included the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, the Southern curlew Forum and the British Trust for Ornithology.

Curlew Country remains busy with requests for advice and training from other Curlew Projects from Scotland to Cornwall and Norfolk and from wider afield in Europe. .

### **3.9 National and International Collaboration:**

The project has received interest and encouragement from National partners, and Amanda Perkins and Tony Cross, ornithologist were invited to make a presentation at the International Wader Study Conference in Prague. Most major active projects, including Curlew Country, are now at a stage where the focus has turned to how we can help chicks in both the short term and long term.

### **3.10 Curlew Observation Film and Appeal:**

In collaboration with the British Trust for Ornithology, Curlew Country have been producing an observation training film. This is intended to help other curlew recovery project by providing footage of and explaining key curlew behaviours. Alongside this, Curlew Country have also put together a short appeal film in order to raise funds for the future of the project. The appeal film can be seen at [www.curlewcountry.org/curlewappeal](http://www.curlewcountry.org/curlewappeal)

Our thanks go to Ben Osborne for his tireless work and dedication to assisting Curlew Country through his filming work.

### **3.11 Presentation Day:**

Another successful Curlew Country presentation day was held in November. This year the event was held at Norbury Village Hall. Visitors, including local and national partners came to hear about the project from different perspectives. Amanda Perkins gave an overview of the project. Tony Cross gave a presentation on the Curlew Country nest monitoring work. One of the Curlew Country farming partners spoke about their involvement with the project and his excitement at fledging a chick from a nest he helped to protect this year. Mike Smart, ex-Ramsar ornithologist from the Curlew Forum gave an overview of lowland curlew and Dr. Geoff Hilton, Head of Conservation Science at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, gave a talk on rearing wader chicks ('headstarting'), to save species threatened by extinction. The discussion was followed by an in depth debate on the future of curlew. Mark Isherwood, Assembly Member and Curlew Species Champion for Wales who attended subsequently asked for further information so that he could raise the matter of Curlew Conservation in the Welsh Parliament.

## **3.12 The Future of Curlew Country**

### **3.13 New Partnership:**

Curlew Country will continue its vital lowland curlew recovery work. When the Stiperstones and Corndon LPS ends in March 2018, the project will be hosted by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT). This is the role that has hitherto been fulfilled by the Shropshire Council through the AONB. GWCT have been one of Curlew Country's national partners for some time, providing support and advice covering a range of work conducted by the project.

Over the past 3 years, the project has become the leading low ground curlew recovery project, operating outside of upland and moorland areas of the UK. Each year funds have been raised from local and national partners to carry out this important research and active recovery work. The support of GWCT as a national partner is helping towards fundraising and placing it on a more secure footing for the future. With help from Natural England and other donors some funds have already been secured and will go towards the 2018 nesting season.

### **3.14 2018 Nesting Season:**

Planning has begun for the 2018 nesting season, as well as continued nest monitoring and intervention, the project work will include:

- A new training opportunity for volunteers wanting to commit to the project over the breeding season.
- Habitat management trials.
- Development of the farmer steering group.
- Using GPS tags to discover more about breeding bird behaviour.
- Trialling a business idea linked to curlew habitat..

### **3.15 Acknowledgements:**

The project would like to thank all of the organisations and volunteers who have supported the first three (LPS) years of the project.

Curlew Country are very grateful to the funders who have supported the first 3 years of the project. They are: Heritage Lottery Fund (2015, 2016, 2017), Natural Resources Wales (2015, 2016, 2017), The Jean Jackson Conservation Trust (2015, 2016, 2017), Natural England (2017), Stiperstones NNR (2015), National Trust (2015), Powys County Council (2015, 2016, 2017), Wader Quest (2017), British Trust for Ornithology (2017), Shropshire Hills AONB Conservation Fund (2015), Rappa Fencing (2017), RSPB – loan of specialist equipment (2015, 2016), Shropshire Ornithological Society (2015, 2016), Upper Onny Wildlife Group (2016), Mere Singers (2016)

## 4 Plant Group Report for 2017

From the initial meetings of the Corndon Stiperstones Landscape Partnership Project at Hyssington, Churchstoke and Chirbury a number of people had expressed interest in forming a plant group.

In 2015 we decided to run the three CWG plant groups together and in 2016 and 2017 we continued to do this.

Of the twelve events four were in the CVCWG area. [Shown in green]

### 13<sup>th</sup> March, Ancient tree walk

Visit to an area of old wood pasture near Rorrington to see, measure and record some of the old oak pollards. A remnant of an unusual habitat in this area. A great turnout of 25 people.



*Ancient Tree Walk*

### 13<sup>th</sup> April, Lichens training day

We were very lucky to get Bob Kemp again to give us a very clear and instructive introduction to this group. It took the form of a PowerPoint presentation followed by looking at lichens around the Bog area and then back to the Natural England offices for more tuition. 9 present

### 28<sup>th</sup> April, Mosses and Liverworts

Our fourth well attended mosses meeting lead by Dan Wrench teaching the basics of mosses and liverworts [bryophytes]. After identifying and collecting specimens around the Bog we headed back to NE offices for lunch and spent time keying out the various specimens using lenses and microscopes. 10 present

### 18<sup>th</sup> May, Mytton Dingle part of the Stiperstones NNR

Heathland, spring ephemerals and a chance to practise mosses and liverworts. The most impressive find was some large specimens of Moonwort, an unusual fern of unimproved grassland. 6 present

### 6<sup>th</sup> June, Todleth Hill.

Our second visit to this rich site and among the new species found were Hoary cinquefoil, Twayblade orchid and Adders tongue fern.



*Southern Marsh Orchid*

### June 15<sup>th</sup> White Grit Meadows

Our third visit to these meadows due to popular demand. The first, a species rich hay meadow is particularly special for its abundance of Greater Burnet.

The second nearby SSSI site is a series of species rich meadows managed by grazing with an abundance of Dyers Greenweed. We also visited a new species rich hay meadow nearby with Southern marsh orchid. 12 present

### 30<sup>th</sup> June, Cwnd Meadow

An evening visit to this flower-rich hay meadow which has been traditionally managed for many years. This was a joint outing with the Marches Meadow group and we were treated to a feast afterwards by our hosts! 9 present

### 17<sup>th</sup> June, Shelve Pool SSSI

Exploring the plants in and around the pool and in nearby species rich grassland. We refound the Petty Whin which had not been seen for some years. 8 present

### 13<sup>th</sup> July, Brithdir SSSI

A whole day exploring and recording around the marsh and meadows of this species rich SSSI and surrounding fields. 12 additional species were found. 10 present

### 23<sup>rd</sup> July, Ritton Bog

Extremely species rich wet grassland and flushes. 9 present

### 3<sup>rd</sup> August, Black Marsh

At the northern end of Stapeley Common is a large and varied area with some particularly good wet flushes, so particular attention was given to rushes and sedges. 4 present

### 18<sup>th</sup> October, Fungi Foray at The Bog



*Moonwort*

Our second Fungi Foray at the Bog led by Jo Weightman. We were also joined by other members of Shropshire fungi group. Considering how dry the weather had been it was very good count with a total of 49 species recorded. Highlights were Herald of winter [*Hygrophorus hypothejus*] and Velvet bolete [*Suillus variegates*]

In the afternoon we looked at some meadows above the Bog including the Natural England SSSI and recorded 28 species including 8 waxcaps.

Some rare and unusual species were recorded at both places. 11 present

#### **4.1 Verge Surveys**

Carrying on from 2015 we modified and simplified the verges survey form which should provide all the relevant data. Volunteers were again provided with these and a tetrad map [4 square kilometres]

The majority of the tetrads have now been surveyed. 20 people have taken part. We have surveyed approximately 170 kilometres of verges in the Upper Onny WG area, 130 km in the Rea valley WG area and 80 km in the Camlad valley WG area.

This information has now gone onto the Shropshire Council GIS data base.

If we can find the remaining species rich verges we can feed this information to Shropshire and Powys Councils who, hopefully with the help of local Parish Councils [some of whom have already expressed interest] will manage these verges in a more sympathetic way.

From this has emerged in 2017 a verges project called '**Life on the Edge**'

This was instigated by Myndtown combined parish council and is centred around Norbury, Wentnor and Ratlinghope.

**We will continue looking for and surveying unimproved meadows in 2018 and working with the Marches meadow group.**

#### **4.2 Recording for the Shropshire Wildlife Trust**

In addition to the above outings the Shropshire Wildlife Trust arranged for the group to monitor several Wildlife Sites and potential Wildlife Sites.

All these sites were surveyed and

- The different habitats mapped (with reference to plant communities where possible)
- The condition of each habitat assessed

- A full plant list produced
- Other species of interest noted
- Photographic record made
- We visited wetland, grassland and woodland sites and mostly they were in good condition.

Montgomery Flora and MWT.

Many of the same people involved have also helped with for Caring for God's Acre surveys of churchyards and burial grounds in Hyssington, Middleton, Church Stoke, Sned and Chirbury.

Many thanks to everybody that came on the outings and especially those who contributed as surveyors, tutors, owners and managers of the sites we visited.

## Results of Camlad Verge Surveys

Sites that we visited on the Welsh side of the border had records sent to the

