

# Abdon District Community Wildlife Group



## Bird survey 2019



# Abdon District Community Wildlife Group Bird Survey Report 2019

## Contents

Abdon District Community Wildlife Group .....	1
<b>Curlews, Lapwings and Other Birds Survey .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Objectives .....	2
Methodology .....	2
Curlew .....	3
Lapwing .....	6
Kestrel .....	8
Other Target Species .....	9
Anecdotal Local Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew .....	10
Objective Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew .....	10
Comparison of Abdon District CWG Results with the Shropshire Bird Atlas 2008-13 .....	11
Use of CWG Survey Results .....	13
Work With Individual Farmers .....	14
Lessons Learnt, to be Applied in 2020 .....	14
Recommendations .....	14
Acknowledgements .....	14
Other Community Wildlife Groups .....	15
Save our Curlews Campaign .....	15
Summary 2019 .....	16
Plans for 2020 .....	16
Further Information .....	16
Appendix 1. Map of Survey Area, showing Square Boundaries and Tetrad Codes ...	17
Appendix 2. Detailed Survey Results .....	18
Appendix 3. Curlew records 2018 (original, smaller, area) .....	19
Appendix 4. Bird Atlas 2008-13 Curlew Distribution map and CWG activity in 2019 ..	20

## Abdon District Community Wildlife Group

Abdon Wildlife Group started as a group of local people with interests in natural history who meet locally to pursue their interests locally be it birds, plants, butterflies and other wildlife.

The Group conducted a Lapwing and Curlew survey in 2018, covering nine 2x2 kilometre squares on the ordnance Survey National Grid, known as “tetrads”, to the west of Brown Clee, using the methodology adopted by Community Wildlife Groups. The results were analysed, and presented to a meeting on 29 November 2018.

On 13 February 2019 the Group expanded its area of operation to 16 tetrads, agreed to repeat the Lapwing and curlew survey in 2019, changed its name to Abdon District Community Wildlife Group, and joined the Community Wildlife Groups website, [www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk](http://www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk)

This report presents the results of this 2019 survey. Results from 2018 are included where appropriate for comparison. The area covered is shown in Appendix 1.

## **Curlews, Lapwings and Other Birds Survey**

### **Objectives**

Participants 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 they are on the *Red List* or *Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern* in the UK because they have suffered large declines in the last 25 or 50 years, and/or are Target Species in the national Biodiversity Action Plan).

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

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

This was the second year in which a bird survey was carried out in this area. It is intended to repeat it annually, to monitor long-term population trends for the two main species, as well as establish the current population and distribution, and use the results to promote conservation and attempt to reverse the decline.

### **Methodology**

The 16 tetrads covered by the Community Wildlife Group, and their reference codes, is shown at Appendix 1.

People who agreed to help were allocated a tetrad, and requested to survey it once during each of three specified two-week periods, around the end of March, end of April, and mid-June.

- The first period follows the arrival of Lapwing and Curlew back on their 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.

Each survey visit concentrated on suitable habitat for the two main target species, and was expected to take around three hours. Participants were provided with detailed survey instructions, and a large scale map of their tetrad (the map filled an A4 sheet of paper) for each survey. The aim was to establish the number of territories (number of breeding pairs) for Lapwing and Curlew; no attempt was made to find nests. All survey work was carried out from public rights of way, unless a surveyor obtained the landowner's permission to look in specific fields.

Participants were familiar with the target species, so no training was needed. Some survey work was carried out in each of the 16 tetrads, and 21 participants contributed 300 hours of survey effort. This represents an excellent effort.

Many surveyors, and other local people, sent in casual records (observations in their survey squares when not actually doing the survey, or in other parts of the area at any time) of Lapwing, Curlew, Kestrel and Red Kite. Such records are extremely useful, as they often include a higher number of birds than seen on the surveys, and they help distinguish between different territories.

Note that some records, of birds heard calling from an unknown position, or seen only in flight with origin or landing place unknown, or believed to be post-breeding flocks or passing through, are not shown on the species maps showing the records received, because they are not helpful in establishing the territories of breeding pairs (the aim of the survey). However, these records are included in the count of records in each tetrad shown in Appendix 2, for completeness. Note also that records listed in Appendix 2 are attributed to the square surveyor, although the survey map has sometimes shown the bird(s) in an adjacent square, which is where they are shown in this report.

The methodology requires observations of a pair together, or a single bird on two of the three surveys, to confirm a territory. However, Curlews in particular 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 or displaying birds are seen or heard concurrently. It must be stressed that on some surveys both the birds in a breeding pair might be seen, but on others only one is seen; that the same birds will probably be seen on more than one survey; and a pair nesting close to the corner of a tetrad might also be recorded in up to three adjacent tetrads, in either different survey periods, or by different surveyors. Therefore the total number of observations made on the surveys will almost certainly be rather more than the total population in the area, and analysis of the results aims to estimate the total number of breeding pairs or territories, and the approximate location of the centre of each territory (i.e. the nest site). The rules of the methodology (the territory mapping method) requires the analysis to produce the lowest population estimate consistent with the records.

## ***Curlew***

The first Curlew map shows all records for 2019, both those found during surveys, and casual reports.

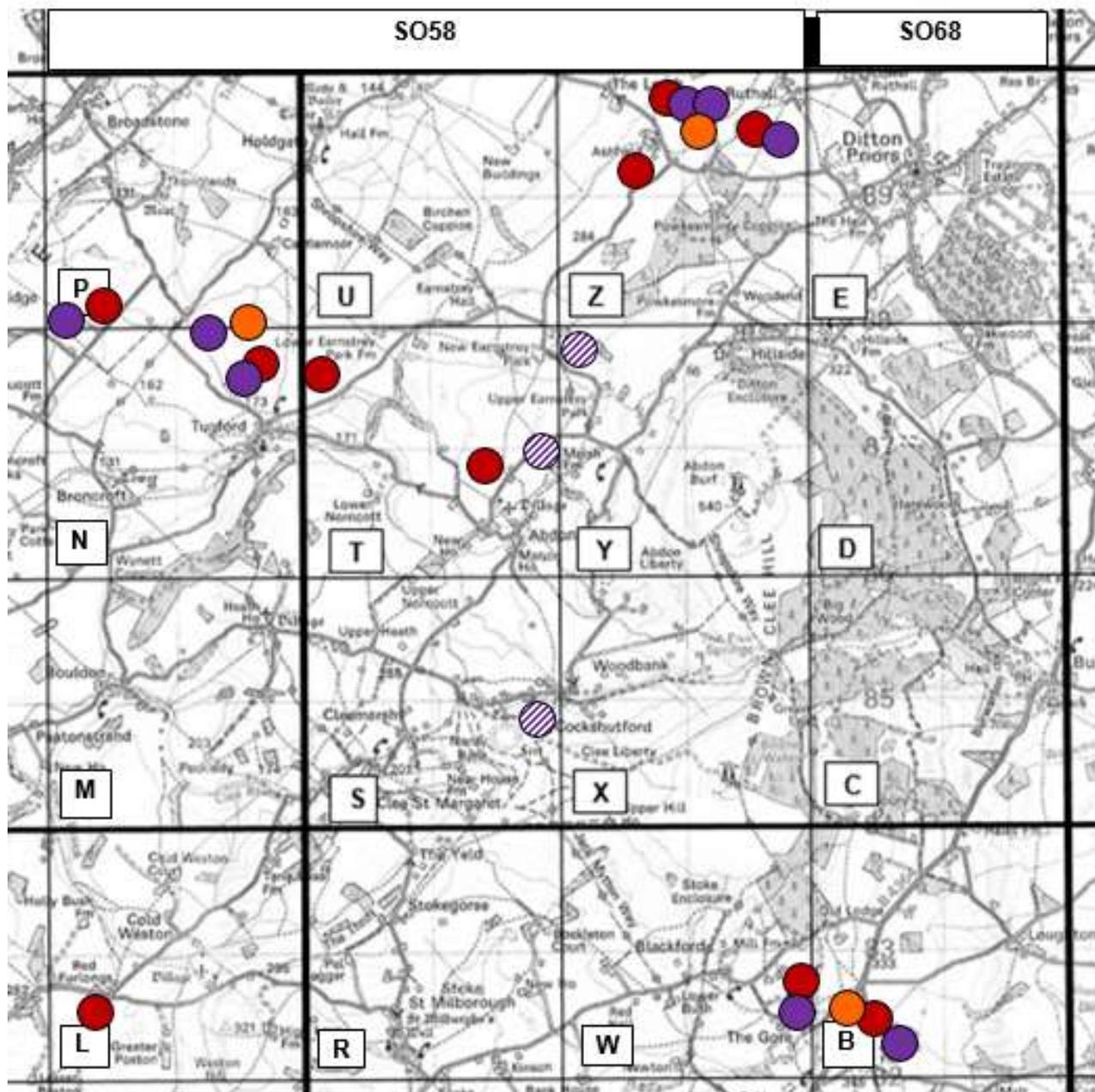
Survey results in 2019 indicate a population of 4 pairs in the nine survey squares (“tetrads”) covered in 2018, plus a pair in SO58N (nest found in 2019 and 2018), another pair in SO68B (known for some years to Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group) and two additional pairs, one in SO58L and the other in SO58P, although one or both nest sites of these pairs may be just to the west of the survey area

However, the square to the west of SO58L (SO58G) has been surveyed by the Clee Hill CWG, and residents in that square report that the Curlews are often heard in SO58L, where they are shown on the Abdon district map, and this is likely to be the nest site.

Up to four Curlew were seen near the nest site in SO68B, suggesting that there may be an additional pair in that square, or SO58W, and one was heard near Cockshutford (see below), another possible additional pair.

The four pairs in the original area were all present in 2018. The 2018 map (see Appendix 3) also identified a pair north of Abdon, near Marsh Farm in SO58T. The survey records were the same in both years, with calling birds heard from New Earnstrey Park almost daily, to the north and east, and to the south, but a thorough search of the area to the south in 2019,

All Curlew records 2019



**Curlew Records**

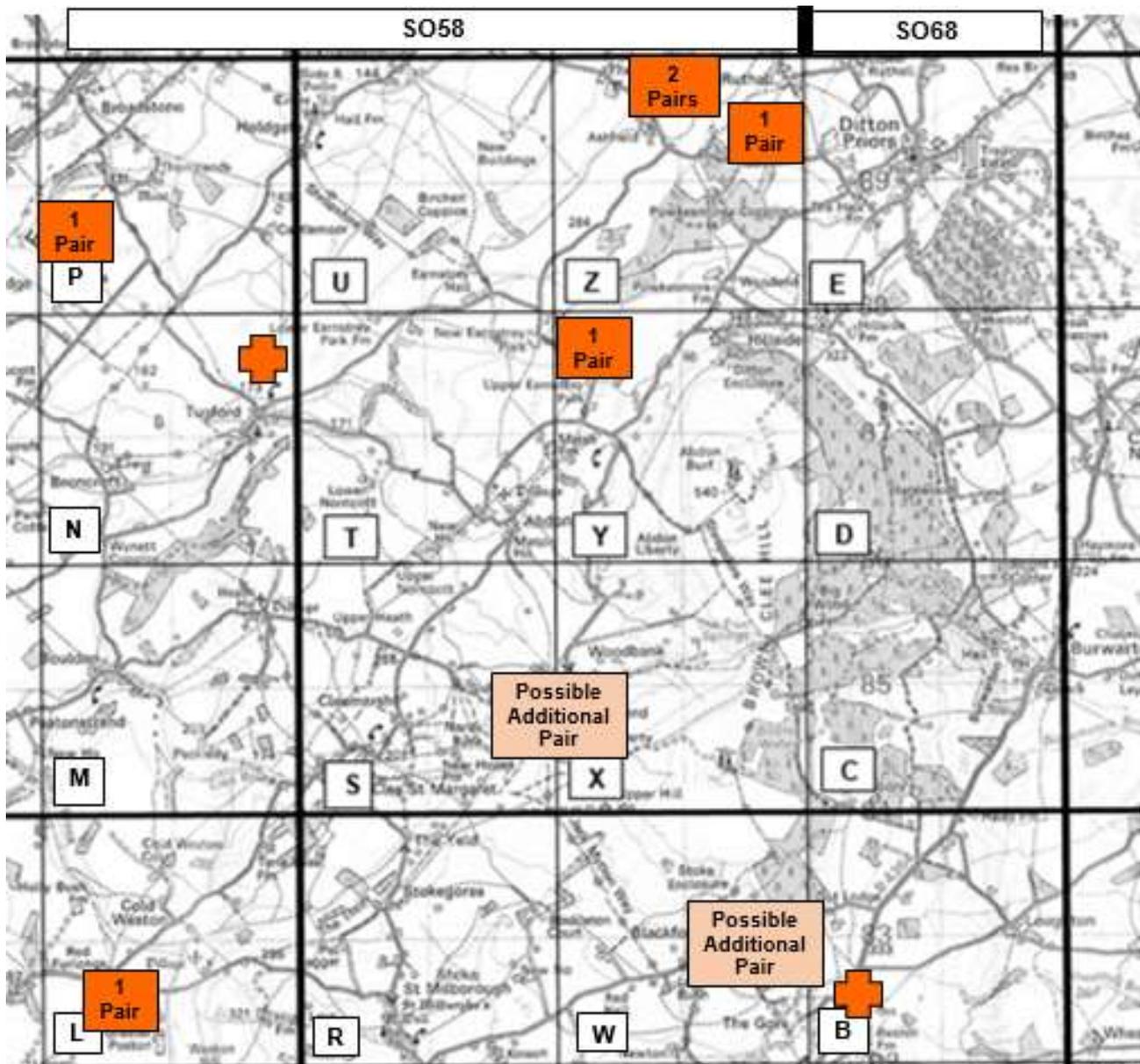
Each dot represents one or two Curlews seen or heard on one of the surveys, and indicates a likely breeding territory

● First survey 23 March – April    
 ● Second survey 20 April- 5 May    
 ● Third survey 8 – 23 June

Hatched dots are casual records (birds seen or heard, but not during a survey), coloured to reflect the survey period.

around Overdale / Marsh Farm, found heavy sheep grazing with no obvious potential nesting ground, and no Curlews. This suggests that the birds heard calling from this area were visiting a feeding area. Significantly, very few concurrent calls were heard, also suggesting

**Curlew nests and territories 2019**



**Curlew Nests and territories**

**SO58L:** Two Curlew, almost certainly a pair, were seen and heard several times on 1 April, but not relocated on 29 April or 22 June.

**SO58N:** Nest found by Miles Leach, and fenced by farmer, on 14 May. This pair responsible for Curlew survey observations nearby.

**SO58P:** Curlews only heard (not seen) in first survey, and seen flying out of the area south-west, might not nest in area.

**SO58T:** Curlews heard just north of Abdon were presumably calling while commuting to a feeding area, which was searched, but no Curlews were located, nor was suitable nesting habitat found.

**SO58Y:** A traditional breeding site with a pair there in 2018. Probably responsible for birds heard calling in SO58T. This pair was mapped in the south-east extremity of SO58Z last year.

**SO58Z:** At least 5 birds, 4 to the west of Rea Brook, and one to the east, all seen or heard concurrently on 5 April, plus a report from the farmer of a pair on to the east of the brook, suggests 3 pairs in the northern half of this square, the same as last year.

**SO68B:** Nest found and fenced by SOS/SWT "Save our Curlews" Campaign. This pair responsible for Curlew survey observations nearby.

only one pair was present, at a traditional site east or north-east of New Earnstrey Park in SO58Y. This casts some doubt on the 2018 analysis, and this will be reviewed next year.

The 2018 map also shows 3 possible additional pairs. In relation to these,

- A Curlew was heard calling from the Cockshutford direction from the track up to Clee Liberty on 1 May, so there may be a pair in SO58X (or S).
- A pair was reported on several dates in late April and early May in the Netchwood area (SO6191) to the north of SO68E, and this pair probably accounts for the record in SO68E in 2018.
- No evidence was found of Curlews near Holdgate (SO58U)

**The population estimate is therefore 7 – 10 pairs in the area surveyed in 2019.**

Efforts will be made to clarify the status of the possible additional pairs next year.

The fenced nest near Tugford (SO58N) contained four eggs. One did not hatch, but the others did, on or before 10 June. Up to six Curlews were seen flying around this and adjacent fields, very vocal and alarm calling, from 10-20 June. If the nest or chicks of a pair of Curlews is threatened by a potential predator, and the pair take defensive action and alarm call, adjacent pairs will come and help, and that is likely to be what happened in this case, indicating that at least one chick was still alive on 20 June.



The fenced nest near Wheathill (SO68B) also contained four eggs. None of them hatched, and they “smelled rotten” when removed after the date when they should have hatched.

The two pairs in SO58Z both apparently produced young, and 5 chicks were seen with 3 adults (the number of adults probably accounted for by one of females leaving: the female often leaves a brood about 10 days after hatching). One of the chicks disappeared, but the farmer believes four chicks fledged. An excellent result.

The outcome of the other nests is unknown.

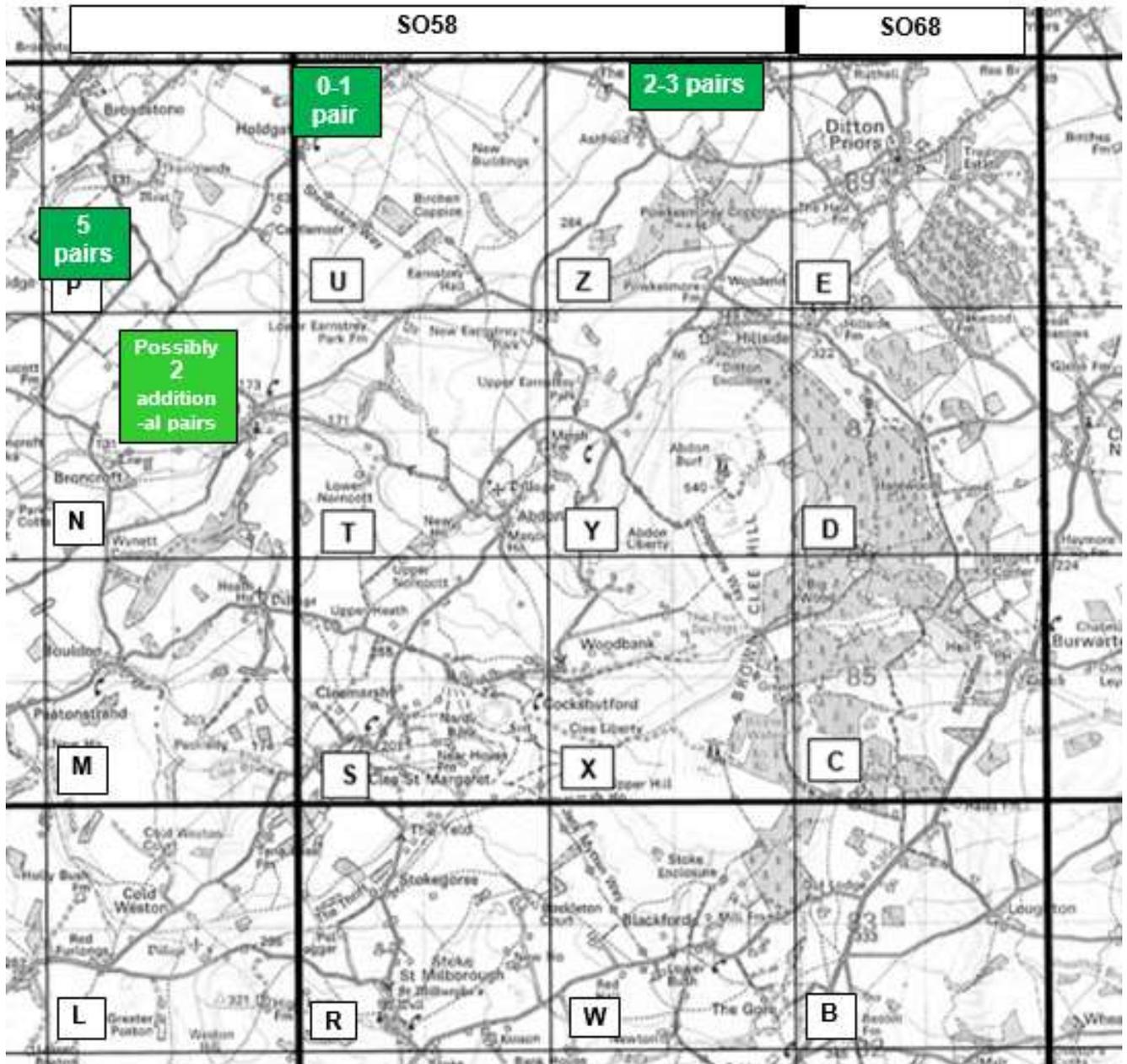
### ***Lapwing***

The Lapwing population estimate is considerably higher than the two pairs found in 2018, one of which was at the same site as the 2-3 pairs in SO58Z. A chick was seen at this site in 2019, and the farmer believes some Lapwing chicks fledged.

The larger 2019 colony, 5 pairs near Broadstone in SO58P, was at a site apparently unoccupied in 2018. Lapwings are much less site-faithful than Curlews, as they have to find fields with bare earth or short grass to nest in, and suitable habitat is moved each year by farm crop rotation. Adults defended the site by chasing off other birds, indicating the presence of eggs or chicks.

**Analysis suggests a population estimate of 7-11, probably 8, breeding pairs**

## Lapwing distribution and observations

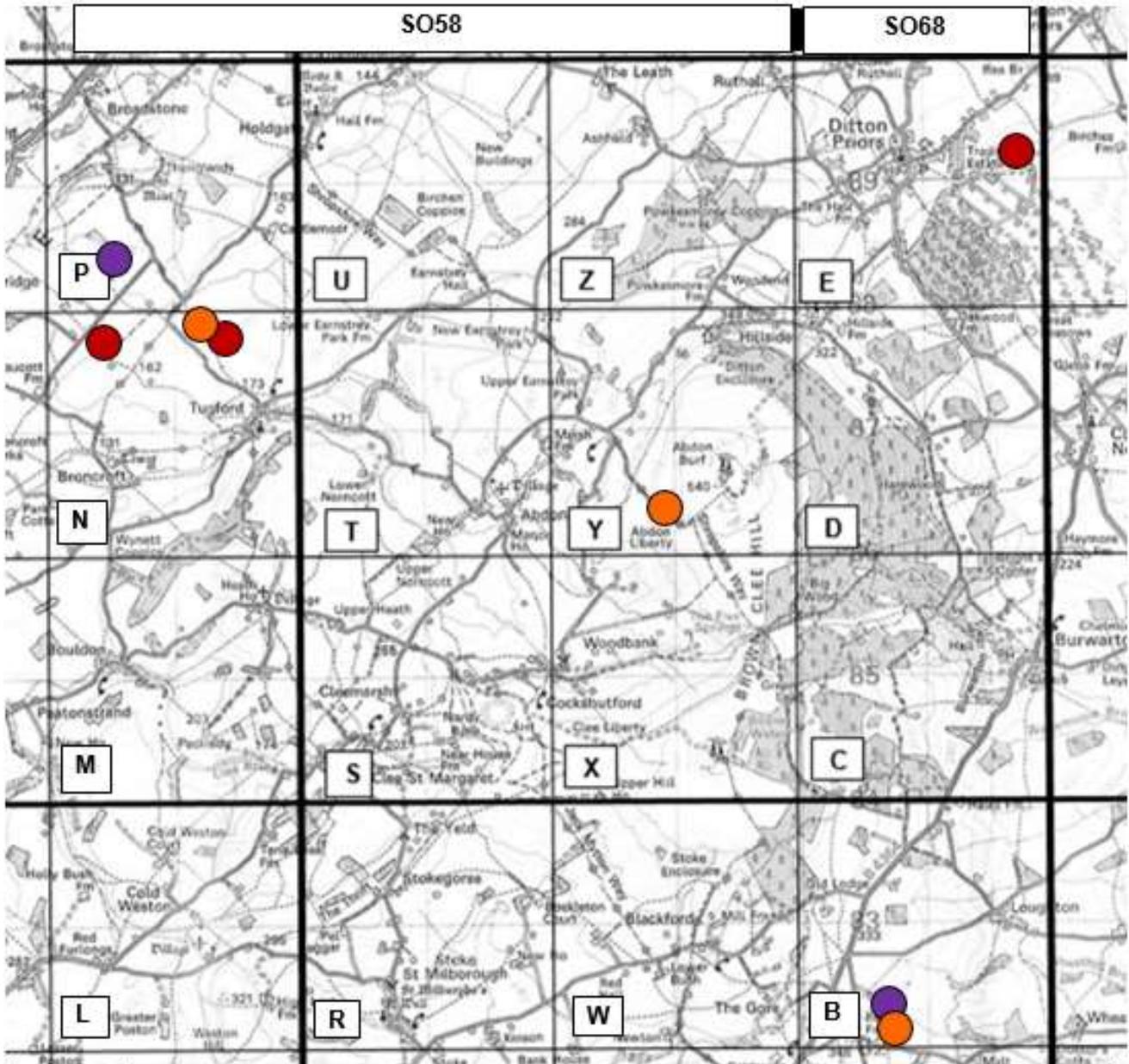


**SO58P:** several birds seen on same two fields on each visit, max. 10 (5 pairs) on 5 May.  
**SO58N:** three birds seen on border with SO58P on 20 April were probably foraging from fields to the west. Four birds seen in the northern part of the square on 8 June may also have been foraging from the population in SO58P, or been displaced from breeding sites elsewhere. This is unlikely to be a breeding site, as none were seen here on the first and second surveys, and Lapwings have usually moved away from breeding sites by June.  
**SO58U:** A single bird seen on 28 April, but not on the first or third surveys, may have been part of a breeding pair (with the female sitting on a nest out of sight), but is more likely to have been a visitor from a square to the north.  
**SO58Z:** five seen on 4 April, and four in the same field on 1 May, suggests 2, or more likely 3, breeding pairs (with additional birds out of sight, sitting on nests. A chick was seen with 4 adults on 13 June

**Population 2019: 7-11 breeding pairs, probably 8**

# Kestrel

Kestrels were seen in 4 or five locations, suggesting this as the minimum number of breeding pairs



**Kestrel Records**

Each dot represents one or two Kestrels seen on one of the surveys, and indicates a likely breeding territory

● First survey 23 March – April    
 ● Second survey 20 April- 5 May    
 ● Third survey 8 – 23 June

There were no casual records (birds seen or heard, but not during a survey)

**Population estimate: 4 – 5 pairs**

## Other Target Species

The Other Target Species recorded during the surveys are summarised in Table 1

**Table 1. Other Target species**

Tetrad		Maximum single count from all surveys in each tetrad										
		Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Whin-chat	Spotted Flycatcher	Tree Sparrow	Bull-finch	Yellow-hammer
SO58	L		3				3		1		1	1
SO58	M		2	2			2					2
SO58	N	3	1	3			9	1			1	5
SO58	P	1	1	2			3			2		4
SO58	R		2	1						1		
SO58	S			2	1			2				
SO58	T		1	6			13		2		2	6
SO58	U		1	2			4					1
SO58	W											
SO58	X		1	20	12	3						
SO58	Y		1	2	1							
SO58	Z			1		1						1
SO68	B	1	2	4		1	4				1	3
SO68	C		1	2		2	2					1
SO68	D			3			2			1	2	1
SO68	E		1				1					
<b>Total</b>		<b>5</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>25</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 primary aim was to look for Lapwing and Curlew, and all participants were familiar with both these two species. Other target species were not recorded in only one square.

Note that participants 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).

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 of the total population will have been recorded.

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. The results of every survey are shown in Appendix 2.

Red Kite appears to be well established in the area: it was not recorded in only four squares, reflecting the rapid spread of Kites in recent years. The first successful breeding in Shropshire for 130 years occurred as recently as 2006, but 35 nests, and another five pairs, were found in 2019, and there are probably many more pairs. No nests were found in this

area, but several were suspected. They are still mainly in the south-west hills, but it is likely that breeding will become a regular occurrence here in the near future.

Most species were found only in small numbers, reflecting the scarcity of their habitat, and four were not recorded at all: Snipe, Barn Owl, Dipper and Yellow Wagtail. Where they are found, these species do not occupy the habitats targeted in this survey.

Five other species were recorded in one tetrad only: Grey Partridge (SO58N), Swift (nest sites - two in SO68B), Wheatear (SO58W), Stonechat (two in SO58Z), Linnet (6 in SO58N) and Reed Bunting (SO58N). Grey Partridge has virtually disappeared from Shropshire. Casual records of Swift nest sites would be gratefully received, as the Swift population in England has declined by 50% since 1995. Records are passed to the Shropshire Swift Group, which is organising a conservation programme for them.

Cuckoo is increasingly rare, but, encouragingly, seven were recorded in a total of four squares. It has declined by 41% in the UK between 1995 and 2017, and by 70% in England and 77% in the English West Midlands in the same period.

### ***Anecdotal Local Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew***

Participants 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.

### ***Objective Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew***

In England, Lapwing and Curlew are in decline, nationally, and in Shropshire. Objective evidence for this comes from Bird Atlas work, and the Breeding Bird Survey carried out each year by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO), and the summary tables in the annual State of the UK's Birds.

In the UK, Curlew has declined by 65% between 1970 and 2015, and 48% between 1995 and 2017. In England the decline has been 30%, and in Wales 68%, between 1995 and 2017.

Lapwing has declined by 64% in the UK between 1970 and 2015, and 42% between 1995 and 2017. In England the decline has been 28%, between 1995 and 2017. The decline in Wales since 1995 has been so large that there is insufficient data now to calculate a change

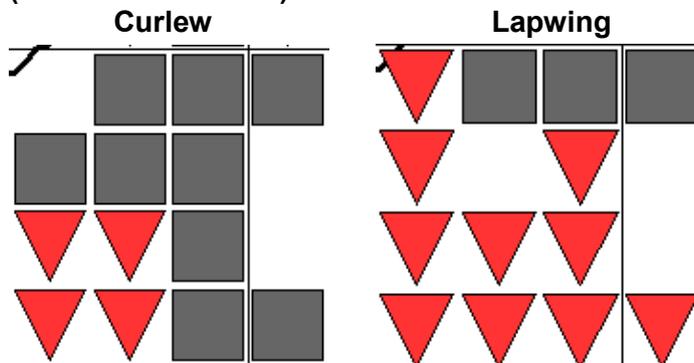
Shropshire Ornithological Society undertook six years fieldwork between 1985 and 1990, and covered all 870 tetrads in the County. The results were published in *An Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Shropshire* in 1992. The survey was repeated in 2008-13, with similar amounts of fieldwork effort, and the Atlas maps (included in *The Birds of Shropshire*, published by Liverpool University Press in 2019) are directly comparable.

The resulting breeding distribution change maps for the Abdon CWG area are shown here. The grid lines across the top separate 10km squares SO58 and SO68 from SO59 and SO69 on the Ordnance Survey National Grid, while the vertical line separates SO58 from SO68. Each symbol represents a tetrad (2x2km square on the OS grid, 12 tetrads in the 10km square SO58 and four in SO68).

Tetrads where each species was found in both Atlas surveys are shown as grey squares, and tetrads where it was found in the earlier period, but not the more recent period, are

marked with red downward triangles. It was not found in either period in the blank squares, and a gain in the later period is shown as a green upward triangle. It will be seen that the range of both species declined substantially in this area in that 20-25 year period. Curlew was still present in 9 tetrads, but lost from 4, while Lapwing was still present in only three, and lost from 10.

### Breeding Distribution Change Maps for the Abdon District CWG area (1985-90 to 2008-13)



Surveys including counts complement these maps. The county Lapwing population has fallen from about 3,000 pairs in 1990 to only about 800 in 2013, a decline of around 70%. The Curlew population has fallen from about 700 pairs in 1990 to about 160 pairs in 2010 (a 77% decline).

Maps copyright Shropshire Ornithological Society.  
Not to be reproduced without prior permission

Surveys carried out by several other Community Wildlife Groups suggest that the population has fallen further since

2010.

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)

Action to reverse the declines must start by improving the breeding success of the remaining pairs, so conservation action in the areas where they are still found, such as the Abdon District CWG area, is vital. Such action is being taken, nationally and locally. 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.

Both species nest on farmland, and the Countryside Stewardship Agri-environment Scheme (part of the system of payments to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union) includes provision to reward farmers for sensitive management of habitat on their farms, and providing other environmental benefits. The scheme includes specific prescriptions, and payments, for Lapwing and Curlew habitat, but it unlikely that new applications will be successful.

A new Agriculture Bill has been submitted to Parliament by the Government, and it remains to be seen whether the post-Brexit agri-environment schemes will be effective in reversing the decline of farmland birds.

### Comparison of Abdon District CWG Bird Survey Results with the Shropshire Bird Atlas 2008-13

The next two pairs of maps show, on the left, the results of the Bird Atlas 2008-13 for the 43 tetrads covered by the survey, and, on the right, the results of the survey in this area, as shown on the 2018 maps in last year's report, and the 2019 maps on pages 4 - 6. Each dot represents at least one observation during the Atlas period, or during the 2018 and 2019 surveys, in the appropriate tetrad.

- Large dot = Confirmed Breeding (Bird seen sitting on nest, or chicks seen)
- Middle dot = Probable Breeding (Pair or display seen)

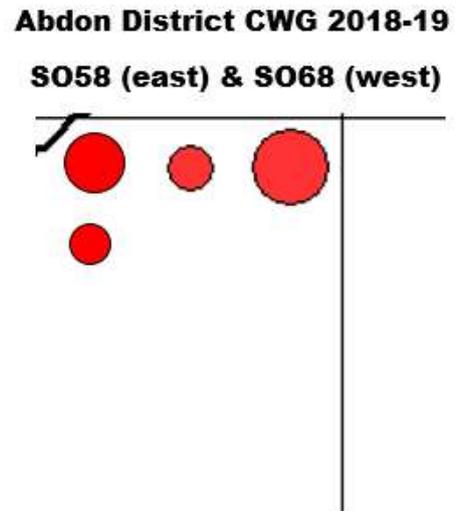
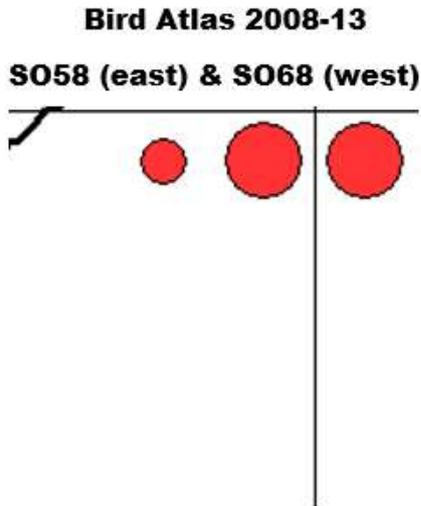
- Small dot = Seen or heard in suitable habitat
- No dot = Not found



**Abdon District**  
Community Wildlife Group

**Lapwing**

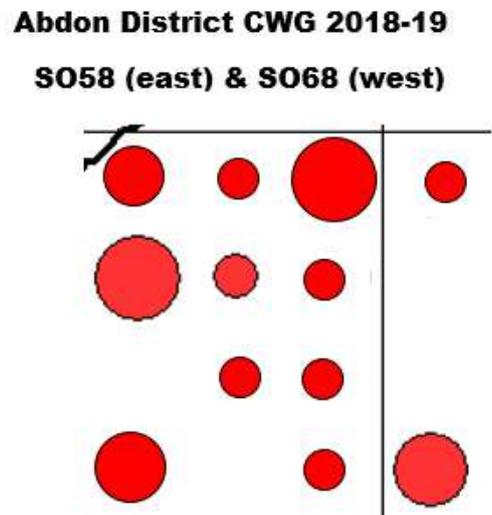
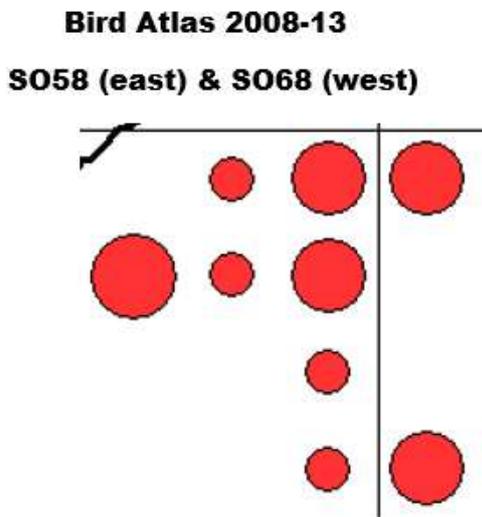
Comparison between Bird Atlas 2008-13 (left)  
and CWG survey 2018-19



**Abdon District**  
Community Wildlife Group

**Curlew**

Comparison between Bird Atlas 2008-13 (left)  
and CWG survey 2018-19



It must be stressed that the Atlas map includes survey work over six years, not two, but most tetrads will not have been visited every year, and it was only necessary to find the highest level of breeding evidence once in the six years, and the surveyors were looking for breeding evidence for all species.

Also, while Curlews, as long as they survive, are generally site faithful, Lapwing on arable farmland have to follow the crop rotation to find bare earth or spring crops, so the same pair(s) may occupy several tetrads in a period of several years.

Even so, it is unlikely that the 2018 and 2019 surveys found all the pairs, and results should improve as surveyors get to know their squares better, and more people find out about the survey and contribute records or information. It is likely to take 2-3 years to build up a complete picture.

However, the two target species are conspicuous and noisy, so most will not have been overlooked, and these maps suggest strongly that the decline of both species has continued since the Atlas survey in this area too.

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

Most importantly in the short term, the survey results will be made available to Natural England. They show the importance of particular areas for these species, which will hopefully encourage farmers to manage their land sensitively, and provide Natural England with objective evidence to judge individual farm applications to join Countryside Stewardship, and information to target the use of their limited resources more effectively.

The results also reinforce and supplement the results from other Community Wildlife Groups operating in the Shropshire Hills, and the north-west. The former 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 now been revised to cover the five years 2019 – 24.

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

Conservation action to halt and reverse the decline of Curlew in particular is becoming increasingly important at the regional and national level. The South of England Curlew Forum is encouraging local conservation projects, and collating results from Shropshire and all counties to the south of us, to show that Curlews are still declining, and productivity (the number of fledged young per breeding pair) is not sufficient to maintain even the existing depleted population.

Shropshire has about 20 – 25% of the Curlew records contributed to the Forum, including those from this Group.

The same information is contributed to a national Curlew Species Recovery Group, comprising RSPB (who provide the chair / secretariat), BTO, GWCT, WWT, JNCC, National Trust, Birdwatch Ireland, National Parks Ireland and the four country-based statutory agencies. The purpose of the group is to bring together five statutory agencies and various non-governmental organisations to shape and drive a co-ordinated programme for curlew conservation

More importantly in the longer term, the location of Curlew territories and nest sites will provide vital information to the *Save our Curlews* campaign. Subject to locating the approximate locations of the centre of several Curlew territories (i.e. the field(s) containing the nest site), and the appeal raising the necessary funds to employ someone to find the nests and put up and maintain electric fences to protect them, it is hoped to start nest protection in the near future. A professional ornithologist will be employed to find nests once we are confident that we have located several territories. This will obviously require permission for access to the appropriate land, and co-operation from farmers on how their land is managed, so building relationships with individual farmers will be a crucial part of our work in future years

### ***Work With Individual Farmers***

Several members talked to local farmers while conducting their surveys, who were friendly and helpful. A lot of useful information was received, including reports of Curlew nests in previous years, and a Red Kite nest. Some volunteered access to their land, particularly to find and protect Curlew nests if and when this work starts in the area.

A record has been kept of the contact details of these farmers, and efforts will be made to keep in touch with them as the group, and the *Save our Curlews* campaign, develops.

### ***Lessons Learnt, to be Applied in 2020***

More emphasis will be placed on noting the behaviour of Lapwing and Curlew, to try and ascertain whether birds are part of the same breeding pair, or different ones, and whether they were defending nests or chicks, indicating the nesting field and level of breeding success.

### ***Recommendations***

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

### ***Acknowledgements***

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

Guy Cholmeley

Sue Cornah

Sue Crichton

Pam Dicer

Milla Fiddian-Green

Cliff Kimber

Miles Leach

Karl Liebscher

Bob Milward

Scarlett Penn

Alison Redgrave

Ruby Reseigh

Trish Shotton

Karen Slater

Neil Slater

Dee Snape

John Thirlwell

Penny Unitt

Kathy Watson

Robert Whitlock

Ann Wishart

Special thanks to Miles Leach, who initiated the Community Wildlife Group, organised the survey, publicised the meetings, distributed information to members, organised the training, and collected and collated the results. Miles also organised the fencing of the Curlew nest near Tugford.

Thanks to local farmers Wally Williams and Tom Morris for information about nesting Curlews, and Wyndham Williams for fencing the nest that was found.

Thanks to Leo Smith (Curlew) and Celia Todd (Lapwing) for the photos on the cover, and Miles Leach for the photos of the Curlew nest

### ***Other Community Wildlife Groups***

The first Group, the Upper Onny Wildlife Group, first surveyed Lapwing and Curlew in 2004, and has done so every year since. Upper Clun CWG started in 2007, Kemp Valley in 2009, Clee Hill CWG in 2012, and Rea Valley and Camlad CWGs (part of the Stiperstones-Corndon HLF funded Landscape Partnership Scheme) in 2014. Stretton Hills CWG was launched in 2012, and surveyed Lapwing and Curlew for the first time in 2017. The Three Parishes CWG, covering Weston Rhyn, St. Martin's and Gobowen, undertook a Bird Survey in 2017. All these groups continued with a Lapwing and Curlew survey in 2018, when they were joined by new CWGs covering Oswestry south (Tanat to Perry) and Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence. A further Group, centred on Abdon (near Brown Clee), also started in 2018, the initiative of a local resident.

All these groups (except Kemp Valley, which has no breeding Curlews) continued with their surveys in 2019. Clee Hill and Abdon extended their areas, to close the gap between them and monitor known additional Curlew territories. Between them, the 10 groups cover around three-quarters of the County's breeding Curlews. The Curlew distribution map from the County Bird Atlas 2008-13 is attached as Appendix 4, overlain with the Community Wildlife Group areas.

In 2019, these Groups covered 267 survey squares (tetrads), totalling 1,048 square kilometres. There were 320 participants, who spent a total of more than 2,350 hours on survey work, and 94 - 115 Curlew territories were identified. This is a clear indication of the concern that local people have for the decline of Curlew, and their willingness to support action to do something about it.

Further information can be found on the joint website for all the Community Wildlife Groups in Shropshire, [www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk](http://www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk)

### ***Save our Curlews Campaign***

SWT supported the *Save our Curlews* campaign and appeal during 2019, but has subsequently withdrawn from it. SOS is continuing to support the appeal in 2020, and has also made a commitment to part-fund the campaign itself over the next three years. Applications will also be made to other funding bodies.

The identification of Curlew territories by the Community Wildlife Groups is the foundation of the campaign. When local knowledge has located them sufficiently for a professional ornithologist to have a good chance of finding several nests, it is intended to find them and protect them with an electric fence, and then radio tag the chicks that hatch, to gain information on how they feed, and the threats they face. The work will hopefully be funded by the campaign and appeal.

Such work was carried out in the Upper Clun and Clee Hill CWG areas in 2018 and 2019. In 2018, three nests were found and fenced in each area. No chicks survived in the Upper Clun, but at least one, probably two, fledged in Clee Hill. In 2019, four nests were found and fenced in the Clee Hill area, five chicks were tagged and followed, and a brood of three all fledged. Unfortunately, because insufficient funds were available to allocate enough time to nest

finding, only one nest was found in the Upper Clun, and permission could not be obtained to fence it. Detailed reports of the work in each of these two areas, and more information about the aims of the campaign, can be found on the SOS website [www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/](http://www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/) If you want to donate to the appeal see the same website.

### **Summary 2019**

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

All 16 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 Abdon District CWG area are estimated at 7 - 10 pairs of Curlew, and 7 - 11 pairs of Lapwing, probably 8.

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

### **Plans for 2020**

The Group intends to repeat the Bird Survey next year, and in subsequent years, to clarify the number of pairs of Curlew and Lapwing actually present, and the location of nest sites and foraging areas, and work towards regular monitoring to establish a population trend. More participants are needed, so we hope to recruit new members.

The Group's meeting at 7.30pm on Thursday 12 March 2020 will largely be about planning the 2020 survey. Everyone interested in birds is welcome to participate. The venue is Abdon Village Hall.

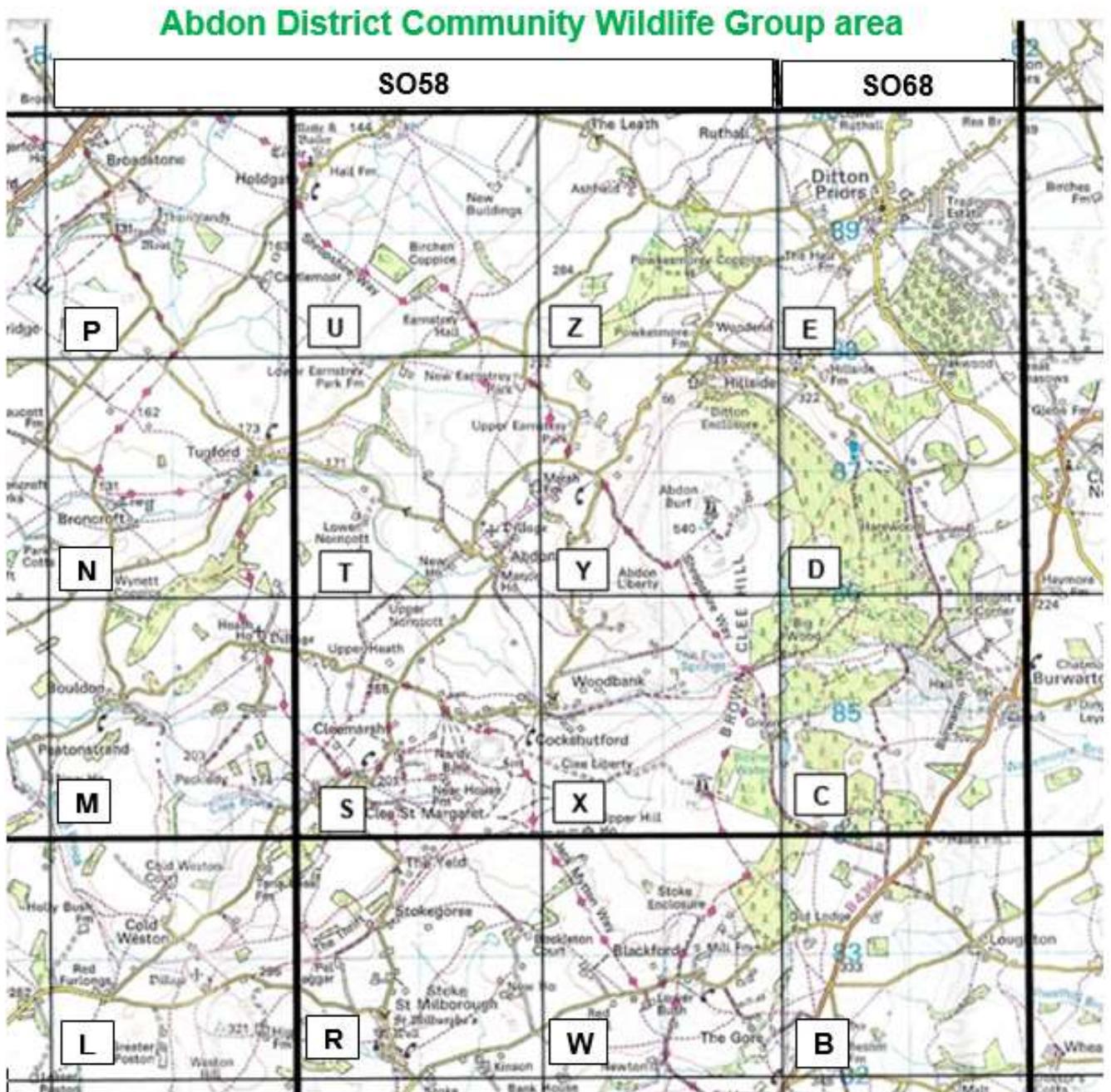
### **Further Information**

- Miles Leach                      [milesleach712@gmail.com](mailto:milesleach712@gmail.com)
- Leo Smith                        [leo@leosmith.org.uk](mailto:leo@leosmith.org.uk)                      01694 720296

Further copies of this report can be obtained from either.

Leo Smith  
Miles Leach  
March 2020

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



## Appendix 2. Detailed Survey Results

First period (23 March - 7 April)

Tetrad	Square Surveyor	Time		Number of Each Species Recorded																			
		Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Grey Partridge	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Swift (sites)	Duncock	Wheat-ear	Whin-chat	Stone-chat	Spotted Fly-catcher	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bull-finch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting	
SO58 L	Cliff Kimber & Scarlett Penn	4	0		2		2															1	1
SO58 M	Judi Major & Rob Woods	5	0				2																
SO58 N	Miles Leach	3	15		2	3	1		2														1
SO58 P	Kathy Watson & Ann Wishart	3	20	7	3				2														
SO58 R	Ruby Reseigh, Sue Cornah, Mila Fiddian-Green	6	10				1											1					
SO58 S	John Thirlwell	3	0						2														
SO58 T	R, RJ and S Whitlock	4	15		2				4												1	4	
SO58 U	Neil Slater	3	15						2														
SO58 W	Karen Slater & Guy Cholmeley	4	0				1		1	1													
SO58 X	Penny Unitt & Felicity Burdara	4	45																				
SO58 Y	Alison Redgrave	2	55							1													
SO58 Z	Karl Liebscher & Dee Snape	3	20	5	5		1		2														
SO68 B	Sue Crichton	5	15		3				3									1			2	1	
SO68 C	Miles Leach	2	45				1																
SO68 D	Alison Redgrave	1	55	No target species seen																			
SO68 E	Trish Shotton	10	0			1	1															1	
<b>Total</b>		<b>67</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	

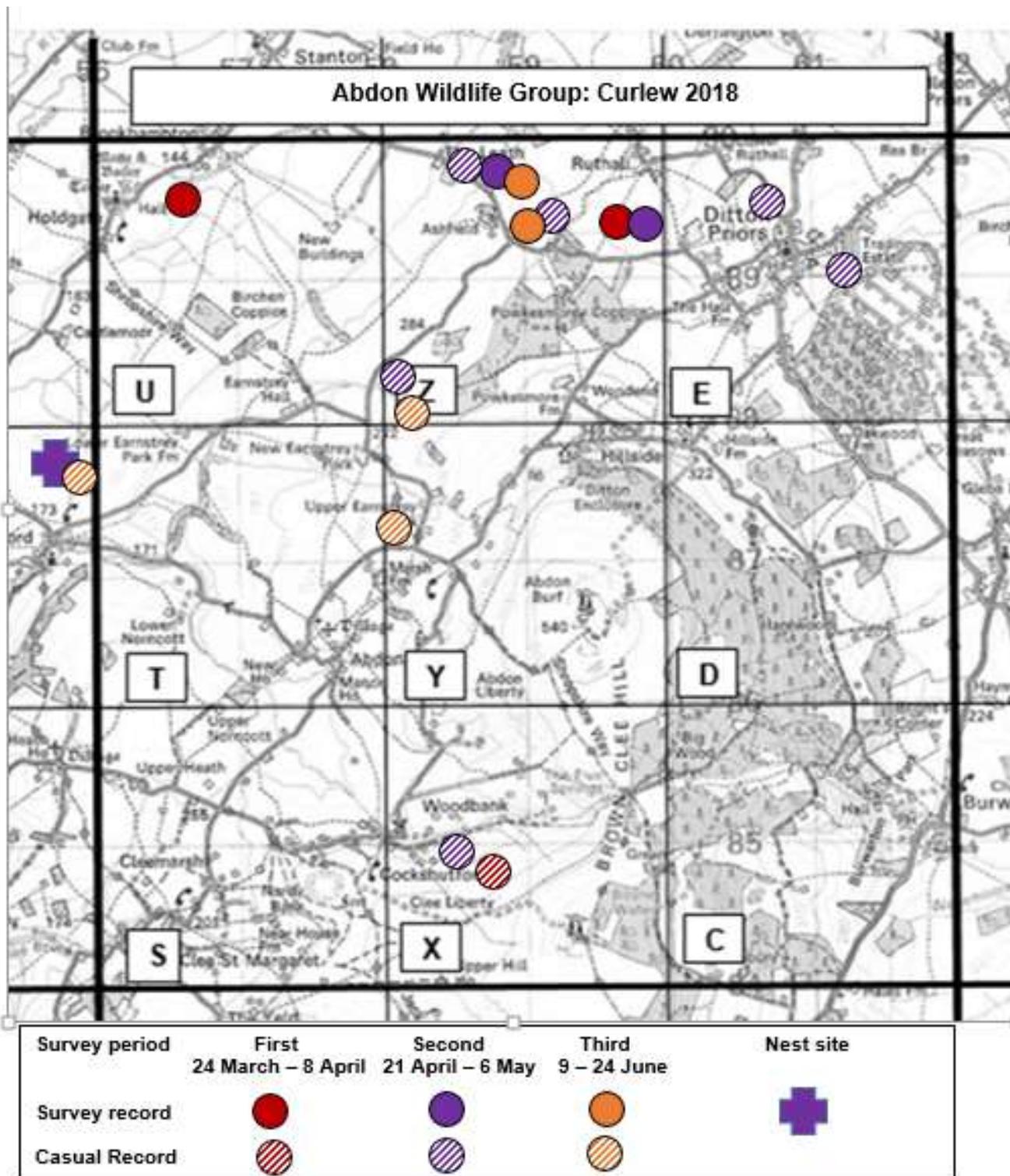
Second period (20 April - 5 May)

Tetrad	Square Surveyor	Time		Number of Each Species Recorded																			
		Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Grey Partridge	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Swift (sites)	Duncock	Wheat-ear	Whin-chat	Stone-chat	Spotted Fly-catcher	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bull-finch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting	
SO58 L	Cliff Kimber & Scarlett Penn	3	10				2																
SO58 M	Miles Leach	3	5						2														2
SO58 N	Miles Leach	3	20	3	3			1	3											6			5
SO58 P	Kathy Watson & Ann Wishart	5	40	10		1			2									2					4
SO58 R	Ruby Reseigh, Sue Cornah, Mila Fiddian-Green	7	0				2		1														
SO58 S	John Thirlwell	3	0						1														
SO58 T	Robert & Ragni Whitlock	4	0		4		1														1	3	
SO58 U	Neil Slater	3	0	1					1					4									1
SO58 W	Karen Slater & Guy Cholmeley	2	30											1									
SO58 X	Penny Unitt & Felicity Burdara	2	30						20	12	3												
SO58 Y	Alison Redgrave	2	35	No target species seen																			
SO58 Z	Karl Liebscher & Dee Snape	3	25	4	4				1		1											1	
SO68 B	Sue Crichton	8	30		4	1	1		4		1			4								3	
SO68 C	Bob Milward & Pam Dicer	6	0											1								1	
SO68 D	Alison Redgrave	1	40	No target species seen																			
SO68 E	Trish Shotton			Survey not completed																			
<b>Total</b>		<b>59</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	

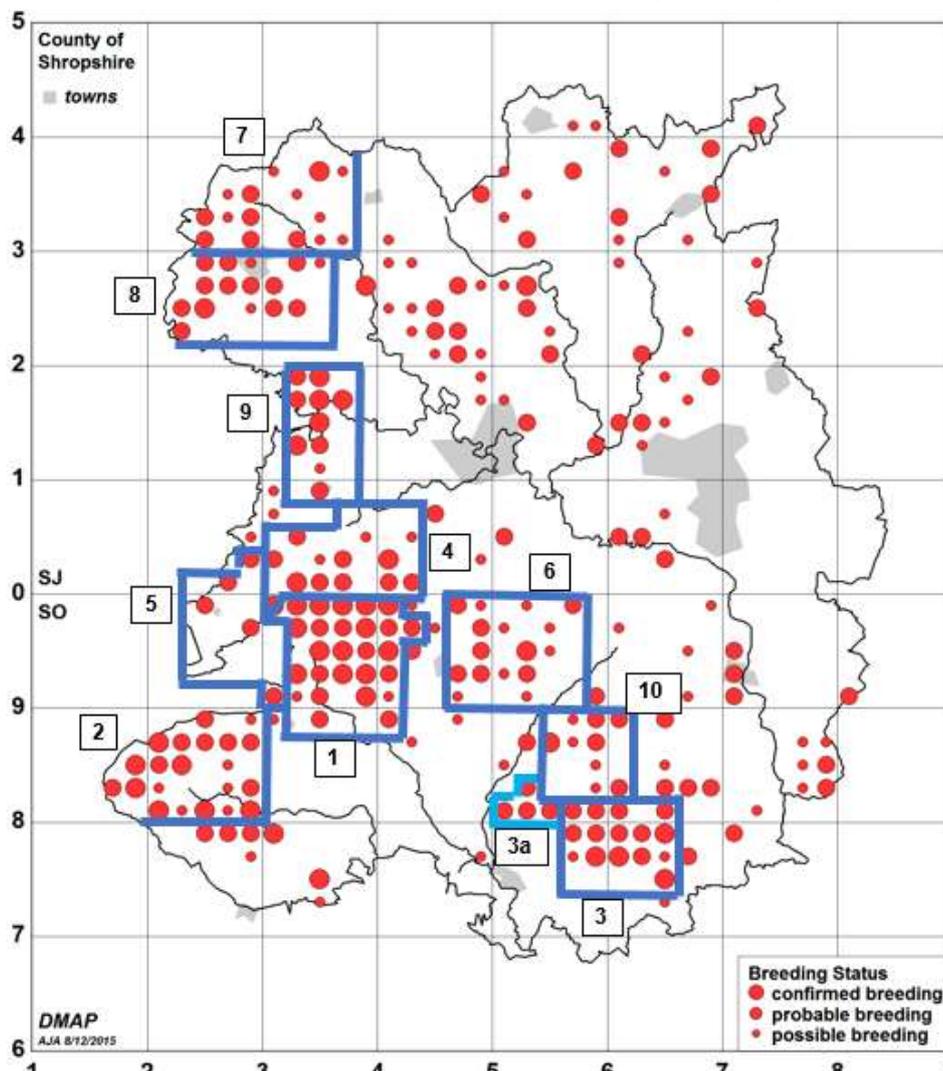
Third period (8 - 23 June)

Tetrad	Square Surveyor	Time		Number of Each Species Recorded																			
		Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Grey Partridge	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Swift (sites)	Duncock	Wheat-ear	Whin-chat	Stone-chat	Spotted Fly-catcher	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bull-finch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting	
SO58 L	Cliff Kimber & Scarlett Penn	3	0				3							1			1				1		
SO58 M	Miles Leach			Survey not completed																			
SO58 N	Miles Leach	2	25	4	1	1	1		3					3						1	1		
SO58 P	Ann Wishart	3	5	7			1							3									2
SO58 R	Ruby Reseigh, Sue Cornah, Mila Fiddian-Green	7	0																				
SO58 S	John Thirlwell	3	0						2	1													
SO58 T	Robert Whitlock	3	50				1		6					6						2		6	
SO58 U	Neil Slater	3	0				1		2					4									
SO58 W	Karen Slater & Guy Cholmeley			Survey not completed																			
SO58 X	Penny Unitt	5	15				1		6	4													
SO58 Y	Alison Redgrave	3	20						2														
SO58 Z	Karl Liebscher & Dee Snape	2	40	4	1				1							2							
SO68 B	Sue Crichton	6	0		2	1	2				1	2									1	2	
SO68 C	Bob Milward & Pam Dicer	3	20								2			2									
SO68 D	Alison Redgrave	2	10	No target species seen																			
SO68 E	Trish Shotton			Survey not completed																			
<b>Total</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	

Appendix 3. Curlew records 2018 (original, smaller, area)



**Appendix 4. Bird Atlas 2008-13 Curlew Distribution map, overlain by Community Wildlife Group areas, and table of CWG data and survey activity in 2019**



Group	Area		First Year	Curlew		% decline since First Year	Participants		
	Survey squares (tetrads)	(sq. kms.)		Breeding Pairs (2019)			No. people	Hours	Minutes
				Min	Max				
1 Upper Onny	31.5	125	2004	27	32	31	31	283	15
2 Upper Clun	31	110	2007	6	10	60	51	150	0
3 Clee Hill	20	80	2012	7	7	46	22	181	2
3a Clee Hill (extension)	4 *	16	2019	6	6	n/a	1	26	30
4 Rea Valley	25.5	102	2014	9	10	n/a	24	173	24
5 Camlad Valley	11 **	44	2014	3	3	n/a	18	119	25
6 Strettons area	30	120	2017	5	8	n/a	45	373	38
7 Three Parishes	28	107	2017	3	4	n/a	21	220	10
8 Tanat to Perry (Oswestry south)	43	172	2018	15	19	n/a	65	356	10
9 Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence	27	108	2018	5	6	n/a	20	176	38
10 Abdon	16 *	64	2018	8	10	n/a	22	298	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>1048</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>115</b>		<b>320</b>	<b>2355</b>	<b>17</b>

Orange highlight = 3 CWGs incorporating "Curlew Country" area (76 tetrads)

\*\* Area also includes 9 tetrads mainly in Wales (Camlad CWG = 20 tetrads), with 2-3 pairs of Curlew

Green highlight = 3 CWGs established in 2018

\* In 2019, Clee Hill took on an additional 4 tetrads to the west, and Abdon took on an additional 7 tetrads to the west and south, to close the gap between the two areas, and cover additional squares with known Curlew territories. Some CWG areas include part-tetrads, so the total area is a bit less than the numbers of (whole or part) squares X 4