Camlad Valley Community Wildlife Group

Celebrating wildlife in Churchstoke, Hyssington and the Priest Weston area

Annual Report 2016-17

Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country
LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

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Contents

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

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$_2$ 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/).

Moth surveying at The Bog Mine site

Now in its fourth 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.

Following the example of other CWGs in Shropshire, the Camlad Valley 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. Projects, such as *Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics* and *Wildflower Meadows and Verges*, continue to inform future management of sites, whereas nest box schemes and the involvement of Young Rangers and *Shropshire Wild Teams* ensures that the project engages local people - experts, enthusiasts and amateurs alike.

As the LPS enters its final year there is a growing emphasis on project legacy and supporting the groups' moves towards greater independence. With this in mind, a questionnaire has been designed to evaluate the LPS CWG project since it began; to gather members views on the Group, post-LPS funding, and to elicit ideas on possible future direction.

Please follow this link to the questionnaire: https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BKG9P2V. Your thoughts and comments are most valuable and your support, as always, is most appreciated.

2. Curlews, Lapwings and Other Birds Survey

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 Natural England's Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme, are on the *Red List* or *Amber List* of *Birds of Conservation Concern* because they have suffered large declines in the last 25 or 50 years, and are Target Species in one of the UK 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
- Spotted Flycatcher
- Tree Sparrow
- Linnet
- Bullfinch
- Yellowhammer
- Reed Bunting

This was the third 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 on page 12.

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 1st April).
- The second period is the best time to find breeding Curlew (first egg date is usually around 30th 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 was unchanged from 2014 and 2015

A training meeting was arranged for those that wanted one, on Monday 28 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 emailed in December.

Survey work was carried out in 14 of the 20 tetrads, and members spent over 100 hours on it, a similar result to last year, but rather less than in 2014, when comparative coverage was 18 tetrads covered in 120 hours.

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 – 8 pairs (2 – 4 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, and partly because Curlews heard several times just south of Hyssington were probably visiting from the territory to the south, but may perhaps have been a separate pair). Two were seen infrequently to the east of Corndon Hill, and were thought to be visitors from the Upper Onny area. An additional observation of a single bird, shown on the map but not included in the total, may possibly indicate additional pairs.

Six squares were not surveyed, but no Curlews were found in any of them last year. A pair was found in SJ20Q, where a pair was found in 2014 but not last year, when the square was surveyed only once. It is therefore possible that pair was overlooked last year.

The observations were passed on to the LPS Nest Monitoring Project, to assist the nest finder. No evidence was found of any 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 2017 should help consolidate the picture, provided that the squares that were not surveyed in 2015 or 2016 are covered then.

Over 60 Curlews have been colour-ringed at the Dolydd Hafren Montgomery Wildlife Trust Reserve on the River Severn near Welshpool in March, in either 2015 or 2016, and two were found breeding in the area, one near Owlbury and the other near Marton.

From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Curlew population in the area in 2016 is 7 – 8 breeding pairs (2 – 4 in Wales, and 4 – 5 in England), compared with 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 2017, 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 10 pairs of Lapwing in four groups. Two groups containing a total of six pairs were in wet meadows in Wales, near the Camlad. Two pairs bred at the more easterly of these two sites last year, and there was one pair there in 2014. The outcome of the nests is not known.

There were also four pairs at two sites on arable farmland in England, in SO29N and SO28T. None were found in this area in 2015, but three pairs were seen in SO29M in 2014.

A pair flying across the Montgomery road, near Chirbury, towards Winsbury on 9 May, and one next to the pond at Walcot, just outside Chirbury, may have been from these four pairs, but the

two squares were not surveyed either this year or last year, and SO29U was not surveyed in 2014 either, so they may have been additional pairs. 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 10 – 12 breeding pairs (6 – 8 in England and 4 in Wales) in 2016, compared with 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.

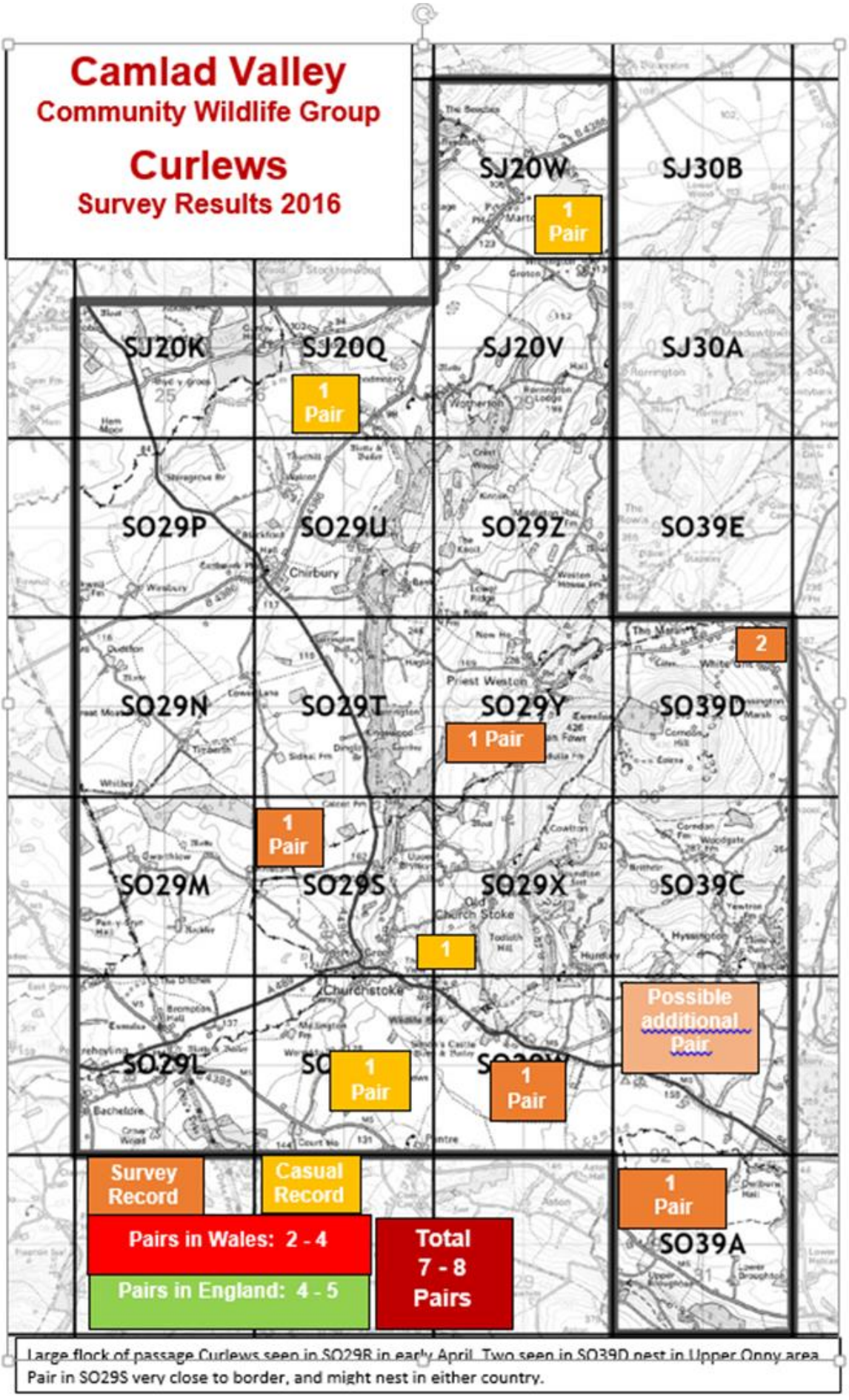
Note that members were asked to record individual birds, not pairs (so at some locations both the birds in the pair were recorded, and in the final survey some recently fledged juveniles may have been recorded as well). Numbers of Meadow Pipit, Linnet and Yellowhammer may be exaggerated by the presence of winter flocks moving onto the breeding grounds, before dispersing to the individual breeding sites, during the first two surveys.

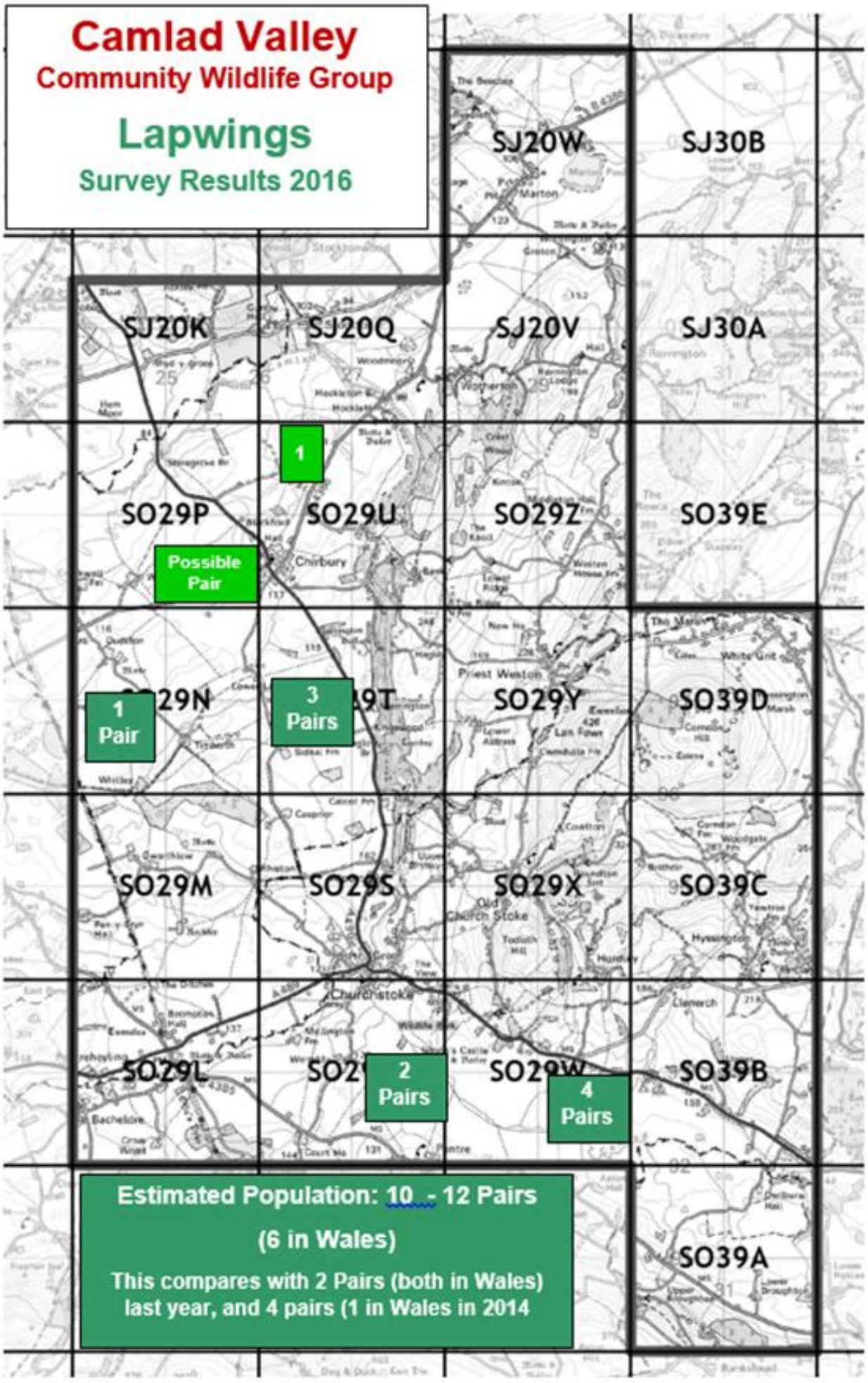
The summary table shows the maximum count for each species on any one survey in each tetrad. This may under-record some species, but the alternative – adding all the counts together – would lead to considerable double or triple counting of some individual birds.

Table 1. Other Target Species - Summary

Tetrad	Wales	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheat-ear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ20 K	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 Q	Y		1		2									2		
SJ20 V	N	(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 W	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)														
SO29 L	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)														
SO29 M	Y						1			3	4				1	
SO29 N	Tiny Bit	2			1		7								5	
SO29 P	N	(Square Surveyed in Third Period only, no target species recorded)														
SO29 R	Y	4	21		1											
SO29 S	Y		4							4			4	1	3	
SO29 T	N	6		1						4					3	
SO29 U	N	(Square Surveyed in Third Period only, no target species recorded)														
SO29 W	ALL	8	2				3			2					1	
SO29 W	ALL	8	1													
SO29 X	Y				1					2		1				
SO29 Y	Y		1	1	1			3		2					1	
SO29 Z	N															
SO39 A	Tiny Bit		5			5	1				6				1	1
SO39 A	Tiny Bit		4		1											
SO39 B	Y	4	1													
SO39 B	Y		1													
SO39 C	ALL		1													
SO39 D	Y		2		1		3	2	1		1			1		
Totals (20 Tetrads)		32	44	2	8	5	15	5	1	17	11	1	4	4	15	1

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


Camlad Valley
Community Wildlife Group
Curlews
Survey Results 2016
SJ20W
1 Pair
SJ30B
SJ20K
SJ20Q
1 Pair
SJ20V
SJ30A
SO29P
SO29U
SO29Z
SO39E
SO29N
SO29T
SO29Y
1 Pair
2
SO39D
SO29M
1 Pair
SO29S
SO29X
1
SO39C
SO29L
1 Pair
1 Pair
Possible additional Pair
1 Pair
SO39A
Survey Record
Casual Record
Pairs in Wales: 2 - 4
Pairs in England: 4 - 5
Total 7 - 8 Pairs
Large flock of passage Curlews seen in SO29R in early April. Two seen in SO39D nest in Upper Onny area
Pair in SO29S very close to border, and might nest in either country.


Camlad Valley
Community Wildlife Group
Lapwings
Survey Results 2016
SJ20W
SJ30B
SJ20K
SJ20Q
SJ20V
SJ30A
1
SO29P
SO29U
SO29Z
SO39E
Possible Pair
Chirbury
Priest Weston
1 Pair
3 Pairs
SO29Y
SO39D
SO29M
SO29S
SO29X
SO39C
Churchstoke
SO29L
2 Pairs
4 Pairs
SO39B
SO39A
Estimated Population: 10 - 12 Pairs
(6 in Wales)
This compares with 2 Pairs (both in Wales) last year, and 4 pairs (1 in Wales in 2014

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, Meadow Pipit are numerous in restricted parts of the area where suitable habitat still exists (the uplands, particularly Toldeth and Roundton Hill), 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 five recorded in SO39A during the first survey were probably passage birds.

Cuckoo is now a Red List species on the Birds of Conservation Concern 3: 2009, but it was again recorded in one tetrad, on Corndon Hill.

Red Kites were seen in seven tetrads, compared with six last year and two in 2014. No evidence of breeding was reported, but given the rapid spread and population increase (at least 34 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, three of the more scarce Target Species were not recorded at all during the surveys – Barn Owl, Grey Partridge or Dipper - but, surprisingly, no Swift (nest sites), Stonechat or Linnet were recorded either.

2.7 Lapwing and Curlew in the LPS area

The total number of Lapwing and Curlew found by the three Community Wildlife Groups in the LPS area in 2016 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Lapwing and Curlew in the LPS area 2016
(Estimated Number of Breeding Pairs)

CWG area	Lapwing	Curlew
Upper Onny	14	28 - 30
Rea Valley	9 - 10	10 - 12
Camlad (England)	4	4 - 5
Camlad (Wales)	6	2 - 4
Total	**33 - 34**	**45 - 50**

NB. The apparent discrepancy in Curlew total due to a pair in SO29S nesting very close to the border, and therefore being counted as "Possibly Breeding" in both countries

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group has been doing this work since 2004. In those 13 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 to the same number as 2004, with a further fall to 13 – 15 pairs in 2015, and 14 pairs in 2016
- 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 13 years

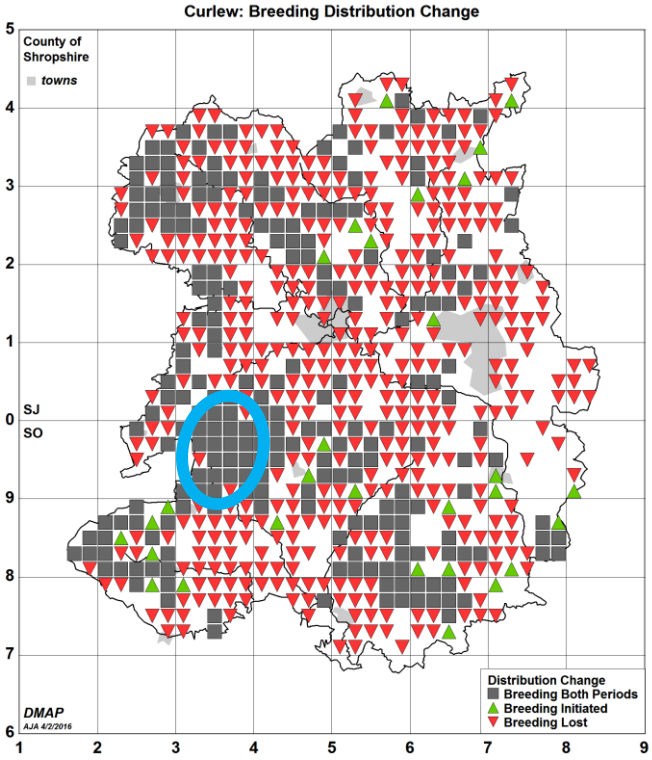
2.8 Links with the LPS Curlew Country Nest Monitoring work

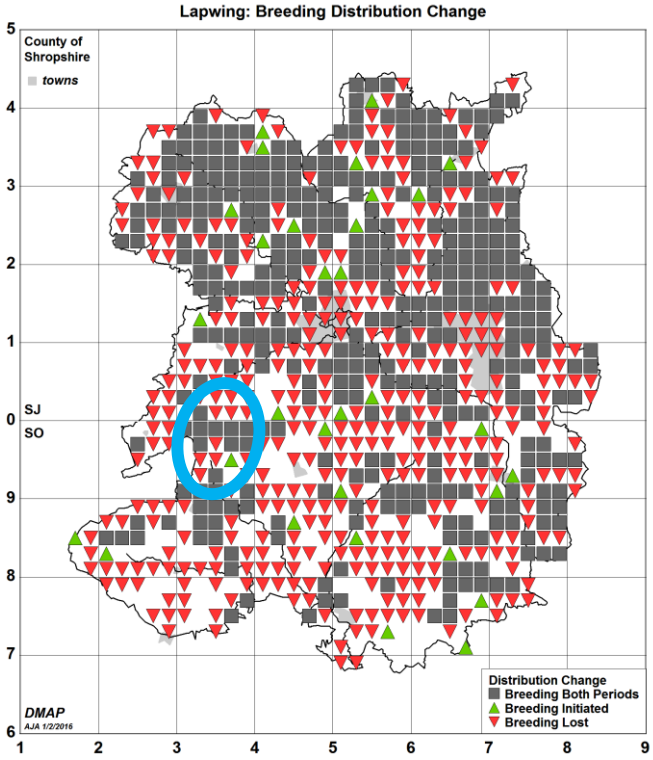
As a result of this evidence, and in the hope of reversing these declines, the Upper Onny Group actively supported the bid for funding for the LPS, and proposed the development of Community Wildlife Groups across the whole area, and the establishment of a Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project within the 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.

Observations of Curlews by the Camlad Valley Bird Group were passed on immediately to the nest finder, to help the effective targeting of his work. Three of the 19 nests found and monitored in 2016 were in the Camlad Valley area.

2.9 Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

Lapwing and Curlew are in decline, nationally, and in the LPS area and elsewhere in Shropshire. 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 2,300 pairs in 1990 to only about 500 now The Curlew population has fallen from about 700 pairs in 1990 to about 160 pairs now (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

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.

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. New applications were invited during 2016.

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, is also being revised, as part of the new Common Agricultural Policy being implemented through the Rural Development Programme 2014-20.

In the LPS area, the Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project has been established to reverse the decline of Lapwing and Curlew.

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 they 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.

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 now covers the five years 2014 – 19.

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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 2017.

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, the results were used by the LPS to support a successful application to NRW for a three year **Camlad Valley Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project, which started in 2015, and which aims to reverse the decline of Lapwing, and particularly Curlew, in the Welsh part of the LPS area. Initially the project will assess the reasons for poor breeding success, by finding nests and monitoring their outcome. 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.**

A similar, but less well funded, project will operate in the English part of the LPS area.

Discussions will take place with Montgomery Wildlife Trust about the use of the results to identify potential local Wildlife Sites in Montgomeryshire.

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 new Environmental Land Management 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:-

Annie Frost, Avril and Stuart Dickinson, Chris Radford, Clive and Ros Burns, Hazel Cribb, Hilary Berry, Huw Prole, Mary Napper White, Rob Rowe, Sally Currin, Sandy Scott and Trevor Holden.

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 2016

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

Fourteen 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 2 pairs of Lapwing (both in Wales), and 6 – 8 pairs of Curlew (3 – 6 pairs in Wales).

There were no fledged young Curlew.

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.

The Curlew results will help with locating nests in 2016, to be monitored to assess the reasons for poor breeding success in the LPS area.

2.14 Plans for 2017

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, and the Landscape Partnership Scheme Website www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk/curlewcountry .

Leo Smith
February 2017

Camlad Valley CWG Bird Survey Results 2016

Survey Results: First Period 21 March - 5 April

Tetrad	L / CU	LPS	Wales	Surveyor(s)	Time Spent		Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)													
					Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ20 K	YES	No	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SJ20 Q			Y	Sandy Scott	3	25				1									2		
SJ20 V			N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SJ20 W			Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 L		No	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 M		Tiny Bit	Y	Chris Radford	2	0							Small flock		2					1	
SO29 N		No	Tiny Bit	Chris Radford	2	0						7								1	
SO29 P	YES	Tiny Bit	N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 R			Y	Sally Currin	5	25		21													
SO29 S	YES		Y	Ros Burns	3	15									4			4		3	
SO29 T			N	Ros Burns	2	30	6								4						
SO29 U			N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 W	YES		ALL	Rob Rowe	2	30	8					2									
SO29 W	YES		ALL	Trevor Holden	2	0	8														
SO29 X			Y	Hazel Cribb	2	45						Yes	Yes				1				
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Chris Radford	3	0		1					3		2						
SO29 Z			N	Mary Napper White	2	15															
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit	Rob Rowe	2	30		5			5					6					1
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit	Huw Prole	1	30		2													
SO39 B	YES		Y	Rob Rowe	3	0	2	1													
SO39 B	YES		Y	Trevor Holden	inc.			1													
SO39 C	YES		ALL	Annie Frost	2	0															
SO39 D	YES		Y	Hilary Berry	4	0		2											1		
Totals (20 Tetrads)					**44**	**5**	**24**	**33**	**0**	**1**	**5**	**9**	**3**	**0**	**12**	**6**	**1**	**4**	**3**	**5**	**1**

Second Period 16 April - 1 May

Tetrad	L / CU	LPS	Wales	Surveyor(s)	Time Spent		Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)													
					Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ20 K	YES	No	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SJ20 Q			Y	Sandy Scott	4	15				2											
SJ20 V			N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SJ20 W			Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 L		No	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 M		Tiny Bit	Y	Chris Radford	2	15						1			3	4				1	
SO29 N		No	Tiny Bit	Chris Radford	2	15	2			1		4								5	
SO29 P	YES	Tiny Bit	N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 R			Y	Sally Currin	5	0	4			1											
SO29 S	YES		Y	Ros Burns	3	15		2							2					2	
SO29 T			N	Ros Burns	2	30	2		1											3	
SO29 U			N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 W	YES		ALL	Rob Rowe	3	0	2	2				3			2					1	
SO29 W	YES		ALL	Trevor Holden	2	0	3	1													
SO29 X			Y	Hazel Cribb	4	0				1					2						
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Chris Radford	3	20		1	1	1										1	
SO29 Z			N	Mary Napper White	2	45															
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit	Rob Rowe	2	30		2				1								1	1
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit	Huw Prole	1	20		2													
SO39 B	YES		Y	Rob Rowe	3	0	4	1													
SO39 B	YES		Y	Trevor Holden	inc.																
SO39 C	YES		ALL	Annie Frost	2	0		1													
SO39 D	YES		Y	Hilary Berry	2	30		2		1		3	2	1		1					
Totals (20 Tetrads)					**45**	**55**	**17**	**14**	**2**	**7**	**0**	**12**	**2**	**1**	**9**	**5**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**14**	**1**

Survey Results: Third Period 4 - 19 June

Tetrad	L / CU	LPS	Wales	Surveyor(s)	Time Spent		Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)													
					Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ20 K	YES	No	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SJ20 Q			Y	Sandy Scott	3	20		1													
SJ20 V			N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SJ20 W			Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 L		No	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 M		Tiny Bit	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 N		No	Tiny Bit	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 P	YES	Tiny Bit	N	Jane & Richard Morris	2	0	(No target species recorded)														
SO29 R			Y	Sally Currin	3	0	4														
SO29 S	YES		Y	Ros Burns	2	0		4							1				1	3	
SO29 T			N	Ros Burns		50														1	
SO29 U			N	Jane Morris	2	30	(No target species recorded)														
SO29 W	YES		ALL	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO29 X			Y	Hazel Cribb	1	15															
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Chris Radford											2						
SO29 Z			N	(Square Not Surveyed)																	
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit	Rob Rowe	1	30		5													
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit	Huw Prole	2	30		4		1											
SO39 B	YES		Y	Rob Rowe	1	30		inc													
SO39 C	YES		ALL	Annie Frost	2	0															
SO39 D	YES		Y	Hilary Berry	2	0						2	1								
Totals (20 Tetrads)					**24**	**25**	**4**	**14**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**3**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**1**	**4**	**0**

Additional Species Recorded: 2 Spotted Flycatcher in SO29S

3 Curlew Country Report for Community Wildlife Groups

2016 was a very busy year which saw the project grow and consolidate considerably.

3.1 Nest Monitoring and Intervention

David Tompkins joined contract Field Ornithologist, Tony Cross to assist with the nest monitoring work. This year over 21 nests were located, but the results (summary overleaf) were similar to last year. We have now monitored over 30 nests closely often with the aid of cameras and thermacrons, but none of the nests have produced any surviving curlew. This year we found new nest sites across the LPS area as well as monitoring some former sites.

The main predator at egg stage has been the fox, although there have been a few badger incidents and one nest was destroyed by sheep this year. The Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust have been supporting the project as a partner and put it in touch with a NABU project in Schleswig Holstein where electric fencing has been used to protect nests. We trialled fencing on three nests this year and these were the only three nests that reached egg hatching stage, all the other nests were predated at egg stage.

Chicks from each of the three nests that survived this year were radio tagged, but as with the results from last year, all the chicks were predated within days of hatching. They were mainly taken out of radio signal, so that it is not possible to find a predator pattern. Signs of avian and fox predation of chicks have been found over the two years, but only in one or two cases.

It is now fairly certain that protecting nests with electric fencing will enable chicks to hatch. We have also been more informally monitoring the grassland length that adult curlew choose as a nesting site and as they are site faithful, know roughly where our local birds will settle. The survival of higher numbers of chicks would help us to know what they require to fledge successfully. Mandi and Tony recently had the opportunity to meet with the Project Manager of the German study in Schleswig Holstein. The findings of that project over a much longer period are that the fencing can protect eggs, but chicks are lost and chick survival rates in the German project will not sustain the population. Curlew country is now at a similar stage in findings to this project.

Fox control is taking place this year in two trial areas. GWCT and BASC have been advising on this. There is good research to suggest that predation control helps waders to fledge. Farmers and pheasant shoots are already carrying out fox control, but it is not necessarily tailored to the ground-nesting bird season. A lot of work has gone into developing a contract designed to be as effective and humane as possible during the nesting season.

In the long term neither fencing nor lethal fox control is likely to be sustainable in their own right, but what intervention is reasonable and achievable can only be ascertained when and if there is a sustainable curlew population.

3.2 Arts Activities

Mary Colwell Hector's walk across from Ireland to the Wash to raise awareness of the plight of curlew, enabled us to enhance the awareness raising activities during this year. Sculpture and writing workshops took place along with the composition of music and lyrics to be performed by a specially formed 'Curlew Choir'. Events were launched in May during Mary's walk through our area and culminated in a spectacular event in July at Norbury. The arts events have been funded by HLF through a separate arts funding stream in the LPS. These events and the many talks that Mandi and Tony have given this year have inspired others to support the project.

3.3 National 'lowland' curlew picture

The RSPB are monitoring and trialling curlew intervention in moorland and upland areas. Mary Colwell Hector has been influential in discovering what work is taking place across the country. It is now estimated that there are only 230 pair of curlew outside these mainly northerly (often reserve) areas. Mandi and Tony recently participated in a 'Call of the Curlew' symposium at Slimbridge (Tony gave a talk on the nest monitoring and Mandi was on a 'Solutions to curlew problems' panel). The Curlew Country project is trail blazing in its holistic approach. Some monitoring is taking place, but not as precisely as ours has been. Nationally in lowland situations, a few projects have been working well with farmers on habitat creation and protection. Awareness raising and arts events do not appear to have started elsewhere yet.

3.4 2017/18 plans

We have managed to raise enough funding for much of the work planned for this year. This will include:

- Nest monitoring – this will no longer be carried out with cameras, but done by observation from a distance
- Intervention – More electric fencing will be used where possible. Fox control is being carried out in trial sites. Other interventions will be trialled.
- Arts and awareness raising – A training film is to be produced by local wildlife cameraman Ben Osborne and this may possibly be in collaboration with other organisations.
- A reminiscences project is just starting with the aim of recording people's memories of waders in our landscape. This will be important, not only in case we lose these precious birds altogether, but we hope it will also give us insights into the way farming has changed and whether there are more or fewer challenges for farmers.
- A local artist is taking 'The Case for Curlew' project into local schools as many children and young people do not know what a curlew is.
- Business trials to assess the impact of supporting breeding curlew on farms will continue alongside the on-the-ground interventions. A number of farms with curlew nesting or foraging on them are part of an agri-environment scheme, but this has not yet saved their decline. Our results will be fed back to policy makers to influence outcomes based incentives that will deliver the right combination of support for waders.

3.5 Beyond the LPS

We have been investigating potential legacy options for the project beyond the life of the LPS which will complete in April, 2018. We believe that to maintain the work of the project, it will be crucial to find a hosting organisation that can demonstrate not only the ability to fund the project, but also to continue the good working relations with the land managing community which have been the key to the success of LPS Curlew Country Project. We are fortunate in that our funders have indicated that they wish to continue to help us, but match funding must be found after the life of the LPS

3.6 Nest Monitoring - Summary of year 2 (2016 findings)

A total of 21 nests were located.

- Two of these nests were found with no eggs in, and one was found after a predation event.
- A total of 63 eggs were observed: fifteen full clutches comprising one nest with six eggs, nine nests with four eggs, four nests with three eggs and one with two eggs.
- Two nests with two eggs and three nests with one egg were predated before the assumed full clutch had been laid.
- The total of nests which failed at the egg stage was 17. One was abandoned, two were badger predated, three were fox predated, two were considered highly likely to have been badger predated, five were considered highly likely to have been fox predated, one was trampled by sheep and three were lost to unknown predators.

A total of seven eggs from three clutches hatched and all chicks were tagged (one clutch of three chicks and two clutches of two chicks).

- These three nests were protected during the second half of incubation with electric anti-predator fences.
- None of the chicks survived: one chick was run over and killed by an ATV approximately a week after hatching, three other chicks were known to have been predated and the tags were retrieved.
- The other three chicks were assumed predated as tags could not be located and there was no adult activity to suggest the presence of chicks.
- One nest (not found) was assumed to have been mown in a silage field, although the evidence for this is circumstantial.

Amanda Perkins
February 2017

4 Plant Group report for 2016

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 we continued to do this. Of the twelve events four were in the CV CWG area. [Shown in green]

March 13th we met at the Gleanings for a social event to discuss the last years survey work and the upcoming 2016 surveys. 20 people were present.

April 7th Lichens training day. We were very lucky to get Bob Kemp 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.
12 present

April 29th. Our third well attended 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.
14 present

April 10th Ancient trees. Visit to an area of old wood pasture near Lydham to see and measure and record some of the old oak pollards which had been hidden in an area of conifers for fifty years. This is a locally unusual habitat.

May 14th. Snead. We were shown around the churchyard and the surrounding fields and woodland. There was a good stand of Early purple orchids and other ancient woodland flora. 9 present.

May 29th Minsterley meadows SSSI It was a real treat to visit these traditionally managed species rich hay meadows, important particularly for their large numbers of Green Winged orchids.12 present

June 16th Hope Common. This varied habitat of grazed meadows, old coppice oak woodland and stream always comes up with a rich species count. There is a good stand of Wood horsetail.
7 present

July 5th White Grit Meadows. Our second visit to these two adjacent SSSI's .The first, a species rich hay meadow is particularly special for its abundance of Greater Burnet. We also found Twayblade an unusual orchid in this area.
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

July 7th Hogstow hayfields.
We were shown around these two wonderful species rich meadows by the owner 8 present.

July 17th Stapeley Common is a large and varied area with some particularly good wet flushes, so attention was given to rushes and sedges.7 present

Aug 4th Corndon Hill. Again we were looking at the wet flushes around the base of the hill. We found some good areas of marsh violet and the small carnivorous plant sundew. A second record for Montgomery.
Corndon hill is an SSSI. It is composed of a base rich volcanic rock which give rise to a particular flora including some unusual ferns. We saw Parsley fern, common in western mountains but at its eastern range here.4 present

October 18th. 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 59 species recorded.
In the afternoon we looked at the Natural England SSSI hay meadows at Pennerley and recorded 24 species including 8 waxcaps.
Some rare and unusual species were recorded at both places. These included Blushing waxcap [Hygrocybe ovina] A first Shropshire record and
Olive earthtongue [Geoglossum olivaceum] 11 present

4.1 Verge Surveys

On April 8th we met for an afternoon road verges survey training session at the Gleanings to which 8 people came
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 and we will aim to finish these in 2017. 20 people have taken part. We have surveyed approximately 150 kilometres of verges in the Upper Onny WG area, 100 km in the Rea valley WG area and 50 km in the Camlad Vallley WG area.

This information is now going 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.

We will continue looking for unimproved meadows in 2017

4.2 Recording for the Shropshire Wildlife Trust

In addition to the above outings the Shropshire Wildlife Trust arranged for the group to monitor 9 Wildlife Sites and 4 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.

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

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.

Rob Rowe
February 2017