Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group

Celebrating wildlife in Pontesbury, Minsterley, Stiperstones and the Hope Valley area

Annual Report 2015

Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country
LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

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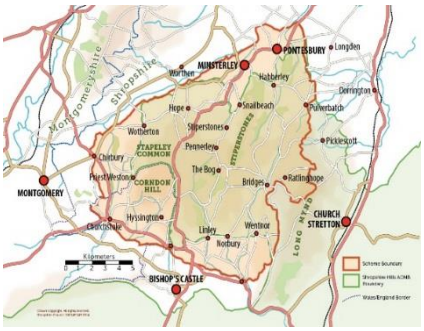
1.1 An introduction to the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership

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. 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.



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 Scheme is divided into four programmes reflecting the special qualities of the area. Within these, fifteen projects are being delivered and range from heritage restoration and habitat management, to training young people in rural skills and offering grants and advice to landowners.

1.2 Community Wildlife Groups (CWGs) in the Landscape Partnership Scheme area

The public consultation during the development phase of the LPS, highlighted the commitment of local people to the natural heritage of the area, particularly the iconic Curlew. This project gives those people the opportunity to do something positive about it. Community Wildlife Groups bring together local people who are interested in natural heritage in the landscape, and involve them in looking for threatened wildlife, so existing populations and habitat can be conserved.

Our intention is that the participants themselves decide which species and habitats are important to them, and they wish to concentrate on.

The Groups are open to everyone in the area and aim to:

- Undertake survey work to establish the status of key bird and plant species, and other wildlife and habitats
- Encourage and enhance local interest in wildlife
- Actively promote conservation

Stuart Edmunds (Shropshire Wildlife Trust) showing Shane Morris how to set up a camera trap on Pontesford Hill

2.1 A Summary of the Plant Group Surveys

From the initial meetings of the Stiperstones & Corndon Landscape Partnership Project a number of people had expressed interest in forming a plant group. In 2015 we decided to run the outings of the three CWG plant groups together. Of these four were in the Rea Valley survey area, as follows.

Northern Marsh Orchid

June 27th. Ritton Castle and Bog.
The castle is the site of an iron age/medieval fort which has recently been cleared of trees, and the bog is a species rich area in the valley bottom.

July 16th.Visit to Hope Valley Meadows SSSI.
A species rich bank which looked remarkably colourful predominantly with the purple of Betony and yellow of Dyers Greenweed and St Johns Wort.

Dyers Greenweed

August 2nd Gatten Marsh.
Wet flushes and marsh on the east side of the Stiperstones nature reserve.

October 18th. Fungi Foray at Snailbeach. A very large turnout of 30+ people of all ages and led by Jo Weightman. We were also joined by several knowledgeable members of the Shropshire fungi group. Considering how dry it had been it was very good with a total of 52 species recorded.

Scarlet Waxcap

On May 6th
We met in the evening for a road verges survey training session at the Gleanings.
With help from others in the group, John Brayford (LPS Countryside Officer) has produced a verges survey form which should provide all the relevant data. Volunteers were provided with these and a tetrad map (4 square kilometres). Approximately one third of the tetrads have been surveyed and we will aim to do as many more as we can this year.
If we can find the remaining species rich verges we can feed this information to Shropshire Council who, hopefully, will manage these verges in a more sympathetic way.
We would also like to continue with looking for unimproved meadows.

Rob Rowe
February 2016

2.2 Curlews, Lapwings and Other Birds Surveys

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 the UK Biodiversity Action Plan).

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 second 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.

Methodology

The part of the LPS area covered by this Community Wildlife Group (RVCWG) has been divided up into 26 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 on page 22).

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 1st April, 1st May and mid-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.

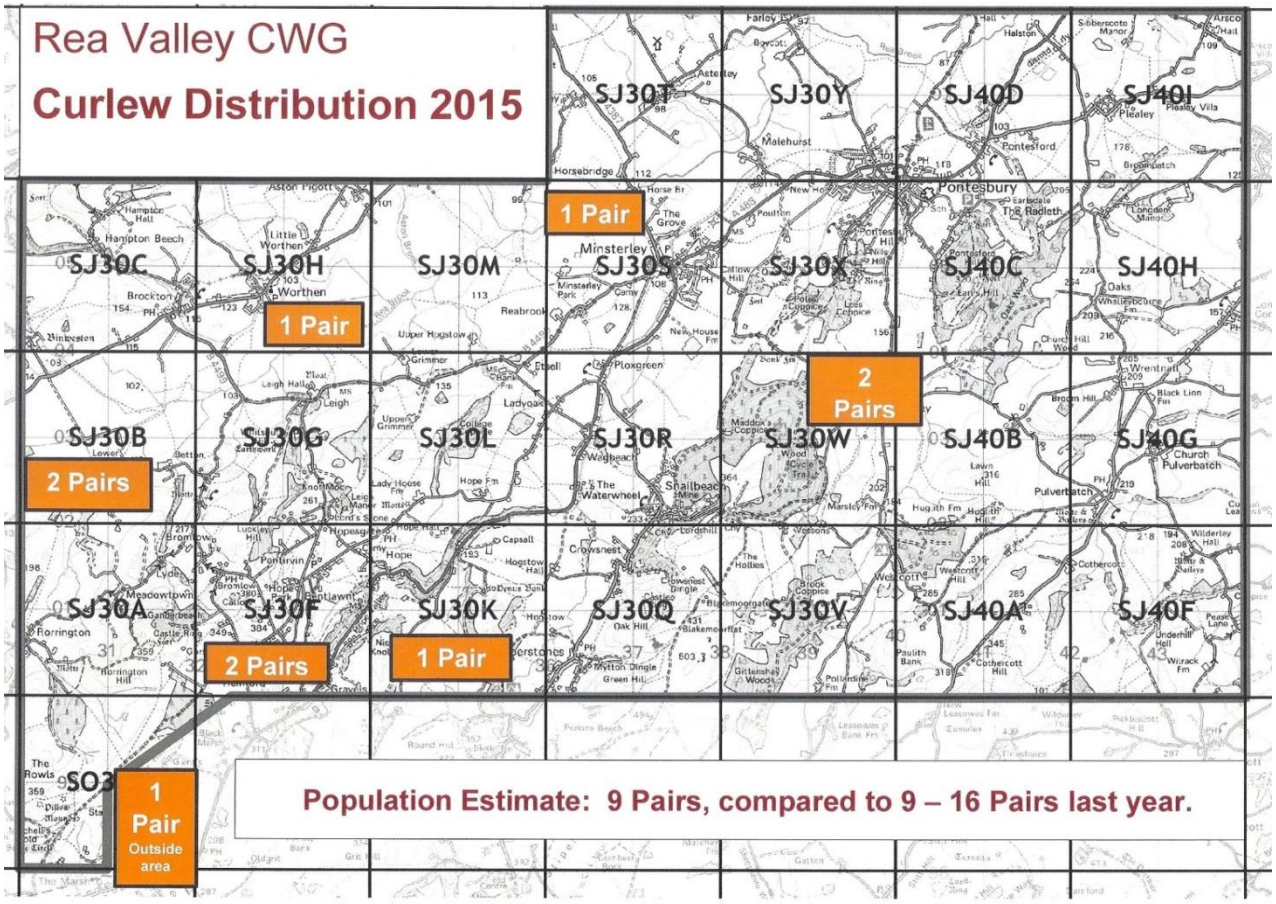
The methodology was identical to that used in 2014.

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. Most had helped with the 2014 survey, and so felt that a feedback meeting to discuss the results of the first two surveys, and provide clarification where necessary, was not needed. A progress report with the results of the first two surveys was emailed out to participants on 1 June, prior to the start of the third survey.

Survey work was carried out in all except five of the 26 tetrads, and members spent almost 260 hours on it. This represents an excellent effort, although it was not as good as 2014, when all except one tetrad was covered.
These survey dates do not provide information on the outcome of these breeding attempts, as the third survey, designed to see which Curlews have chicks, takes place around a month before any young birds are due to fledge. Members who found Curlews during the earlier surveys were therefore asked to revisit their squares after the third survey, so any they found could be reported to the nest Monitoring project. None were found, and there is no evidence that any young Curlews fledged in the whole area in 2015.

Curlew

The map summarises the estimated number and distribution of Curlew territories in the area. The location of Curlews found during the surveys, or reported on Casual Record maps, is shown on the map in Appendix 2 on page 23.



The methodology requires observations of a pair together, or a territorial display, 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 nine pairs.

Compared with 2014, an increase was found in three areas. In SJ30B, and in SJ30W / SJ40B (around Habberley), the estimated 1-2 pairs last year was firmed up to two pairs in each location in 2015. In addition, a pair was found in SJ30H (near Worthen) which was not suspected last year.

Conversely, only five Curlews, rather than six, returned to SJ30F (Hemford) – the loss of a breeding pair. Also, there was no evidence for more than one pair in SJ30K (Santley), compared to an estimate of 2 – 3, possibly 4, pairs last year. None were found in SJ40A (compared to one last year), nor were any found in any of the other three areas where there were "Possible Additional Pairs" in 2014. The single birds seen then in these three areas were therefore probably foraging away from their nest sites.

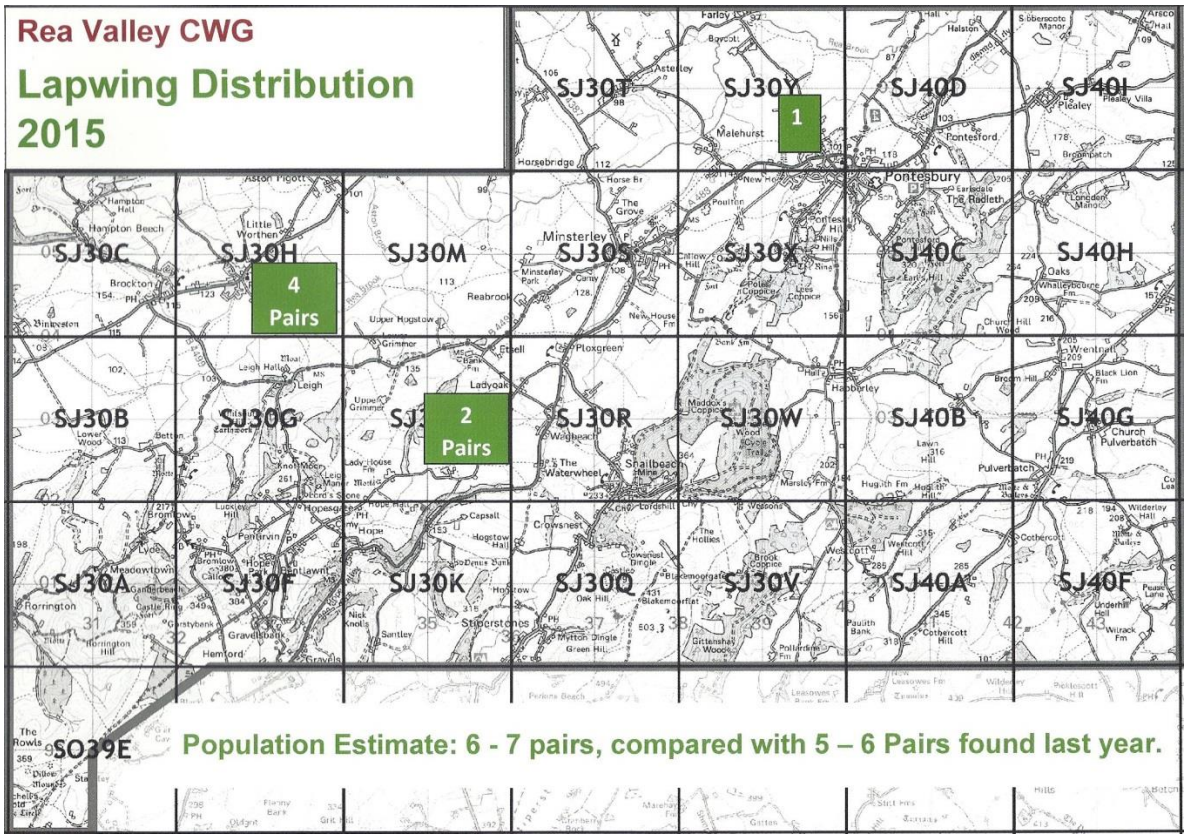
From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Curlew population in the area in 2015 is nine breeding pairs, at the bottom end of the estimate of 9 – 16 pairs in 2014.

The survey should be repeated in 2016, to clarify the number of pairs actually present and the location of nest sites and foraging areas.

Regular annual monitoring should be carried out to establish better knowledge of nesting and foraging areas, and the population trend.

Lapwing

The map summarises the estimated number and distribution of Lapwings. It shows the cumulative results of all three Surveys.



In SJ30H, five birds in flight were seen at the same place on the first two surveys. The farmer subsequently reported that there were four pairs, which produced 10 fledged young. On the third survey, there were 33, presumably the 18 from the site (8 adults and 10 fledged young), plus unpaired birds, failed breeders, and pairs and fledged young from near-by sites. The observer counted at least nine young. None were found by the Group at this site last year, but the farmer reported that three pairs produced six fledged young in 2014 (and two pairs produced five fledged young in 2013)

In SJ30Y, one was heard on the second survey, and the farmer reportedly heard more, so there was probably at least one breeding pair. The first survey in this square was not carried out, and none were found on the third survey. One was seen at this site last year.

No full survey was carried out in SJ30L, but 4 (2 pairs) were see on 6 April (3 – 4 Pairs were seen in that square last year. Two pairs in SO30T last year did not return

From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Lapwing population in the area in 2015 is 6 – 7 breeding pairs, compared with 5 – 6 pairs found last year.

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 Curlews are less common now than they used to be. Lapwings have apparently declined much more than Curlews.

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.

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.

Table 1. Other Target Species - Summary

Tetrad	Surveyor(s)	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)													
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer
SJ30 A	Luke Walker & Janet Radford		1	2	1	2									
SJ30 B															
SJ30 C															
SJ30 F	Richard Allan & Tony Legg		4												
SJ30 F	Training Session (30 March)		5												
SJ30 G	Tony Legg*											12			
SJ30 H	Jerry Hughes	33	1		1										
SJ30 K	David Wilson & Tony Legg		1						1					2	
SJ30 L	Tony Legg*	4													
SJ30 M	David Wilson		1	1		6			1						1
SJ30 Q	Julian Bromhead				1	9	51		1	3	2		2		
SJ30 R	Anne Yeeles														
SJ30 S	Stephen Wilson					3			2	2			4	1	1
SJ30 T	Richard Halahan								2						6
SJ30 V	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price							1							
SJ30 W	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price		3												
SJ30 X	Alison, Elizabeth and Paul Holmes			2	1				1					2	
SJ30 Y	Richard Halahan	1							2						6
SJ40 A	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers														
SJ40 B	Siobhan Reedy		2				2								1
SJ40 C															
SJ40 D	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers														
SJ40 F	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers														
SJ40 G															
SJ40 H															
SJ40 I	Simon Brown														
SO39 E	Luke Walker & Janet Radford		1	3	2	6					2				
Totals (26 Tetrads)		**38**	**19**	**8**	**6**	**26**	**53**	**1**	**10**	**5**	**4**	**12**	**6**	**5**	**15**

Of the Target Species, Barn Owl, Grey Partridge, Snipe, Dipper, Swift (nest sites) and Reed Bunting were not recorded on any survey.

The Stonechats in SO39E were a family, two adults (listed) and 2 juv (not listed) There was a Redstart at Blakemoorgate (SJ30Q)
There was one casual record of Dipper (SJ40C), and a survey record of Spotted Flycatcher (SJ40I)

***** Tony Legg was asked to cover the intersection of squares SJ30F, G, K and L, to try and clarify the number and home range of Curlews moving between these squares

It will be seen that Skylark, Dunnock and Yellowhammer are widespread and numerous, Meadow Pipit are numerous in restricted parts of the area where suitable habitat still exists (the uplands, particularly The Stiperstones), and the remaining species that were found are present only in their specific habitats, and in small numbers.

Cuckoo became a *Red List* species in the *Birds of Conservation Concern 3: 2009*. It was recorded in one tetrad, compared with two last year.

Red Kites were seen in four tetrads, but there was no evidence of breeding. A pair did nest in the area in 2012, and, 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.

There was one casual record of Dipper (SJ40C), and a survey record of Spotted Flycatcher (SJ40I).

Not surprisingly, six of the more scarce Target Species were not recorded at all during the surveys – Barn Owl, Grey Partridge, Snipe, Dipper, Swift (nest sites) and Reed Bunting

Barn Owl Project

The Group initiated a Barn Owl project. Nest boxes are only worth putting up in areas of good foraging habitat (rank vegetation a few inches high, where the favoured prey, voles, can be found) so a poster asking people to report sightings has been widely distributed in the area.

So far five reports have been received, not enough to identify potential sites for nest boxes yet.

The poster is attached as Appendix 4 on page 25. Reports of sightings are still wanted, please.

Nest Box Scheme

A nest box scheme for woodland birds, particularly Pied Flycatcher, in the Stiperstones valleys has been developed by the LPS and Natural England. A report of a successful first year is given on page 17.

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 2015 is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Lapwing and Curlew in the LPS area 2015 (Estimated Number of Breeding Pairs)

CWG Area	Lapwing	Curlew
Upper Onny	13 - 17	23 - 26
Rea Valley	6 - 7	9
Camlad (England)	0	2 - 3
Camlad (Wales)	2	3 - 6
Total	**27 - 30**	**37 - 43**
NB The apparent discrepancy is due to one pair in the Camland being right on the border, and therefore counted as possibly in either England or Wales		

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group has been doing this work since 2004. In those 12 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
- Curlew has shown a steady decline from an estimated 38 pairs in 2004 to only 23 - 26 now – a loss of around 13 pairs, more than one-third, in only 12 years.

Links with the LPS Curlew Nest Monitoring Project

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.

In 2015, the LPS organised a Curlew Nest Monitoring Project. Twelve nests were found and monitored in the LPS area. The results are described in the next section of this Report.

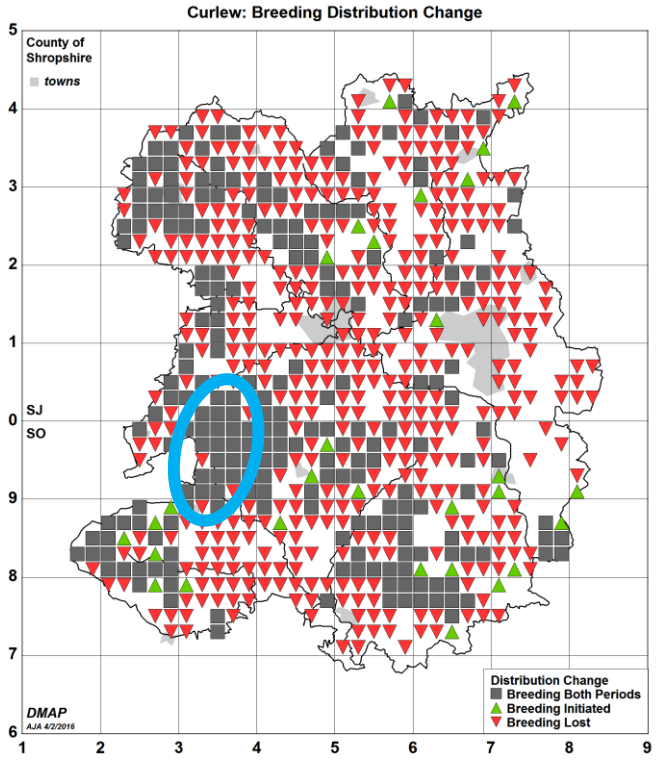
Observations of Curlews by the Rea Valley Bird Group were passed on immediately to the nest finder, to help the effective targeting of his work. Four of the 12 nests found and monitored were in the Rea Valley area.

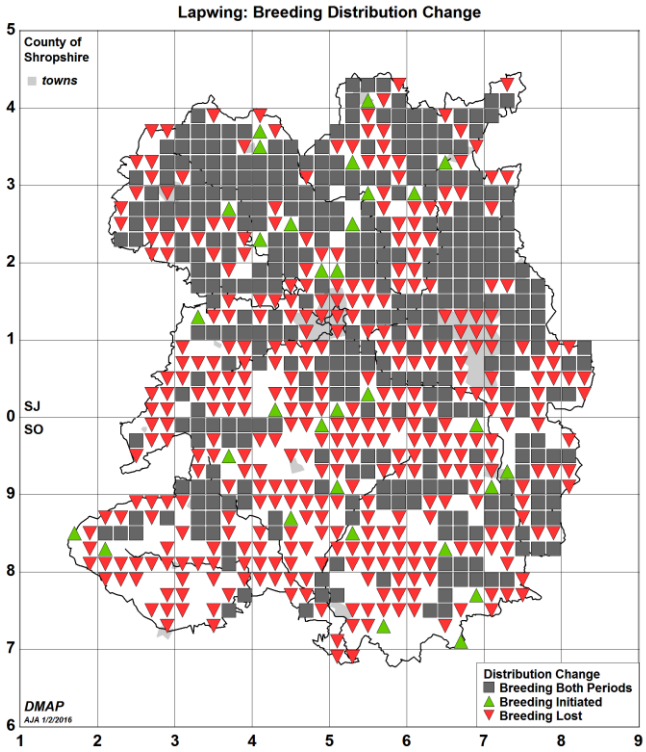
Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

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 150 pairs now (a 78% 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. The details are still being worked out, and new applications will be invited during 2016.

Use of CWG Survey Results

Most importantly, the results are made available to Natural 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.

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 2016.

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.

Recommendations

Natural England is recommended to encourage farmers with breeding Lapwing or Curlew on or near their land, to join Countryside Stewardship, 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:-
Alison, Elizabeth & Paul Holmes; Amber Bicheno & Gary Price; Anne Yeeles; David Wilson; Jerry Hughes; Julian Bromhead; Luke Walker & Janet Radford; Richard Allan; Richard Halahan; Shropshire Wild Team volunteers; Simon Brown; Siobhan Reedy; Stephen Wilson and Tony Legg.

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.
- Amber Bicheno, for co-ordinating the Barn Owl project.

Summary 2015

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

All except five of the 26 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. A Barn Owl project was also started.

The populations in the Rea Valley area are estimated at 6 - 7 pairs of Lapwing, and 9 pairs of Curlew.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 in the area.

Plans for 2016

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

The Barn Owl and Woodland Bird nest box schemes will continue, and consideration will be given to developing other activities, similar to those operated by other Community Wildlife Groups, if there is sufficient support. 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 .

Leo Smith
February 2016

2.3 Ground nesting Birds Recovery Project
Curlew Recovery Project Summary

Background

For over 10 years a local Community Wildlife Group (Upper Onny) has been monitoring curlews according to BTO methodology in part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) area. This has demonstrated that the population has decreased 26% in 11 years 2004-14. The group have been instrumental in seeking a solution to reverse this decline.

Objectives

- To discover why the curlew population is failing to breed successfully through implementation of a 3 year nest monitoring project.
- To take action to prevent and reverse the decline of the population in collaboration with farmers and land managers leading to formation of farmer-led groups.

Nest Monitoring Pilot Project Notes

- Pilot project field work in 2015 carried out by AV Cross, ornithological consultant with ground nesting bird experience.

Results:

- 12 nests with eggs monitored, through nest cameras and radio tagging of chicks.
- 38 eggs laid – 4 x 4 egg, 5 x 3 egg and 2 x 2 egg clutches.
- Nest failure – 1 desertion, 6 mammalian (1 fox, 1 badger and 4 almost certainly fox from evidence, but not on camera), 1 avian and 1 unknown
- Chicks - 9 eggs from 3 clutches hatched and all chicks tagged, none survived.
- All chicks almost certainly predated, evidence of fox and avian predation in some cases.
- During the nest location phase, 3 fields under observation because of Curlew activity were mown before any nests were located and there was a further report of a farmer finding an abandoned nest after mowing a field.

The population in the Upper Onny area apparently declined by a further 3-4 pairs. None of the 3 Community Wildlife Groups in the LPS area found evidence of fledged young anywhere in the whole area.

Farmer Liaison

Over 30 farmers gave permission for curlews to be monitored on their land. All the farmers approached were interested and sympathetic to the plight of curlews and concerned about the effect of predation that they felt had hitherto been overlooked in efforts to save this species. The farmers with nests on their land were keen to know precise nest locations so that they could reduce any potential disturbance to nests. There have been feedback presentations for farmers and landowners, who have shown support for the project to continue.

The Future

- There are still almost 40 pairs of curlews in the LPS area. If the curlews are to be saved the project must be continued.
- Monitoring - It is essential that nest and Curlew behaviour monitoring is carried out over more than one year so that the effect of variables such as weather conditions can be better understood. 2015 was atypical. Modifications learned from the pilot project will need to be implemented.
- Nest Protection - We will also need to trial forms of nest protection and deterrents based on evidence gathered this year.
- Help to locate the curlews – This depends greatly on help from local people. Farmers, Community Wildlife Groups and local residents all play a part.
- Improved training on curlew behaviour, which is quite different throughout the stages of the breeding season, is needed to help increase the value of observations made by volunteers A document to be produced for the spring will be augmented with a film by the end of the 2016 season.
- An 'irecord' system will be set up to enable fast communication of casual curlew sightings and will provide a link keeping contributors up to date with news of the project.
- Locally curlews nest in grassland and prefer hay meadows. Accommodating the needs of nesting birds may interrupt farming operations and lead to loss of income. We want to establish what effect supporting curlew nesting and foraging sites is on the farm business and explore potential avenues for compensating against this.

Current Funding Situation

Funding for the project in the Welsh part of the scheme for a further two years has been secured by Natural Resources Wales.
Funding will be required to for the project to continue in England. The Jean Jackson Trust has made a recent generous contribution to the project for about half the estimated costs.

Over the next two years, we will need to raise an additional £22,000 each year for the project to proceed in its entirety.

Partners represented on Project Steering Group

Natural England, local consultant ornithologists, National Trust, RSPB, Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

For further information please contact:

Amanda Perkins (LPS Countryside Officer)
February 2016

Photos by AV Cross, Ornithologist

2.4 ‘Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics’ Project Summary of the Moth Surveys

Background

During the summer of 2015 a series of introductory moth recording workshops were held across the six sites undergoing positive biodiversity management under the WREN funded Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics project (RROR)

- These are: -
    - The Bog
    - Earl’s Hill SWT Reserve
    - Nills Hill Quarry
    - Poles Coppice Countryside Heritage Site
    - Roman Gravels mine
    - Snailbeach mine

In total 20 people from the local area attended one or more of the 7 Friday evening sessions, enjoying a variety of weather conditions and some high quality biscuits. As a result of the training at least 2 participants have acquired their own moth traps and are undertaking recording.

Blomer's Rivulet *Discoloxia blomeri* - A Nationally Notable Geometrid moth associated with wych elm, recorded at Earl’s Hill SWT Reserve on 12 July 2015.

- 600 moth records were obtained during the sessions and a total of 288 species of moth were recorded. There has previously been little moth recording carried out at any of these sites. Nearly all species are likely to be new site records and, in the case of the northerly sites, new records for the 10-km squares.

Clouded Magpie *Abraxas sylvata* - A local elm-feeding, species **r**ecorded at Earl's Hill SWT Reserve (Pontesford Hill car park) 10 July 2015 (3 individuals) and Earl’s Hill SWT Reserve (slope below hill fort) on 12 July 2015 (5 individuals).

- An exceptionally high number of species were recorded at The Bog, Earl’s Hill SWT Reserve, Nills Hill Quarry and Pole's Coppice Countryside Heritage Site and this reflects the richness of these sites for moths.

- The moths recorded include three Nationally Notable species and a number of other moths that are of significance in a local context. The Nationally Notable species are: -
    - *Pseudotelphusa scalella* (Scopoli, 1963)
    - Blomer's Rivulet *Discoloxia blomeri* (Curtis, 1832)
    - Cloaked Carpet *Euphyia biangulata* (Haworth, 1809)

Cloaked Carpet *Euphyia biangulata* - a Nationally Notable species recorded at The Bog on 7 August

- It was anticipated that at least some of the project sites could be very high in moth diversity and have the potential to support uncommon species. In the event, the results greatly exceeded expectations and the workshops give some idea of the great potential of these sites. It is highly likely that many further species await discovery.

- The level of attendance at the workshops and the enthusiasm of the participants was also most encouraging. It is even more encouraging that at least some of the participants are now recording moths by themselves.

Noteworthy species recorded

Nationally Notable species:
***Pseudotelphusa scalella* (Scopoli, 1963) National status:** Nationally Scarce B

One recorded at Pole's Coppice Countryside Heritage Site on 26 June 2015. *Pseudotelphusa scalella* is widespread in southern England as far north as Yorkshire but apparently absent from Cornwall and Somerset. Previously only recorded on three occasions in Shropshire, all at sites in the Wyre Forest.

The life history of this species is not properly understood but the larvae are believed to be associated with oaks (*Quercus* ssp.).

Blomer's Rivulet *Discoloxia blomeri* (Curtis, 1832)
National status: Nationally Notable B

One recorded at Earl's Hill SWT Reserve (slope below hill fort) on 12 July 2015. The moth occurs sporadically throughout England and Wales.

The Blomer's Rivulet is associated with deciduous woodland habitats where the larvae feed on the leaves of wych elm *Ulmus glabra*.

Cloaked Carpet Euphyia biangulata (Haworth, 1809)
National status: Nationally Notable B

One recorded at The Bog on 7 August 2015. A scarce species occurring sporadically in the south- western counties of England and Wales, and the Isle of Man. Seemingly very scarce in Shropshire with no records appearing in Riley, 1991.

The Cloaked Carpet is stated to be associated with damp, mossy woodland and wooded rocky ravines with streams and also in old banked hedgerows along sunken lanes. The larvae are believed to feed on stitchworts *Stellaria* spp.

Other species of note:
***Stenolechia gemmella* (Linnaeus, 1758) National status**: Local

Recorded at Pole's Coppice Countryside Heritage Site on 26 June 2015. *Stenolechia gemmella* is widespread in England and Wales as far north as southern Northumberland and Cumbria. This is only the second Shropshire record.

The larvae of this species feed in the buds and shoots of deciduous oaks (*Quercus* ssp.).

***Gelechia sororculella* (Hübner, [1817]) National status**: Local

A local species recorded at The Bog on 7 August 2015. *Gelechia sororculella* is fairly widespread throughout Britain but only known from two other Shropshire localities

The larvae of this species feed in the leaves and female catkins of *Salix* spp., usually goat willow *S. caprea* or grey willow *S. cinerea*.

***Clouded Magpie Abraxas sylvata (Scopoli,* 1763) National status:** Local

Recorded at Earl's Hill SWT Reserve (Pontesford Hill car park) 10 July 2015 (3 individuals) and Earl's Hill SWT Reserve (slope below hill fort) on 12 July 2015 (5 individuals).The Clouded Magpie is widespread but thinly distributed throughout much of England, Wales, southern Scotland, it also occurs in Ireland. It is considered to have declined greatly following the appearance of Dutch elm disease. Riley, 1991, noted a major decline in Shropshire. The Clouded Magpie inhabits woodland, parks and similar habitats. The foodplants are Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* and English elm *U. procera*.

Lobster Moth *Stauropus fagi* (Linnaeus, 1758) National status: Local

Recorded at Nills Hill Quarry on 12 June 2015 (5 individuals) and Pole's Coppice Countryside Heritage Site on 26 June 2015 (14 individuals).

The Lobster Moth is well distributed and sometimes frequent in southern, south-west and south-east England, and in Wales. It is more local in East Anglia and the southern half of the Midlands which, until very recently, represented the northern limit of the species' range. The moth was not known at all in Shropshire until the early 2000s but has now colonised and appears to be expanding northwards through the county. The count of 14 individuals at Pole's Coppice Countryside Heritage Site on 26 June 2015 is quite exceptional and suggests that the moth is now well established in the Stiperstones area.

The larvae live on the leaves of various deciduous trees including beech *Fagus sylvatica*, birches *Betula* spp. and oaks *Quercus* spp.

Conclusions

It was anticipated that at least some of the project sites could be very high in moth diversity and have the potential to support uncommon species. In the event, the results greatly exceeded expectations and the workshops give some idea of the great potential of these sites. It is highly likely that many further species await discovery.

The level of attendance at the workshops and the enthusiasm of the participants was also most encouraging. It is even more encouraging that at least some of the participants are now recording moths in the Stiperstones themselves.

Acknowledgements

This work was commissioned by the Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership as part of the *Rescuing Rocks & Overgrown Relic*s project. It is funded through a Landscape Partnership Scheme fund, and the main contributor to this project is WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental Network Ltd.).

The author would like to thank John Brayford for arranging the events and John Brayford, Joy Howells and Joe Penfold for their superb organisation and assistance during the events themselves. I would also like to thank my colleague Dr Susan Clarke for much needed help during the wet weather at Earl's Hill SWT Reserve.

Particular thanks are due to all workshop participants for their great enthusiasm in sometimes "challenging" weather conditions and for making the workshops such an enjoyable experience.

Dave Green
February 2016

2.5 Results of the Resting Hill Nestbox Scheme

Introduction

Resting Hill Wood is located on the slopes of the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve above the village of Snailbeach. It is a coppiced oak woodland, which is still actively managed.
The Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* is a charismatic species of migratory bird, which breeds in oak woodland across the UK during May and June. It uses cavities in mature trees for nest sites. Loss of habitat has caused a decline of 53% in this species over the last 20 years or so and it is Amber-listed on the UK List of Birds of Conservation Concern.

This species was known to be present at Resting Hill Wood in the past, but in recent years was thought to have been lost. Indeed, a full survey of the wood in 2014 found no Pied Flycatchers at all.
Luckily, they do take well to artificial nest-boxes, so with the support of the Stiperstones & Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme and Natural England, the Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group began a nest box scheme with aim of encouraging this species back to the wood. The boxes would also provide nest sites for other species including the familiar Blue and Great Tits, and maybe also Coal Tit, Marsh Tit, Redstart or Nuthatch.
The nest boxes were erected and monitored using the methodology provided by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) Nest Record Scheme. Data was submitted to the BTO as part of this scheme.

Results

Box Uptake

Table 1 shows the figures relating to uptake of nest boxes by each species.

Table 1. Nest Box uptake in 2015

	#	Proportion of all boxes	Proportion of occupied boxes
Total Boxes	54		
Total Occupied	15	28%	
Occupied by BLUTI	10	18.5%	67%
Occupied by PIEFL	5	9.3%	33%

Only two out of the seven potential species ended up nesting in our boxes this year. These were Blue Tit and Pied Flycatcher. Though this may seem disappointing, the fact that we succeeded in attracting Pied Flycatcher in good numbers achieved the main goal of the operation, so in those terms it was indeed a success.

Surveys of the wood during 2014 and 2015 and casual observations whilst inspecting the nest-boxes did observe Great Tit, Coal Tit and Nuthatch as being present in the wood. Redstart were observed where Resting Hill Wood becomes Crow's-nest Dingle, but only once in the area of the nest boxes. Marsh Tits were not observed anywhere in the wood, and indeed it would not seem to be ideal habitat for them (they have been shown to prefer mature Ash-dominated woodland with a dense shrub layer).

Nest Success Rates

Table 2 shows the figures related to success of broods of all nesting species. Generally success was high, with only one complete failure.

Table 2. Nest success rates

Species	BLUTI	PIEFL
Total broods	10	5
Total successful[1]	9	5
Success rate	90%	100%
Complete successes[2]	2	3
Complete success rate	20%	60%
Total eggs laid	93	32
Average clutch size	9 (6-14)	6 (5-7)
Total eggs hatched	83 (89%)	32 (100%)
Total young fledged	59	29
Overall success rate[3]	71%	91%

[1] Successful broods were those that fledged at least one chick
[2] Complete success was determined as those broods which fledged 100% of young
[3] Overall success rate was the proportion of eggs that resulted in fledged young

It was generally thought to be a bad year for resident species in the UK due to an unseasonal cold-snap in May, leading to lack of invertebrate prey. Accordingly we did see very few completely successful Blue Tit nests, though overall the success rate was 71%, which still seems quite good. The Pied Flycatchers fared much better with a 91% success rate, which is very encouraging.

Nest Timings

Table 3 shows a breakdown of the timing of each stage of each nesting attempt.

Table 3. Nesting attempt time breakdown

Box	Species	Eggs	Success	1st Egg	Hatch	Fledge	Incubation	Days in nest
24	BLUTI	10	90%	19/04/2015	12/05/2015	31/05/2015	13	19
31	BLUTI	10	50%	19/04/2015	12/05/2015	31/05/2015	13	19
52	BLUTI	7	100%	19/04/2015	12/05/2015	31/05/2015	16	19
54	BLUTI	10	60%	19/04/2015	12/05/2015	31/05/2015	13	19
1	BLUTI	8	75%	20/04/2015	12/05/2015	31/05/2015	14	19
20	BLUTI	8	75%	21/04/2015	12/05/2015	31/05/2015	13	19
28	*BLUTI*	*14*	***29%***	*21/04/2015*	*13/05/2015*	*29/05/2015*	*8*	*16*
41	BLUTI	11	91%	22/04/2015	16/05/2015	10/06/2015	13	25
44	BLUTI	9	**0%**	28/04/2015	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
35	BLUTI	6	100%	04/05/2015	23/05/2015	11/06/2015	13	19
13	PIEFL	7	71%	05/05/2015	28/05/2015	12/06/2015	16	15
19	PIEFL	7	100%	09/05/2015	28/05/2015	12/06/2015	12	15
45	PIEFL	6	80%	11/05/2015	28/05/2015	12/06/2015	11	15
49	PIEFL	7	100%	11/05/2015	01/06/2015	15/06/2015	14	14
34	PIEFL	5	100%	01/06/2015	17/06/2015	05/07/2015	11	18

These figures are derived from estimates from the Integrated Population Monitoring and Reporting software provided by the BTO. It may be influenced by the use of existing data averages from the Nest Record Scheme, and hence observed patterns may be exaggerated.

Data for Box 28 was unusual and maybe due to errors in counts. But perhaps it was just unusual and hence accounts for its low success rate.

This was not apparent in the field but there was a quite a degree of synchronicity in the timings of each species. Both species showed distinct clustering in the timing of their 1st eggs, with an outlier result for each species. It is likely that these outliers are 'replacement clutches'. These are clutches laid after an early failure of the initial clutch (presumably these must have been in an unknown natural nest site somewhere close by).

Table 4. Average times for different stages of nesting

	Blue Tit	Pied Flycatcher
Average incubation time (days)	12.9	12.8
Average time to fledge (days)	19.3	15.4

Both species showed very similar lengths of time for incubation. Blue Tits spent a little longer in the nest which is presumably one of the benefits of being resident and starting to nest earlier.

Some simple statistical analysis showed that timing of nests had no effect on success rates i.e. longer periods of incubation or young in nest, and timing of first eggs were not correlated with success rates. This suggests that variation in success rates was due to environmental reasons, or due to variations in adult 'fitness'. Interestingly, though the late outlier nesting attempts for both species did have the lowest clutch sizes recorded, which would support the diagnosis of a replacement clutch, with the females having less energy to produce a full second clutch so soon after attempting the first. This gives us a good baseline of what to expect next year and also provides reason to continue checking previously empty boxes well into June.

Distribution of Nesting Attempts

There is evidence to suggest that Pied Flycatcher prefer to nest near tit species, and even raise healthier chicks when they do so. It is suggested that because the migrant flycatchers start nesting later in the season, they have less time to assess the micro-conditions within the woodland habitat than the resident tit species. Therefore it is thought that the flycatchers use the presence of tit nests as an indicator of the better sites to nest. There are also potential social benefits to this close living arrangement, including better detection of predators.

It is also suggested that as tit species are highly territorial, placing nest boxes in clusters ensures that after a tit has established a nest, its territorial defensive behaviour will keep closer nest boxes empty for the late arriving flycatchers. However, whilst this is no doubt true to some extent, it seems like the factors above are the more significant reasons why the species nest close together.

Doing some simple spatial analysis showed that even though our boxes were put up in loose rows they do actually conform to a statistically random distribution pattern within the study area.
Table 4 shows the figures relating to distances between occupied nest boxes.

Table 4. Distances between occupied nest boxes

Distance (m)	Between BLUTI nests	Between BLUTI and PIEFL nests
Minimum	26	12
Maximum	113.5	35.3
Average (Mean)	48	24.1
Standard Deviation	26.1	8.6

There was considerable variation in distance between nests of Blue Tits, too much to draw conclusions about local territory sizes. All Pied Flycatcher nests were found within 40m of an active Blue Tit nest. Interestingly, the two flycatcher nests that only had partial success were a) the one furthest away from a Blue Tit nest (35m), and b) the only one close to the Blue Tit nest that failed completely at egg stage.
Whilst our sample size is very small, this does lend support to Pied Flycatchers performing better when closer to an active tit nest and that they select nest sites closer to active tit nests. After all, there were plenty of empty boxes to select from, many of which that were well away from active tit nests, and none of these was used.

Ringing

Four of the five Pied Flycatcher broods and one adult female were ringed by a licensed bird ringer. This may provide further information about their movements and whether they return to the site to breed.

Future Work

Monitoring of the boxes at Resting Hill will continue in 2016, though no new boxes will be installed. A new scheme is due to start at Pontesford and Earl's Hill Nature Reserve.
Contacts have been made with two other nest box schemes in the local area, and it is hoped that a results summary and analysis can be made of the overall area to see the bigger picture.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Simon Cooter, Jenni Tibbets, Jon Bielstein and Joe Penfold for instigating and supporting the project.

Thanks to all the volunteers (Amber, Gary, Dorcas, Julian, Malcolm, Jerry, Chris, Anne, Pat, Rosie and Shane) who helped to gather such excellent data.
And thank you to all the members of the local community and schools who helped to make the boxes.

Jonathan Groom
February 2016

3.1 Plans for 2016
Surveys, Training and Opportunities

Community Wildlife Group volunteers are given a voice on which species and habitats are important to them, and which species they wish to action to conserve. A programme of activities is publicised in our quarterly newsletter, facebook page and website and has been developed to reflect people's interest, as well offering training for new members who would like to get involved.

Over the coming year members will be invited to take part in the Bird Survey, as well as the more focussed survey of Pied Flycatchers at Resting Hill. Building on the success of the latter, a further nest box project is underway in partnership with Shropshire Wildlife Trust, involving the local scouts and the Friends of Pontesford Hill. There is also the potential for a Barn Owl monitoring programme following an appeal for sightings by CWG member, Amber Bicheno. There are casual reports of Dippers, too, in the survey area along Habberley Brook.

The Plant Group carried out a survey last year which aimed to identify species-rich roadside verges. Having covered roughly a third of the survey area, we'd like to continue this to get a clearer picture of the condition of our verges. With this in place we will be in a better position to influence, and hopefully bring about a change to cutting regimes to benefit wildlife. Working with Shropshire Wildlife Trust, the plant group will also continue to play in important role in helping to identify potential County Wildlife Sites and opportunities for surveying meadows and practical management (e.g. scything) is an area that the group may wish to explore.

The LPS delivered a series of very successful moth survey events through our project, Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics. Follow-up, volunteer-led surveys of the six former mining and quarrying sites is to be encouraged and there are already a few people from the group who are getting involved.

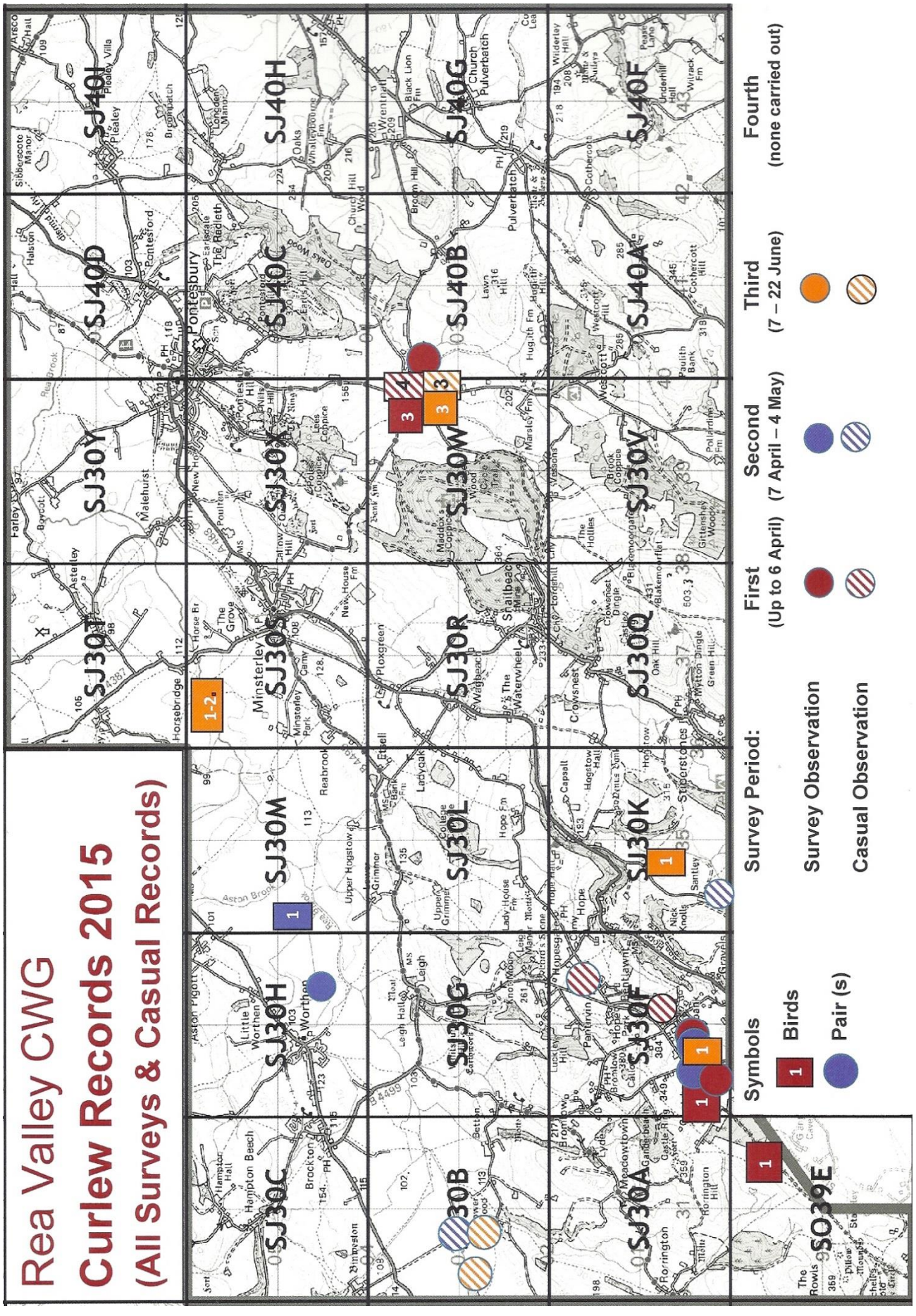
3.2 Sustaining CWGs beyond the lifetime of the Landscape Partnership Scheme

In the following year we also aim to encourage the group to be self-supporting in much the same way as the other Shropshire CWGs. This will be achieved by:

1. Contributing info to the CWGs Website
2. Repeating community engagement activities (i.e. nest box schemes, guided walks)
3. Developing new initiatives
4. Formalising the CWG, including:
    - Open Bank Account
    - Draft simple Constitution (including affiliation to SWT, if CWG Committee agrees) for presentation to Annual Meeting for adoption
5. Encouraging and training members of the CWG to take responsibility for activities, so it is sustainable when the LPS Community Officer's support diminishes, and LPS funding expires.
6. Encourage the Rea Valley CWG to work with other CWGs, and Shropshire Wildlife Trust, so that the CWGs collectively make a contribution to conservation at the County level, and the Shropshire Biodiversity Partnership

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

Appendix 2. All Curlew Records Received 2015



Appendix 3. Detailed Bird Survey Results 2015

First Period (21 March - 5 April)

Tetrad	Surveyor(s)	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)													
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer
SJ30 A	Luke Walker & Janet Radford	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ30 B															
SJ30 C															
SJ30 F	Richard Allan		4												
SJ30 F	Tony Legg*		2												
SJ30 F	Training Session (30 March)		5												
SJ30 G	Tony Legg*	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 H	Jerry Hughes	5			1										
SJ30 K	David Wilson													2	
SJ30 K	Tony Legg*	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 L	Tony Legg*	4													
SJ30 M	David Wilson		1	1		6									1
SJ30 Q	Julian Bromhead					8	51		1		2				
SJ30 R	Anne Yeeles	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ30 S	Stephen Wilson					3									
SJ30 T	Richard Halahan	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 V	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price	(No Target Speci		(2)											
SJ30 W	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price		3												
SJ30 X	Alison, Elizabeth and Paul Holmes			2					lots						
SJ30 Y	Richard Halahan	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ40 A	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 B	Siobhan Reedy		2												
SJ40 C															
SJ40 D	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 F	Simon Brown	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 G															
SJ40 H															
SJ40 I	Simon Brown	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SO39 E	Luke Walker & Janet Radford		1			lots									
Totals (26 Tetrads)		**9**	**18**	**3**	**1**	**17**	**51**	**0**	**1**	**0**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**2**	**1**

Second Period (18 April - 3 May)

Tetrad	Surveyor(s)	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)													
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer
SJ30 A	Luke Walker & Janet Radford		1												
SJ30 B															
SJ30 C															
SJ30 F	Richard Allan		2												
SJ30 F	Tony Legg*	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ30 F	Training Session (30 March)														
SJ30 G	Tony Legg*	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 H	Jerry Hughes	5	1												
SJ30 K	David Wilson								1					1	
SJ30 K	Tony Legg*	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ30 L	Tony Legg*	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 M	David Wilson					1			1						
SJ30 Q	Julian Bromhead				1	9	42			3	2		2		
SJ30 R	Anne Yeeles	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ30 S	Stephen Wilson								1	2			4	1	1
SJ30 T	Richard Halahan								2						6
SJ30 V	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ30 W	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ30 X	Alison, Elizabeth and Paul Holmes			1					1					2	
SJ30 Y	Richard Halahan	1							2						6
SJ40 A	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 B	Siobhan Reedy						2								1
SJ40 C															
SJ40 D	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 F	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 G															
SJ40 H															
SJ40 I	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SO39 E	Luke Walker & Janet Radford			3		lots									
Totals (26 Tetrads)		**6**	**4**	**4**	**1**	**10**	**44**	**0**	**8**	**5**	**2**	**0**	**6**	**4**	**14**

Third Period (7 - 22 June)

Tetrad	Surveyor(s)	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)													
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer
SJ30 A	Luke Walker & Janet Radford			2	1	2									
SJ30 B															
SJ30 C															
SJ30 F	Richard Allan		1												
SJ30 F	Tony Legg*	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 F	Training Session (30 March)														
SJ30 G	Tony Legg*											12			
SJ30 H	Jerry Hughes	33													
SJ30 K	David Wilson		1												
SJ30 K	Tony Legg*	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 L	Tony Legg*														
SJ30 M	David Wilson					1									1
SJ30 Q	Julian Bromhead					4	43				2				
SJ30 R	Anne Yeeles	(Survey not undertaken)													
SJ30 S	Stephen Wilson		1-2			1			2						1
SJ30 T	Richard Halahan														
SJ30 V	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price	(No Target Species Recorded)						1							
SJ30 W	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price		3												
SJ30 X	Alison & Elizabeth Holmes			1	1				1					2	
SJ30 Y	Richard Halahan														
SJ40 A	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 B	Siobhan Reedy	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 C															
SJ40 D	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 F	Simon Brown/Shropshire Wild Team volunteers	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SJ40 G															
SJ40 H															
SJ40 I	Simon Brown	(No Target Species Recorded)													
SO39 E	Luke Walker & Janet Radford			3	2	6					2				
Totals (26 Tetrads)		**33**	**5**	**6**	**4**	**14**	**43**	**1**	**3**	**0**	**4**	**12**	**0**	**2**	**2**

Appendix 4. Barn Owl Poster

Shropshire Barn Owl Group

Rea Valley
Community Wildlife Group

Please Help Barn Owls!!

Special Nest Boxes provided free

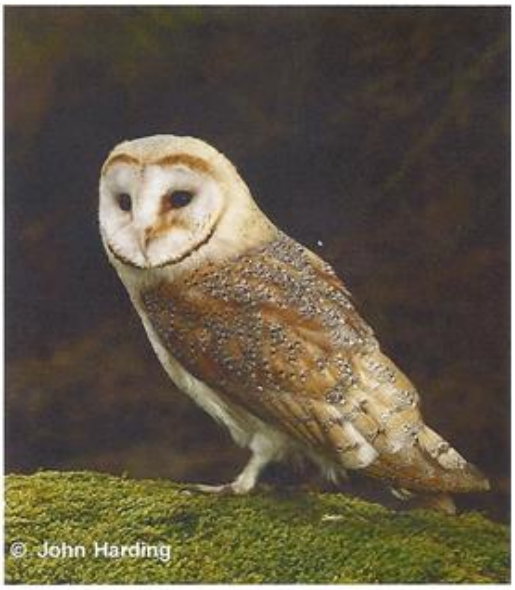
to Farmers & Landowners with suitable habitat in the Rea Valley area, and elsewhere in the Shropshire Hills AONB -

- Isolated farm building, or large isolated tree or pole more than 400 metres from nearest woodland
- 4 hectares (10 acres) of permanent rough grassland nearby, several inches tall to provide cover for voles and other prey

If you see a Barn Owl we'd like to know, please

Barn Owls control pests such as rats and mice, but the population has declined in Shropshire and elsewhere. Loss of habitat - rough grassland for hunting prey - is the major factor, but loss of suitable nest sites has also contributed. Traditional open barns have been enclosed, replaced by different types of barn, or converted into houses. Other suitable nest sites – holes in large isolated trees – have also disappeared from the landscape in recent times, as trees have died off or been removed. The decline in the County population has recently been halted and reversed, but it is still around only half that found by a survey carried out in 1932.

Barn Owl is on the *Amber List* of *Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (2009)*. Increasing the population, partly through nest boxes, is part of the Shropshire *Biodiversity Action Plan*. Nest boxes are more likely to be used, and help increase the population, if they are put near to existing Barn Owl territories and foraging areas.



For further information,
or to report a Barn Owl sighting in the Rea Valley area, please contact

Amber Bicheno
07540730967 amba_b@hotmail.co.uk

Thanks to the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership and the Stiperstones-Corndon LPS (funded by Heritage Lottery) for funding the development of Community Wildlife Groups. This initiative to help Barn Owls in the Rea Valley complements similar work by several other Groups. See the Community Wildlife Groups website www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk for further information about how to get involved