

Camlad Valley Community Wildlife Group

in Churchstoke, Hyssington, Priest Weston and Chirbury



Annual Report 2014



<u>Contents</u>		Page
1	Introduction	
1.1	An introduction to the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership (LPS)	1
1.2	Community Wildlife Groups (CWGs) in the Landscape Partnership Scheme area	2
2	2014 – Survey activities and results	
2.1	Plants – Rob Rowe	4
2.2	Curlews, Lapwings and Other Birds Survey – Leo Smith	5
	Map 1: Camlad Valley CWG Curlew Survey Results 2014	7
	Map 2: Camlad CWG Lapwing Survey Results 2014	8
	Appendix 1: Map of survey area showing boundaries and tetrad codes	15
	Appendix 2: Camlad Valley CWG Bird Survey Records	16
2.3	Other training, wildlife surveys and events	17
3	Up and coming training, wildlife surveys and events	
3.1	The Resting Hill nest box project – Simon Cooter	19
3.2	Plans for 2015	20
3.3	Forthcoming activities and events	21
3.4	Other forthcoming activities and events	22

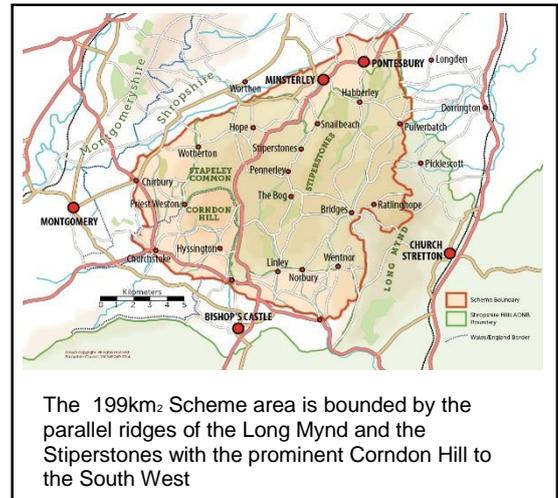
1. Introduction

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 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.



Scraping Beneath the Surface – Mining of lead, barytes and coal has created a historical pattern of small farms, smallholdings and squatter settlements and villages



Land Between Lands – This is a borderland defined by past conflict that has left a legacy of medieval castles and ancient hillforts, and a mix of English and Welsh place names



Remarkable Wildlife – Thin soils and mining spoils have created an area rich in bio-diversity, with curlew, dormice, butterflies, spreading bellflowers and other threatened species



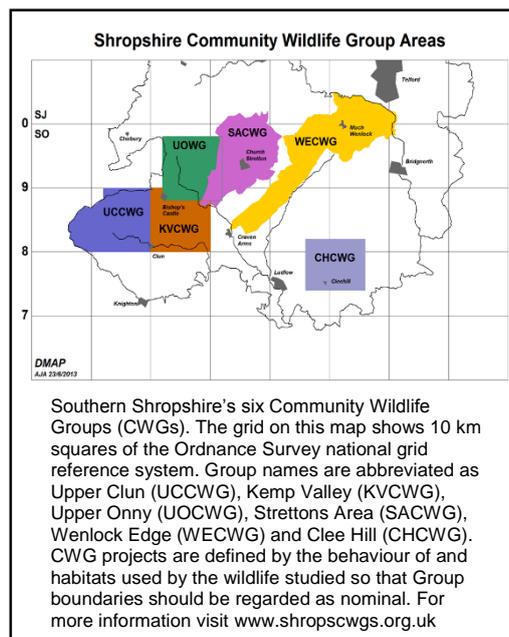
Resourceful people – Since prehistoric times, people have worked in and cherished this landscape as they do today

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

During 2012-13, the Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS) was in development and public consultation highlighted the commitment of local people to the natural heritage of the area, particularly the iconic Curlew. The *Community Wildlife Groups* project was subsequently created as one of the fifteen LPS projects with the aim of giving people the opportunity to do something positive for local wildlife. The project brings 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.

The LPS CWGs project builds on the example of the existing Upper Onny Wildlife Group, which was established in 2003, and complements the work of the other five CWGs that developed in subsequent years.

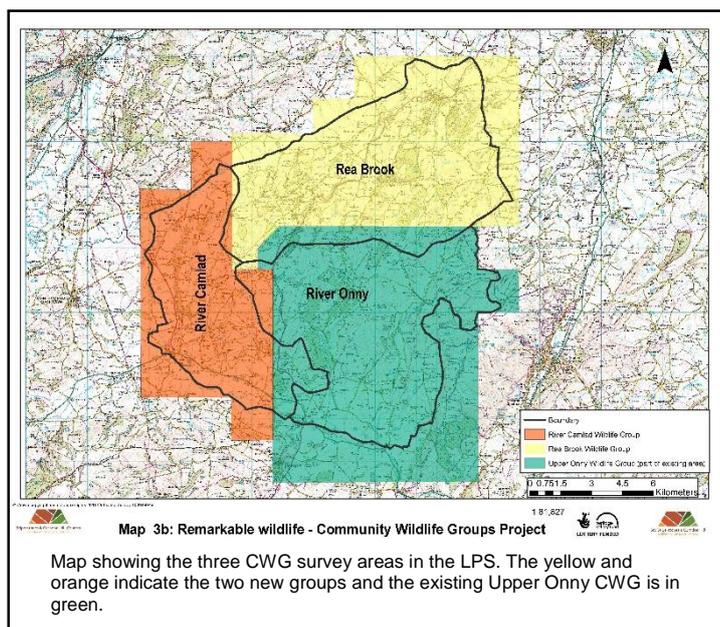
The Upper Onny CWG covers around one-third of the LPS area, so the LPS CWG Project aims to establish two new Community Wildlife Groups, to cover the whole of the remainder of the LPS area. The Groups are open to anyone who lives or works in their area, and who wants to actively contribute to local knowledge and conservation. They are for everyone in the community, not just experts. Interest in the area, and enthusiasm, are far more important than detailed knowledge. Most of the target birds and plants are important and easy to recognise and search for. Initial training on identification and simple survey methods is provided, and regular support and advice is also provided, so members learn a lot, and the work is very enjoyable!



Opportunities for the many local people who love wildlife:

- Meeting like-minded people to learn about local wildlife and its needs
- Surveying and recording important bird and plant species, and other wildlife and habitats
- Encouraging local interest in wildlife and passing on knowledge
- Actively promoting conservation locally

In the past year, two new CWG groups have been set up for part of the *Camlad Valley* catchment area, and *Rea Brook* catchment area and it is for the groups to decide which species and habitats are important to them so that existing populations and habitat can be conserved.



In this, the first year the LPS Community Officer (Joe Penfold) undertook development work to establish the *Camlad Valley Community Wildlife Group*. This included the following activities:

1. Assessing current activities and existing organisations in the area, to ensure this Project complements, and does not duplicate, them.
2. Consulting local organisations and identifying “Stakeholders”
3. Holding public meetings in Chirbury, Hyssington and Churchstoke for everyone interested in wildlife, to promote the idea of Community Wildlife Groups, and to identify the wildlife issues that the community is concerned about and interested in
4. Identify “experts” to design the survey methodology, and train volunteer surveyors

With the support of project partners, Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation and Montgomeryside Bat Group, three community engagement events were delivered at Chirbury, Hyssington and Churchstoke during February 2013. 45 people expressed interest in joining the group and during 2014 Camlad Valley CWG members contributed 270 person hrs of volunteer support.

The reports that follow are those compiled by Rob Rowe, leader of the Plant group and Leo Smith, leader of the Bird group.

2. 2014 – Survey activities and results

2.1 Plants – Rob Rowe

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

Our first meeting was an introductory plant identification walk around Priestweston on the Shropshire /Powys border on the evening of May 6th.

12 people attended.

This CWG area is interesting in itself in that being on the border botanical records for Shropshire and the old county of Montgomeryshire need to be recorded separately.

We identified plants as we walked along the lane to visit the Lump, which is an SSSI [Site of special Scientific Interest]. Being a slightly base rich volcanic rock it has a rich flora and among the plants of note seen were maiden pink and rock stonecrop.

Also Wild Thyme, Early Whitlow Grass, Burnet Saxifrage, Betony, Crosswort among others. About 80 species in all were recorded.

Meeting back at the pub afterwards gave people chance to look at maps and discuss future plans

June 30th saw a well-attended evening meeting [16 people] at Brithdir farm just south of Corndon. This again is an SSSI, in Montgomeryshire this time. A beautiful evening, we walked down to the SSSI through meadows which themselves were plant and insect rich.

The site contains several unusual and rare plants for this area and although we failed to find the fragrant orchid there were many others. Heath spotted orchid, giant horsetail, marsh valerian, devils bit scabious, pepper saxifrage.

July 10th. Another evening meeting, this time on Stapeley Hill and to a species rich bog down to the west. We spent some time looking at the upland grasses sedges and rushes and then descended the stream. Among the many interesting plants found were Marsh Lousewort, Lemon-scented Fern, Cotton Grass, Sundew and Bog Asphodel.

From a promising start with an enthusiastic core of people we hope to build on this in 2015 with more plant outings and recording.



Betony



Marsh Valerian



Devil's Bit Scabious

2.2 Curlews, Lapwings and Other Birds Survey – Leo Smith

Objectives

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

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

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

This was the first 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 has been divided up into 20 tetrads (2x2 kilometre squares, each made up of four of the one-kilometre squares shown on Ordnance Survey maps). A map showing these tetrads, and the reference code, is attached (Appendix 1).

People who agreed to help were allocated a square / tetrad, and requested to survey it once during each of three specified two week periods, twice before 4 May and again around 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.

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.

A training meeting was held for those that wanted one, on the evening of 16 April. Five participants attended. A feedback meeting was held on 19 May, to present the results of the first two surveys, discuss them, provide clarification where necessary, and iron out any difficulties experienced by the participants. 20 survey participants attended.

Survey work was carried out in all except two of the 20 tetrads, and members spent over 120 hours on it. This represents an excellent effort.

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 in mid-July, to look for family parties. Four tetrads were surveyed in this period, but only one Curlew (and no fledged young) was found.

Curlew

The map on page # shows the location of Curlews seen during the surveys, and summarises the estimated number and location of Curlew territories in the area.

Two pairs were seen concurrently near Snead in SO39B, at the opposite end of the square from the pair seen and heard regularly near Hyssington, all probably different from the pair in SO29W.

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 nine pairs (four in England and five in Wales). In two squares, three birds were seen, which might have been the same birds, or different ones, and there were four observations of a single bird. These may all indicate additional pairs.

Experience of undertaking this type of survey with more long-standing Community Wildlife Groups suggests that, in future years, evidence will be found to confirm that most of these are in fact part of additional breeding pairs.

From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Curlew population in the area is currently 9 – 13 breeding pairs (4 – 6 in England, and 5 – 7 in Wales).

The survey should be repeated in 2015, 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.

Lapwing

The location of Lapwings found during the surveys is shown on page 10. Six Lapwings were seen on the first survey in SO29M, and seven on the second. The pair just in SO39B were only seen on the third survey, and may have relocated following unsuccessful breeding attempts elsewhere. They were very close to the border, but were probably in Wales.

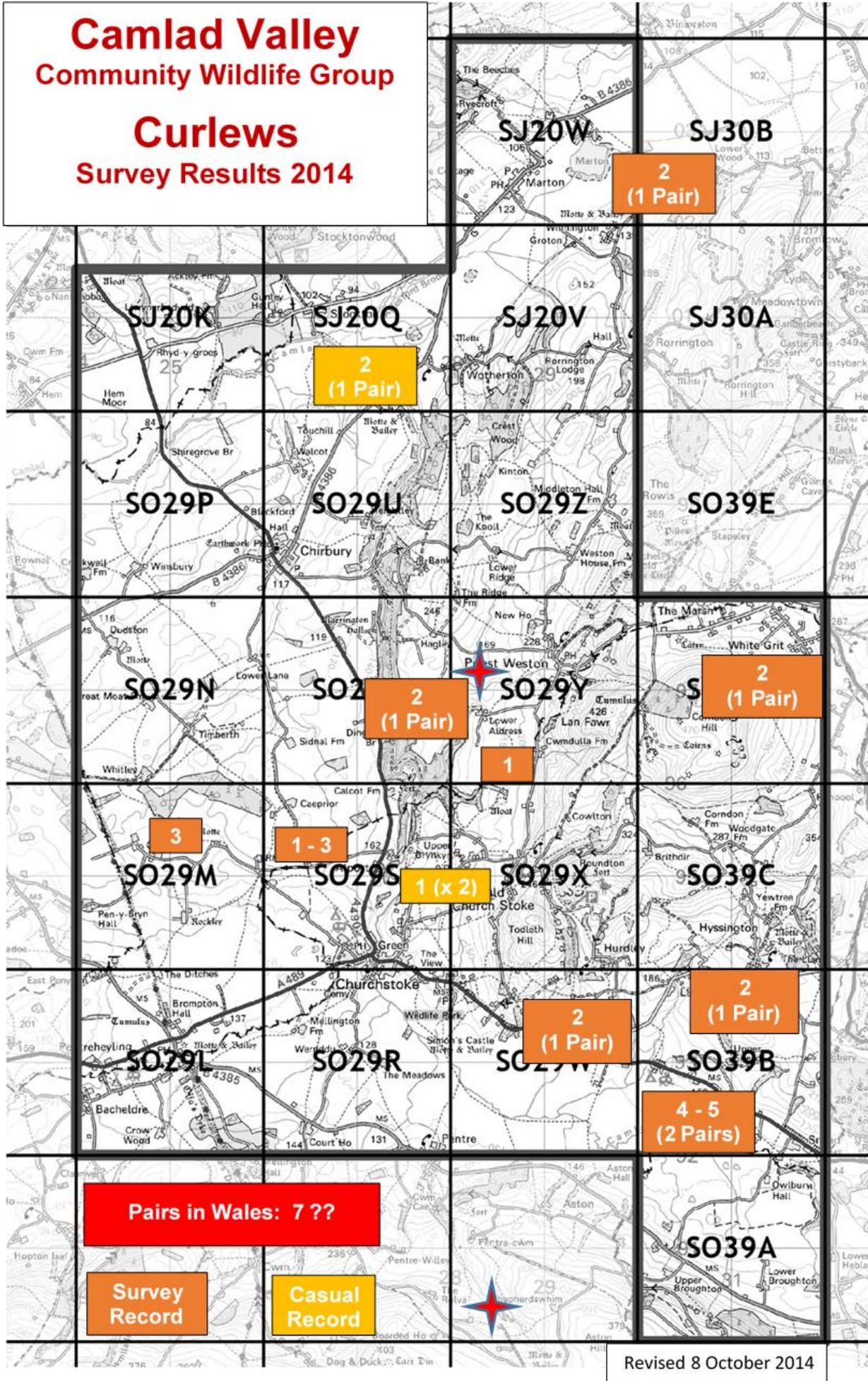
From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Lapwing population in the area is currently only 4 - 5 breeding pairs (probably one in Wales)

The outcome of the nests is not known.

Anecdotal Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

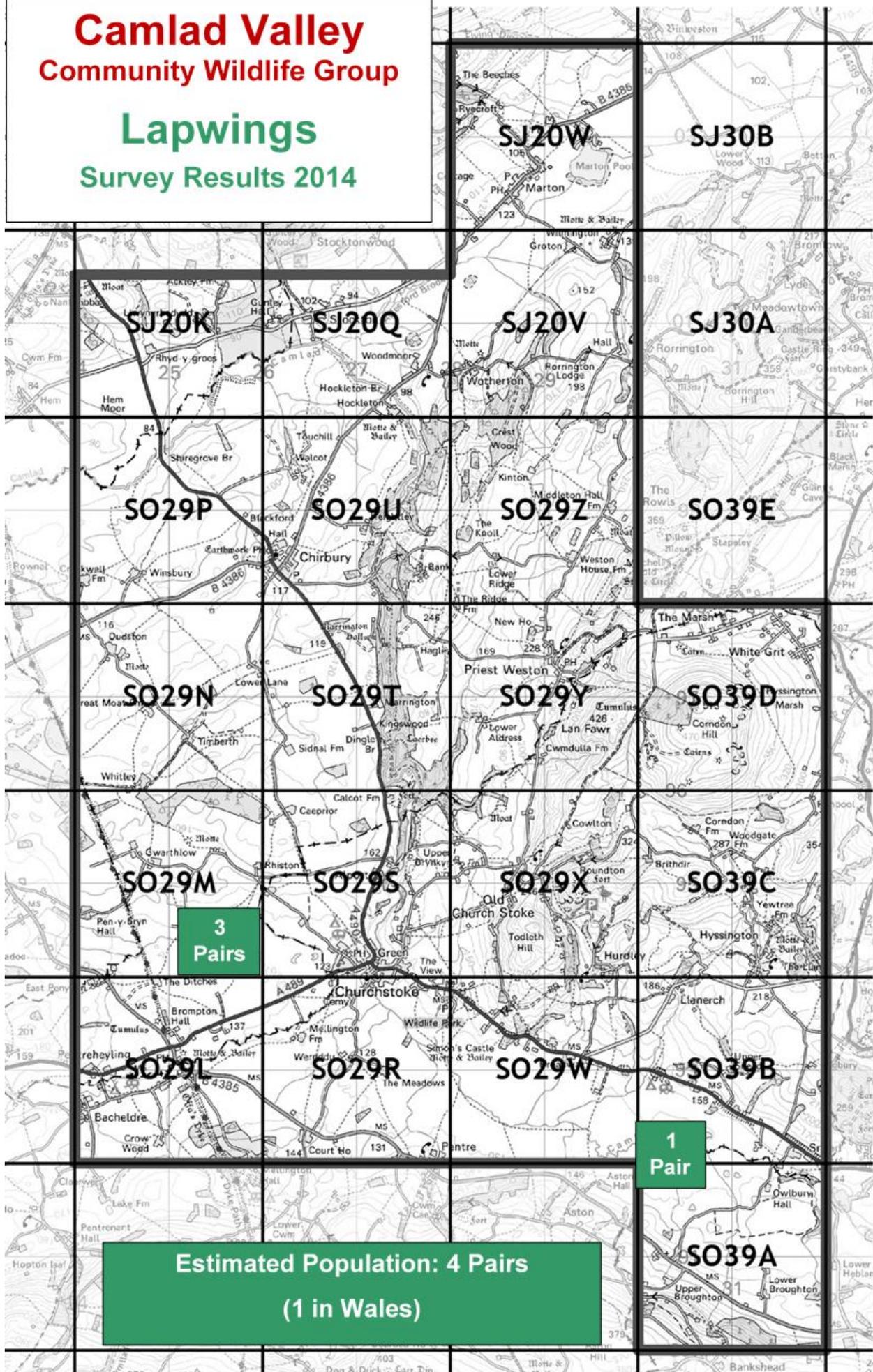
Members of the Bird Group who live in the area, and other local residents, say that Lapwings and Curlews are less common now than they used to be. Some members talked to local farmers in the course of their surveys, and they too said that Lapwings and Curlew are less common now than they used to be.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

Map 1



Camlad Valley Community Wildlife Group

Lapwings Survey Results 2014



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	Wales	Maximum Number of Each Species Recorded on Any One Visit (Individual Birds)												
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Grey Partridge	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellowhammer	Reed Bunting
SJ20 K	Y	(Square Not Surveyed)												
SJ20 Q	Y	(No Target Species Recorded)												
SJ20 V	N	(Square Not Surveyed)												
SJ20 W	Y		2											
SO29 L	Y						1					1		
SO29 M	Y	7	3				1			2			4	
SO29 N	Tiny Bit			1	1	2	5					1	3	
SO29 P	N						2			2				
SO29 R	Y		1				2						2	
SO29 S	Y		3		5					3	11			
SO29 T	N		2											
SO29 U	N													
SO29 W	ALL		2				6						3	
SO29 X	Y						3	6		3				
SO29 Y	Y		2							3				
SO29 Z	N													
SO39 A	Tiny Bit		9										2	2
SO39 B	Y	2	11											1
SO39 C	ALL		1							1		1		
SO39 D	Y		5	1			3	1	1	1		1		
Total (20 Tetrads)		9	42	2	6	2	23	7	1	15	11	4	14	3

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.

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

Red Kites were seen in only two tetrads, and there was no evidence of breeding. 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.

Not surprisingly, seven of the more scarce Target Species were not recorded at all during the surveys – Barn Owl, Grey Partridge, Snipe, Dipper, Wheatear, Stonechat and Yellow Wagtail, but, surprisingly, no Swift (nest sites) or Linnet were recorded.

Skylark on Stapeley Hill

Several volunteers mapped displaying Skylarks on Stapeley Hill on 4 May and 8 June. Two one kilometre squares were covered (the south-west and north-east quadrants within tetrad SO39E), and the number of territorial males was estimated at 16 in the former, and 10 in the latter.

These are extremely high densities by national standards, and comparable with densities found on the Long Mynd and the Stiperstones, which are prime habitat for the species.

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 is shown in Table 2.

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

CWG Area	Lapwing	Curlew
Upper Onny	18 - 19	28 - 31
Rea Valley	5 - 6	9 - 16
Camlad (England)	3 - 4	4 - 6
Camlad (Wales)	1	5 - 7
Total	27 - 30	46 - 60

The Rea Valley and Camlad Groups both started monitoring these species in 2014.

The Upper Onny Wildlife Group has been doing this since 2004. In those 11 years,

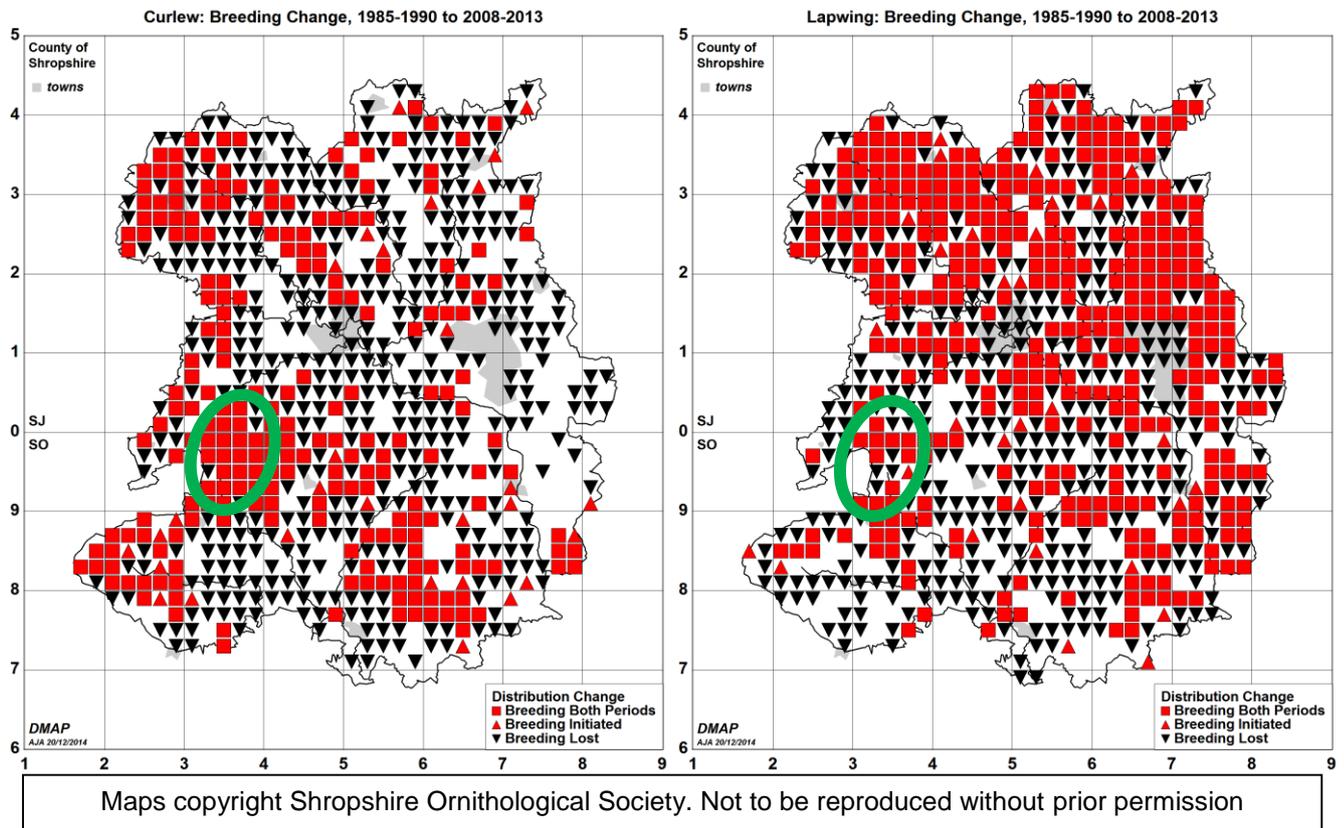
- Lapwing, after an initial decline from the number found in 2004 (19 pairs), recovered after intensive conservation work, but a subsequent decline has returned the population to the same number as 2004
- Curlew has shown a steady decline from an estimated 38 pairs in 2004 to only 28 now – a loss of 10 pairs (26%) in only 11 years.

As a result of the evidence collected by the Upper Onny Group, and in the hope of reversing these declines, they 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.

Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

In England, 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. The approximate location of the LPS area is shown in green. 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 (red squares) and tetrads where it was found in the earlier period, but not the more recent period (black 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).

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 being taken, nationally and locally. Both species have been designated as UK Biodiversity Priority Species by the Government, as part of its commitment to international biodiversity targets, precisely because of the rapid decline.

Both species nest on farmland, and the Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (part of the system of payments to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union) includes provision to reward farmers for sensitive management of habitat on their farms, and providing other environmental benefits. Farmers applying to join the scheme had to take into account the breeding 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 includes specific prescriptions, and payments, for Lapwing and Curlew habitat, if the farmer wants to take them up.

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 come to an end, and is being replaced by a new Environmental Land Management Scheme (Countryside Stewardship), with similar objectives and targeting. The details are still being worked out, and new applications will be invited during 2015.

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

Use of CWG Survey Results

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

In England, they show the importance of particular areas for these species, which will hopefully encourage farmers to manage their land more sensitively, and provide Natural England with objective evidence to judge individual farm applications to join Countryside Stewardship, and information to target the use of their limited resources more effectively.

The results also reinforce and supplement the results from other Community Wildlife Groups operating in the Shropshire Hills, 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.

Records collected in the area up until 2013 at tetrad level to help support the bid to Heritage Lottery Fund have also been supplied to Shropshire Ornithological Society for incorporation into the Shropshire Bird Atlas. The Atlas project has now completed its six years fieldwork 2008-13, and results should be published in a new county Avifauna, *The Birds of Shropshire*, around the end of 2015.

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 the sites sensitively, so they retain their value for wildlife.

In Wales, the results have been used by the LPS to support a successful application to NRW for a three year Camlad Valley Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project, starting in 2015, 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 2014 survey results will help target the initial nest-finding, and the early results of the 2015 surveys will help further. 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.

Ground nesting Bird Recovery Project

This project is heavily reliant on the contribution land managers make to helping the birds breed successfully. Unfortunately, our relentless demand for cheap food, means that the habitat the birds need is fast disappearing. Research by ornithologists and conservationists has shown that alongside loss of habitat, threatened wader populations are more vulnerable to predation. Throughout Britain the loss of curlew, lapwing and snipe is dramatic, but different local factors often influence the outcome of local populations.

Following on from the excellent bird surveying work that the Community Wildlife Groups have done, the project is aiming to discover what the main local factors are that prevent birds (Curlews in particular) from breeding successfully. A new project group has been formed to structure a way forward and funding has been sought for a three year project to implement nest monitoring and predation analysis. The LPS wants to apply for further money to help support farmers and land managers to form their own action groups to secure a future for these birds.

A successful bid to Natural Resources Wales means that the 3 year study and action plan can start in Wales this year. The LPS is urgently trying to secure funding to carry out a pilot project in England for one year and the outlook is optimistic.

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

Acknowledgements

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

Anne Hill, Avril and Stuart Dickinson, Chris Radford, Clive and Ros Burns, Hazel and John Cribb, Heather Scott, Hilary Berry, Kay Radford, Kay Yeates, Mary Napper White, Nancy and Andy Ketchen, Nicola Jones, Pat Morris and Rob Rowe.

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.
- Mike Watkins, who organised the Skylark survey on Stapeley Hill, and analysed the results

Summary 2014

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

All except two 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.

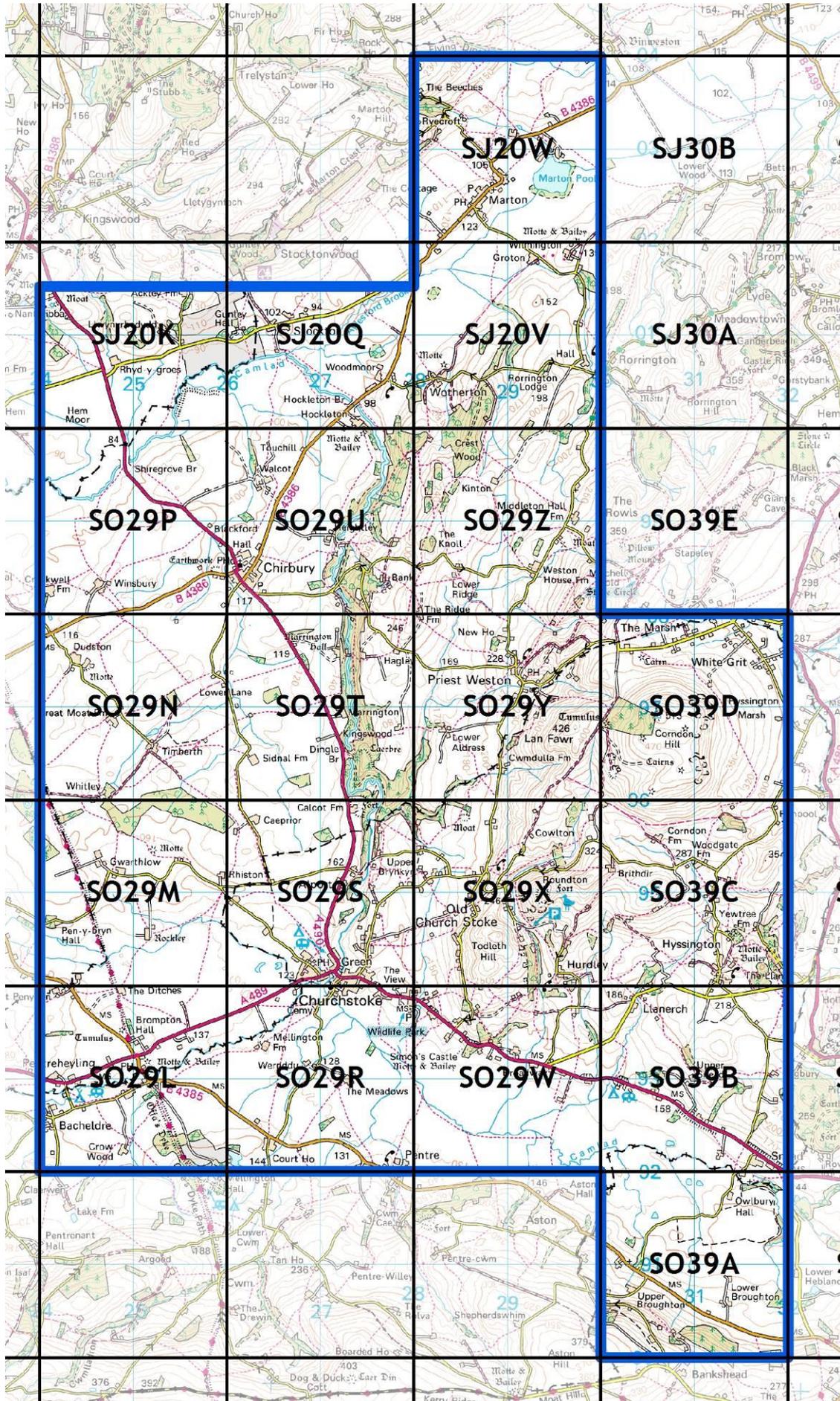
The populations in the Camlad Valley area are estimated at 4 - 5 pairs of Lapwing (one probably in Wales), and 9 – 13 pairs of Curlew (5 – 7 pairs in Wales)

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.

The results will help with locating nests in 2015, to be monitored to assess the reasons for poor breeding success in the LPS area.

Leo Smith
February 2015

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



Appendix 2: Camlad Valley CWG Bird Survey Records

Camlad Valley CWG Bird Survey

Survey Results: First of two before 4th May

Tetrad	L / CU	LPS	Wales	Surveyor(s)	Time Spent		Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
					Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Grey Partridge	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Duncock	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting		
SJ20 K	YES	No	Y				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 Q			Y	Sandy and Heather Scott	4	30	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ20 V			N				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 W			Y	Nancy & Andy Ketchen	2	30	1														
SO29 L		No	Y	Chris Radford	2	30	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 M		Tiny Bit	Y	Chris Radford	2	30	6	3			1			2			3				
SO29 N		No	Tiny Bit	Kay Radford	3	0				1	5					1	1				
SO29 P	YES	Tiny Bit	N	Clive and Ros Burns	2	20	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 R			Y	Mary Napper White	2	30	1														
SO29 S	YES		Y	Clive and Ros Burns	3	30	1		1				3	11							
SO29 T			N	Anne Hill and Pat Morris	3	30	2														
SO29 U			N				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SO29 W	YES		ALL	Rob Rowe	3	0		2													
SO29 X			Y	Hazel and John Cribb	3	45				3	6		3								
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Nicola Jones	4	30	1														
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Trisha Marlow			(Survey return not received yet)														
SO29 Z			N	Kay and David Yeates			(Survey return not received yet)														
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SO39 B	YES		Y	Sally Currin	3	0		1													
SO39 B	YES		Y	Rob Rowe	3	0		2													
SO39 C	YES		ALL	Stuart Dickinson	3	45							1		1						
SO39 D	YES		Y	Hilary Berry	2	0		5													
Totals (20 Tetrads)					49	50	6	19	0	2	0	13	6	1	11	11	3	9	0		

Survey Results: Second of two before 4th May

Tetrad	L / CU	LPS	Wales	Surveyor(s)	Time Spent		Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
					Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Grey Partridge	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Duncock	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting		
SJ20 K	YES	No	Y				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 Q			Y	Heather Scott			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ20 V			N				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 W			Y	Nancy & Andy Ketchen	1	0	2														
SO29 L		No	Y	Chris Radford	2	30					1										
SO29 M		Tiny Bit	Y	Chris Radford	2	30	7														
SO29 N		No	Tiny Bit	Kay Radford	3	0			1	2	3							4			
SO29 P	YES	Tiny Bit	N	Clive and Ros Burns	1	0				1								3			
SO29 R			Y	Mary Napper White			(Square Not Surveyed)														
SO29 S	YES		Y	Clive and Ros Burns	1	5	3														
SO29 T			N	Anne Hill and Pat Morris			(Survey return not received yet)														
SO29 U			N				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SO29 W	YES		ALL	Rob Rowe	3	0		1													
SO29 X			Y	Hazel and John Cribb	3	0				2								1			
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Nicola Jones	3	30	2														
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Trisha Marlow			(Survey return not received yet)														
SO29 Z			N	Kay Yeates	3	0	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SO39 B	YES		Y	Sally Currin			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO39 B	YES		Y	Rob Rowe	3	0		2													
SO39 C	YES		ALL	Avril and Stuart Dickinson	3	0		1					1		1						
SO39 D	YES		Y	Hilary Berry	2	30		4			3	1	1								
Totals (20 Tetrads)					32	5	7	15	1	0	2	10	1	1	8	0	1	8	0		

Third Survey : 7 - 22 June

Tetrad	L / CU	LPS	Wales	Surveyor(s)	Time Spent		Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
					Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Grey Partridge	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Duncock	Tree Sparrow	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting		
SJ20 K	YES	No	Y				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 Q			Y	Heather Scott			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ20 V			N				(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ20 W			Y	Nancy & Andy Ketchen			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 L		No	Y	Chris Radford			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 M		Tiny Bit	Y	Chris Radford			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 N		No	Tiny Bit	Kay Radford			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 P	YES	Tiny Bit	N	Clive and Ros Burns	1	20	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 R			Y	Mary Napper White			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 S	YES		Y	Clive and Ros Burns	4	15			5				2	1							
SO29 T			N	Anne Hill and Pat Morris			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 U			N				(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 W	YES		ALL	Rob Rowe	1	0		1			6										
SO29 X			Y	Hazel and John Cribb	3	45						1									
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Nicola Jones	3	30	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 Y	YES		Y	Trisha Marlow			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO29 Z			N	Kay Yeates			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO39 A	YES		Tiny Bit	Rob Rowe	6	0		9													
SO39 B	YES		Y	Sally Currin			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO39 B	YES		Y	Rob Rowe	6	0	2	11													
SO39 C	YES		ALL	Avril and Stuart Dickinson			(No Target Species Recorded)														
SO39 D	YES		Y	Hilary Berry	2	30		1	1			1	1		1	2	3				
Totals (20 Tetrads)					28	20	2	22	1	5	0	6	1	1	3	1	1	2	3		

2.3 A Summary of other surveys and training

Dawn Chorus Walk



On the 8th May members of the Upper Onny, Camlad and Rea Valley CWGs came together to celebrate *International Dawn Chorus Day*. Pete Carty of the National Trust led a dawn chorus walk long the Darnford Valley which was followed by breakfast at The Bridges.

Dormice



The *Helping Hillforts & Earthwork Castles* project involves groups of volunteers in practical conservation and survey projects at six scheduled ancient monuments across the Landscape Partnership Scheme area. At Callow Hillfort, near Minsterley, CWG members undertook a survey to determine whether Dormice were present on the site so that the necessary steps could be taken to minimise disturbance to their habitat. Kate Thorne from Churton Ecology led an informal training session to show volunteers Dormouse nest signs and to search for their presence, which is often indicated by tell-tale teeth marks on hazel nuts. The survey was....fruitless. But the search will continue in the summer of 2015....

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Ancient Trees



Winter might be considered an uneventful time for wildlife, but it's nevertheless a great time to see trees in all their naked glory! On the 22nd November, Rob Rowe led a tree safari around part of the Landscape Partnership Scheme area to share some of our hidden gems. The itinerary included among others, the Norbury Yew, Linley Beeches and, as featured the Lydham Oak. Rob is planning another tree tour soon, so watch this space!

Bats



As part of the Snailbeach Heritage weekend on 13-14th September, Mike Worsfold of both Shropshire Mines Trust and Shropshire Bat Group led a walk around the mining remains. We were encouraged to see some younger wildlife enthusiasts from Stiperstones school. More bat surveys will be happening in 2015 as part of our project, *Rescuing Rocks and Overgrown Relics*.

Mammals



At Habberley Brook, the subtle aroma of Otter - freshly mown hay mixed with putrefied fish - was detected by the highly-tuned nostrils of Stuart Edmunds. The CWG volunteers were only too happy, it seemed, to inhale the scent. The *Hide n' Squeak* project has run a number of sessions in the Rea Valley CWG survey area and has caught some delightful footage of our local mammals, including a tantalising glimpse of Otter. Follow this link to see some of the highlights:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbK5qyJl5s>

Bioblitz

On 22nd-23rd August 2014, Natural England headed up a partnership event called the 'BioBlitz'. Occurring along the length of the Stiperstones Ridge, the Bioblitz was a marathon biodiversity survey over a 24 hour period. A target of 500 species was set, and thanks to the efforts of all concerned the target was surpassed with a final tally of 550 species.

Heather shieldbug was recorded for the first time since 2002, it is rare in Shropshire and only found on three sites, Wyre, Whixall and Stiperstones.

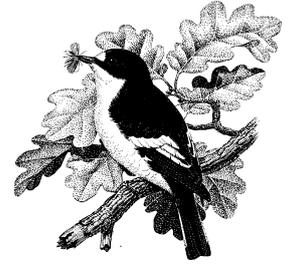
The Northern Rustic Moth was also recorded on the hill, the last known recording was in the 1890's on the Devil's Chair.

2014 Bioblitz survey by taxa:

Taxon	Species Recorded
Amphibian	3
Bird	38
Bryophyte	39
Fungi	16
Invertebrate	192
Lichen	58
Mammal	11
Plant	179
Protozoa	12
Reptile	1
Slime Mold	1
Grand Total	550

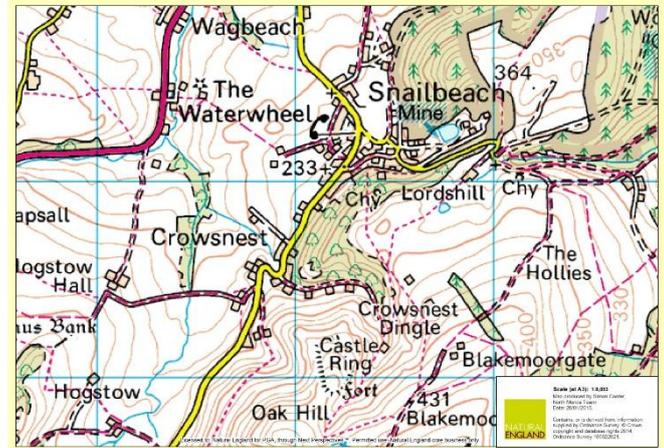
3. Up and coming events, training and survey work

3.1 The Resting Hill nest box project – Simon Cooter



Background

Resting Hill Woodland is an upland oak woodland that is owned by Natural England as part of the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve. It is located at the north end of the site near Snailbeach and due to its proximity to the old lead mines has seen a great deal of management over the years. It has a history of coppicing and grazing, and like many woodlands in the area was abandoned as a coppice woodland some time ago. Although Natural England have reinstated the coppicing which has helped add structure to the woodland, there is a lack of old trees within the woodland and therefore a shortage of holes for birds to nest in. A recent survey of the woodland birds at Resting Hill showed that there were no pied flycatchers and only three redstart territories, both birds that should benefit from the provision of nest boxes. Both are amber listed birds of conservation concern and both have a westerly distribution in the UK, so this area could be very important for them, being near to the edge of their range.



Project aims

As a continuation of the study into woodland birds on this site 50 nest boxes will be put up in the northern section of the wood and the changes in bird territories will be monitored.

To do this timber has been sourced locally and nest boxes will be built with help from the Stiperstones School and the local community. Volunteers will also be needed for putting up the boxes and subsequent monitoring of the birds nesting in them. This monitoring will be part of the BTO's nest box recording scheme and will give information to the woodland bird study.



In addition the Stiperstones and Chirbury schools will make and put up a nest box in their school grounds with a nest camera linked to a monitor in their school.

3.2 Plans for 2015

Over the longer-term of the CWG project, it is intended that volunteers can decide on which species and habitats are important to them, and which species they wish to concentrate on. The programme of forthcoming activities (3.3) has been developed to reflect people's interest that were expressed during the public open meetings last year.

The Bird Group intends to repeat the Bird Survey next year. New participants are needed, so we hope to recruit new members. A nest box scheme for woodland birds in the Stiperstones valleys has been developed by Natural England, as above. Nest box schemes for 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.

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

1. Contributing info to the CWGs Website
2. Repeating the first year community engagement activities
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

Details of the above 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.

3.3. Forthcoming activities

Please see below the list of training and survey opportunities. Please email info@stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk for further information and to book a place.

Resting Hill Nest Box project – Nest box building	Sunday 8th March 11am – 2pm Stiperstones School	Join Joe Penfold and Jenni Tibbetts to help build a target of 50 birdboxes!
Resting Hill Nest Box project – Nest box siting	Saturday 14th March 10am – 2pm Snailbeach Village Hall	Led by Jonathon Groome (Shropshire Council Biodiversity Data Officer) and Simon Cooter (Stiperstones Reserves Manager) to find suitable sites for the nest boxes.
Rea Valley Bird Group Meeting – Survey planning	Wednesday 23rd March 7.30pm – The Horse & Jockey, Churchstoke	Join Leo Smith to get involved in the 2015 Lapwing and Curlew Survey. Your chance to choose your square!
Resting Hill Nest Box project – Training session	Sunday 22nd March 10am – 2pm Snailbeach Village Hall	Simon, Jonathan and research student, Chris Radford, will be running a practical training session to plan the survey of the target species.
Hide n’ Squeak – Mammal survey	Saturday 18 th April 10.30am-2pm East Ridge Woods car park SJ 393027	Setting up camera traps in the East Ridge and Lower Vessons area with Stuart Edmunds (Shropshire Mammal Group)
Mosses & Liverworts - Beginners	Friday 24th April 10am - 3pm Meet at the Natural England Office, Pennerley. Grid Ref: SO 357 985	Led by Dan Wrench. Partly outside and partly indoors with lenses and microscopes to look at these beautiful and overlooked plants. Cost £5.
Hide n’ Squeak – Mammal survey	Saturday 25 th April 10.30am-2pm East Ridge Woods car park SJ 393027	Join Stuart for part 2 of the mammal camera-trapping project to see what footage has been recorded
Upland Wood Pasture	Sunday 17th May 10am - 1pm Meet at Shropshire Wildlife Trust’s car park, Lords Hill Chapel. Grid Ref: SJ 381 020	A visit to Brook Vessons to explore this unusual habitat and maybe practice bryophyte ID.
Roundton Reserve and SSSI	Thursday 28th May 10am - 1pm Meet at the Reserve car park near Old Church Stoke. Grid Ref: SO 292 946	A rich site for Spring ephemerals
Brithdir	Wednesday 10th June 6.30 - 8.30pm Meet in the farm yard at Brithdir. Grid Ref: SO 301 952	An evening visit to the spectacular marsh and meadows.

Willow Farm and Camlad Apiary	Friday 19th June - Parking on site between Priest Weston and Old Church Stoke. Grid Ref: SO 289 963	evening 4.30 - 6pm apiary visit - learn about the conservation of our native honey bee 6pm picnic 6.30pm - 8.30pm woodland/grassland walk. Come to one or both.
Ritton Castle and Bog	Saturday 27th June 10am - 3pm Meet at the Bog car park. Grid Ref: SO 257 978	Site of an Iron-Age hill fort and grassland.
White Grit Meadows	Sunday 5th July 2 - 5pm Parking on roadside corner. Grid Ref: SO 314 980	Two adjacent SSSIs of species rich meadows.
Venus Bank	Thursday 16th July 10am - 1pm Parking at the owner's house in Hope Valley. Grid Ref: SJ 340 008	A visit to rich grassland sites
Gatten Marsh	Sunday 2nd August 10am - 1pm Meet at the Knolls (main NNR) car park. Grid Ref: SO 370 976	Exploring the wet flushes and bogs of the Stiperstones Wellies advisable.
Fungi Foray	Sunday 18th October 10.30am - 1pm Meet Snailbeach Village Hall car park. Grid Ref: SJ 373 023	A visit to the woodland at Snailbeach.

3.4 Other forthcoming activities and events

You may also be interested in other work being carried out by the LPS including:

Rescuing rocks & overgrown relics project – All about moths- A series of 6 sessions to learn more about moths, identification, trapping and the practicalities of running a trap. Cost £5 for the first session you attend, then subsequent sessions free.

Dates are:

5th June 2015 – Snailbeach

12th June 2015 – Nils Hill

26th June 2015 – Poles Coppice

10th July 2015 – Earl's Hill

31st July 2015 – Roman Gravels

7th August 2015 – The Bog

Times to be confirmed. Booking essential, contact JP Brayford john.brayford@shropshire.gov.uk .

Stiperstones &
Corndon Hill Country
LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME



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www.shropscwgs.org.uk / www.stiperstonesandcorndon.co.uk