heritage treftadaeth

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ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI

Rea Valley Community Wildlife Group

in Pontesbury, Minsterley, Stiperstones and the Hope Valley

Annual Report 2014

Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country
LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME

Bro Stiperstones a Corndon Hill
CYNLLUN PARTNERIAETH TIRWEDD

Contents

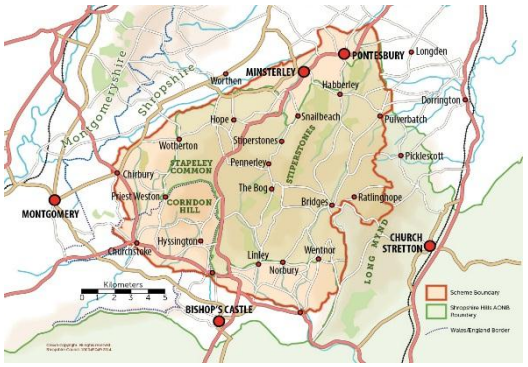
Introduction

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 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.

Scraping Beneath the Surface

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

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

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

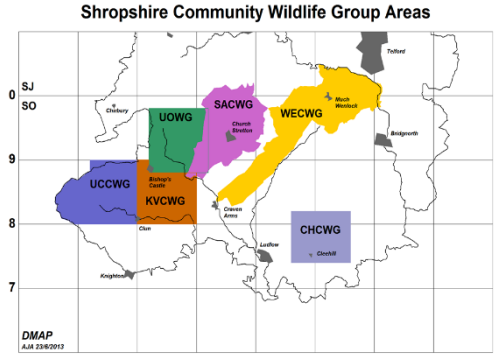
Resourceful People

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.

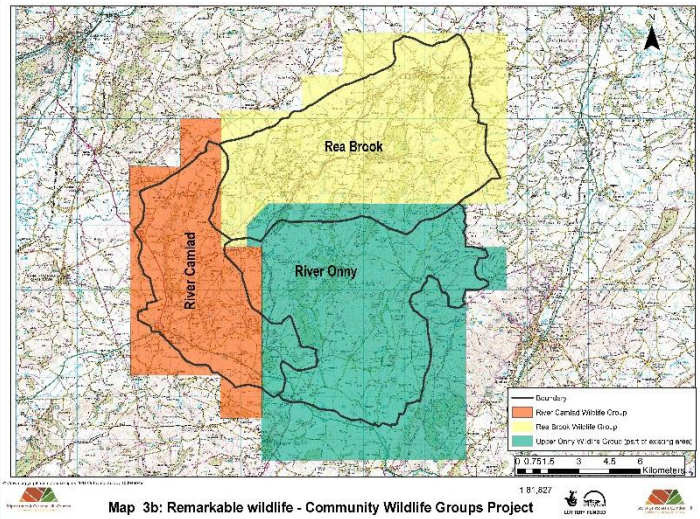


Southern Shropshire's six Community Wildlife Groups (CWGs). The grid on this map shows 10 km squares of the Ordnance Survey national grid reference system. Group names are abbreviated as Upper Clun (UCCWG), Kemp Valley (KVCWG), Upper Onny (UOCWG), Strettons Area (SACWG), Wenlock Edge (WECWG) and Clee Hill (CHCWG). CWG projects are defined by the behaviour of and habitats used by the wildlife studied so that Group boundaries should be regarded as nominal. For more information visit www.shropscwgs.org.uk

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



Map showing the three CWG survey areas in the LPS. The yellow and orange indicate the two new groups and the existing Upper Onny CWG is in green.

In the past year, two new CWG groups have been set up for the *River Camlad* catchment area, and the *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 *Rea 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 identify "Stakeholders"
3. Holding public meetings in Pontesbury, Snailbeach/Stiperstones and Hope 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

1.3 Volunteer engagement and in-kind contribution

With the support of project partners, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Butterfly Conservation and Shropshire Mammal Group, three community engagement events were delivered at Snailbeach, Pontesbury and Hope during February 2013. 58 people expressed interest in joining the group, and since then an additional 17 people have come forward to take part in the plant and bird survey groups. During 2014 Rea Valley CWG members contributed 483 person hours 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 Plant group report – by Rob Rowe

The plant group had its inaugural meeting at the Stiperstones Inn on the evening of April 16th. 12 People attended.
Joe Penfold explained the role and aims of the LPS and it was agreed that those members that wished to would look specifically for unimproved grass land and hay meadows in particular, whilst recording any other interesting sites found i.e. water, woodland.
The LPS area has been divided into tetrads [2x2 kilometre squares] the same system being used by the bird group.
People took away their chosen tetrad map and an ID sheet if wanted.
A date was set for a field meeting to help people with ID skills.

Yellow Bird Nest [*monotropa hypopitys]*

On the evening of the 7th May we met at Snailbeach to walk around the old mine site and do some plant species ID.
A very varied site, we found a mixture of grassland and woodland plants and especially 'Calaminarian' grassland which is that associated with old mine sites.
Although early in the year quite a lot of orchid leaves were showing (e.g. Common Spotted Orchid and Broad Leaved Helleborine). Tiny plants such as the Thyme Leaved Sandwort and Early Whitlow Grass were representative of the mine scree and the most exciting find was the dead stems of Yellow Bird Nest [*monotropa hypopitys].*This is a rather rare and strange parasitic plant that grows in association with willow and a fungi called Tricholoma.

Plant group survey at Hope Common

17th June. A visit to the meadows belonging to one of the group members at Bentlawnt near the Hope valley.
Unexpectedly species rich grassland and hay meadows, where the grazing of horses and sheep seems to work very well in combination. Amongst other hay field plants the highlight was finding rather large specimens of Moonwort, an unusual fern found in old grassland.

Early Whitlow Grass

The information from the groups surveys which people completed produced some very useful results will be used by Shropshire Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, and the LPS.
At least two old species rich meadows have come to light from this years work.

Many thanks to those who contributed.

2.2 Curlews, Lapwings and Other Birds Survey

Objectives

The Rea Valley CWG 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 first year in which a bird survey was carried out in this part of the 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 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).

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.

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 session, delivered on 1st April took place at Hemford and was attended by 16 people. A feedback meeting was held on 22nd April, to present the results of the first surveys, discuss them, provide clarification where necessary, and iron out any difficulties experienced by the participants. 30 survey participants attended.

Survey work was carried out in all except one of the 26 tetrads, and members spent almost 300 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 no Curlews at all were found.

Curlew

The map on page 7 summarises the estimated number and location 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 13.

Three pairs were seen concurrently in SJ30F, near Hemford. There were also definitely two, probably three, pairs in SJ30K, and a pair with two fledged young were reported in that square near Santley farm.

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. In three squares, the observer(s) saw birds in two places, but could not be certain that there were two pairs present. In four other cases, one bird was seen once.

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 – 16 breeding pairs.

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 8. A summary of the observations is also shown on the map.

From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Lapwing population in the area is currently only 5 - 6 breeding pairs. The outcome of the nests is not known.

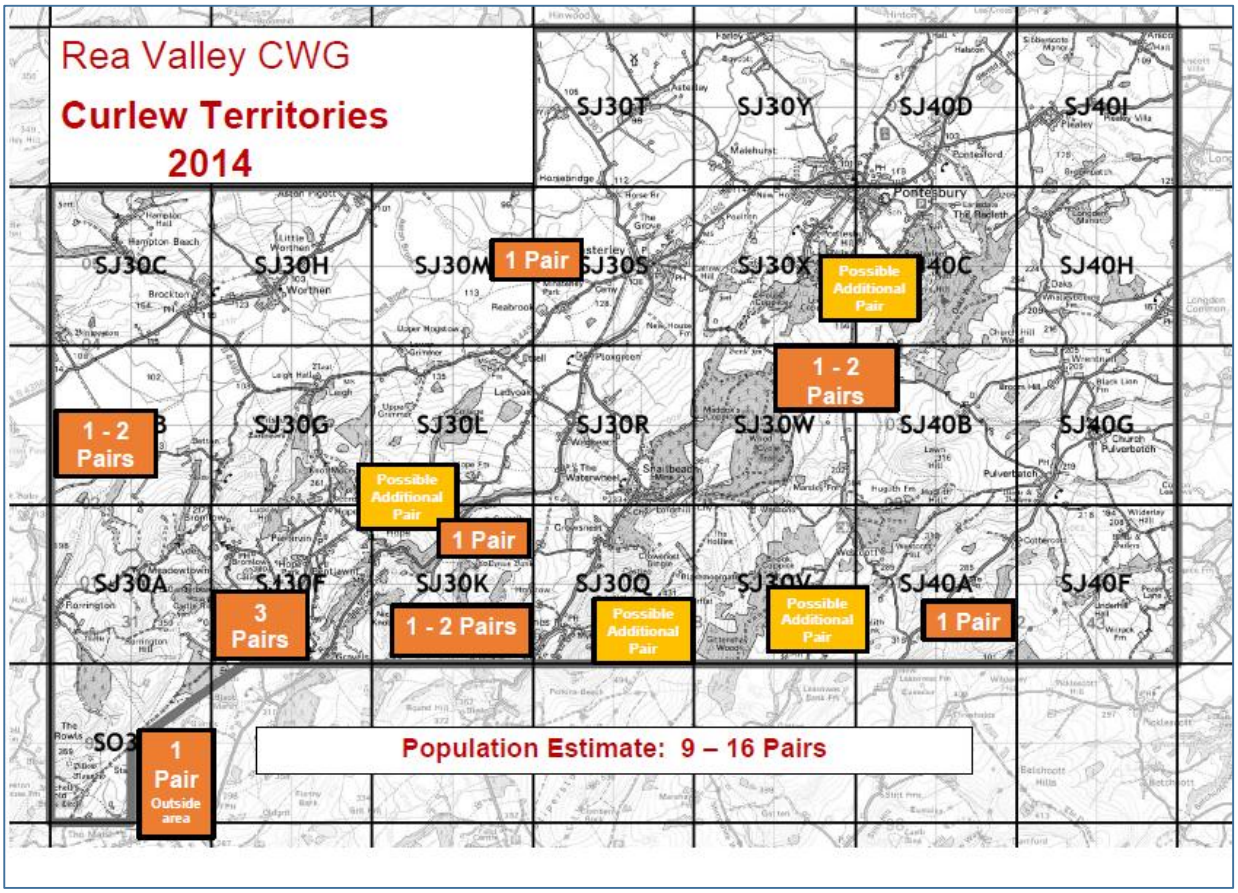
Anecdotal Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

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.

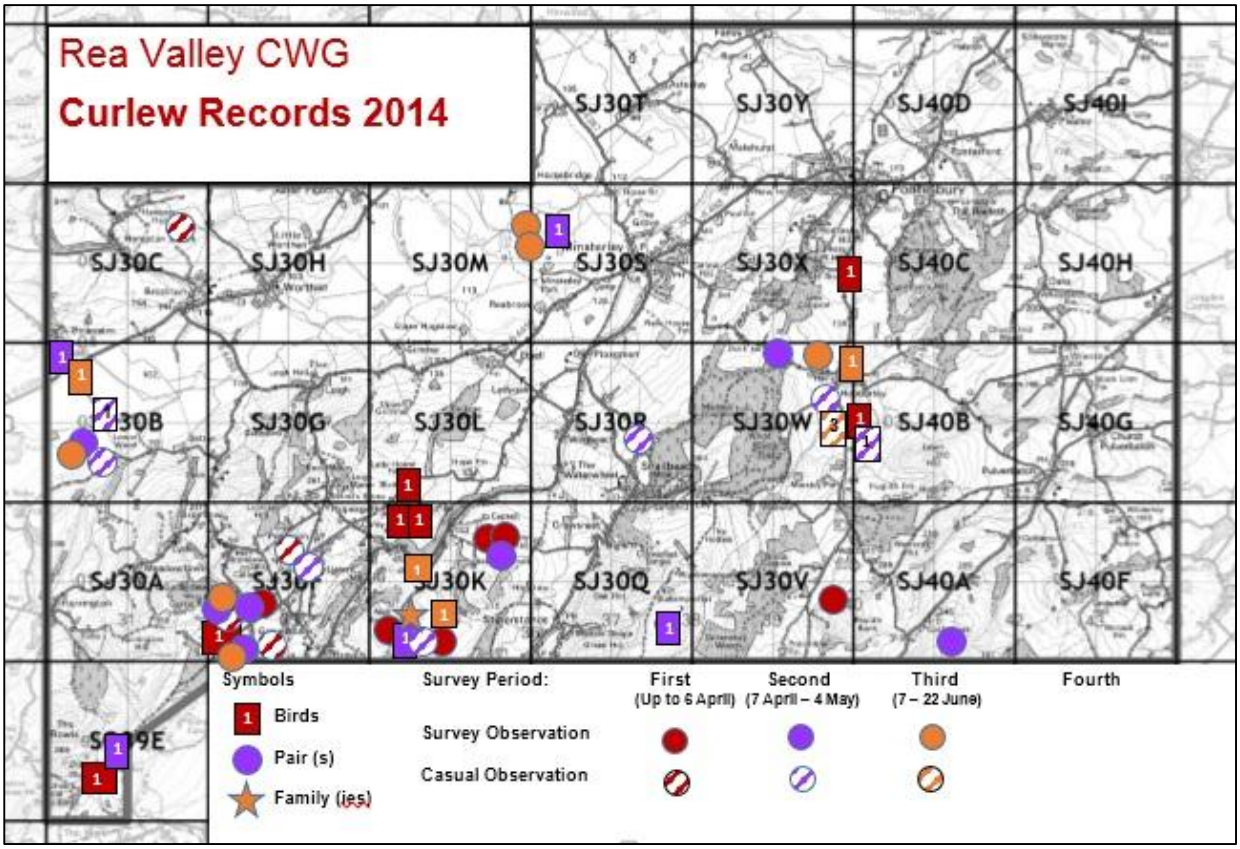
Other Target Species

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.

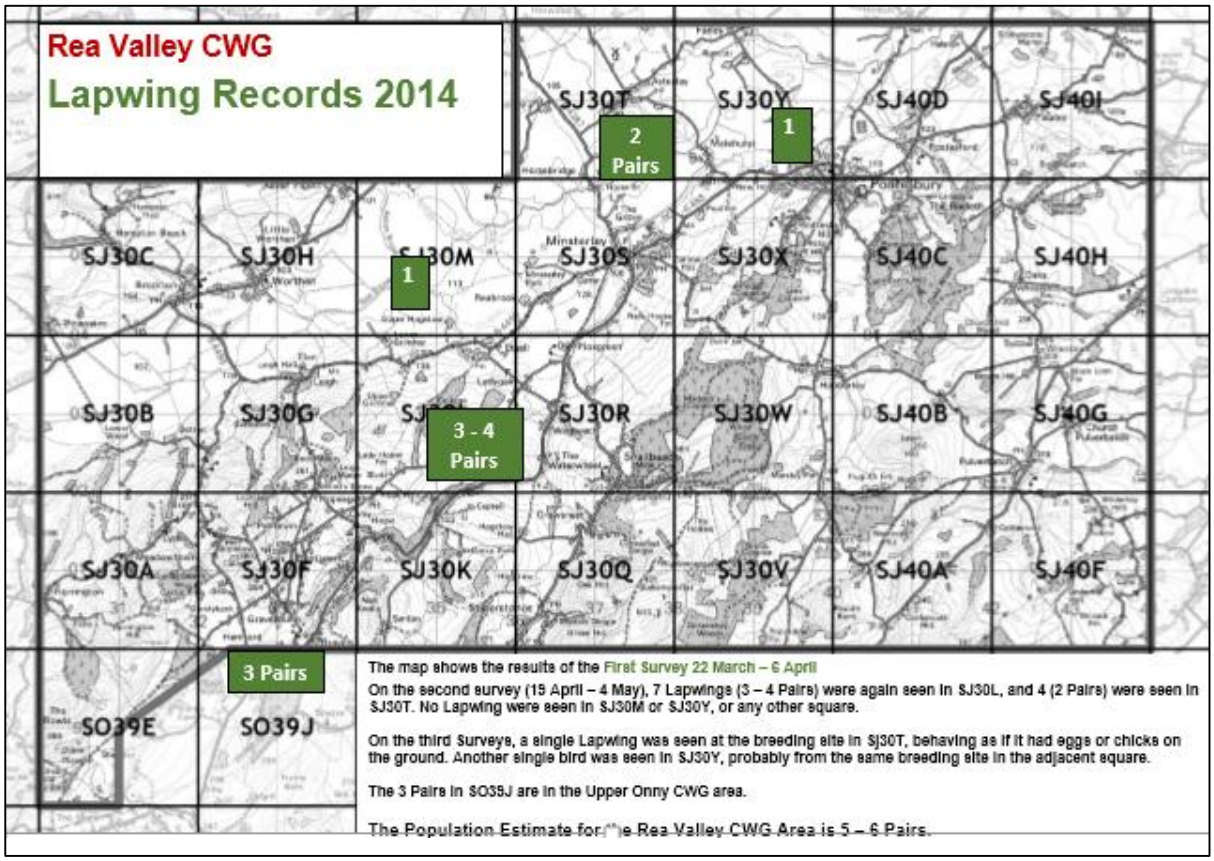
Map 1


Rea Valley CWG
Curlew Territories
2014
SJ30T
SJ30Y
SJ40D
SJ40I
SJ30C
SJ30H
SJ30M
1 Pair
SJ30S
SJ30X
Possible Additional Pair
SJ40C
SJ40H
1 - 2 Pairs
SJ30G
SJ30L
SJ30R
SJ30W
SJ40B
SJ40G
1 - 2 Pairs
Possible Additional Pair
1 Pair
SJ30A
SJ30F
SJ30K
SJ30Q
SJ30V
SJ40A
SJ40F
3 Pairs
1 - 2 Pairs
Possible Additional Pair
Possible Additional Pair
1 Pair
1 Pair Outside area
Population Estimate: 9 – 16 Pairs

Map 2


Rea Valley CWG
Curlew Records 2014
SJ30T
SJ30Y
SJ40D
SJ40I
SJ30C
SJ30H
SJ30M
SJ30S
SJ30X
SJ40C
SJ40H
SJ30G
SJ30L
SJ30R
SJ30W
SJ40B
SJ40G
SJ30A
SJ30K
SJ30Q
SJ30V
SJ40A
SJ40F
Symbols
Birds
Pair (s)
Family (ies)
Survey Period:
First (Up to 6 April)
Second (7 April – 4 May)
Third (7 – 22 June)
Fourth
Survey Observation
Casual Observation

Map 3


Rea Valley CWG
Lapwing Records 2014
SJ30T
2 Pairs
SJ30Y
1
SJ40D
SJ40I
SJ30C
SJ30H
SJ30M
1
SJ30S
SJ30X
SJ40C
SJ40H
SJ30B
SJ30G
3 - 4 Pairs
SJ30R
SJ30W
SJ40B
SJ40G
SJ30A
SJ30F
SJ30K
SJ30Q
SJ30V
SJ40A
SJ40F
3 Pairs
SO39E
SO39J
The map shows the results of the First Survey 22 March – 6 April
On the second survey (15 April – 4 May), 7 Lapwings (3 – 4 Pairs) were again seen in SJ30L, and 4 (2 Pairs) were seen in SJ30T. No Lapwing were seen in SJ30M or SJ30Y, or any other square.
On the third Surveys, a single Lapwing was seen at the breeding site in SJ30T, behaving as if it had eggs or chicks on the ground. Another single bird was seen in SJ30Y, probably from the same breeding site in the adjacent square.
The 3 Pairs in SO35J are in the Upper Onny CWG area.
The Population Estimate for the Rea Valley CWG Area is 5 – 6 Pairs.

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	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dipper	Dunnock	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30 A				1	2										
SJ30 B		3													
SJ30 C	(Square not surveyed)														
SJ30 F	3	7													
SJ30 G	1	4													
SJ30 H															
SJ30 K		3		3					1				3		
SJ30 L	7	8	1	2	4				4				1		
SJ30 M	1	1	1		7				3					4	
SJ30 Q		1	1	1	10	63	2		4	6					
SJ30 R															
SJ30 S		1			6				3				1	2	
SJ30 T	4														
SJ30 V		3			3	1									
SJ30 W		2													
SJ30 X		1							2				4		
SJ30 Y	1													2	
SJ40 A		2	1		7	6						4	2	10	2
SJ40 B					4	1								1	
SJ40 C					3			1							
SJ40 D			1		6				4		2			1	
SJ40 F					3	1					1				1
SJ40 G				1	4				4						
SJ40 H					5									1	
SJ40 I			2	1	8		3		17		10	6	1	13	
SO39 E		1	1	1	8										
Totals	**17**	**37**	**8**	**10**	**80**	**72**	**5**	**1**	**42**	**6**	**13**	**10**	**12**	**34**	**3**

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 is now a Red List species on the Birds of Conservation Concern 3: 2009, but it was recorded in two tetrads, and three were heard concurrently in SJ40I.

Red Kites were seen in six 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 (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.

There was one casual record of Dipper (SJ40C), and a survey record of Spotted Flycatcher (SJ40I). Snipe were recorded in SJ# in # but these would be passage or late-departing over-wintering birds

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

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.

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**

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

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.

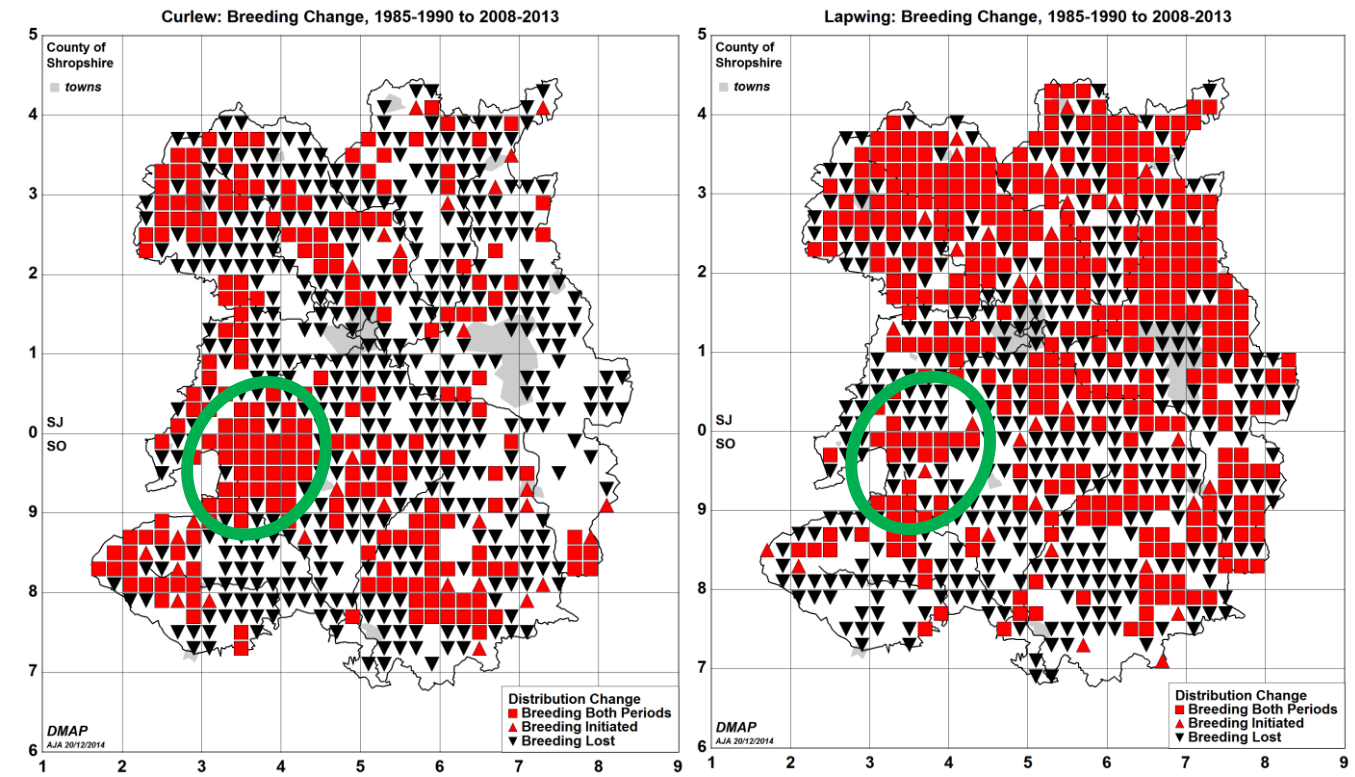
As a result of the evidence collected by the Upper Onny Group, and in hope of reversing these declines, they actively supported the bid for funding for the LPS, and proposed the development of Community Wildlife Groups across the whole area, and the establishment of a Ground-nesting Bird Recovery Project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

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 (NELMS), with similar objectives and targeting. The details are still being worked out, and new applications will be invited during 2015.

Use of CWG Survey Results

Most importantly, the survey 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 NELMS, 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.

The records at tetrad level 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.

Recommendations

Natural England is 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:-

Alison Hosker, Alison Slade, Alison, Elizabeth and Paul Holmes, Amber Bicheno and Gary Price, Anne and Jon Yeeles, Barry Peabody, Dave Woodhouse & Judith Metcher, David Wilson, Dorcas Frame, Emma Coyle, Jerry Hughes, Jo Longstaff, Jonathon Groom, Julian Bromhead, Malc & Jude Mollart, Martin Sutton, Megan Holdgate, Richard Allen, Richard Halahan, Siobhan Reedy, Steph Cotton and Stephen Wilson.

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.

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 one 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.

The populations in the Rea Valley area are estimated at 5 – 6 pairs of Lapwing, and 9 – 16 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.

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

Appendix 2: Rea Valley CWG Bird Survey Records

Rea Valley CWG Bird Survey Results 2014

First Period (22 March - 6 April)

Tetrad	Surveyor(s)	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dipper	Dunnock	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30 A	Richard Allen	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 B	Barry Peabody	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 C		(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ30 F	Jo Longstaff	3	3													
SJ30 F	Vicky Smeaton and HarryCoyle	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 F	Training Session (1 April)	1	4													
SJ30 G	Barry Peabody	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 H	Jerry Hughes					1										
SJ30 K	Vicky Smeaton and Harry Coyle		3													
SJ30 K	David Wilson		8		1	1				4				1		
SJ30 L	Martin Sutton	7			2	1										
SJ30 L	Megan Holdgate	1	1													
SJ30 M	Emma Coyle	1				4										
SJ30 Q	Julian Bromhead			1		9	63			4	1					
SJ30 R	Anne and Jon Yeeles	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 S		(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ30 T	Richard Halahan	4														
SJ30 V	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price		2			3	1									
SJ30 W	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price		1													
SJ30 X	Alison, Elizabeth and Paul Holmes		1							2				4		
SJ30 Y	Richard Halahan	1														
SJ40 A	Jonathon Groom			1		7	6							2	10	1
SJ40 B	Siobhan Reedy					4	1								1	
SJ40 C	Alison Slade															
SJ40 D	Dorcas Frame					5				4		2				
SJ40 F	Alison Hosker					2						1				
SJ40 G	Dave Woodhouse & J. Metcher					4				4						
SJ40 H	Steph Cotton					5									1	
SJ40 I	Malc& Jude Mollart					2				9			6			
SJ40 I	Dorcas Frame					3				1					2	
SO39 E	Richard Allen		1													
Totals (26 Tetrads)		18	24	2	3	51	71	0	0	28	1	3	6	7	14	1

Non-breeding Snipe were recorded in SJ40F and SJ40I (2 birds in each tetrad0

The Following Species Were Not Recorded: Barn Owl, Grey Partridge, Cuckoo, Dipper, Swift (nest sites), Wheatear, Spotted Flycatcher & Yellow Wagtail

Second Period (19 April - 4 May)

Tetrad	Surveyor(s)	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dipper	Dunnock	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30 A	Richard Allen				1	2										
SJ30 B	Barry Peabody		3													
SJ30 C		(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ30 F	Jo Longstaff		7													
SJ30 F	Vicky Smeaton and HarryCoyle	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 G	Barry Peabody	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 H	Jerry Hughes	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 K	Vicky Smeaton and Harry Coyle	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 K	David Wilson		3							1				3		
SJ30 L	Martin Sutton	6		1	1	4										
SJ30 L	Megan Holdgate	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 M	Emma Coyle	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 M	David Wilson			1		7				3					2	
SJ30 Q	Julian Bromhead		1		1	10	45	2		2	3					
SJ30 R	Anne and Jon Yeeles	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 S	Stephen Wilson		1			1				3					2	
SJ30 T	Richard Halahan	4														
SJ30 V	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price					1										
SJ30 W	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price		2													
SJ30 X	Alison, Elizabeth and Paul Holmes	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 Y	Richard Halahan														2	
SJ40 A	Jonathon Groom		2			5	2						4		3	2
SJ40 B	Siobhan Reedy														1	
SJ40 C	Alison Slade					3										
SJ40 D	Dorcas Frame			1		6									1	
SJ40 F	Alison Hosker					3										1
SJ40 G	Dave Woodhouse & J. Metcher															
SJ40 H	Steph Cotton														1	
SJ40 I	Malc& Jude Mollart			1	1	8		3		17		10	5		9	
SJ40 I	Dorcas Frame	(No survey return received)														
SO39 E	Richard Allen		1		1	8										
Totals (26 Tetrads)		10	20	4	5	58	47	5	0	26	3	10	9	3	21	3

There was one record of Grey Partridge(SJ40I), one Yellow Wagtail (SJ40G) and one of Wheatear (SJ30Q)

The Following Species Were Not Recorded: Barn Owl, Snipe, Dipper, Swift (nest sites), & Spotted Flycatcher

Third Period (7 - 22 June)

Tetrad	Surveyor(s)	Number of Each Species Recorded (Individual Birds)														
		Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dipper	Dunnock	Stone-chat	Tree Sparrow	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30 A	Richard Allen					2										
SJ30 B	Barry Peabody		3													
SJ30 C		(Square Not Surveyed)														
SJ30 F	Jo Longstaff		4													
SJ30 F	Vicky Smeaton and Harry Coyle	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 G	Barry Peabody	(Square Not Surveyed - no Lapwing or Curlew seen on previous visits)														
SJ30 H	Jerry Hughes	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 K	Vicky Smeaton and Harry Coyle	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 K	David Wilson		2		3					1						
SJ30 L	Martin Sutton	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 L	Megan Holdgate	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 M	Emma Coyle	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 M	David Wilson		1	1						2					4	
SJ30 Q	Julian Bromhead					10	56	1			6					
SJ30 R	Anne and Jon Yeeles	(No Target Species Recorded)														
SJ30 S	Stephen Wilson					6				2				1	1	
SJ30 T	Richard Halahan	1														
SJ30 V	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price		3													
SJ30 W	Amber Bicheno and Gary Price	(Survey could not be carried out)														
SJ30 X	Alison, Elizabeth and Paul Holmes	(No survey return received)														
SJ30 Y	Richard Halahan	1														
SJ40 A	Jonathon Groom	(No survey return received)														
SJ40 B	Siobhan Reedy					Several										
SJ40 C	Alison Slade	(No Target Species Recorded)							1							
SJ40 D	Dorcas Frame	(No survey return received)														
SJ40 F	Alison Hosker					3	1									
SJ40 G	Dave Woodhouse & Judith Metcher				1	2				2						
SJ40 H	Steph Cotton	(No survey return received)														
SJ40 I	Malc& Jude Mollart			2		7				6			4	1	13	
SJ40 I	Dorcas Frame	(No survey return received)														
SO39 E	Richard Allen			1		6										
Totals (26 Tetrads)		2	13	4	4	36	57	1	1	13	6	0	4	2	18	0

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

The Following Species Were Not Recorded: Barn Owl, Grey Partridge, Snipe, Swift (nest sites), Wheatear & Yellow Wagtail

2.3 LPS Ground nesting Bird Recovery Project update

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 in this area. 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.

Amanda Perkins, LPS Countryside Officer

2.4 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….

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 Partnerhsip 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 Worsefold 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=mbK5qyiJl5s

Bioblitz

On 22nd-23rd August 2014, Natural England headed up a partnership event called the 'Great Stiperstones 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**

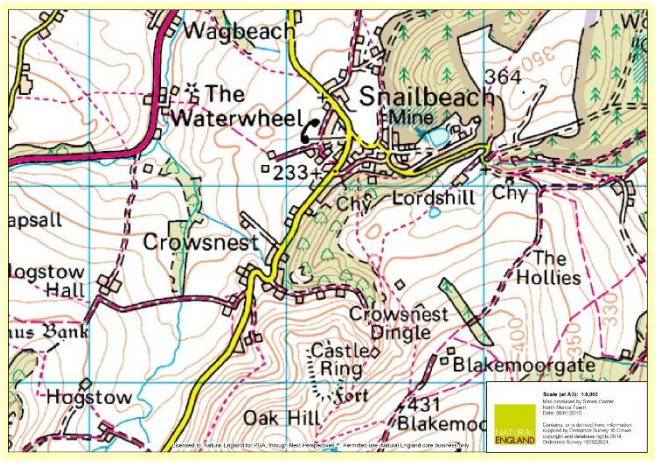
Heather shieldbug photograph © Colin Pumfrett
Northern Rustic Moth image © Butterfly Conservation

3. Up-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 be 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 CWGs. 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 CWG activities and events

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 18th March 7.30pm – Snailbeach Village Hall	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 18th 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 25th 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 - evening Parking on site between Priest Weston and Old Church Stoke. Grid Ref: SO 289 963	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

Bro Stiperstones a Corndon Hill
CYNLLUN PARTNERIAETH TIRWEDD

Partnership
The Scheme is managed by a partnership of professional and community representatives from Shropshire and Powys. The lead organisation for the Scheme is the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership, hosted by Shropshire Council.

Funding
The majority of the funding comes from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional support from Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, Shropshire Council, Powys County Council, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Natural Resources Wales, Natural England, English Heritage, WREN and the Jean Jackson Trust.

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