

# Severn – Vyrnwy Confluence Community Wildlife Group



## Bird Survey Results 2018





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## Severn - Vyrnwy Confluence Community Wildlife Group

The Group was established in February 2018, primarily to look for Curlews as part of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) and Shropshire

Ornithological Society (SOS) *Save our Curlews* Campaign. There were already Community Wildlife Groups surveying Lapwing and Curlew in most areas in the County where several pairs of Curlew had been found during Bird Atlas surveys carried out in 2008-13, but there was no previous coverage of the important Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence.

Both Lapwing and Curlew have suffered a massive contraction in range and population decline in the last 20 years or so, nationally and locally. Curlew has been described as the UK's highest bird conservation priority, as we have an estimated 28% of the European breeding population, and 19 – 27% of the world population.

The aim of the Group is therefore to involve local people in surveying the area for Lapwing and Curlew, to see if the populations have continued to fall here following the Bird Atlas survey. The survey aims to locate the territories of breeding pairs, estimate the population, and if possible pin-point the fields with nests. No attempt is made to look for nests.

The launch meeting received a presentation on the methodology and results of similar surveys carried out by Community Wildlife groups in the Shropshire Hills since 2004, and the organisation of a similar survey in the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence.

An Introductory leaflet, outlining the reasons for the survey and how it would be carried out, with an appeal for volunteers and publicising the meeting, was distributed in the area, and sent out to SWT and SOS members. Posters were put up, and a press release was sent out.

The meeting was well attended, by 19 people, most of whom agreed to help. Several other people, who were unable to come to the meeting, also volunteered to help. In total, 21 people, including four couples, and one of the Shropshire Wild Teams, did survey work.

# CURLEWS, LAPWINGS AND OTHER BIRDS SURVEY

## Objectives

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

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

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

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

## Methodology

The area covered by the Community Wildlife Group was divided up into 27 tetrads (2x2 kilometre squares, each made up of four of the one-kilometre squares shown by the pale blue grid lines 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 the end of March, end of April, 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 1<sup>st</sup> April).
- The second period is the best time to find breeding Curlew (first egg date is usually around 30<sup>th</sup> April).
- The third period is timed to find any Curlews that have successfully hatched and still have chicks. It is also the best time to find the Other Target Species.

Each survey visit concentrated on suitable habitat for the two main target species, and was expected to take around three hours. Participants were provided with detailed survey instructions, and a large scale map of their tetrad (the map filled an A4 sheet of paper) for each survey. The aim was to establish the number of territories (number of breeding pairs) for Lapwing and Curlew, not to find the nest. All survey work was carried out from public rights of way, unless a surveyor obtained landowners permission to look in specific fields.

A training meeting was held for those that wanted one, on Saturday 24 March. Seven participants attended, and three others attended a session the following day. All were treated to several pairs of displaying and breeding Lapwing, and a pair of Curlew.

A feedback meeting was held on 5 June, to present the results of the first two surveys, discuss them, provide clarification where necessary, and iron out any difficulties experienced by the participants; 11 people attended. Corn Bunting was added to the list of Targets.

Survey work was carried out in all except one of the 27 tetrads, and members spent just over 330 hours on it. This represents an excellent effort

A further meeting was held on 23 October to present the final results, and discuss lessons learnt and plans for 2019 and future work; eleven participants attended.

## ***Curlew***

The map on page 4 shows the location of Curlews seen during the surveys, and summarises the estimated number and location of Curlew territories in the area. In the three surveys, there were a total of 32 observations of Curlew.

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 or displaying birds are seen or heard concurrently. It must be stressed that on some surveys both the birds in a breeding pair might be seen, but on others only one is seen; that the same birds will probably be seen on more than one survey; and a pair nesting close to the corner of a tetrad might also be recorded in up to three adjacent tetrads. Therefore the total number of observations made on the surveys will almost certainly be rather more than the total population in the area, and analysis of the results aims to establish the total number of breeding pairs or territories, and the approximate location of the centre of the territory (i.e. the nest site).

Participants were also asked to send in records of any Lapwing, Curlew, Kestrel and Red Kite seen or heard in their own survey squares when not actually doing their survey, and any others seen elsewhere in the area at any time. These “casual records” supplement the survey records, and are very helpful in the analysis to locate and separate territories. The casual Curlew records are also shown on the map, with hatched shading.

The methodology requires the analysis to produce the lowest population estimate consistent with the records, in this case 7 pairs, possibly more. Experience of undertaking this type of survey with more long-standing Community Wildlife Groups suggests that it takes several years to get a complete understanding of the populations, and that, in future years, evidence may be found to confirm a higher population.

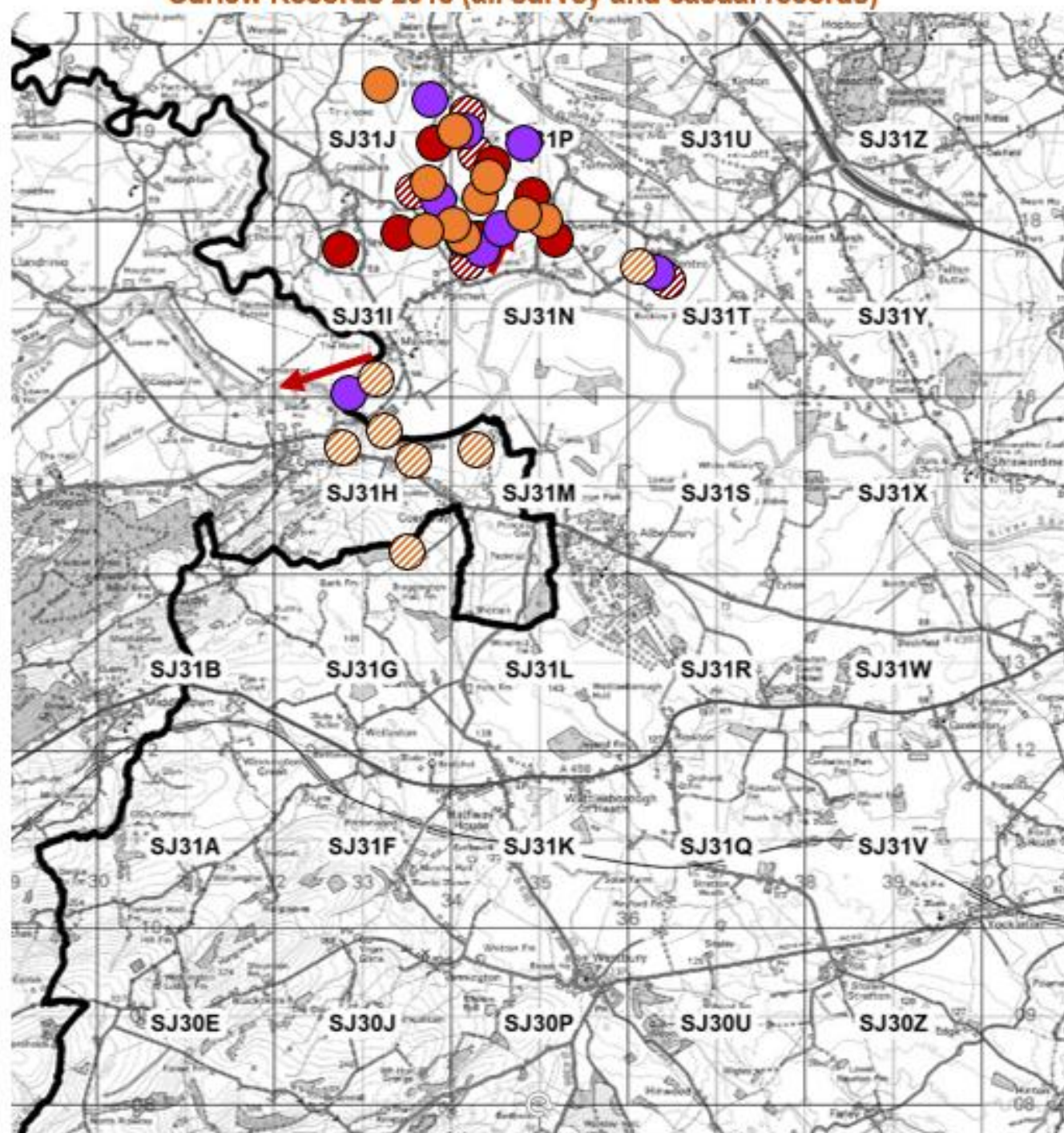
The most useful records are of two singing or displaying males or pairs seen or heard concurrently. The boundary between the two territories will be between them. The analysis was greatly helped by observations in the vicinity of Holly Banks on the training sessions, when birds were seen or heard concurrently on several occasions, as summarised on page 5. This allowed the dense cluster of records shown in SJ31I, J, N and P to be separated into five territories, as shown on page 6. All observations made in all three surveys of these tetrads, together with several casual records, can be fitted into the notional territory boundaries shown on page 6. In addition to these five pairs, there was another pair near Pentre, and several casual records indicate another pair, perhaps more, in the vicinity of Crew Green and Meverley. However, these birds were usually seen in flight, and the centre of the territory is unknown.

Observations of continuously calling Curlews on the third survey, on 10 June, suggests that at least two pairs south of Holly Banks had chicks on that date, but surveys were undertaken in mid-July in tetrads SJ31I, N and P, and no Curlews were seen or heard then, suggesting that no chicks survived to fledging.



## Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence Community Wildlife Group

### Curlew Records 2018 (all survey and casual records)



Survey Period:

First

Second

Third

(Up to 8 April)

(9 April – 6 May)

(9 – 24 June)

Survey Observation



Casual Observation



A fourth survey was carried out in mid-July in SJ30J & P, and SJ31I, N & P, but no Curlews were recorded

**Population estimate: 7 pairs**

Two Curlew pairs also recorded with territories between Heldre Hill and Walton Hill (SJ20X, Y and Z, outside SVC CWG area)



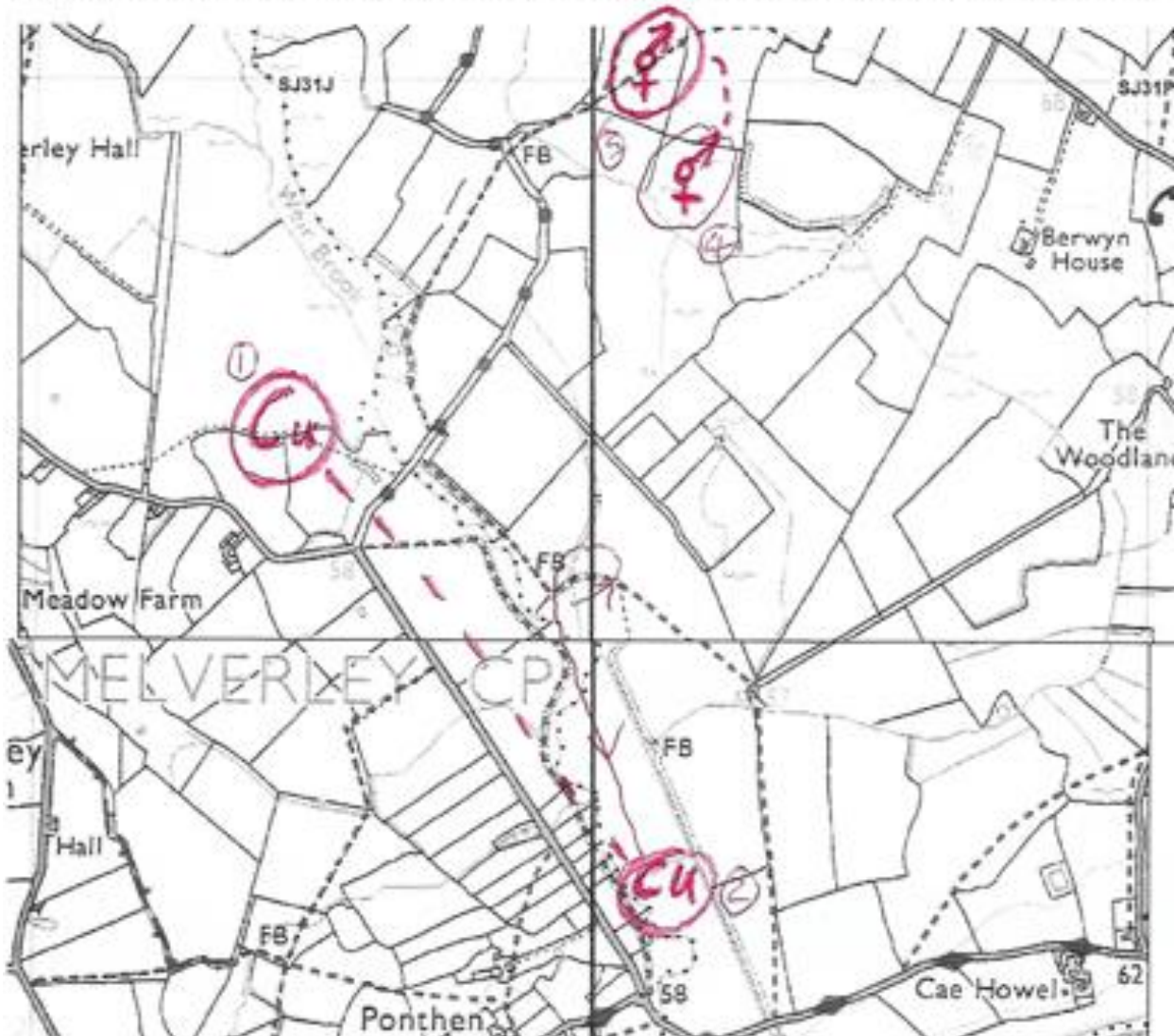
Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence  
Community Wildlife Group  
Lapwing, Curlew and Other Birds Survey

Tetrad SJ31N & P  
Training Map  
(Holly Banks)

Survey period: ..... Year .....

Observer Leo Smith Date(s) 25.3.18 Total Time .....(hrs)..... mins

Please mark on the Map, with a coloured pen, the location, as far as you are able to judge, and the number of birds, every time you see or hear Lapwing and Curlew (and, if you wish, the other species listed overleaf). Please indicate with a different light-coloured felt-tip pen the route you took or the area you searched. If the survey is discontinuous, make clear which records relate to which dates / times. Mark the locations using the species letters and activity codes listed overleaf. Make clear where possible if you are recording the same or different birds. Include records just outside the edge of the square. Please also give an estimate of number of different birds you saw (write the number next to the species name overleaf). Record other interesting wildlife you see if you wish. Make notes overleaf. Post each form as soon as possible after end of each survey period to: Michael Wallace, 75 Larkhill Road, Kingswood, Shrewsbury, SY3 8XJ.

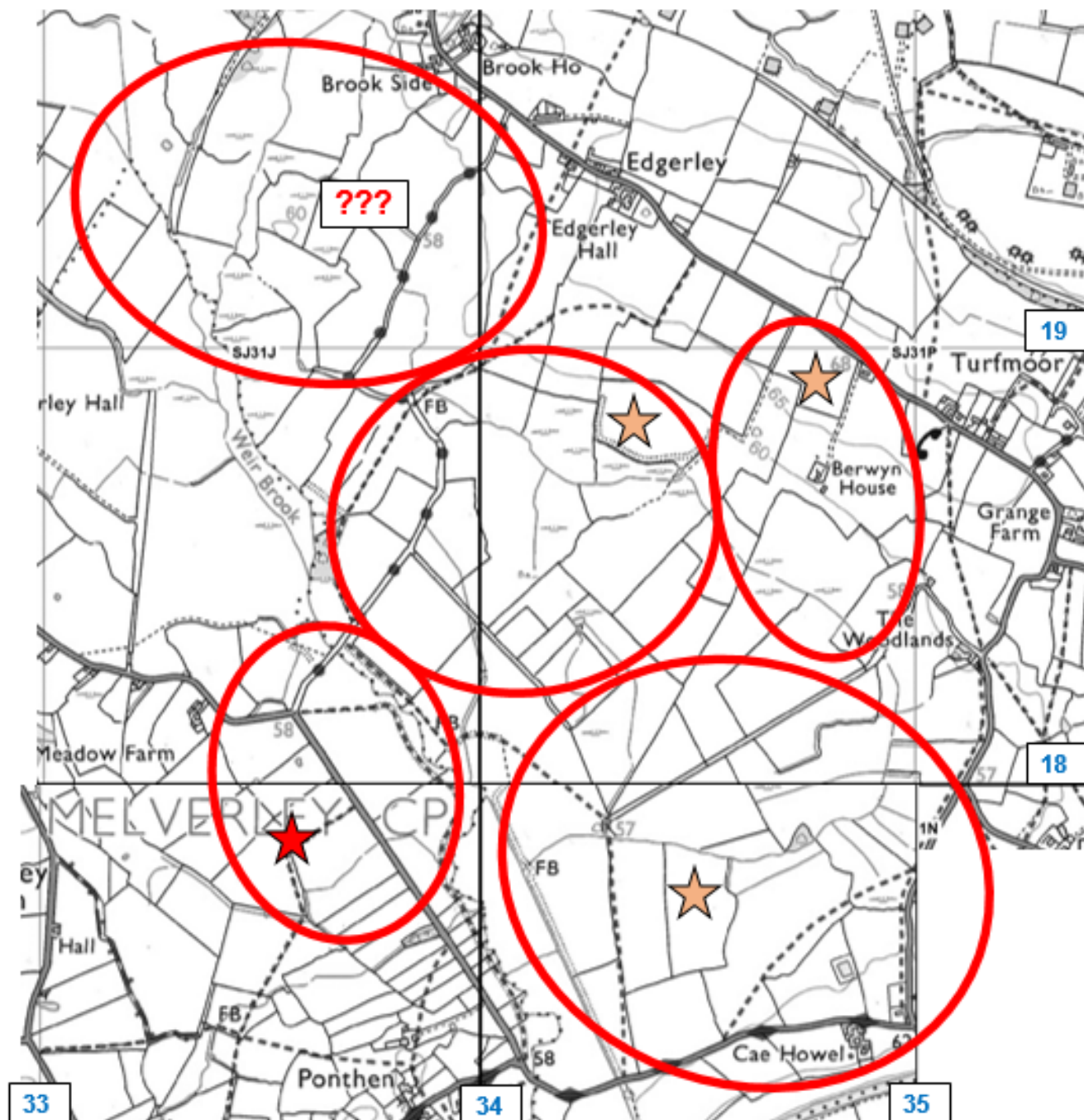


Notes

1. Heard calling
2. Flew in and called back (couldn't possibly be same bird)

Later

3. Pair seen feeding
4. Another pair called, visited the same field (all 4 birds in sight at same time)



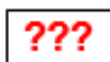
Notional territory boundaries enclose all observations on all surveys



Nest found



Likely nest site (based on observation of defensive activity)



No indication of nest site, but definitely a different territory (pair seen concurrently to, and territorial activity in relation to, pair to south-east)

**Population in area shown on map: 5 pairs**



**From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Curlew population in the area is 7 pairs, but there is no evidence that any young fledged.**

Over 150 Curlews have been colour-ringed since 2016, mainly at Dolydd Hafren Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust Reserve on the River Severn near Welshpool during March, when they are passing through on their way to their breeding sites. Each of these Curlews is individually identified by the two letters on the yellow ring on the left leg. Several of them have been found at breeding sites elsewhere in Shropshire. Surveyors in this area were asked to check any Curlews that were seen on the ground at breeding sites for rings, but none were. However, a small flock was seen at Holly Banks before the breeding season started, and several had colour-rings. (More info to come from David Hardwick)

## ***Lapwing***

The location of Lapwings found during the surveys is shown on page 8.

Two Lapwing were present near Half Way House (SJ31F) in late March. There were casual records of three pairs at the same place in early April, 3 birds in late April and none on 9 May, but the stubble field they were using was ploughed in first week in May, and there was only one Lapwing present just afterwards. The casual records contained the maximum count, and evidence of desertion following the ploughing, illustrating their value.

South of Holly Banks (SJ31J), on a bare field with the remnants of last year's maize crop, one Lapwing was seen on an early visit, and two pairs were sitting on 28 April (one drove off a crow). However the field was ploughed before 4 May, when no Lapwings were seen. On 20 May what "looked like two juveniles with parents" were seen nearby on the other side of the road, opposite the "green lane" to Holly Banks. Lapwings will re-lay if they lose a clutch of eggs, but not usually if chicks perish after hatching, so it is likely that one nest hatched between 28 April and 4 May, and the chicks were moved from the field before it was ploughed, but it might have been an additional pair that was not seen on early visits. Note that some of these observations were made on surveys of adjacent tetrads, and on casual visits, so the figures in the table of survey results (Appendix 2) do not match.

Two pairs were seen west of Berwyn House (north of Holly Banks in SJ31P) in a part-flooded field, and they were present on both the early survey visits.

No Lapwings at all were seen on the third (mid-June) surveys.

**From the observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Lapwing population in the area is 7 - 8 pairs, probably more  
There was no evidence of any fledged young.**

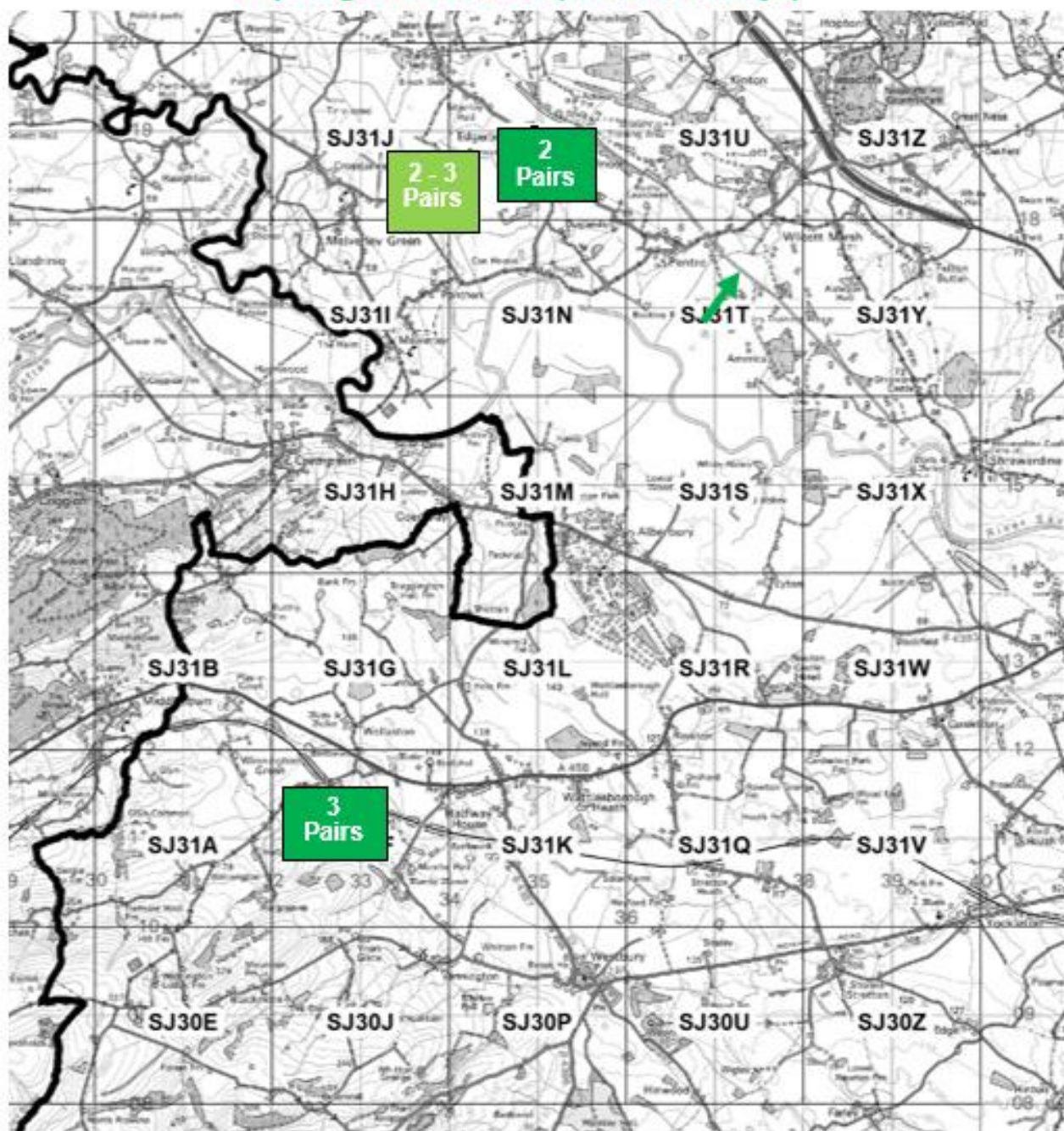
## ***Kestrel***

The location of Kestrels seen during the surveys is shown on page 9.

Kestrels forage up to about 1.5 kilometres from their nest site, so several of the dots will be different observations of the same individuals. However, it is likely that the clusters of dots represent around seven pairs.

Kestrels have also declined considerably in recent years, and the Shropshire Ringing and Raptor Groups are launching a nestbox scheme to help improve breeding success, and try and find out the reasons for the decline.

**Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence Community Wildlife Group**  
**Lapwing Records 2018 (first two surveys)**



**Breeding sites**

Three pairs in SJ31F in early April, 3 birds in late April and 9 May, stubble field ploughed in first week in May (casual record)

South of Holly Banks (SJ31J), on bare field, 1 Lapwing on first visit, pair on second visit with "juvenile", two pairs on 28 April (sitting), but field ploughed before 4 May, when no Lapwings were seen.

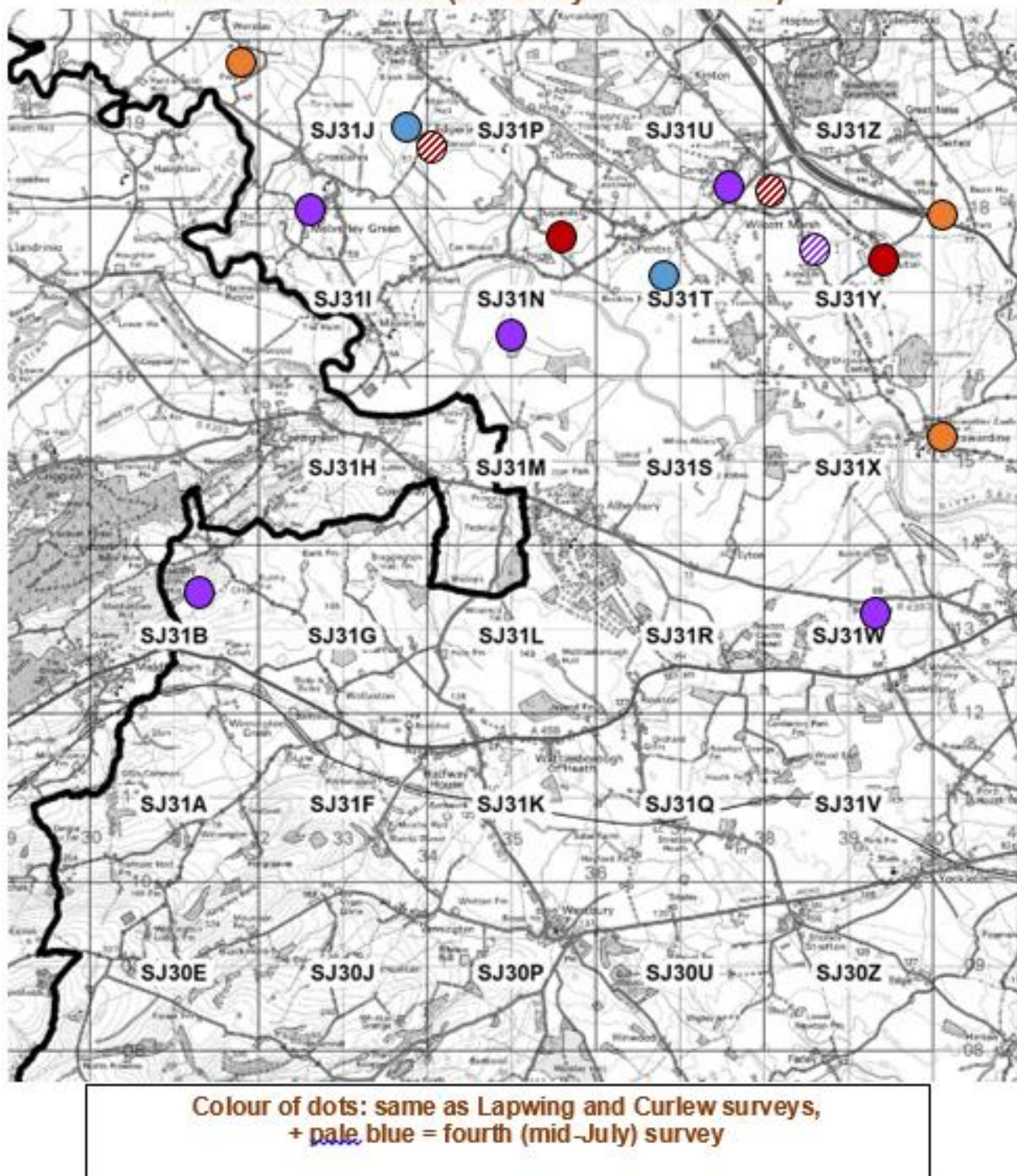
Two pairs west of Berwyn House (north of Holly Banks in SJ31P) in part-flooded field, present on both survey visits.

**Population estimate 7 – 8 pairs**



## Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence Community Wildlife Group

### Kestrel Records 2018 (all surveys and records)



### Other Target Species

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

As expected in a survey of this type, the expertise of members, and the time they had available to undertake the surveys, varied considerably. The primary aim was to look for Lapwing and Curlew, and all participants were familiar with both species, but several participants made no attempt to look for, or record, the other target species.

However, participants were requested to make an effort to record Kestrels, as they too have declined considerably in recent years.



Note that participants were asked to record individual birds, not pairs (so at some locations both the birds in the pair were recorded, and in the final survey some recently fledged juveniles may have been recorded as well).

The survey squares also vary considerably, in accessibility and terrain. The “detectability” of the birds themselves also varies considerably, according to prevailing weather conditions, time of day, stage in the breeding cycle, and the normal behaviour of each species. Thus the survey results will give an indication of the species present, and perhaps their habitat preferences, but only a very small proportion of the total population will have been recorded.

The summary table shows the maximum count for each species on any one survey in each tetrad. This may under-record some species, but the alternative – adding all the counts together – would lead to considerable double or triple counting of some individual birds. The results of every survey are shown in Appendix 2.

**Table 1. Other Target Species - Summary**

Tetrad		Number of Each Species Recorded															
		Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Barn Owl	Skylark	Cuckoo	Swift (sites)	Yellow Wagtail	Dunnock	Wheat-ear	Stone-chat	Spotted Flycatcher	Linnet	Bull-finch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30	E																
SJ30	J																
SJ30	P																
SJ30	U																
SJ30	Z					1											
SJ31	A		1													1	
SJ31	B	1	1			1					1						
SJ31	F					2			1								
SJ31	G																
SJ31	H																
SJ31	I	1	1	29		1											
SJ31	J	1				1			2				6	4	3	5	
SJ31	K																
SJ31	L																
SJ31	M					4			4	1		6		1	4		
SJ31	N	2		20		8			8	1				2	5	1	
SJ31	P	1	1			1	1							2	1	1	
SJ31	Q																
SJ31	R																
SJ31	S								2				5		1		
SJ31	T		1	2		5	2										
SJ31	U	1				3			2								
SJ31	V	1				1				3							
SJ31	W					6							100				
SJ31	X	2			1			2	2						1	1	
SJ31	Y	1				6			2						2	3	
SJ31	Z	1				1			3						1		
Total		12	5	51	1	41	1	2	2	26	5	1	6	111	13	19	7

Most species were found only in small numbers. The large counts of Snipe and Linnet on the first surveys were almost certainly migrants passing through on their way north in the first case, and a winter flock moving to breeding grounds in the latter case.

The Red Kite sightings were the first time some of the observers have seen them in the area, reflecting the rapid spread of Kites in recent years. The first successful breeding in Shropshire for 130 years occurred as recently as 2006, but there are well over 30 pairs now, still mainly in the south-west hills, but a nest north of Shrewsbury was reported in 2017, so it is likely that breeding will become a regular occurrence here in the near future.

Four species were not recorded at all, Grey Partridge, Meadow Pipit, Dipper and Tree Sparrow. The partridge has virtually disappeared, and there is little suitable habitat in the area for the other three. Barn Owl, Cuckoo and Stonechat were recorded once each, and Yellow Wagtail twice. There was a casual record of a second Cuckoo in SJ31Tat the end of May, but this species is increasingly rare – it has declined by 43% in the UK between 1995 and 2016, and by 70% in England and 75% in the English West Midlands in the same period.

Two pairs of Swift nesting near Pentre (SJ23T) was welcome news, as the Swift population in England has declined by 50% over the same period.

Corn Bunting was added to the list of Other Target Species at the feedback meeting at the beginning of June. Two were recorded at Felton Butler (SJ31Y) at the end of April, but none were recorded on any of the other early surveys, or during the third survey in mid-June.

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

Participants who live in the area, and other local residents, say that Lapwings and Curlews are less common now than they used to be. Some members talked to local farmers in the course of their surveys, and they too said that Lapwings and Curlew are less common now than they used to be.

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

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

In the UK, Curlew has declined by 65% between 1970 and 2015, and 48% between 1995 and 2016. In England the decline has been 30%, and in Wales 63%, between 1995 and 2016.

Lapwing has declined by 64% in the UK between 1970 and 2015, and 42% between 1995 and 2016. In England the decline has been 26%, between 1995 and 2016. The decline in Wales since 1995 has been so large that there is insufficient data now to calculate a change.

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

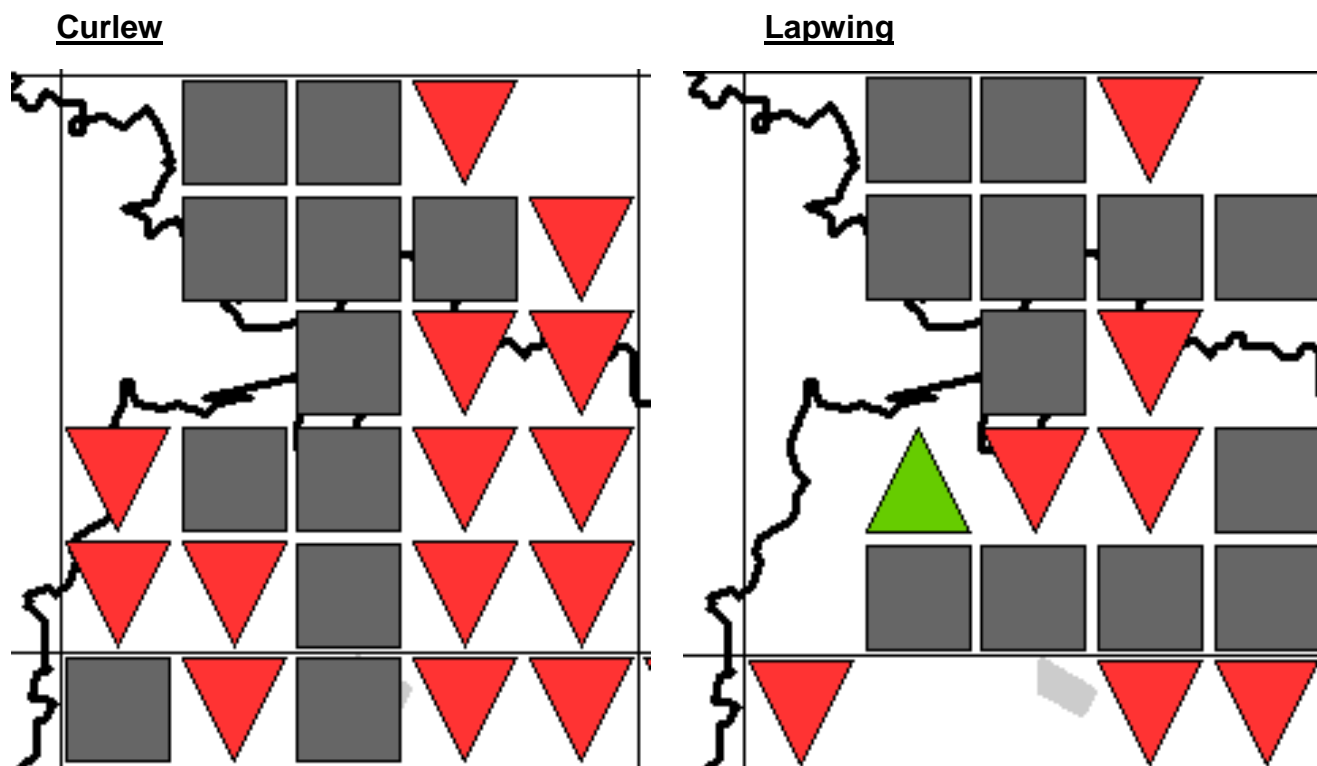
The resulting breeding distribution change maps for the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence are shown below. The black line along the left of each map is the border with Wales, the black line through the middle is the River Severn, and the background pale grey shape towards the bottom right corner is the settlement of Westbury. The grid lines enclose the 10km square SJ31 on the Ordnance Survey National Grid. Each symbol represents a tetrad (2x2km square on the OS grid, 25 tetrads in the 10km square, but four in Wales excluded, with five squares along the northern edge of SJ30 at the bottom).

Tetrads where each species was found in both Atlas surveys are shown as grey squares, and tetrads where it was found in the earlier period, but not the more recent period, are marked with red downward triangles. It was not found in either period in the blank squares, and a gain in the later period is shown as a green upward triangle. It will be seen that the range of both species declined substantially in this area in that 20-25 year period. Curlew was still present in 11 tetrads, but lost from 14, while Lapwing was still present in 12, lost from 7 and gained in one.

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

Surveys carried out by several other Community Wildlife Groups suggest that the population has fallen further since 2010.

### Breeding Distribution Change Maps for the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence (1985-90 to 2008-13)



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Other evidence for the decline of Lapwing and Curlew can be found on the website of the British Trust for Ornithology [www.bto.org](http://www.bto.org)

Action to reverse the declines must start by improving the breeding success of the remaining pairs, so conservation action in the areas where they are still found, such as the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence, is vital. Such action is being taken, nationally and locally. Both species have been designated as UK Biodiversity Priority Species by the Government, as part of its commitment to international biodiversity targets, precisely because of the rapid decline.

Both species nest on farmland, and the Countryside Stewardship Agri-environment Scheme (part of the system of payments to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union) includes provision to reward farmers for sensitive management of habitat on their farms, and providing other environmental benefits. The scheme includes specific prescriptions, and payments, for Lapwing and Curlew habitat, if the farmer wants to apply, and the application is successful.

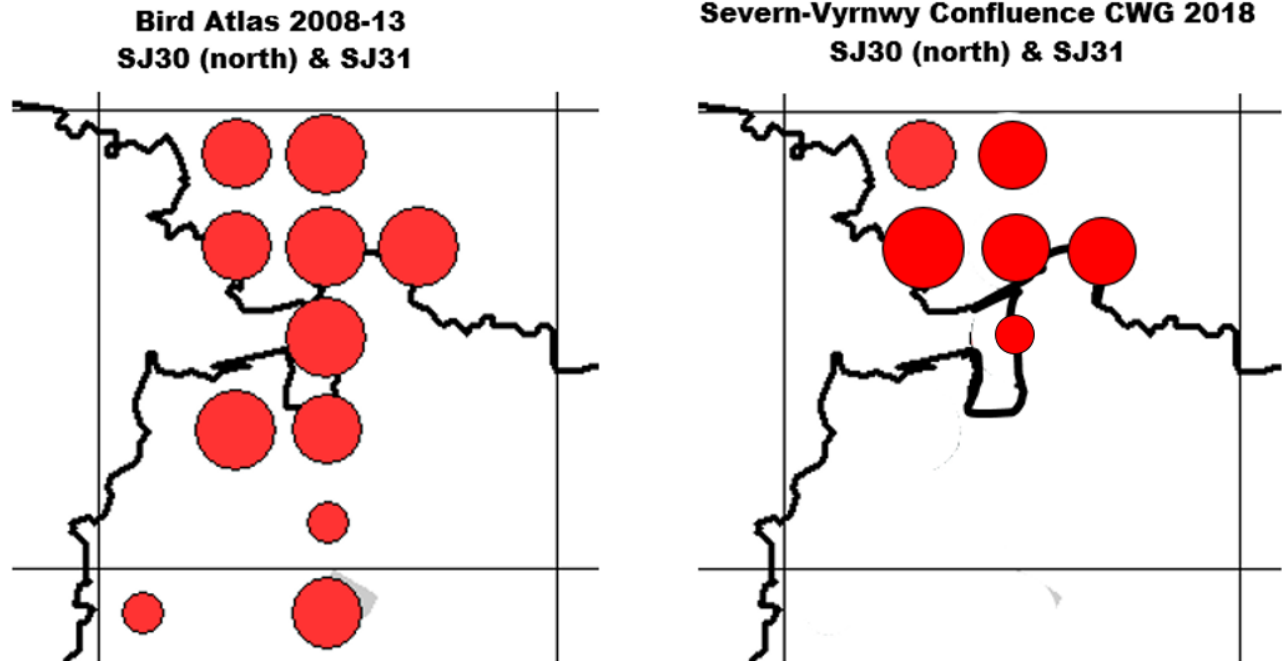
### **Comparison of Severn – Vyrnwy Confluence CWG Bird Survey Results with the Shropshire Bird Atlas 2008-13**

The next two pairs of maps show, on the left, the results of the Bird Atlas 2008-13 for the 27 tetrads covered by the survey, and, on the right, the results of the survey in the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence as shown on the maps on pages 4 and 8. Each dot represents at least one observation during the Atlas period, or during the 2018 survey, in the appropriate tetrad.

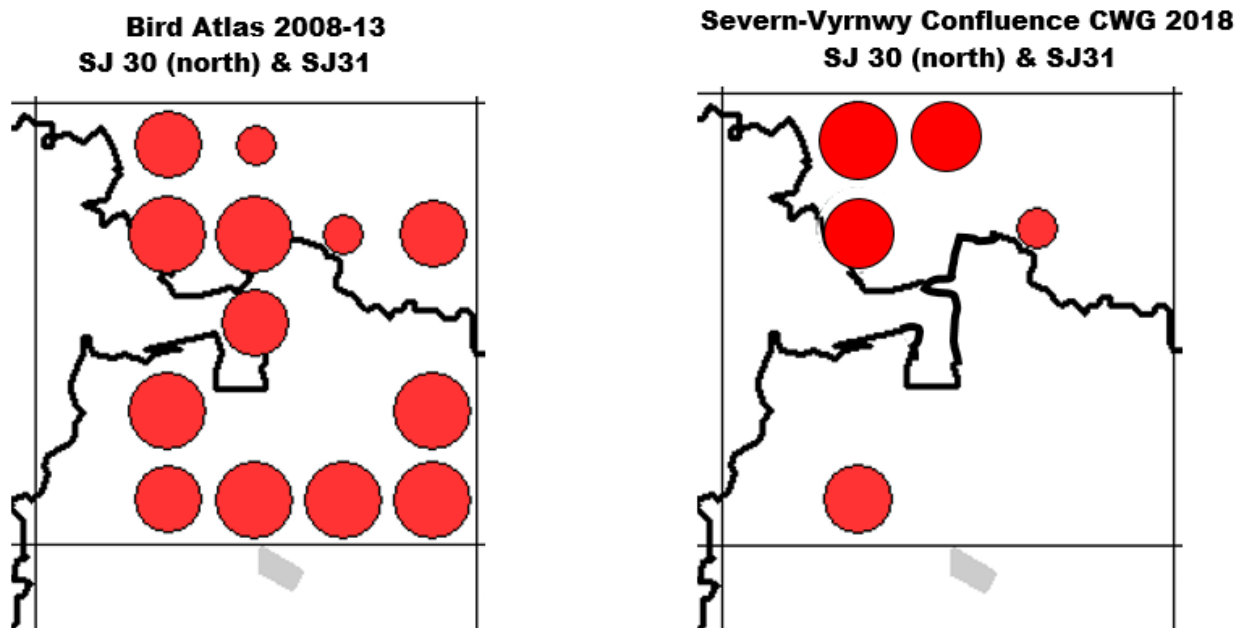
- Large dot = Confirmed Breeding (Bird seen sitting on nest, or chicks seen)
- Middle dot = Probable Breeding (Pair or display seen)
- Small dot = Seen or heard in suitable habitat
- No dot = Not found



### Curlew



### Lapwing



It must be stressed that the Atlas map includes survey work over six years, not one, but most tetrads will not have been visited every year, and it was only necessary to find the highest level of breeding evidence once in the six years, and the surveyors were looking for breeding evidence for all species. Even so, it is unlikely that the 2018 survey found all the pairs, and results should improve as surveyors get to know their squares better, and more people find out about the survey and contribute records or information. It is likely to take 2-3 years to build up a complete picture.

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

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

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

The results also reinforce and supplement the results from other Community Wildlife Groups operating in the Shropshire Hills, and the north-west. The former now cover well over 500 square kilometres, around two-thirds of the Shropshire Hills AONB. These results help inform the AONB Management Plan, which is now being revised to cover the five years 2019 – 24.

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

More importantly in the longer term, the location of Curlew territories and nest sites will provide vital information to the SWT / SOS *Save our Curlews* campaign. Subject to locating the approximate locations of the centre of several Curlew territories (i.e. the field(s) containing the nest site), and the appeal raising the necessary funds to employ someone to find the nests and put up an electric fence to protect them, it is hoped to start nest protection in 2019, if a CWG volunteer surveyor locates it, but for a professional ornithologist to be employed to find nests in the area once we are confident that we have located several territories, perhaps in 2020. This will obviously require permission for access to the appropriate land, and co-operation from farmers on how their land is managed, so building relationships with individual farmers will be a crucial part of our work in 2019.

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

A Curlew nest with eggs was found near Ponthen. The farmer who owned the field was identified, and visited to advise him of the presence of the nest. It was in a grass (silage) field, which he said was about to be mowed. This would have destroyed the nest if no action was taken to save it, so the farmer was advised of where the nest was, and he agreed to mow round it. However, the area left uncut was small, and the nest wasn't fenced. Because the uncut area with the nest then looked different from the rest of the field, it would have attracted inquisitive predators. Not surprisingly, the eggs disappeared.

The positive response of the farmer, in that he went out of his way to avoid the nest, is welcome and something to build on.

Similar contacts will be made with farmers in 2019, if the group identifies fields with Curlew (or Lapwing) nests or chicks. Group members at the feedback meeting on 23 October were almost all willing to visit farmers to do this, preferably with someone familiar with farming and the farmers in the area.

## ***Lessons learnt, to be applied in 2019***

Participants at the feedback meeting on 23 October were happy with the survey methodology and the paperwork and guidance provided.

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

## Recommendations

*Natural England is recommended to encourage farmers with breeding Lapwing or Curlew on or near their land, to join the Countryside Stewardship 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:-

David Clegg	Steve & Yvonne Mancey	Margaret Sumnall
Tony Comley	Mike & Jenny Masterson	Michael Wallace
Warwick Davies	Andrew Morton	Jane Weston
Rodney Farmer	Andy Neal	Alec White
Tony Hill	Mark Pearson	Shropshire Wild Teams
Roger & Mary Lovegrove	Karl Spence	
Jamie Maclauchlan	Nicola Strudwick	

Special thanks to Michael Wallace, who publicised all the meetings, distributed information to members, and co-ordinated the work.

Thanks also to:-

- Richard Hammerton, Shropshire Council Biodiversity Data Officer, who provided the survey maps.
- David Hardwick, for helping with, and promoting, the launch meeting and giving permission for the training sessions in March to visit his land.
- Warwick Davies, for extra survey work in the Holly Banks area, and help interpreting the curlew observations described in the report.
- Kate Mayne, for contacting the farmer with the Curlew nest on his land.

## Other Community Wildlife Groups

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

A further Group, centred on Abdon (near Brown Clee) also started in 2018, the initiative of a local resident.

Between them, these Groups cover well over half of the County's breeding Curlews. The Curlew distribution map from the County Bird Atlas 2008-13 is attached as Appendix 3, overlain with the Community Wildlife Group areas.

In 2018, these Groups covered 137 survey squares (tetrads), totalling 536 square kilometres. There were over 270 participants, who spent a total of more than 2,200 hours on survey work, and 80 – 100 Curlew territories were identified. This is a clear indication of the concern



that local people have for the decline of Curlew, and their willingness to support action to do something about it.

Further information can be found on the joint website for all the Community Wildlife Groups in the Shropshire Hills, [www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk](http://www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk) The three CWGs in the north-west will join the website during the coming winter.

## **SWT / SOS Save our Curlews Campaign**

The identification of Curlew territories by the Community Wildlife Groups is the foundation of the campaign. When local knowledge has located them sufficiently for a professional ornithologist to find several, it is intended to find them and protect them with an electric fence, and then radio tag the chicks that hatch, to gain information on how they feed, and the threats they face. The work is funded by a joint SWT/SOS Appeal.

This work was carried out in the Upper Clun and Clee Hill CWG areas in 2018. Three nests were found and fenced in each area. No chicks survived in the Upper Clun, but at least one, probably two, fledged in Clee Hill. Detailed reports of the work in each of these two areas, and more information about the aims of the campaign, can be found on the SOS website [www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/](http://www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/) If you want to donate to the appeal see [www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/appeals](http://www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/appeals)

## **Summary 2018**

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

*All except one of the 27 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 Severn – Vyrnwy Confluence area are estimated at 7 pairs of Curlew and 7-8 pairs of Lapwing).*

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

## **Plans for 2019**

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

The Group's meeting on Tuesday 19 February 2019 will largely be about planning the 2019 survey. Everyone interested in birds is welcome to participate.

## **Further Information**

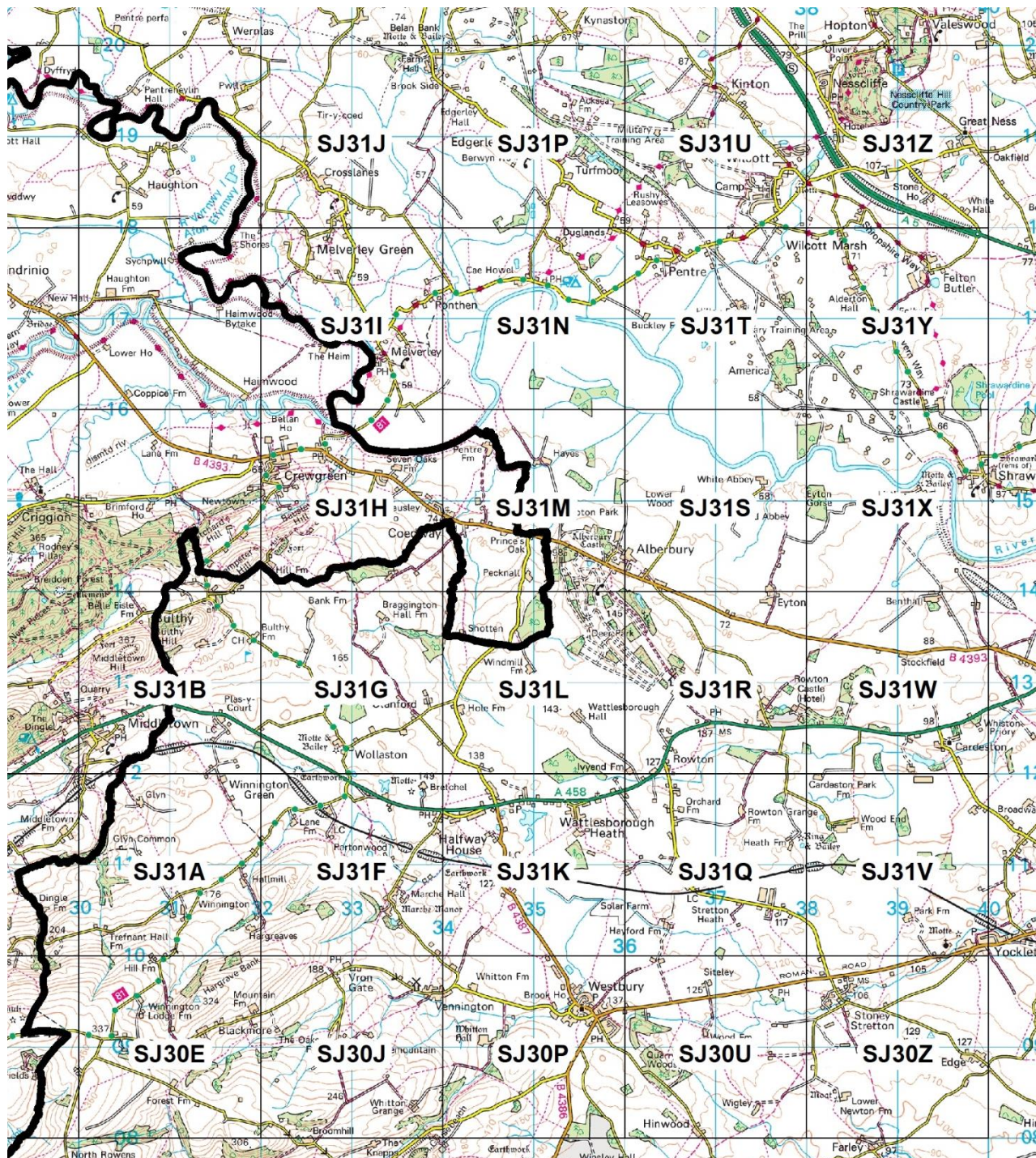
- Leo Smith [leo@leosmith.org.uk](mailto:leo@leosmith.org.uk) 01694 720296
- Michael Wallace [michaelwallace47@gmail.com](mailto:michaelwallace47@gmail.com) 01743 369035,

Further copies of this report can be obtained from Leo Smith

Leo Smith  
November 2017



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



## Appendix 2. Detailed Survey Results

First period (24 March - 8 April)

Tetrad		Square Surveyor	Time		Number of Each Species Recorded																	
			Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Barn Owl	Skylark	Cuckoo	Swift (sites)	Yellow Wagtail	Duncock	Wheat-ear	Stone-chat	Spotted Flycatcher	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30	E	Shropshire Wild Teams	2	30	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ30	J	Rodney Farmer & Margaret Sumnall	5	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ30	P	Rodney Farmer & Margaret Sumnall	4	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ30	U				(Square not surveyed)																	
SJ30	Z	Mike & Jenny Masterson	2	30							1											
SJ31	A	Alec White	3	0				1														
SJ31	B	Alec White	3	0						1						1						
SJ31	F	Tony Hill	2	30	2					2				1								
SJ31	G	Jane Weston	3	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	H	Andy Neal	4	30		1																
SJ31	I	Karl Spence	7	0		2		1	29		(lots)											
SJ31	J	Tony Comley	3	15										2						1		
SJ31	K	Roger & Mary Lovegrove	1	45	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	L				(Square not surveyed)																	
SJ31	M	Michael Wallace	7	5						4				4	1		4			4		
SJ31	N	Michael Wallace	12	15		1	2		20		8			8					2	1		
SJ31	P	Warwick Davies	3	30		5	7				1								(several)		1	
SJ31	Q	Roger & Mary Lovegrove	2	15	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	R				(Square not surveyed)																	
SJ31	S	Andrew Morton	3	45										2								
SJ31	T	Andrew Morton	4	30		1			2		3											
SJ31	U	Nicola Strudwick	3	40						3				2								
SJ31	V	David Clegg	2	15						1												
SJ31	W	Steve and Yvonne Mancey	3	0						6								100				
SJ31	X	Tony Hill	3	5			2		1					2					1	1		
SJ31	Y	Jamie Maclanchlan	4	20			1			4				1						3		
SJ31	Z	Nicola Strudwick	4	15			1			1				3					1			
Total			95	55	8	11	6	2	51	1	35	0	0	0	25	1	1	4	100	4	10	1

Second period (21 April - 6 May)

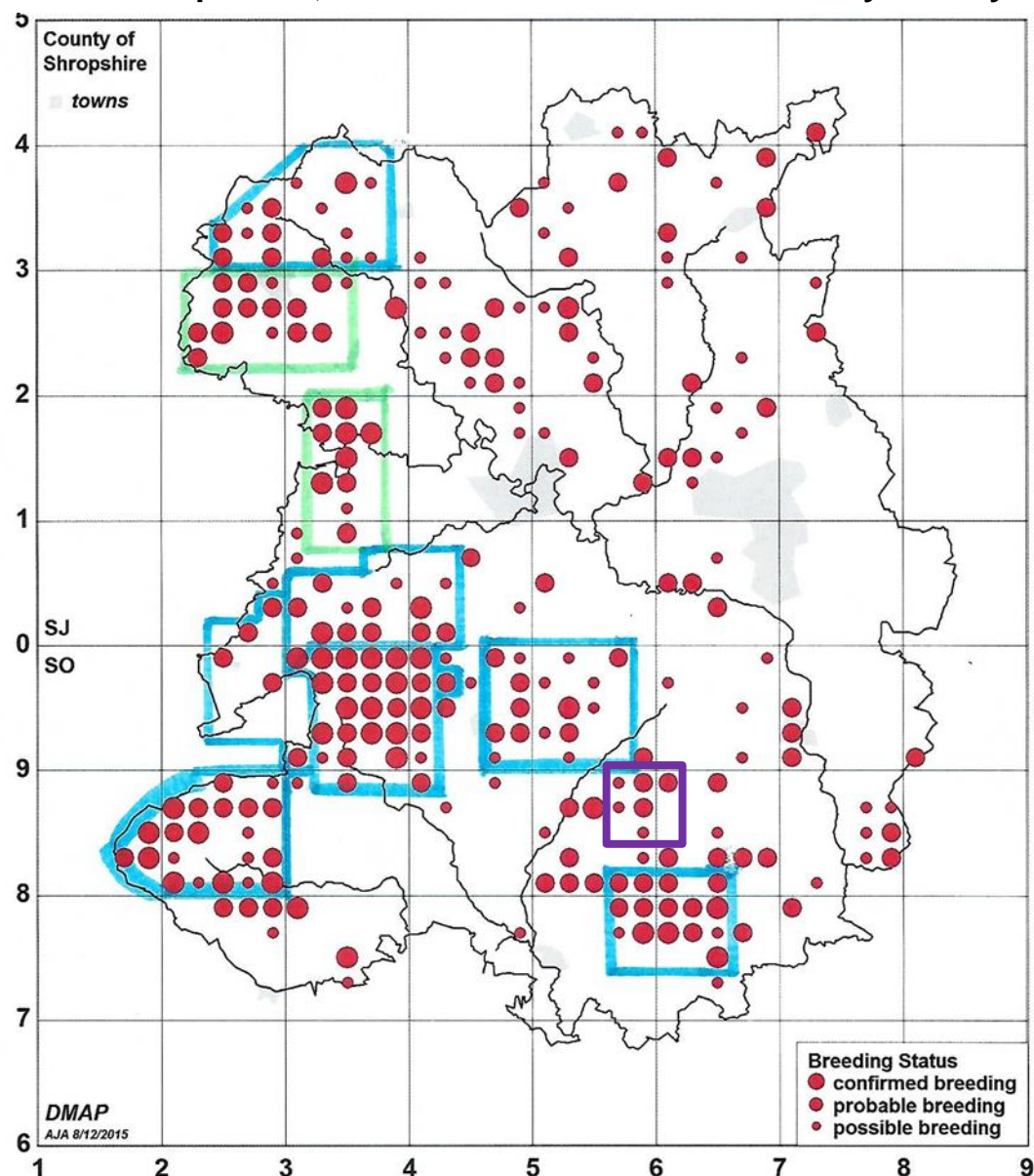
Tetrad		Square Surveyor	Time		Number of Each Species Recorded																	
			Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Barn Owl	Skylark	Cuckoo	Swift (sites)	Yellow Wagtail	Duncock	Wheatear	Stonechat	Spotted Flycatcher	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellowhammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30	E	Shropshire Wild Teams	1	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ30	J	Rodney Farmer & Margaret Sumnall	6	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ30	P	Rodney Farmer & Margaret Sumnall	6	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ30	U				(Square not surveyed)																	
SJ30	Z	Mike & Jenny Masterson	1	30	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	A	Alec White	2	30				1													1	
SJ31	B	Alec White	3	0			1															
SJ31	F	Tony Hill	2	0	1																	
SJ31	G	Jane Weston	2	30	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	H	Andy Neal			(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	I	Karl Spence	7	50	4	3	1		8													
SJ31	J	Tony Comley	3	15	3	2					1								3	4	2	3
SJ31	K	Roger & Mary Lovegrove	2	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	L	Mark Pearson	1	20	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	M	Michael Wallace	5	45							1					1		4		1	3	
SJ31	N	Michael Wallace	8	50		1	1				3			1	1						5	1
SJ31	P	Warwick Davies	6	0	6	5						1										
SJ31	Q	Roger & Mary Lovegrove	2	30	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	R	Mark Pearson	1	15	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	S	Andrew Morton	3	35										1					5		1	
SJ31	T	Andrew Morton	5	30		2					5											
SJ31	U	Nicola Strudwick	4	10			1															
SJ31	V	David Clegg	2	0			1				1				3							
SJ31	W	Steve & Yvonne Mancey	2	15							6								1			
SJ31	X	Tony Hill	3	30									2	1								
SJ31	Y	Jamie Maclanchlan	2	55							6				1					2		
SJ31	Z	Nicola Strudwick	3	55	(No target species recorded)																	
Total			91	5	14	13	5	1	8	0	23	1	0	2	4	5	0	4	9	7	12	4

Third period (9-24 June)

Tetrad		Square Surveyor	Time		Number of Each Species Recorded																	
			Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Barn Owl	Skylark	Cuckoo	Swift (sites)	Yellow Wagtail	Duncock	Wheatear	Stonechat	Spotted Flycatcher	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellowhammer	Reed Bunting
SJ30	E	Shropshire Wild Teams	2	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ30	J	Rodney Farmer & Margaret Sumnall			(Square not surveyed?)																	
SJ30	P	Rodney Farmer & Margaret Sumnall			(Square not surveyed?)																	
SJ30	U				(Square not surveyed)																	
SJ30	Z	Mike & Jenny Masterson	2	10	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	A	Alec White	3	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	B	Alec White	2	30				1														
SJ31	F	Tony Hill	2	0	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	G	Jane Weston	2	30	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	H	Andy Neal	3	45	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	I	Karl Spence	4	50		1				1												
SJ31	J	Tony Comley	3	5		2	1			1								6	1	3	5	
SJ31	K	Roger & Mary Lovegrove			(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	L	Mark Pearson																				
SJ31	M	Michael Wallace	6	40						4							6			1		
SJ31	N	Michael Wallace	9	42						2										3		
SJ31	P	Warwick Davies	6	30		6					2								2	1	1	
SJ31	Q	Roger & Mary Lovegrove			(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	R	Mark Pearson			(Square not surveyed)																	
SJ31	S	Andrew Morton	3	0										1				4				
SJ31	T	Andrew Morton	3	30				1		1		2										
SJ31	U	Nicola Strudwick	3	25	(No target species recorded)																	
SJ31	V	David Clegg			(Square not surveyed)																	
SJ31	W	Steve & Yvonne Mancey	1	45					several						2							
SJ31	X	Tony Hill	2	20			1															
SJ31	Y	Jamie Maclauchlan	2	45						2				2								
SJ31	Z	Nicola Strudwick	3	30			1			1												
Total			68	57	0	9	3	2	0	0	12	0	2	0	5	0	0	6	10	3	8	6



### Appendix 3. Bird Atlas 2008-13 Curlew Distribution map, overlain by Community Wildlife Group areas, and table of CWG data and survey activity in 2018



Group		Area		First Year	Curlew		Participants			
		Survey squares (tetrads)	(sq. kms.)		Breeding Pairs (2018)		% decline since First Year	No. people	Hours	Min-utes
					Min	Max				
1	Upper Onny	31.5	125	2004	25	- 28	37	27	232	5
2	Upper Clun	31	110	2007	8	- 9	60	19	130	0
3	Clee Hill	20	80	2012	7	- 10	31	28	180	55
4	Rea Valley	25.5	80	2014	9	- 11	n / a	21	179	5
5	Camlad Valley	11 **	44	2014	4	- 5	n / a	15	125	50
6	Strettons area	30	120	2017	5	- 6	n / a	35	279	49
7	Three Parishes	28	100	2017	3	- 4	n / a	29	194	55
8	Tanat to Perry (Oswestry south)	43	172	2018	11	- 15	n / a	70	452	
9	Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence	27	108	2018	7	- 7	n / a	22	328	
10	Abdon	9	36	2018	4	- 6		11	108	
Total		137	536		83	- 101		277	2207	39

Groups 1 – 7 formed before 2018. 1, 4 and 5 (yellow highlight) cover Curlew Country area. 8 & 9 promoted in 2018 by SWT / SOS campaign. 10 formed in 2018 by local resident