



Upper Clun

Community Wildlife Group Report 2018



Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group

Report 2018

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INTRODUCTION

The *Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group* was formed in 2007, following extensive promotion and development work in the area initiated by 'Down to Earth in the Clun Forest' as part of the Shropshire Hills AONB's Blue Remembered Hills Project. This process was described in the Group's 2007 report. The first Annual Public Meeting in November 2007 agreed the Aims and Objectives, and its area of operation, and elected a Committee.

The Group aims to contribute to local knowledge and conservation of popular "flagship" wildlife species, by undertaking surveys to establish their status, and promoting conservation by working with farmers and landowners to safeguard and increase important habitats. It complements but does not duplicate the work of either *Land, Life and Livelihoods*, or the Clun and Bishop's Castle branch of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT). We have worked closely with both groups, which have in turn actively supported the Wildlife Group.

The Group has carried out Bird and Plant surveys each year since 2007, and Butterfly surveys since 2010. Well over 100 different people have been involved in these surveys. This Report presents the results for the current year, and updates our knowledge of wildlife in the area.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The Group will

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

AREA & MEMBERSHIP

The Group covers the catchment area of the River Clun west of Clun, including the River Unk and the Folly Brook, plus the part of the Bettws-y-Crwyn parish that is outside the River Clun catchment area. It includes the whole of the parishes of Newcastle, Bettws-y-Crwyn & Mainstone, and parts of the parishes of Clun, Colebatch and Llanfair Waterdine.

The Group is open to anyone who lives or works in the area, and who wants to actively contribute to local knowledge and conservation. It is for everyone in the community, not just experts. Interest in the area, and enthusiasm, are far more important than detailed knowledge. The target birds and plants are important and easy to recognise and search for. Initial training on identification and simple survey methods, and regular support and advice, is provided, so members learn a lot, and the work is very enjoyable.

The mailing list has grown each year, and now includes over 220 local people at more than 170 addresses, plus representatives of various organisations.

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Role of the Committee is to

- Organise survey work
- Involve more local people
- Work with local people and other groups to develop a policy for conservation action
- Seek to influence other organisations
- Obtain and manage funds to continue existing work and develop new projects.

The membership, and details of meetings in 2017, are set out in the Annexe to the Report.

PUBLICITY

To help recruit and involve new members, the Group's activities have been well publicised in the area, through posters and press releases, and articles in the *Clun Chronicle*. The annual public meeting is well advertised, a recruiting leaflet is available in community centres and elsewhere, a

display is put up at the Newcastle Show, and occasional Bird, Plant and Butterfly events have been organised.

WEBSITE

There is a website for all the Community Wildlife Groups, with separate pages for the Upper Clun Group www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk. Future events and news will be listed. Members are requested to check the website periodically, particularly before events.

FACEBOOK PAGE

The Group now has a Facebook page. Log into Facebook and then in the search bar, (with the magnifying glass), start typing the name of the group, i.e. 'Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group, (UCCWG)' Facebook may come up with a list of suggestions as soon as you start typing in the name. Click on the group name to select the group and it should come up, (the 'cover' photo is currently a picture of a Curlew), then click on ' + join group', to become a member.

CO-OPERATION WITH FARMERS, LANDOWNERS & OTHER ORGANISATIONS

The vast majority of the area is farmland, and almost all of the birds, plants and butterflies that the Group wishes to conserve live on it. Close co-operation with farmers is therefore crucial to our success.

The Group has continued to actively promote conservation of popular "flagship" wildlife species by working with, and influencing, farmers, landowners, other local organisations, Government Agencies and the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, to protect and restore important habitats.

In 2010, we brought together the results of four years' survey work to identify some of the best sites for birds, plants & butterflies in the Upper Clun. These sites have survived thanks to the way they have been managed, and we have subsequently worked with some of the land owners to help ensure that they continue to be managed in the same way. We have now made personal contact with almost all the farmers who own one of these high-quality sites, and we hope the information we have collected is useful to them. We have worked with both farmers and Natural England to ensure that the best wildlife sites are incorporated into Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme (HLS) agreements.

This work is described in the Chapter on Conservation Action later in this Report.

ACTIVITIES & SURVEYS

Since its launch in 2007, the Group has set out to find all breeding pairs of Lapwing and Curlew, monitor other important farmland birds and their habitats, and promote the conservation of Barn Owls, Dippers and woodland birds through provision of nest boxes. This built on local knowledge of Lapwing and Curlew gained since 2004.

In 2007, a dozen different wild flowers were also located, and a further 12 plants indicative of woodland, and 12 indicative of grassland, were included in the 2008 surveys. These results were used to highlight the most important sites, and these sites have been the subject of detailed Plant surveys in subsequent years since 2009, with the aim of getting the best sites adopted as Local (County) Wildlife Sites.

Three Nature Reserves in the Upper Clun area are owned by Shropshire Wildlife Trust, Rhos Fiddle, Lower Shortditch and Mason's Bank. These reserves have also been surveyed in some years.

Our area was initially divided into 31 squares, 2x2 kilometre squares on the Ordnance Survey National Grid. A map showing these squares has been included in previous Annual Reports. The Group recruited a local member to survey each of these squares for birds and/or plants each year, and well over 100 people have either undertaken surveys, or provided additional useful information, since 2007. However, since 2009, only the best sites have been selected for further survey work, and many of them do not fall into single squares, so this division of the area into squares is no longer important. The map of the area, divided up into these squares, can be viewed on the website.

Butterfly surveys, supported by Butterfly Conservation and concentrating on Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, were started in 2010.

It was hoped to organise Mammal surveys, following the invitation to the Shropshire Mammal Group to speak at the 2014 Annual Public Meeting. However, this has not proved possible, and it is hoped to find a volunteer to take this on.

The aims and results of these surveys are described elsewhere in this Report.

COVERING OTHER TYPES OF WILDLIFE

The Group wants to expand its activities, and survey and promote conservation of other types of wildlife. These activities will be shaped by the interests of all the people who join.

FUNDING

Initially the Group was funded by the AONB's *Down to Earth* programme, and then its Sustainable Development Fund.

From October 2011 until June 2013, funding came via the "LEADER in the Shropshire Hills" programme, "part financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development 2007-2013: Europe investing in rural areas". This programme was co-ordinated by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership with Defra as the Managing Authority. The National Trust was the lead organisation and banker for the LEADER Project

The Group is not currently in receipt of any grants. Efforts will therefore be made to raise funds by asking people attending meetings and events to make donations, and support raffles. Members have not been asked to contribute since the Group started, and the Committee hopes to avoid having to charge a membership subscription, but hopefully members will now support the Group financially, as well as through voluntary activity.

Grant Applications will be made when the opportunity arises.

CONSTITUTION

To make Grant Applications, it is necessary to have a written Constitution, which was adopted at the Annual Public Meeting in November 2013. The Constitution can be viewed on the website.

OTHER COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUPS

The Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group was the second CWG to be formed, following the Upper Onny Wildlife Group, launched in 2003.

The Kemp Valley CWG started in 2011. The LEADER project funded these three Groups, and also three new groups, covering Clee Hill, the Strettons, and Wenlock Edge.

The Stiperstones – Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme (LPS), financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund, has supported the development of two new CWGs, covering the Rea Valley and Camlad Valley, since 2014.

These groups all survey important wildlife in their areas, but they are developing differently. All are monitoring birds and plants, but the species being searched for are different. Six of these groups are monitoring Lapwings, and five Curlews.

Until 2017, all the Community Wildlife Groups were in the Shropshire Hills, in the south-west of the County, but the Three Parishes CWG (covering Weston Rhyn, St. Martins and Gobowen, north of Oswestry) was formed in 2017, and Tanat to Perry CWG (covering the area to the south of Oswestry and the Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence CWG were both launched in 2018

**The activities and results for each of the Groups can be found on the website
www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk**

THE BIRD GROUP

BIRD SURVEYS

Introduction

Since 2007 the Bird Group has monitored the population and distribution of Lapwing, Curlew, and other species of conservation interest. Early surveys highlighted the importance of 'wetland' areas retaining a more diverse flora, especially Soft Rush *Juncus effusus*, and such sites were given particular attention from 2010 onwards. Up to 2011 the Group attempted to survey all 31 tetrads ((2x2 kilometre squares) in the Upper Clun, focusing increasingly on Curlew as Lapwings disappeared. However, as Curlew's range contracted and its population decreased, blanket coverage was replaced by more intensive fieldwork on its strongholds.

Geographic surveys are now supplemented by observations from a network of resident recorders in Curlew hotspots who are prompted to collect evidence of activity at key points in the breeding cycle, and members of the Wildlife Group are encouraged to send in all records of Lapwing or Curlew. Observers are kept informed by emailed progress reports.

The Methodology and Recording Instructions for the Bird Surveys were described fully in the 2011 Report (Appendix 1), and can be found on the website.

Participation and Coverage

This year seven members carried out surveys of agreed geographic areas; 47 others, including resident recorders and 'casual' observers, contributed records by phone, email or personal contact, a total of 54 participants. One hundred and forty-six Curlew observations or sets of observations were received, exceeding last year's record. Five nest box hosts sent in breeding results.

All observers who undertook geographic surveys or continuous recording, or submitted nest box data, live within the survey area. Several are farmers, and many other farmers provided valuable information. The co-operation of landowners who allowed access to their land was crucial to this year's Curlew fieldwork, and is gratefully acknowledged

LAPWINGS

Fieldwork Results

There were no reports of Lapwing during the breeding season. Some may have passed through in March as in previous years but went unobserved owing to the very poor weather conditions.

There have been no breeding records since 2012. A map showing the approximate location of all breeding Lapwing found by the Group since 2007, together with the nests found previously in 2004 – 06 (Smith 2006) has appeared in previous reports, and can be found on the website.

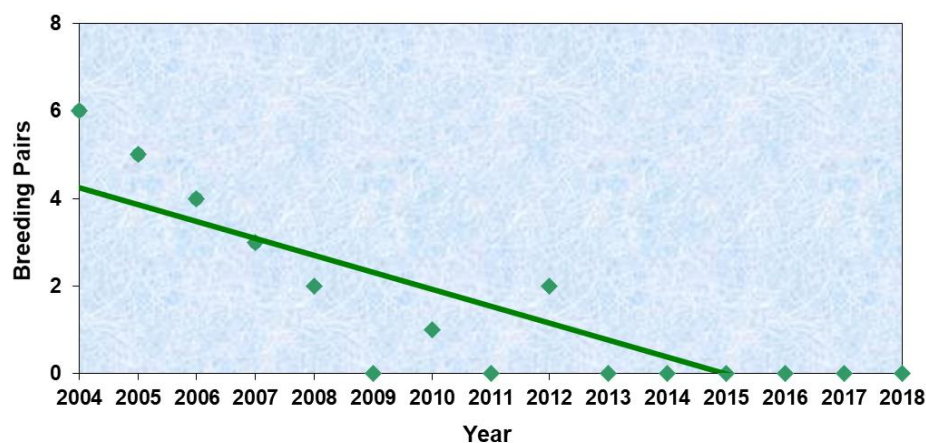
Local Extinction

The local breeding population declined by around a pair a year between 2004 and 2010; only one pair has been found since (Figure 1). Since no young are known to have fledged since 2008, Lapwing appears to be extinct as a breeding species in this area.

Habitat requirements

The Habitat Requirements of Lapwing, and the reasons for the Population Decline, were described in the Group's 2010 (and previous) Report, and are not reproduced here. Full details are provided in Shrubb's book *The Lapwing*, and papers by Sheldon, listed in the References.

Figure 1. Decline of Lapwing in the Upper Clun 2004 – 2018



CURLEW RECOVERY PROJECT

A full report on the Curlew Recovery Project is available online at www.shropshirebirds.com

2018 saw the launch of the Curlew Recovery Project, funded jointly by Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Ornithological Society. Its aim is to try to improve the breeding success of local Curlews so that the population can first become stable, then increase.

Professional help was engaged to build on the survey work by UCCWG members over recent years by finding as many nests as possible. Landowners' consent was then sought to protect them with electric fencing, and they were monitored up to hatching. The

chicks were ringed and radio-tagged, and then tracked in order to monitor their development and movements, establish how many fledged, and what happened to those that did not.



Fieldwork Results

Residents in Curlew hotspots provided updates on activity in their areas, and more remote sites were surveyed regularly. The data were used to brief the professional nest-finding team. Three nests, each of four eggs, were found in early May, protected by electric fences and monitored regularly. All survived intact, and no eggs were lost. They hatched in early June. One nest produced four chicks and one three, with one failed egg. At the third, two eggs failed to hatch, and two chicks hatched but were not viable owing to congenital abnormalities.

Seven chicks were ringed and radio-tagged before leaving their nest enclosures, and were tracked regularly to ascertain their whereabouts and condition. Where they might have been exposed to agricultural operations, good communications between the farmers and the team averted any problems. The first loss came within a week of hatching. By June 29th, around three weeks after hatching, no live chicks were detected and adult activity had also ceased. The three chicks whose remains were found had been predated; based on field signs, it is likely that a Buzzard, an unknown avian predator and a fox each accounted for one of the three. The other four were probably predated, but they were carried out of range or underground, and not found. The latter is more likely, as the tags are reliable, and they were searched for extensively. Foxes are therefore the most likely culprit. No chicks were lost to agricultural operations.

Three other pairs probably produced hatched young, with territorial activity continuing into June, but ending before any young could have fledged. Two further territories were occupied at the start of the season: at one activity ended by late April; at the other it continued until late May. In neither case is it known whether there was a nest. Breeding may have taken place at two more sites, but the evidence was ambiguous as they were close to known nests.



One male Curlew at a site near The Anchor had been colour-ringed by Tony Cross of the Mid-Wales Ringing Group at Dolydd Hafren near Montgomery in February 2016 to complement the LPS Curlew Recovery Project. As the male at the same site last year was ringed (though not read), and Curlews are loyal to sites, it may well have been the same bird. This is the second ringed Curlew to be found in the Upper Clun, but the male in the Llanfair Hill area last year (see photo) was not relocated. If you see a Curlew on the ground, please check it for colour rings. The red/orange on the right leg is conspicuous.

Discussion

The Curlew Recovery Project brought into sharp focus several of the problems besetting the Curlew population. Last year spring was exceptionally dry; this year the weather was wet and cold, delaying the growth of ground vegetation until well into May. When the Curlews were settling down some regularly-used sites offered no cover for a nest, and some pairs may have moved to alternate sites as a result, or nests may have failed early. They are likely to have to cope with further extreme fluctuations in coming years.

Two of the nests that were found were on grazed heathland and one on improved pasture with some rush. The exact location of the other probable nests is not known, but all would have been within 1 km of damp, rough or semi-natural areas, important for foraging. Curlews are loyal to historic nesting sites even if the habitat has deteriorated over the years, and such sites may continue to support Curlew only because they are within range of more favourable habitats.

In all cases where the cause of death was known, the chicks were predated, reinforcing the suspicion that predation at the post-hatching stage is the main threat to Curlew survival in this area. However, no cause of mortality operates in isolation: Curlews are more vulnerable to predation as a result of habitat loss, reducing nest cover and forcing them to move the chicks further in search of food. Other human interventions such as conifer plantations, which harbour predators, only add to the pressure.

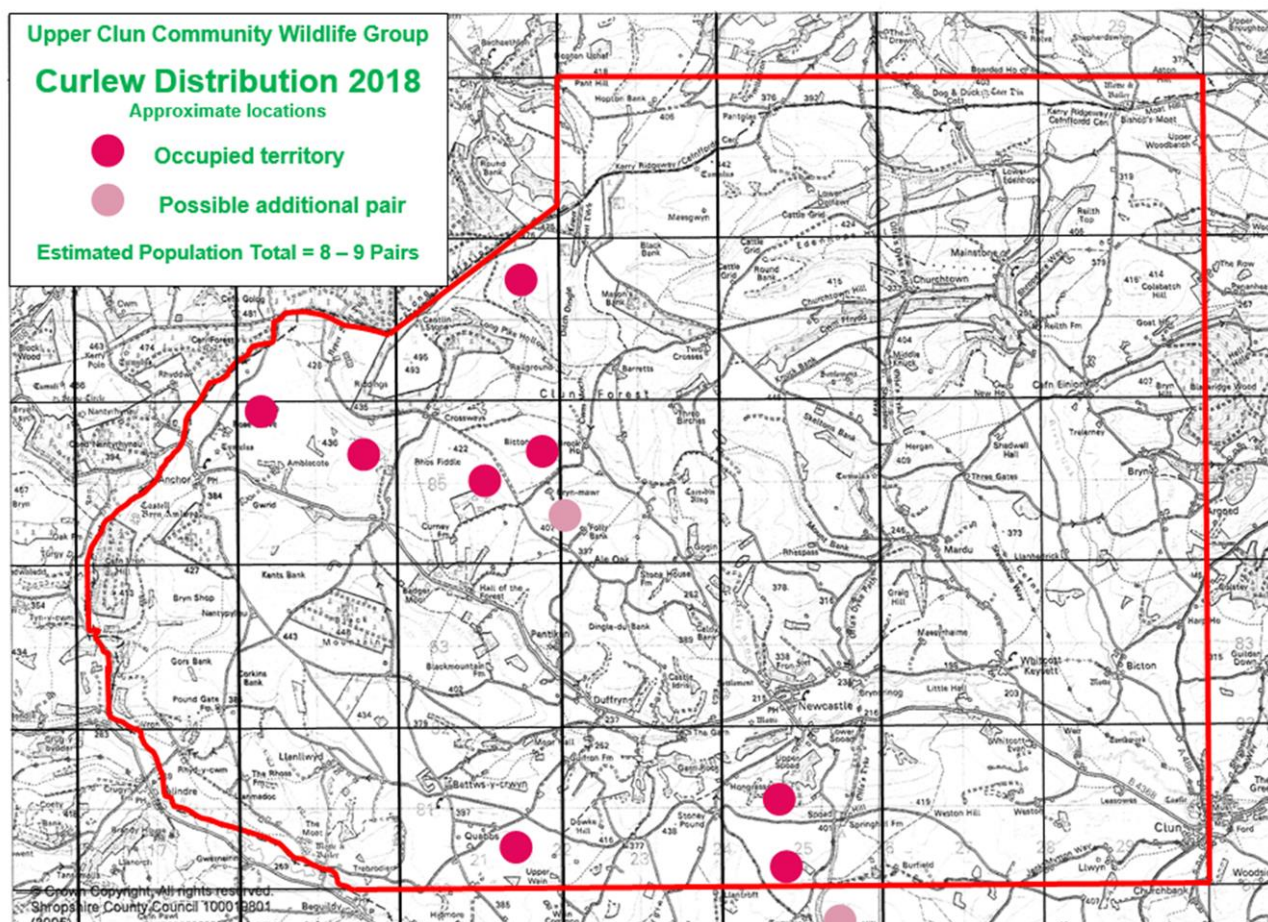
The recovery project was successful in ensuring that chicks hatched, and it is known from other areas that that cannot be taken for granted even where nests are protected. As a result, valuable insights were gained by tracking the chicks, and these will help shape future strategies for addressing the greater challenge, attempting to improve the survival of the young to fledging.

There was cause for optimism at our partner Curlew Recovery Project at Clee Hill. Their experience was similar in terms of nests found, chicks hatched and many losses, but with one crucial difference: at least one, and probably two, young Curlews fledged at one site. That may have been mere chance, but a comparison of the successful site with others in the two areas may point to key factors that are improving the local survival rate. Also, comparison of the results in these two areas with those of the Stiperstones-Corndon Landscape Partnership Scheme Curlew Recovery Project suggests that the threats faced by Curlew nests and chicks differ from area to area.

The full results of the Group's Curlew surveys are set out in Appendix 2.

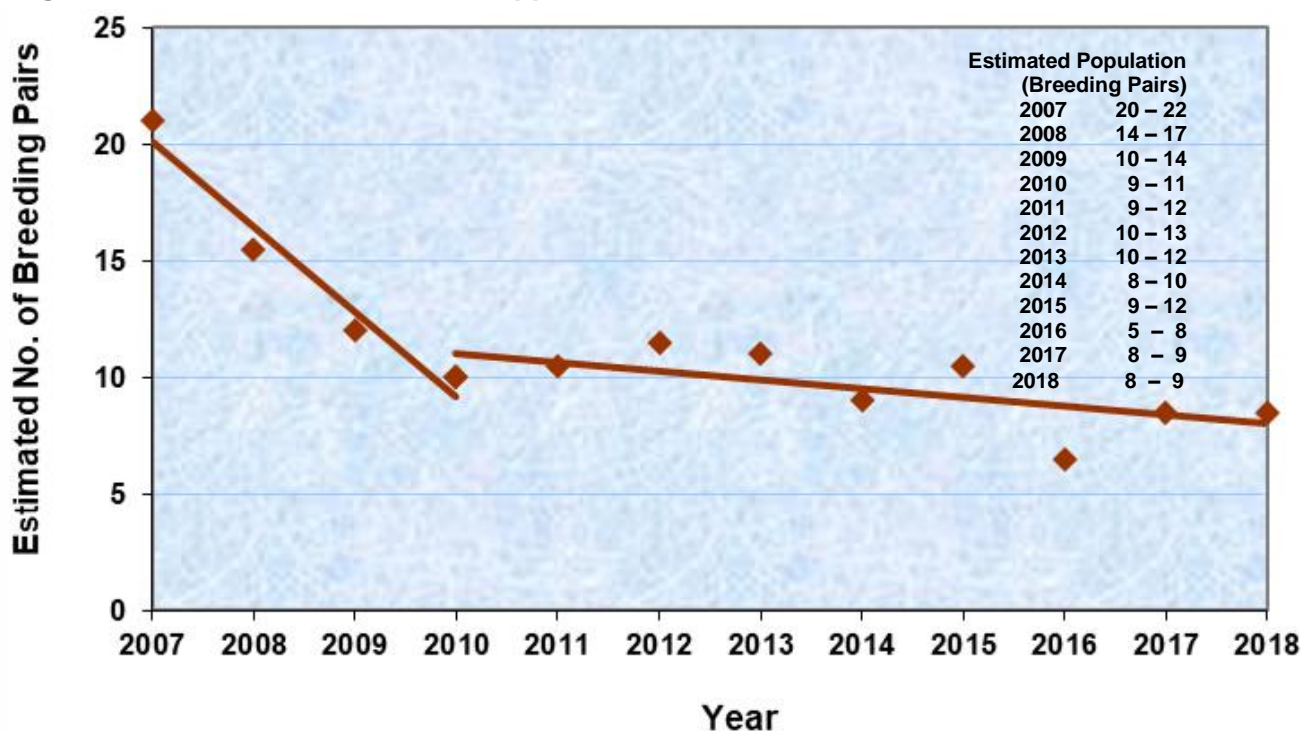
The distribution of territories in 2018 is shown in Map 1.

Map 1. Approximate location of Curlew Territories 2018



The rate of population decline appears to have slowed since 2010, following several years of steep decline. However, productivity in recent years was not sufficient to maintain, let alone rebuild, the population, and as no young are believed to have fledged in 2017 or 2018, the decline is set to continue. The estimated population found each year since 2007 is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 2. Decline of Curlew in the Upper Clun 2007 – 2018



Curlews are long-lived, and may return to their breeding territories for many years without producing any fledged young. Eventually the adults will die, and the breeding population will only be stable if there are enough young birds to replace them. Breeding success will fluctuate from year to year, and is likely to be better in years when wet weather delays grass cutting and other agricultural activity until after the Curlew breeding season, so any long term decline is unlikely to be steady – it will go in fits and starts.

Habitat Requirements and Population Decline

Curlews are ground-nesting birds, requiring rank vegetation as cover for the sitting bird and eggs. They nest on unimproved grassland and heather moorland, rushes or tussocks on rough grazing, or in grass being grown for hay or silage, and feed on damp pasture and meadows with wet, boggy areas rich in invertebrates. Since they need all-round visibility to detect approaching predators, they are found only in open landscapes.

The local decline has been accompanied by a sharp contraction of what was already a very limited range in a short space of time. The last pair of Curlew nesting in the “lowlands” of the Upper Clun has been lost: they occupied a territory north-west of Clun, in the Unk valley, but they were last recorded there in 2010. The Curlew population appears now to be entirely confined to the very highest ground, with no known territory below around 375 metres.

In late 2015, Curlew, previously Amber-listed, was added to the *Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern*. Its national decline is attributed primarily to agricultural intensification, in particular:

- land drainage, which reduces rank vegetation for nest sites, and the invertebrate food supply
- increased use of fertilizers, intensifying the effect of drainage
- control of 'weeds', such as rushes, which are necessary for nest cover
- rolling and chain-harrowing when it can destroy nests and chicks
- silage production, with earlier and more frequent cutting, endangering eggs and chicks
- intensive grazing, with higher stocking levels leading to an increased risk of trampling

(See *Birds of Wet Meadows Survey 2002* (Wilson et al., 2005) and the *Repeat Upland Bird Survey 2002* (Sim et al., 2005))

Predation has also played a part in the decline (Grant et al, 1999). The sparse Curlew population, the reduced amount of nesting cover, and the distances involved in finding food mean nests and chicks are extremely vulnerable to predators, particularly foxes and corvids, which do very well in the current farmed landscape.

Curlew are loyal to nesting sites even if the habitat has changed over the years, so their choices may reflect historic conditions rather than those prevailing at present. However, the few remaining Curlew nest sites are all within 1 km of damp, rough or semi-natural areas, three of which are SWT reserves, and there is evidence that these are important for foraging. Sites which have themselves become marginal may continue to support Curlew by virtue of their proximity to such habitats.

Curlew do not have to raise many young each year to survive in an area, but no population can sustain productivity as poor as that found here. In the Upper Clun there is still a nucleus of breeding birds to work with; in other parts of the country the situation is even worse. Revival will require a long-term strategy aimed at re-establishing habitat of suitable quality on an appropriate scale. In the short term, with basic survival in question, emergency measures need to be considered. The nest protection undertaken this year was successful in ensuring that chicks hatched. The next, more challenging, step is to improve survival of hatched young to fledging.

The SWT / SOS “Save our Curlews” Campaign is organising the short-term measures needed to try to help the remaining pairs breed successfully, and develop the long term strategy to reverse the decline.

After a rapid initial decline, then a period of stability, the decline in the Curlew population has resumed, and is now around 8 pairs.

The situation is now critical, and a Curlew Action Plan was launched in 2016 to attempt to recover the population.

In 2018, nest finding and protection was organised as part of the SWT / SOS “Save our Curlews” campaign. Three nests were found and fenced. The nests all survived, but none of the chicks fledged. All were predated, mainly by foxes.

However, we learnt a lot about how the chicks move about, and feed, in the landscape, and this will help future conservation efforts.

SNIPE

The important local Snipe population at SWT Rhos Fiddle Nature Reserve was surveyed as part of the Shropshire Snipe Survey 2009. Four pairs were found, including a new territory in the centre of the Reserve, compared with 3 – 4 pairs in 2004. The survey was repeated in 2014, 2015 and 2016 with no conclusive evidence of Snipe. No breeding-season records were obtained this year.

Snipe appear now to have been lost as breeding birds throughout the area, although they are still regular winter visitors. A site on Black Mountain, occupied in 2004, was surveyed in 2009 and 2010, but no Snipe recorded. Rush management and the creation of a scrape may have improved the habitat for Snipe, and the site should be revisited, but the prognosis is poor if the much better and more extensive habitat at Rhos Fiddle is vacant.

BIRDS OF THE “WETLANDS”

The Wetlands Project, launched in 2010, aimed to identify and survey all bogs, mires, flushes, wet meadows and rush pasture in the Upper Clun area in order to assess their condition and census the birds, plants and butterflies they support.

A baseline survey of the major 'wetland' sites and their bird communities was made in 2010 and 2011, with the aim of resurveying the sites at approximately five-year intervals to monitor breeding species and assess the effectiveness of any conservation measures. Where sites have been shown to support Lapwing, Curlew or Snipe, or at least four of the Other Target Species (Kestrel, Cuckoo, Barn Owl, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Stonechat, Linnet, Yellowhammer & Reed Bunting), they qualify for adoption as County Wildlife Sites (CWS).

Initially, priority was given to privately-owned farmland with potential for inclusion in HLS. (This work is described in the Chapter on Conservation Action later in the Report.) The sites owned or managed by SWT (Lower Short Ditch, Masons Bank & Rhos Fiddle) are now included in the survey as a standard of comparison, and, since they are more extensive than the other sites, as a means of assessing the importance of site area.

Survey Findings

The sites were not formally surveyed in 2018, but were visited as part of other fieldwork. All target species were recorded, though not at all sites, and there was evidence that the harsh conditions in late winter and early spring had affected breeding numbers of several species, especially Stonechat. Cuckoo, which like last year arrived very late and left early, was recorded at very few sites.

The more diverse flora and fauna of the wetlands benefit many other bird species besides the group's targets, including other Red-listed species such as Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, Whinchat, Tree Pipit, Tree Sparrow and Lesser Redpoll.

All survey records, and the maps based on them (Maps A2.1 and A2.2 in the 2011 Report, Appendix 2) will be submitted to Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS) as evidence of the extent to which the sites continue to justify their status as Local (County) Wildlife Sites.

RED KITE

Six Red Kite nests were found in the Upper Clun, including two new ones. They were all successful, unlike last year, though productivity was a little low. Three nests produced two fledged young each, the other three one each, making nine altogether, a respectable result in what must have been a difficult season. A total of 39 active nests have been found in the Upper Clun since 2007. Twenty-seven were successful, producing 40 young.

Three chicks at two of this year's nests were tagged, but the ringing and tagging programme has been reduced in order to redirect the time and effort required to species in more urgent. Nest monitoring will continue for another three years to follow up kites that have been tagged, so please continue to report sightings of a Kite in the same vicinity on several occasions, or of two together, or of one going into a wood between January and July, which may indicate a nest site.

Such locations should be kept strictly confidential, as Kites are still persecuted, but should be reported immediately to Leo Smith or Michelle Frater (both of whom have a monitoring licence).

KESTREL PROJECT

The Kestrel population has given rise to increasing concern in recent years, and in recognition of this the Shropshire Ringing and Raptor Study Groups have begun a county-wide programme of nest monitoring. Nest boxes are being erected in areas of suitable habitat, such as rough grassland, heath and rushy areas, which have surviving Kestrel populations, in order to supplement scarce natural sites and to gather data on breeding and productivity.

The first nest box in the Upper Clun was used successfully last year, producing three fledged young. Two more were erected in March this year, one of which was occupied straight away. Two boxes were used and chicks reared almost to fledging, three in one box and four in the other, but in both cases the chicks disappeared at that late stage. There was clear evidence of avian predation in one case, and the circumstances of the other failure suggested a similar cause. A regular natural site was occupied at the beginning of the season, and the female remained at the site, but the male seems to have disappeared, cause unknown.



It is estimated that the Kestrel population in the area is 4 – 5 breeding pairs, but we need to establish this with more certainty, and identify more suitable locations for nestboxes.

Please report all Kestrel sightings to Michelle Frater, 01588 640909.

DIPPERS

Dippers are restricted to, and dependent on, fast-flowing streams and rivers with stony beds. The headwaters of the River Clun, including the River Unk and the Folly Brook, are one of the County strongholds. The average length of the fiercely-defended territory, approximately 1km in the Upper Clun, is closely related to water quality. The health of the Dipper population, assessed by nest monitoring, ringing, and trapping or re-sighting ringed adults, is therefore an important indicator of changes in the river environment.



Nests are located directly above flowing water; natural sites are used, but man-made structures are preferred where available, and Dippers take readily to nest boxes. With landowners' permission, specially-designed nest boxes have been installed under bridges in the Upper Clun to increase nesting opportunities and breeding success, and facilitate population monitoring.

2018 Monitoring Results

- 28 potential nest sites were monitored, the great majority nest boxes under bridges
- 16 sites were occupied, down from 22 last year; there were 14 active nests, 5 on the Clun, 5 on the Folly Brook, 3 on the Unk and 1 on Mardu Brook
- 13 nests were in boxes and one, on a bridge, was natural
- 32 chicks and 1 adult were ringed at 8 sites; chicks that reach ringing age are likely to fledge
- 15 colour-rings on breeding adults were read

The number of chicks ringed was less than two-thirds of last year's total, reflecting both lower site occupancy and lower breeding success this year. The highly variable water levels early in the season may have played a part, as may the very poor spring weather.

Tony Cross has been monitoring Dippers in the Teme catchment since 1987, by ringing chicks at nest sites, and counting birds at winter roost sites. Colour-ringing of adults started in 2011, and since then as many colour-rings as possible have been read during the breeding season, giving an important measure of adult movements and survival. Annual reports of this project, *Dippers in the River Teme Catchment*, have been produced since 2007.

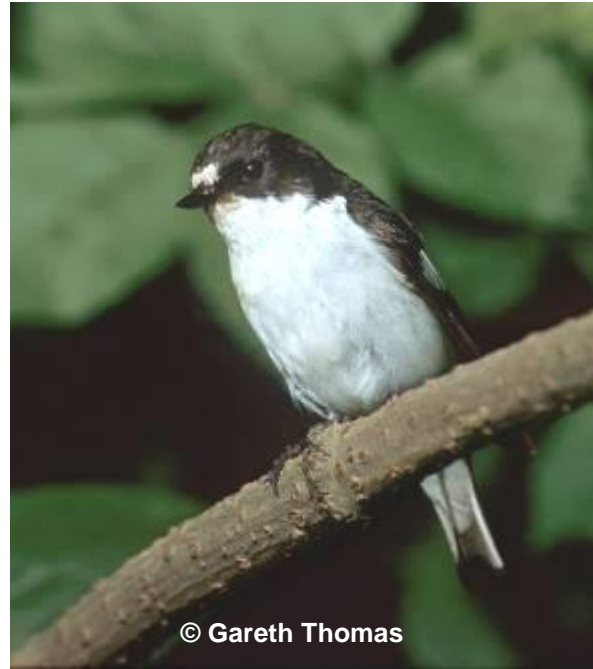
The study suggests that the local population declined in the 20 years prior to the start of the nest box scheme in 2006, then increased until 2010, as the boxes created more nesting opportunities. Productivity is slightly higher in boxes, as they tend to be less vulnerable to predation. Adverse conditions in 2011 and 2012 appeared temporarily to reverse the growth. Natural fluctuations are normal for species inhabiting dynamic environments, and long-term trends will become apparent only after years of monitoring.

**If you see Dippers regularly, or know of an existing nest site,
please contact Michelle Frater, 01588 640909.**

NEST BOXES FOR WOODLAND BIRDS

The Nest Box Scheme aims to increase the number of suitable nest sites for hole-nesting woodland birds, and to collect data on their breeding success. Some members with suitable gardens or access to woodland host up to 10 boxes provided by UCCWG. New members are welcome to join, but unfortunately the Group is no longer able to fund new boxes, so people must now provide boxes themselves.

Occupancy and outcomes were available for five schemes. The occupancy rate was low this year, less than 40% on average, with a range from 20 - 50%. This was probably an effect of the harsh weather and poor vegetation growth in early spring. Three species used boxes, Blue Tit (7 nests), Pied Flycatcher (5) and Great Tit (2). Thirty Pied Flycatchers, 56 Blue Tits and 22 Great Tits fledged. Two broods, both of Great Tit, died before fledging, one complete clutch of unknown species failed to hatch, and two other clutches, one of Blue Tit and one of Great Tit, contained addled eggs.



There are other nest box schemes in the area, and Andy Spencer rings Pied Flycatcher and Redstarts here, together with sites in the Onny valleys and the Stiperstones (over 700 boxes altogether). The Group helps him identify which of the boxes hold the two target species, and more volunteers for this work would be welcome. Including boxes erected this year at new sites, there are now about 300 at 12 sites, including about 100 at Woodbatch. A few sites such as Black Hall are outside the area.

Total occupancy in these boxes (all species) was approx. 26%. This is low because new boxes were erected too late to be used this year, but it should increase in future. However, 18 pairs of Pied Flycatchers, and 1 pair of Redstarts, occupied the boxes. About 80% of adults, and all the Pied Flycatcher chicks, were ringed, together with a brood of Marsh Tits and two of Tree Sparrows.

The metal rings, fixed to the leg, are inscribed with a unique number, recorded by BTO. If the bird is caught again, or found dead, and the ring details are reported, its age and movements are known. Almost everything we know about bird migration and longevity is as a result of ringing.

If you live in the Upper Clun area, and are interested in having nest boxes on your land, or you would like to help monitoring Pied Flycatchers at other nest box schemes in the area, please ring Marie Zenick on 01588 630750 e-mail mariezenick@yahoo.co.uk

BARN OWLS

Barn Owl was removed from the *Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern* in 2015, but remains scarce locally. Loss of rough grassland rich in prey is the major factor, but lack of suitable nest sites has contributed. The Shropshire Barn Owl Group (SBOG) installed a few nest boxes in the Upper Clun, and UCCWG many more, mostly in isolated farm buildings or large trees 400m or more from woodland, near at least 4 ha (10 acres) of permanent rough grassland.

In 2017 there were active nests at two sites, and Barn Owls bred at the same two sites this year, though the final outcomes are unknown. At one of these sites, a nest box installed by a farmer near The Anchor was regularly used



up until 2009, but apparently not again until last year. The nest at the second site is not in one of the Group's boxes, but the location is confidential at the request of the farmer.

Other Barn Owls, including pairs, were reported in several places, one of them a previously regular nest site, but there was no evidence of any further breeding. Two Barn Owl casualties have been found in the last year, one the victim of road traffic, the other possibly of a collision with power lines; although unfortunate, it is another indication that there are more about.

**If you see a Barn Owl, especially if you suspect it may be breeding,
please tell Michelle Frater, 01588 640909.**

OTHER SPECIES

A brood of young Sparrowhawks also fell victim to predation. There were several sightings of Merlin (not in the breeding season) and three of Hobby, but no evidence that either bred locally.

In winter, there was an influx of Hawfinches attracted by yew berries in local churchyards, and some good flocks of Siskin in riverside alders. A murmuration of Starlings formed near Ceri Forest.

Several Yellow Wagtail pairs bred on arable fields in the Unk valley, along with Skylark, Whitethroat and Sedge Warbler. Green Woodpecker and Spotted Flycatcher were confirmed breeding, although the latter was in very low numbers this year. Two colonies of Tree Sparrows bred, one in the valley, the other on higher ground. Mandarin Duck bred on the Clun, and Sand Martins were present on two different stretches of its banks. Mute Swans bred successfully near Bicton, producing one cygnet. Passage Whinchats were seen at Rhos Fiddle in spring and autumn. An autumn highlight was the appearance of a Green Sandpiper feeding at Rhos Fiddle pool.

OVERVIEW

Our survey work over 12 years has made a detailed assessment of the bird populations in the Upper Clun. During this period Lapwing appears to have become extinct as a local breeding species, and Curlew is only just holding on. The status of most of the other target species is more secure, largely because their habitat requirements are less exacting, and are met on the three SWT reserves and a few other sites of comparable quality.

The data has helped us to identify key Local (County) Wildlife Sites, and support several farmers in applications to join Environmental Stewardship HLS; Natural England made use of our data in identifying priorities for new agreements. Future surveys will continue to monitor the populations of the target species, especially in relation to changes in land management under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Their fortunes will be an important measure of its effectiveness.

The Bird Group has evolved over the years: map-based surveys are still important, and those who carry them out are reliable, conscientious and increasingly knowledgeable. At the same time, the contribution of our network of resident recorders, and other local people, who send in records of the bird activity they see around them has greatly increased. Information is exchanged via an email distribution list. Records are submitted regularly to the County Recorder, and, where relevant, to BTO.

Thanks to our large initial membership, and a small but steady stream of new members, the Bird Group has achieved a great deal: we've organized nest box schemes, collected valuable data for local and national conservation bodies, and published advice leaflets on land management for wildlife. Above all, our monitoring of the local Curlew population has highlighted the need for urgent conservation measures, and has built a good foundation for the nest protection and chick monitoring carried out by the SWT / SOS "Save our Curlews" Campaign.

THE PLANT GROUP

(THE WILDLIFE SITE AND BOTANY SURVEY GROUP)

INTRODUCTION

For 12 years now the botany group have been visiting the landscape of the Upper Clun and Teme (tetrads SO18, SO27 and SO28). The group surveyed a suite of Local (County) Wildlife Sites (LWS) once again in an attempt to assess the health of such sites and their wildlife in this landscape area. At the same time Fiona Gomersall mapped large areas (hedgerows, grasslands and watercourses) on a large scale, covering whole farms and the LWS within them.

It is known that the LWS and nature reserves provide essential habitat and refuges for our declining wildlife but the ecological links between them are not strong enough. The purpose of the mapping was to provide a baseline for a Nature Recovery Network which underpins the objectives in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan.



SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The Upper Clun and Teme have a core group of seven skilled volunteers who carry out the LWS surveys. The group is supported by Shropshire Wildlife Trust but due to a lack of funding there was little training this year. Since this is a community wildlife group, other local people are always encouraged to join in.



In 2018 overall, 9 sites were surveyed over a 15 week period by the botany group (see Appendix 3).

SWT provides maps, condition survey cards, NVC recording cards, species record cards, Invertebrate Habitat Assessment check lists, risk assessments and offers some training. SWT also arranges access permissions.

A training course on 'Sedges, Rushes and Grasses' took place this year on a LWS in the Upper Clun and was open to all SWT surveyors in Shropshire.

All surveyors use recommended floras (listed under References), and the *axiophyte* lists, which show the target species for the three key habitats in the area (Rush Pasture/Purple Moorgrass, Blanket Bog and Meadow (see Appendix 4), are used for guidance.

The LWS Condition Form for Grassland has been included in previous Reports, to give an idea of the data collected, as is the species recording card used (condition forms for Woodland and Wetlands were also used).

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Eight people variously carried out the site surveys in 2018, collecting valuable information on both LWS and one new site. Again, excellent species lists were compiled along with quadrat data and in-depth information about site condition. One of the sites was surveyed for the AONB Conservation Fund as the owner has a grant to control gorse scrub this winter.

Around 100 target species are recorded each year. These plants are the Shropshire 'axiophytes', the species which are good habitat indicators as they are relatively uncommon and indicate an unimproved and relatively unspoilt habitat. As a rule of thumb, the higher the number recorded, the better the site. Species-rich hay meadows are measured using a different set of indicators since they may have few axiophytes but are nonetheless important priority habitats.

Species of interest recorded in 2018 included: Silver Hair-grass at a new site, Lesser Marshwort at its only site (Bettws Pool), Dyer's Greenweed, Marsh Arrowgrass and White Sedge - all uncommon.

The cumulative result of the Botany Group's work (together with the complementary work of the Bird and Butterfly Groups) is shown in Map 4 "Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife and Candidate Sites in the Upper Clun" in the Chapter on Conservation Action on page 20.

DISCUSSION

Through both the LWS and mapping surveys it is evident that there are still semi-natural areas in the Clun and Teme which may to date have been overlooked. Bryn Bedw Pastures, a prospective site was adopted during 2018 as a LWS and provides a good extension to an already rich suite of wildlife sites in that apart of SO27. Since the start of the Community Wildlife Group in 2007, 26 (38)* LWS are either completely new or are significant extensions to existing sites. On a less positive note, the landscape mapping highlighted several areas of LWS which should be de-designated as they no longer hold good, semi-natural habitat or were wrongly mapped in the first place.



The majority of the 50 (67)* LWS in the Upper Clun (and Teme) areas have been surveyed within the last five years, and around 70% are in a reasonably good condition. This figure has remained about the same for a number of years which is encouraging.

Where sites were found to be in a poor or declining condition this was attributed to fertiliser use, the extreme weather patterns this year, and scrub encroachment, all leading to loss of species-richness.

Most of the work of the three groups: Bird, Butterfly and Botany focuses on rush pasture, bogs and unimproved grassland habitats of the Clun Forest. There are around 15 good rushy pastures in this landscape where conservation work needs to be focused for vulnerable and threatened

species like the Curlew and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly. A key aim of The Upper Clun Facilitation Fund (see p. 21) is to increase the extent of these rushy pastures.



Bilberry

The Botany group continues to work closely with farmers, which is essential if habitat conservation and restoration is to be successful since most of the Upper Clun is farmland. The group also works closely with Natural England (NE) and the various staff of the AONB Partnership to ensure that LWS receive appropriate management within schemes and projects.

Although fewer sites are visited by the group these days, the ground covered this year still amounted to 98 hectares and means that at least some of the LWS are receiving health checks. The landowner involvement, interest and cooperation is good and most of the data collected has been useful. Working with our partners at the AONB, Shropshire Council, Natural England, SWT and Land Life and Livelihoods means that so much more is achieved.

FURTHER WORK

Botanical surveys (and possibly mapping) will continue on a similar scale in 2019. New and returning surveyors will once more be encouraged to join the survey group.

()* = figures where Teme valley local wildlife sites are included

Twelve years of botanical survey work on farms in the Upper Clun and Teme translates to a huge amount of data collection which has led to a much improved knowledge of this landscape and a good picture of the health of wildlife in south-west Shropshire. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) which provide strong ecological links with the nature reserves have now been surveyed in detail for around seven years. The surveying of these sites is now always the main focus as is the assessment of 'new' areas which arise each year.

THE BUTTERFLY GROUP

INTRODUCTION

Surveys of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries started in 2010 and the results for 2010 to 2016 were summarised in the 2016 report. The survey results for this year are given in Appendix 5.

This fritillary is a UKBAP Priority Species, of High Conservation Priority which has suffered long term decline across the UK. The most important sites in the Upper Clun are: Barretts West (Masons Bank West Local Wildlife Site), Pant-y-Lidan LWS and Gors Bank LWS. The numbers found at Barretts West in 2010- 2011 made this a regionally significant site although such numbers were not recorded this year.

However numbers of the fritillaries were up this year for all three sites mentioned compared with last year and a further location at Gors Bank LWS was identified. Fewer visits to sites were made this year due to a lack of recorders.



SAFEGUARDING HABITAT

Rush Pasture is an important habitat for Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries, and the food plants they need, and it is also an important habitat for wetland birds. A UCCWG leaflet on the management of Rush Pasture for its characteristic wildlife was included in the 2013 Report (Appendix 7), and can be found on the website www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

A similar document, but concentrating on the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and its needs, has also been produced. This is available on the website of the West Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation www.westmidlands-butterflies.org.uk

BURY DITCHES (a nationally important site for Wood Whites)

Although it's not in the Upper Clun area, readers may be interested to know that, from April to September every year, weekly surveys ("Transects") of a 2 ¼ mile section of forest track in Bury Ditches are conducted by a team of volunteers under the auspices of Butterfly Conservation. The volunteers count the numbers of all species seen, but the prime object is to count Wood Whites (a rare species classified as "Endangered" on the UK Red List – the second highest danger rating), so that the effect of habitat improvement measures taken to help the Wood White population can be assessed

Anyone who would like to help with these Transects, even for the occasional visit, should contact Rhona Goddard, Butterfly Conservation (rgoddard@butterfly-conservation.org).

Rhona also organises work parties to improve habitat for the Wood White.

FUTURE PLANS

Unless more volunteers materialise, all that can be done is to concentrate on sites where significant numbers of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries have been seen previously, i.e. (in descending order of importance): 1. Barretts W, 2. Pant-y-Lidan, 3. Cefn S/Bryn Shop (2 sites close together), 4. Ditch Dingle (close to Barretts W) and 5. Bank.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Dennis Twist organised our Butterfly surveys for many years, but is unable to continue. We therefore need someone new to co-ordinate the surveys of Small Pearl- bordered Fritillaries in the Upper Clun area, and more surveyors, please. If you can help, please contact Rob Rowe 01588 630648, email rob@robrowe.co.uk

MAMMALS

The Group decided at its 2014 Annual Meeting to expand its interests in birds, butterflies and plant life to mammals (and reptiles and amphibians) and John Mackintosh of the Shropshire Mammal Group made a presentation.

However, for a number of reasons the intention to get a new Mammal Group up and running has not proved possible. Hopefully, new volunteers will come forward and help with that. If you want to help, please tell Rob Harris, phone 01588 640234, email wilksharris@hotmail.com

CO-OPERATION WITH FARMERS

The Wildlife Group needs, and wants, to work closely with the farmers in the area. The vast majority of land in the Upper Clun area is farmland. Therefore, if we are to gather a worthwhile picture of local wildlife, and then undertake effective action to increase populations and habitat, we need the active cooperation of local farmers. We will therefore continue to work with farmers, individually and generally, on conservation issues in future.

We also encourage members of the Group who are not farmers to do whatever they can to develop good relations with individual farmers while carrying out surveys. This often includes discussion while seeking permission to carry out surveys on farmland.

There are now many examples of where this co-operation has produced results, for the benefit of wildlife and farmers, as we have helped farmers with good wildlife habitat to secure an Environmental Stewardship HLS Agreement with Natural England, so they are rewarded for managing these habitats sensitively and effectively. More details are given in the next Chapter.

CONSERVATION ACTION

The Group was set up in 2007 to monitor nationally or locally threatened bird, plant and butterfly species and their habitats, and to encourage interest in, and actively promote, conservation in the area. Annual Reports have documented the results of the surveys, and the data have been used to underpin Conservation Action, particularly in relation to the steeply-declining Curlew population.

The Group has successfully

- formed a good estimate of the breeding population, distribution and habitat use of Lapwing, Curlew and other target Bird Species
- identified plant sites which contain axiophytes, indicators of high habitat quality, and produced complete species lists in support of their adoption as Local Wildlife Sites
- identified important Butterfly sites, two of which are regionally important

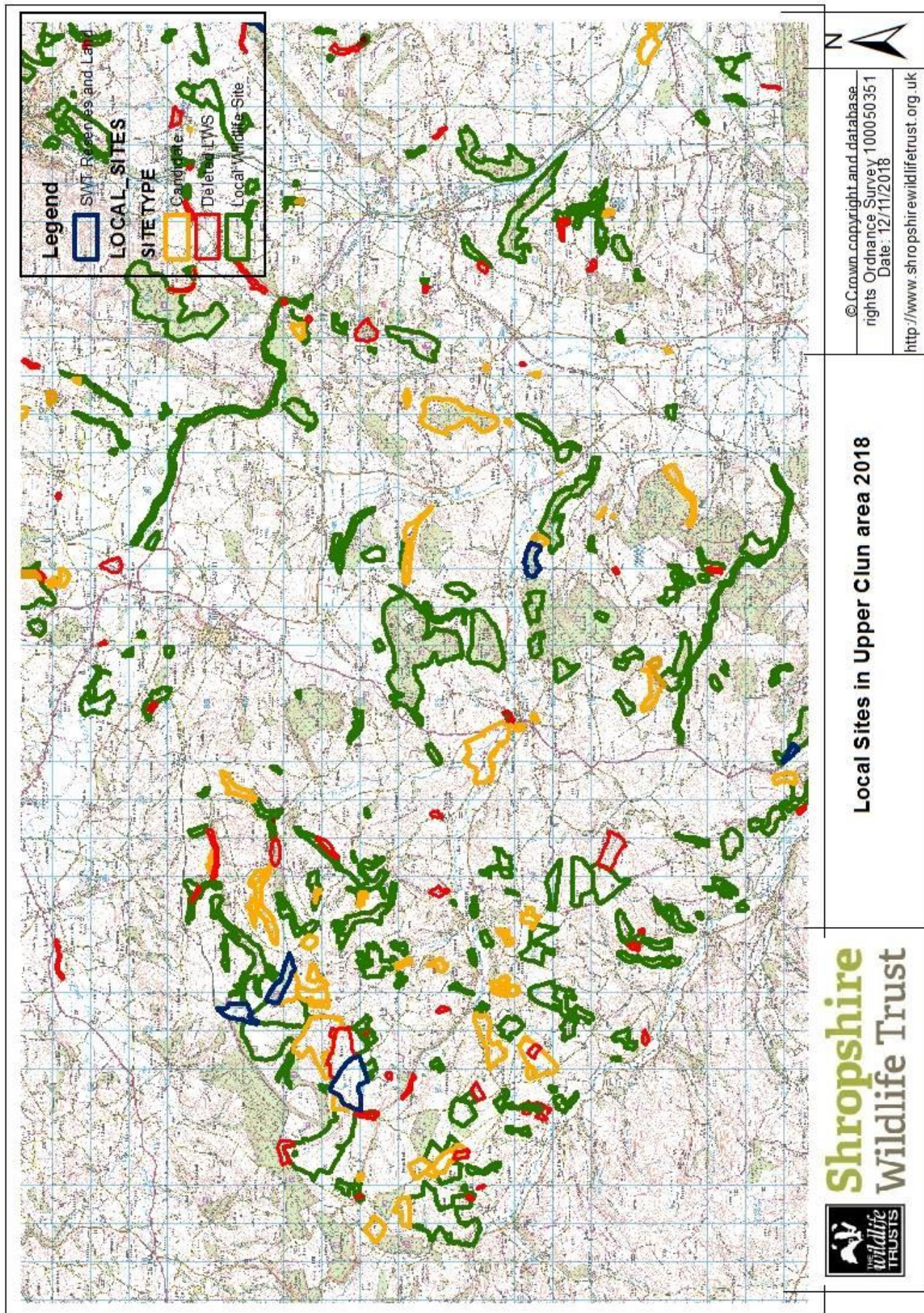
LOCAL (COUNTY) WILDLIFE SITES

Survey results presented in previous reports demonstrated that 'Wetland' sites which support many of the target birds are also key habitats for plants and butterflies. Data were collated across the three survey groups, and used to make the case that sites that were not already Local Wildlife Sites should if possible be adopted. These sites of wildlife interest are shown in the Local Sites Map on page 19. They include, Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites, Candidate Sites and Deleted Sites in the Upper Clun 2018. All the proposals have been accepted in principle by the LWS Committee, but formal adoption requires landowners consent, and this is still being sought in some cases, shown as "Candidate Sites" on the map.

The map also shows the deleted (red) sites. The wildlife attributes of these sites were lost when they were ploughed, fertilised, built on, planted on, felled or destroyed in some other way, usually more than 10 years ago.

HLS AGREEMENTS

Until recently, the national and local strategies to reverse the declines of local priority species and habitats, and meet Government Biodiversity targets, were based on using Environmental



Stewardship (particularly Higher Level Scheme - HLS) agreements between Natural England and landowners to safeguard and enhance the habitats. Such agreements aimed to mitigate the long-term agricultural changes which have led to the decline of many bird, plant and butterfly species, including “improvement” of grassland by ploughing, reseeding and / or draining.

Most farmland in the Upper Clun was covered by Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) agreements, but these all expired in 2014 or earlier. Natural England (NE) had to consider which of the land covered by ESA Agreements should be incorporated into HLS Agreements. The Group’s strategy was therefore to identify the best wildlife sites, make survey information freely available to the land owners and to Natural England, and ask that the species-rich habitats most likely to benefit bird, plant and butterfly species would be included in the scheme. Our detailed proposals to Natural England have been described in previous Repots.

New HLS agreements between Natural England and Individual Landowners in the Upper Clun were entered into in 2013 (21) and 2014 (a further 11), covering more than 10 sq. km altogether.

Our strategy was partially successful, and the 2014 report included comments from Lucy Roberts and Chris Hogarth, the Joint Shropshire Land Management Team Leaders at NE, about how valuable the data we provided was in helping NE decide which land should be covered by Agreements.

Maps showing the location of holdings which include HLS agreements that started in 2013 or earlier, and in 2014, were published on pages 26 and 27 of our report for 2014. These agreements are scheduled to last for 10 years, so they should bring substantial benefits to local wildlife for many years to come.

However, each agreement is voluntary, so it may not protect the best habitats, and funding constraints mean that it is unlikely that any agreements will create significant amounts of new habitat. Around half the landowners in the Upper Clun were not able to make a strong enough case that their farms should have a share of an inadequate budget to provide wider environmental benefits; others preferred to forgo the income rather than enter into HLS agreements. Some farmers need to increase production in order to make up the shortfall in income, and this has already had an effect on grassland management that may further disadvantage wildlife.

Therefore, while HLS has been a major benefit, it protects only a small proportion of the area, so the Group still needs to monitor key wildlife species, monitor the impacts of HLS, positive or negative, and promote conservation

COUNTRYSIDE STEWARDSHIP

HLS has now been replaced by a Countryside Stewardship Scheme, which, although it is supposed to be more simple than HLS, is much more bureaucratic and less well funded. It aims to implement the proposals of the Lawton Report, which recommended reducing habitat fragmentation through a more integrated approach to land management. Participating areas will be selected by Natural England, rather than relying on applications from individual landowners.

Targeting Statements have been published, but do little to clarify how the scheme will work in practice. In particular, Curlew has been given no priority, despite a decline so serious that it now figures on the Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern. Getting to grips with Countryside Stewardship, and using local knowledge to promote the interests of conservation, will be a major priority for the Group in coming years.

CLUN FOREST FACILITATION FUND

The Group, together with Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, has supported a successful application by Land, Life & Livelihoods Community Wildlife Group, for a 3 year Facilitation Fund grant to work with local farmers and landowners.

The Facilitation fund, managed by Natural England as part of Countryside Stewardship (CS), supports people and organisations that bring farmers, foresters, and other land managers together

to improve the local natural environment at a landscape scale. This landscape scale approach can cover land under existing agri-environment and forestry/woodland agreements, common land and land not currently covered by a scheme. It builds on the principles of partnership working to deliver environmental benefits, as demonstrated by various initiatives, including farm clusters and the farmer-led Nature Improvement Area.

Funding is awarded to successful applications through a competitive process. Priority is given to approaches which show partnership and a collective approach across holdings to deliver shared environmental outcomes that go beyond what could be delivered by individual holdings acting in isolation. The area covered by the Clun Forest project is shown on the map.

The Fund is to help farmers and land managers in the Clun Forest:

- Protect and manage land, soil, and water, and conserve rare and threatened plants and animals, e.g. white clawed crayfish, mountain pansy, small pearl-bordered fritillary butterfly, curlew
- Join up areas of the catchment that are important and valuable for wildlife, biodiversity & flood/water management.
- Increase farm viability and care for our special landscape
- Achieve new and improved environmental schemes
- Meet together to discuss, problem-solve and act
- Obtain encouragement, technical, and personal support
- Find funds, advice and practical help so that these aims/objectives can be achieved



Bringing farmers and landowners together in this way provides an ideal opportunity to try and meet the needs of many of the Group's priority wildlife species and habitats.

More information can be found on the relevant part of the Land, Life and Livelihoods website <http://www.landlifeandlivelihoods.org.uk/>

FUTURE AGRI-ENVIRONMENT SCHEMES

All agri-environment schemes for many years have been part of the European Union Common Agricultural Policy. Given the referendum result and the Government's plan to leave the EU by 2019, the future arrangements for farm payment schemes and benefit for wildlife are very uncertain.

We hope that future arrangements will help farmers and wildlife, and we will continue to work with local farmers to ensure that both benefit from any new schemes.

HABITAT REQUIREMENTS FOR TARGET SPECIES

If the various threatened species are to be saved from local extinction, it is necessary to protect them where they breed now, and improve breeding success so their populations can increase and spread. The apparent loss of Lapwing as a breeding species underlines the urgency of this work. The habitat requirements for Curlew, Lapwing, Snipe, the other Target Bird Species and Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary have been included in previous reports.

Unfortunately, little management work has been carried out in recent years to ensure that sites retain their value for wildlife, but now that some land is being managed under HLS, with funding for such work, it is hoped that this will lead to beneficial changes in farming practice such as rush management, growing hay rather than silage, creating shallow pools and muddy patches, and managing livestock in the vicinity of nest sites.

The Group will continue to monitor these species and sites, particularly the wetlands and Wildlife Sites, to see if our aspirations are borne out in the future.

HABITAT MANAGEMENT LEAFLETS

Based on the results of our local surveys, four leaflets have been published

1. *Please Conserve our Curlews*, requesting farmers to make changes in the way in which grassland is managed and grazed, in 2007 This is based on a similar leaflet produced by the Upper Onny Wildlife Group
2. *Please Help Hedgerow Birds*, requesting all landowners to make small scale changes to the management of hedges, verges, field margins and scrub, in 2008.
3. *Managing Wetlands for Wildlife*, to benefit birds, plants and butterflies, in 2009.
4. *Management of Rush Pasture*, also to benefit birds, plants and butterflies, in 2013.

All these leaflets have been endorsed by the AONB, Natural England, RSPB, Shropshire Wildlife Trust and, when it still existed, Shropshire FWAG.

Each leaflet was published in the appropriate Annual Report, and further copies are available on request. They can also be viewed and downloaded from the website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

SURVEYING WILDLIFE SITES

'Local Wildlife Site' is not a statutory designation. It provides no protection, and does not limit landowner activity. It recognises the wildlife value of a piece of land based on the species it supports. Sites have to meet published criteria drawn up by Shropshire Wildlife Trust in consultation with Statutory Bodies such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and Forestry Commission, and other Organisations such as Shropshire Ornithological Society and Butterfly Conservation. Applications have to be approved by a committee representing most of these bodies, and adoption needs landowner consent.

Fieldwork associated with current or potential Local Wildlife Sites was done in consultation with landowners, whose permission has been sought both for the survey, and for any subsequent adoption of sites. Landowners are given all survey results, and information about any rare or unusual plants at sites.

RIVER CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

Water quality in the River Clun and its tributaries has declined as a result of silting up of the river bed and pollution from people, transport and farming practices. This is being addressed by statutory organisations in compliance with the EU's Water Framework Directive (WFD), under which The Environment Agency is charged with getting all rivers into 'good ecological condition'.

Part of the lower Clun is designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) by the European Union, one of only three such designations in England, because it supports a threatened population of Freshwater Pearl Mussels. The designation requires the statutory organisations to protect the mussel population. Action is urgent: monitoring suggests that if the current rate of decline continues, the population will be extinct within the very near future.

Current initiatives include:

- work on farms to reduce run-off into the rivers through the **Catchment Sensitive Farming** project funded by Natural England
- a **Teme Pilot Project** whose implementation is being co-ordinated by Severn Rivers Trust (SRT); it includes funding for the **Dipper Project**

- a **Clun Catchment Management Plan** being drawn up by a Working Group, set up by Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, on which UCCWG is represented
- **Dippers in the Teme Catchment** project, with UCCWG involvement, collects data on a species with similar habitat requirements to the Mussel
- Land, Life and Livelihoods, a community initiative in the Clun Forest, is developing a **Catchment Management Plan** as invited by the government

The Wildlife Group supports these initiatives, and will seek to become involved in them wherever possible.

SHROPSHIRE HILLS AONB MANAGEMENT PLAN

The AONB has a statutory obligation to produce a Management Plan every five years. Conservation and enhancing Biodiversity are important elements of the Plan. The plan for 2014-19 can be found on the AONB website.

Preparing the next five year plan now underway.

CONSERVATION ACTION

UCCWG recognizes that most land in the area is farmland in private ownership, and the Group needs to work closely with farmers to achieve our conservation objectives, although other landowners, householders with gardens, the County Council (responsible for verges and public open space), Welsh Forestry and the Wildlife Trust, among others, should also be involved. Declines in habitat quality and species richness have occurred slowly over many years, and it will take many more years of sustained, incremental habitat improvement if the populations of the “flagship” species are to return to their former levels.

The Group will continue to promote its vision of a diverse, wildlife-rich landscape, and to collect the evidence that enables it to make authoritative representations for inclusions in Parish Plans, the AONB policy and Management Plan, Natural England’s Countryside Stewardship, the Environment Agency’s work on river habitats, the Statutory Planning Process, and the policies of other statutory and voluntary organisations. Such influence is necessary if we are to help make a difference to the quality and diversity of wildlife habitats

CURLEW ACTION PLAN, & THE SWT / SOS “SAVE OUR CURLEWS” CAMPAIGN

The Wildlife Group has been surveying the Upper Clun for 12 years now, and working to reverse species declines by promoting the protection and restoration of habitat. It remains committed to such an approach as the only means of sustaining healthy species populations in the long term. However, Curlew has now declined so severely that it may follow Lapwing into local extinction before such measures can take effect. In an effort to prevent this, the Group launched an emergency *Curlew Action Plan* at the 2016 Annual meeting



Fieldwork suggests that fewer Curlew pairs are settling to nest, and the habitat at many of the traditional breeding sites is now marginal and requires landscape-scale conservation measures. Where pairs do manage to breed, nest and chick survival is extremely poor: in 2015 and 2016 only one brood per year is believed to have survived to an age where young might have gone on to

fledge. This falls so far below the productivity needed to maintain the population that the situation is has become critical.

The work of the LPS (*see Bird Report above*) has shown that predation is now a major cause of breeding failure, though agricultural activities sometimes play a part; the same is likely to apply in the Upper Clun. Fencing nests has been shown to increase the chance of eggs hatching, and about 50% did in 2017, a big improvement on last year.

Breeding success will not improve unless the immediate causes of failure are tackled directly, with close landowner involvement at all stages. Therefore, as part of the *Action Plan*, more effort was made in 2017 to locate nest sites, rather than territories. One nest was found, and protected by an electric fence. The eggs hatched, increasing the chances that young would fledge, but it will be seen from Appendix 2 that no young fledged in 2017.



Monitoring of Curlew populations by other Community Wildlife Groups has shown a similar rate of decline elsewhere. Shropshire Wildlife Trust (SWT) has

therefore convened a multi-agency Shropshire Curlew Group to co-ordinate a County-wide “Save our Curlews” campaign, and SWT and Shropshire Ornithological Society have launched a joint appeal to fund the nest monitoring and protection. Campaign work in the Upper Clun in 2018 is described in the Bird Group work on page 6.

Similar work was carried out in the Clee Hill CWG area in 2018. 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/. The Curlew distribution map from the County Bird Atlas 2008-13, overlain with the Community Wildlife Group areas, can also be found on the website, which is updated regularly.

SWT / SOS Save our Curlews Campaign

The identification of Curlew territories by the Community Wildlife Groups is the foundation of the campaign strategy – nests can only be protected once they are found. When local knowledge has located them sufficiently for a professional ornithologist to find several in a CWG area, 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 is a long-term project, so funding will be needed for many years. The appeal has been sent out to members, and will be again. If you want to donate, see www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/appeals

The UCCWG Curlew Action Plan will continue in 2019 and future years, as part of the wider campaign. Anyone who wants to help with locating Curlews next April and early May should contact Michelle Frater 01588 640909, email michellefrater@outlook.com If you see or hear a Curlew next spring, please tell Michelle immediately.

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. All these CWGs are active in the Shropshire Hills. The Three Parishes CWG, covering Weston Rhyn, St. Martin's and Gobowen, north of Oswestry, undertook a Bird Survey in 2017, and new CWGs, covering Oswestry south (Tanat to Perry) and Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence, were launched in 2018. A further Group, centred on Abdon (near Brown Clee) also started in 2018, the initiative of a local resident.

All these groups undertook Lapwing and Curlew surveys in 2018. Between them, they cover well over half of the County's breeding Curlews. They 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 The three CWGs in the north-west will join the website during the coming winter.

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Most importantly, thanks to all the people who undertook the Survey work, and contributed additional information. None of the work would have been possible without their effort and commitment. Their names are listed below

Bird Surveyors

Brian Angell (s)
Elizabeth & Steve Blackman (s)
Geoff Clarke (r)
Colin & Sheila Davies (r)
Chris Evans (s)
Michelle Frater (s)
Elizabeth Johnson (r)
Tim Lewis (r)
John Lyden (r)
Mark Measures (r)
Karen Mitchell (r)
Katie Steggles (s & r)
Richard Whateley (r)

(r) = Resident (Continuous) Recorder

(s) = Map Surveys

Plant Recorders

John Clayfield
Susan Gardner
Ros Gillard
Fiona Gomersall
John Lyden
Tess Pearson
Rob Rowe
Janet Watkin

Butterfly Recorders

Fiona Gomersall
John Lyden
Rob Rowe
Catherine Wellings

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Michelle Frater organised the bird surveys, liaised with the surveyors and kept them informed with an e-newsletter, and wrote the chapters on the work of the Bird Group. She also undertook additional Bird Survey work, particularly in determining the Curlew population.

Martyn Owen and Richard Moores of Biome Consulting found the Curlew nests, Tim Lewis put up and maintained the electric fences around them, and Tony Cross fitted BTO rings and radio tags to the chicks. Tim Lewis tracked them all.

Allan Bernau photographed the ringed Curlew at Llanfair Hill in 2017

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Ross Jones monitored the Barn Owl nest boxes, and provided the information for the Barn Owl Chapter in the report.

John Swift made and installed the Dipper and Woodland Bird nest boxes up until 2011. Vince Downs has made the nest boxes since then.

Tony Cross carried out the Dipper nest monitoring and ringing.

Fiona Gomersall compiled and drafted the Chapters and sections on the work and results of the Plant Group, and she also organised the surveys and the training.

Tess Pearson led the training session on Sedges, Rushes and Grasses

John Arnfield, who set up the website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk, and trained the members of the Group who manage the UCCWG pages: this role has now been taken on by Chris Bargman. Rob Harris posted the UCCWG material on the website

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Smith, L. *Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group Report* Annually since 2007

Smith, L. *Dippers in the River Teme Catchment* Annually since 2007

References and fieldguides used by the Plant Group for survey work include:-

- *The Wildflower Key* (second edition): Francis Rose & Clare O' Reilly
- *Wildflowers of Britain and Ireland*: Marjorie Blamey, Richard Fitter and Alastair Fitter
- *The Vegetative Key to the British Flora*: John Poland and Eric Clement
- *New Flora of the British Isles*: Third Edition Clive Stace
- *Sedges of the British Isles* Jermy, A.C., Simpson D.A., Foley M.J.Y., Porter M.S.
- *Guide to Grassland Plants 1*: FSC (Field Studies Council) publications
- *Guide to Moorland Plants* FSC Publications
- *Guide to Woodland Plants* FSC publications
- *Guide to Orchids* FSC publications

DISTRIBUTION

Paper copies of this Report are being distributed to the people listed above in the acknowledgements.

An electronic version of this Report, in .pdf format, will be supplied to the individuals and organisations listed below. Paper copies will be supplied to them on request.

Natural England

- Elisabeth Harris (Team Leader – Shropshire and Herefordshire), County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP
- Ceri Meehan (Natural England Lead Adviser responsible for the Clun area) Parkside Court, Hall Park Way, Telford, TF3 4LR
- Frances McCullagh (Ecologist, Midlands Land Management Team), Parkside Court, , Hall Park Way, Telford, TF3 4LR

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THE REPORT

The Group's Report is printed on re-cycled paper.

Copies can be downloaded from the website www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

Additional Copies (either paper or electronic .pdf files), or copies of any of the Reports since 2007, can be obtained from Leo Smith *Ornithological Surveys & Consultancy*; The Bryn, Castle Hill, All Stretton SY6 6JP (tel: 01694 720296, email leo@leosmith.org.uk)

CONCLUSION

The Group has covered the whole Upper Clun area with Bird and Plant Surveys since 2007, and knowledge of the numbers and distribution of target species is increasing. Butterfly Surveys have been carried out since 2010.

Some of the best grassland and wetland sites in the area, which contain good habitat for scarce Birds, Plants and Butterflies, have been identified. The Group has now started working with land owners to safeguard these sites. Most have been adopted as Local (County) Wildlife Sites.

The information we collected helped land owners apply for Environmental Stewardship Higher Level Scheme agreements, and helped Natural England target these agreements for maximum benefit for wildlife in our area. Most of the best wildlife habitat in the area has been safeguarded through HLS Agreements that have 10 years to run, mainly from 2013 or 2014.

We have also worked with the local community, land owners, and the relevant Statutory and Voluntary Organisations, to raise awareness of conservation issues and influence decision-making bodies.

We have become increasingly involved in the land management issues which affect the water quality in the River Clun and its tributaries.

Planned survey work in 2019 will build on this knowledge, particularly in the wetlands, and enable us to extend the action to promote conservation of our target species and their habitats.

We will continue to implement our Curlew Action Plan, to try and save Curlew from local extinction as a breeding species, and work as part of the SWT / SOS "Save our Curlews" campaign.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Bird Survey Recording Instructions 2018

Appendix 2. Bird Survey Results

- i) Curlew and Lapwing**
- ii) Other Target Bird Species, and Wetland Surveys**
- iii) Curlew, Reed Bunting, & Other Target Species: Explanatory Note to the Maps**

Appendix 3. Plant Group – Sites Surveyed 2018

Appendix 4. Plant Survey - Target Indicator Species (Axiophytes)

Appendix 5. Small Pearl-bordered Butterfly Records 2018

Annexe 1: The Management Committee

Appendix 1. Bird Survey Recording Instructions 2017

The maps and recording instructions for the Survey ("Operation Curlew, plus Lapwing & Other Target Species") have not changed since 2011, and are not reproduced here.

The survey is organised and administered via email, and all surveyors are sent reminders at key stages in the season, the first in late March.

Some returns are marked on survey maps, but most come from surveyors via email, as and when they have observations to report. This is particularly useful to collect all the observations of recorders who live in the area and hear Curlews frequently.

Appendix 2: Bird Survey Results

i) Curlew and Lapwing

There were no reports of Lapwings, so there is no Table of Lapwing Survey Results.

The Curlew Results in Table A2.1, together with the results of follow-up fieldwork and visits to local farmers and residents, and a few casual records, have been used to produce Map 1 (the approximate location of Curlew Territories) in the main body of the Report.

ii) Other Target Bird Species, and Wetland Surveys

Members have been asked to record Other Target Species since 2007. The list has been revised occasionally, and the current list is included in the *BIRDS OF THE "WETLANDS"* section in the Bird Surveys Chapter in the main body of the Report.

By the end of 2009 it became apparent that many of the Target Species were restricted to "wetlands" (mires, flushes and damp pasture) in the area. The best wetland sites were therefore targeted in 2010 and 2011, and were revisited from 2012 onwards only where incidental to other fieldwork. The results were shown on the *Curlew, Reed Bunting, & Other Target Species* maps for 2007-10, and for 2011, reproduced in the 2011 Report, while the similar map for subsequent years appeared in the relevant report. That for 2018 is on the page after next.

Because priority was given to recording Curlew, surveyors were not asked to record Other Target Species this year, although some contributed records voluntarily. This year's records are shown on Map A2.1. *Curlew, Reed Bunting, & Other Target Species 2015*. The map has been produced on the same basis as those in previous reports.

iii) Curlew, Reed Bunting, & Other Target Species: Explanatory Note to the Maps

The "Other Species" are Snipe, Cuckoo, Skylark, Meadow Pipit, Stonechat, Linnet and Yellowhammer

Curlew, Reed Bunting and Kestrel are usually represented by one lozenge per record, although in some cases only representative Curlew records are shown, as some resident recorders were seeing or hearing them almost daily at some stages of the season. The presence of the other species is marked by a single lozenge which may represent multiple records.

At sites where Curlew records came mainly from local residents, no attempt may have been made to record the Other Target Species. These species will therefore be under-represented on the Map.

Fewer visits were made to some sites than others; this too will have affected the relative volume of records.

Table A2. 1. Results of Curlew Survey

UPPER CLUN CURLEW SURVEYS 2018

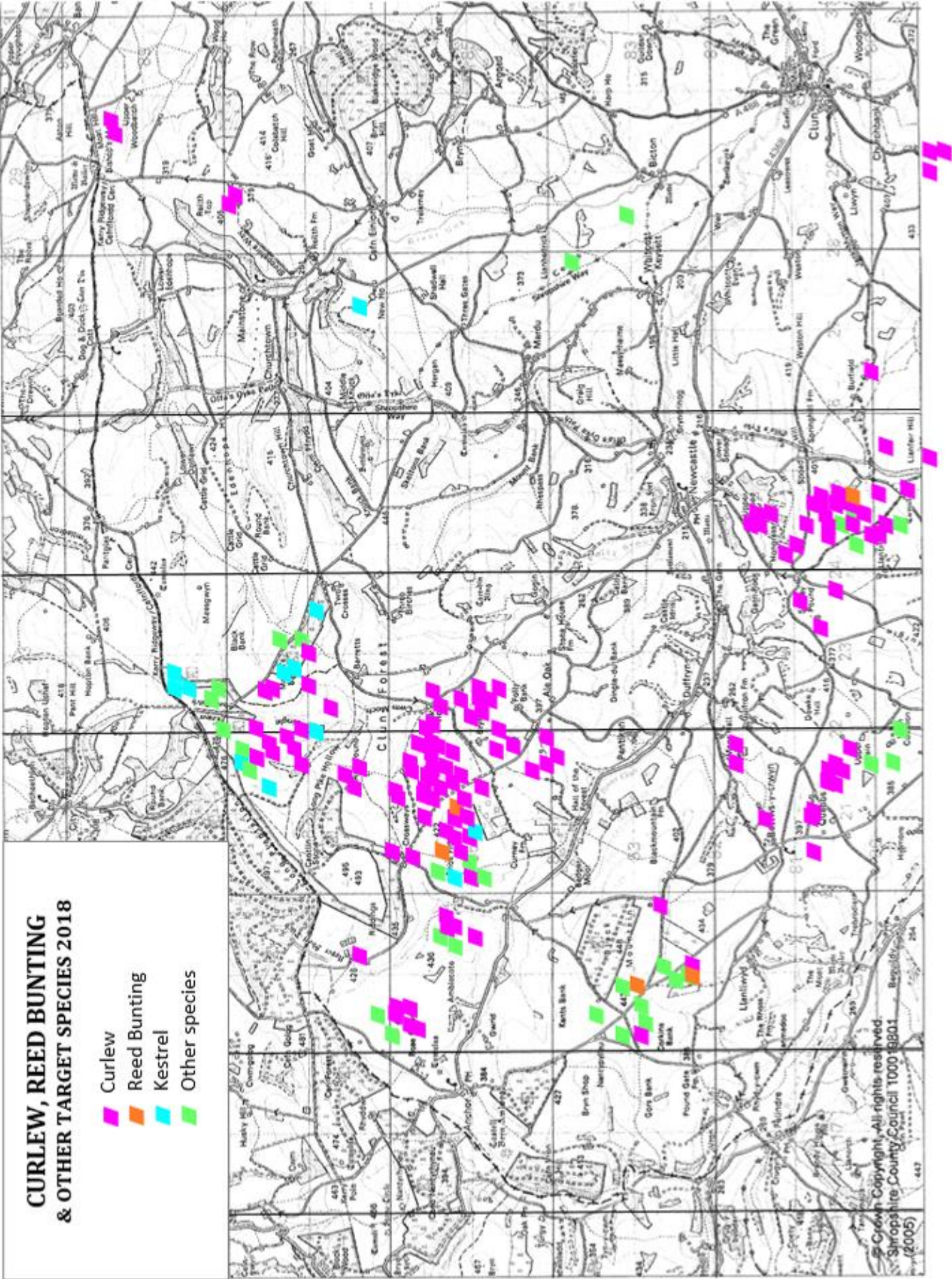
Site name	Tetrad	Observer	Status	Comment
Amblecote	SO18X/Y	Colin & Sheila Davies (r)	(NY)	Territorial pair; regular activity until well into June suggested hatched young
Riddings	SO18X	C & S Davies (r) J Lyden (r)	T	Territorial pair, either laid early and failed or moved away; site vacant by end April
Cwm Moch	SO28D	Elizabeth Johnson (r)	T	Territorial behaviour from early April to mid-May; possibly nested but no evidence of young
Rhos Fiddle	SO28C	Chris Evans (s) John Lyden (r)	NY	Nest found; 4 chicks ringed & radio-tagged; 2 predated, 2 contact lost by late June; no observations since
Bicton Hill	SO28C	Katie Steggles (s & r)	NY	Nest found; 1 egg failed, 3 chicks ringed & radio-tagged; 1 predated, 2 contact lost by late June; activity ceased early July
Folly Bank area	SO28C/H	Tim Lewis (r) Karen Mitchell (r)	(NY)	Activity through season, exact location unknown; continuation into June suggested hatched young
Quabbs	SO28A	R Whately (r) J Crompton (r)	(NY)	Territorial activity to late June suggested hatched young, but then ceased
Llanfairwaterdine Turbary	SO28K	B Angell (s) E&S Blackman (s)	NY	Nest found; two eggs failed to hatch, two chicks hatched but with congenital deformities
Stoney Pound area	SO27P	B Angell (s) G Clarke (r)	(NY)	Territorial behaviour end March to late June, continuing after failure of the Llanfairwaterdine Turbary nest, suggested hatched young, exact location unknown

(s) map surveys

(r) resident recorder

There were 14 further records from Black Mountain, Bishops Moat, Colebatch Hill, Llanfair Hill & Pen-y-Wern. Most were probably passing through, but the last two sites may hold breeding pairs.

Map A2. 1. Approximate location of Curlew and Other Target Bird Species 2017



Appendix 3 Plant Group – Sites Surveyed 2018

Site name	Site Code	Grid Reference	Area Surveyed (ha)	Habitat 1	Condition	Habitat 2	Condition	No. of axiophytes (whole site - last 6 years)
Anchor (part)	SO18.02	SO178852	4.4	Rush pasture	good	Acid grassland	no change	45
Riddings, Anchor	SO18.06	SO192859	0.6	Acid grassland	no change			53
Curney Plantation	SO28.06	SO210848	9.4	Alder carr	good	Rush pasture & purple moorgrass	Improving	24
Stoney Pound	SO28.11	SO240802	24.7	Wet mesotrophic grassland	declining	Acid grassland	declining	44
Mount Valley	SO28.16	SO257848	15	Semi-natural woodland	good	Species-rich grassland and rush pastures	good	56
Bettws Pool	SO28.24	SO204813	1.4	Wet woodland	good	Wet mesotrophic grassland	good	22
Llanfairwaterdine Turbary	SO28.29	SO245803	16.5	Acid grassland	good	Rush pasture & purple moorgrass	good	53
Cwm Frydd (west)	SO28.33	SO249867	14.8	Acid grassland & heath	good	Mesotrophic grassland	good	38
Cwm Frydd (east)	SO28.33	SO253871	5.5	Acid grassland	good			36
Bettws Pool Meadows	SO28.43	SO201814	3	Species-rich meadows	good	Semi-improved grassland	no change	12
Maes y Garn	SO28.44	SO220850	2.84	Acid grassland	good	Semi-improved grassland	no change	10

Appendix 4. Target Plant Indicator Species in the Upper Clun (The "Axiophytes")

Rush Pastures

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Achillea ptarmica</i>	Sheezewort
<i>Anagallis tenella</i>	Bog Pimpernel
<i>Briza media</i>	Quaking Grass
<i>Carex curta</i>	White Sedge
<i>Carex demissa</i>	Common Yellow Sedge
<i>Carex echinata</i>	Star Sedge
<i>Carex hostiana</i>	Tawny Sedge
<i>Carex panicea</i>	Carnation Sedge
<i>Carex pilulifera</i>	Pill Sedge
<i>Carex pulicaris</i>	Flea Sedge
<i>Comarum palustre</i>	Marsh Cinquefoil
<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i>	Early Marsh-orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza maculata</i>	Heath Spotted-orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza purpurella</i>	Northern Marsh-orchid
<i>Dryopteris carthusiana</i>	Narrow Buckler-fern
<i>Epilobium palustre</i>	Marsh Willowherb
<i>Equisetum sylvaticum</i>	Wood Horsetail
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	Cross-leaved Heath
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	Common Cottongrass
<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	Hare's-tail Cottongrass
<i>Galium uliginosum</i>	Fen Bedstraw
<i>Isolepis setacea</i>	Bristle Club-rush
<i>Juncus foliosus</i>	Leafy Rush
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	Bogbean
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	Purple Moor-grass
<i>Myosotis secunda</i>	Creeping Forget-me-not
<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>	Bog Asphodel
<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	Lousewort
<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Common Butterwort
<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	Heath Milkwort
<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>	Common Fleabane
<i>Scutellaria minor</i>	Lesser Skullcap
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Devil's-bit Scabious
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	Deergrass
<i>Triglochin palustre</i>	Marsh Arrowgrass
<i>Valeriana dioica</i>	Marsh Valerian
<i>Veronica catenata</i>	Pink Water-speedwell
<i>Veronica scutellata</i>	Marsh Speedwell
<i>Viola palustris</i>	Marsh Violet

Blanket Bog

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Anagallis tenella</i>	Bog Pimpernel
<i>Apium inundatum</i>	Lesser Marshwort
<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	Heather
<i>Carex demissa</i>	Common Yellow Sedge
<i>Carex dioica</i>	Dioecious Sedge
<i>Carex echinata</i>	Star Sedge
<i>Carex laevigata</i>	Smooth-stalked Sedge
<i>Carex pilulifera</i>	Pill Sedge
<i>Carex pulicaris</i>	Flea Sedge
<i>Dactylorhiza incarnata</i>	Early Marsh-orchid
<i>Dactylorhiza purpurella</i>	Northern Marsh-orchid
<i>Drosera rotundifolia</i>	Round-leaved Sundew
<i>Eleocharis multicaulis</i>	Many-stalked Spike-rush
<i>Eleocharis quinqueflora</i>	Few-flowered Spike-rush
<i>Erica tetralix</i>	Cross-leaved Heath
<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	Common Cottongrass
<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	Hare's-tail Cottongrass
<i>Hypericum elodes</i>	Marsh St. John's-wort
<i>Isolepis setacea</i>	Bristle Club-rush
<i>Juncus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Rush
<i>Juncus foliosus</i>	Leafy Rush
<i>Lythrum portula</i>	Water Purslane
<i>Melampyrum pratense</i>	Common Cow-wheat
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	Bogbean
<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	Purple Moor-grass
<i>Myosotis secunda</i>	Creeping Forget-me-not
<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>	Bog Asphodel
<i>Pedicularis palustris</i>	Marsh Lousewort
<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	Lousewort
<i>Pinguicula vulgaris</i>	Common Butterwort
<i>Potamogeton polygonifolius</i>	Bog Pondweed
<i>Ranunculus omiophyllus</i>	Round-leaved Crowfoot
<i>Scutellaria minor</i>	Lesser Skullcap
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	Deergrass
<i>Valeriana dioica</i>	Marsh Valerian
<i>Veronica scutellata</i>	Marsh Speedwell
<i>Viola palustris</i>	Marsh Violet

Species-rich Meadows

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Alchemilla filicaulis</i>	a lady's-mantle
<i>Ananacampsis morio</i>	Green-winged Orchid
<i>Betonica officinalis</i>	Betony
<i>Botrychium lunaria</i>	Moonwort
<i>Briza media</i>	Quaking-grass
<i>Carex caryophyllaea</i>	Spring Sedge
<i>Carex pallescens</i>	Pale Sedge
<i>Carex panicea</i>	Carnation Sedge
<i>Carex spicata</i>	Spiked Sedge
<i>Colchicum autumnale</i>	Meadow Saffron
<i>Euphrasia officinalis</i> agg.	Eyebright
<i>Filipendula vulgaris</i>	Dropwort
<i>Genista tinctoria</i>	Dyer's Greenweed
<i>Linum catharticum</i>	Fairy Flax
<i>Myosotis discolor</i>	Changing Forget-me-not
<i>Myosotis ramosissima</i>	Early Forget-me-not
<i>Neottia ovata</i>	Common Twayblade
<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i>	Adder's-tongue
<i>Pimpinella saxifraga</i>	Burnet-saxifrage
<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	Yellow-rattle
<i>Serratula tinctoria</i>	Saw-wort
<i>Silau silaus</i>	Pepper-saxifrage
<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	Devil's-bit-Scabious
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	Yellow Oat-grass

Appendix 5: Small Pearl bordered Fritillary Butterfly Surveys 2018

Date	29/5/18	03/06/18	10/06/18	24/6/18	31/7/18	7/8/18
Recorder	JL	RR	RR	FG	FG/CW	FG
Barretts West (Mason's Bank West)	10	30				
Ditch Dingle (Cwm Moch)						
Pant-y-Lidan		14				
Black Mountain 1			0			0
Black Mountain 2			0			0
Black Mountain 3			0			0
Rhos Fiddle SE			3			
Rhos Fiddle N			0			
Corkins Bank						0
Llanfair Hill						
Cwm Burholes						
The Riddings						
Gors Bank (Cefn Vron)				3		
Gors Bank (Bryn Shop)			38			
Gors Bank (Pound Gate)					0	
Gors Bank (Walkmill)			3			
Dowke Hill						

Key: FG = Fiona Gomersall, JL = John Lyden, CW = Catherine Wellings RR = Rob Rowe

Annexe 1. The Management Committee

Membership

The following people were elected at the Annual Meeting in November 2017

- Leo Smith (Chair)
- Jacky Harrison (Secretary)
- Mervin Mullard (Treasurer)
- Fiona Gomersall (Plant Recorder)
- Rob Rowe
- Joy Greenall
- Rob Harris
- John Lyden
- Katie Steggles
- Trevor Wheeler
- Marie Zenick (Bird Group rep)

Karen Mitchell volunteered to be Publicity Officer, and was co-opted onto the Committee.

Fiona Gomersall also represents the local Branch of the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, and Trevor Wheeler also represents the Clun Forest *Land, Life and Livelihoods* project Steering Group.

The Committee, and the Bird and Plant Group, have the support of Professional Advisers

- Fiona Gomersall (Shropshire Wildlife Trust) actively supports and co-ordinates the Plant Group
- Leo Smith actively supports and helps co-ordinate the Management Committee and the Bird Group

Meetings

The Committee has met once since the last Annual Public Meeting, on 15 October 2018. Much of the meeting was concerned with speakers and arrangements for the Annual Public Meeting.

The Group is represented on the Advisory Committee to the Land, Life and Livelihoods Facilitation Fund project by Leo Smith, Jacky Harrison and Fiona Gomersall. Rob Harris and Trevor Wheeler are also involved through their work with LLL, and Joy Greenall is facilitator. The project aims to encourage farmers largely on the high ground in the area to work together to provide “joined up management” to improve key upland habitats.

Otherwise, most of the practical work of the Group is carried out by the Bird and Plant Groups, and the organisers report to, and are overseen by, the Management Committee. In practice this means that it is not necessary to have frequent meetings of the Committee.

Most of the issues discussed at Committee meetings relate to the conduct and results of surveys, mailings to members, publicity and getting more people involved, engaging with farmers and landowners, relations with Land Life and Livelihoods and the Clun & Bishop’s Castle SWT branch, Conservation Action & *Wildlife Habitats & Landscape* Policy, the increasing attention being paid to land management issues in the whole catchment, as they affect the water quality in the river, and other matters which are fully described in this Report.

Minutes of Committee meetings have been kept, and can be obtained from the Secretary.

Funding and Bank Account

The Group had a Bank Account with HSBC in Bishop’s Castle, the only branch of any bank convenient for the area.

Each cheque requires two signatures from four nominated Committee members: the current Officers, and Rob Rowe

Up until 2011, all the costs of the Group were met through various grants to Leo Smith. From October 2011 to June 2013, all costs were met by the LEADER Community Wildlife Groups Project, administered by the Shropshire Hills AONB and part financed by the European Union Regional Development Fund, with the National Trust as Banker. These grants were listed in the Acknowledgements in the various Reports, and all of them have been accounted for to the funding body.

Most grants are for the financial year ending 31st March, so the Constitution has set the financial year as 1st April – 31st March, and accounts will be audited accordingly.

Financial Report and Accounts

In 2017-18 the only income was receipts from the 2017 Annual meeting. Expenditure was hire of hall and refreshments for the meeting, and expenses for Group mailings (mainly postage), a stall at Newcastle Show, and UCCWG's share of the cost for the website.

Income and Expenditure for 2017-18

Last year's report noted Expenditure on stamps of £40.32, and a balance of £369.61 on 26 October 2017. Transactions since then are summarised in the table below.

OPENING BALANCE	31/10/17	369.61
<u>INCOME</u>		
DRAW AGM	117.00	
FOOD	AGM	66.10
TOTAL INCOME		<u>183.10</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
AGM HALL HIRE	32.00	
POSTAGE STAMPS	42.00	
WEBSITE	15.00	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		<u>89.00</u>
CLOSING BALANCE	31/03/18	463.71
OPENING BALANCE	01/04/18	463.71
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
WEBSITE	12.00	
<u>INCOME</u>		
	0.00	
CLOSING BALANCE	02/11/2018	451.71

Audited by Cath Iandles (AONB Community Officer) 2/11/18

Members

Any volunteers for membership of the Committee will be very welcome.

All the current Committee members are willing to stand for re-election. Existing and new members are all subject to election at the Public Meeting

Leo Smith (Chair)
Mervin Mullard (Treasurer)
November 2018