



Shropshire Ornithological Society

Save our Curlews

Campaign & Appeal



The Birds of Shropshire estimated that the Curlew population declined by 77% between 1990 and 2010, down to around only 160 pairs, and had disappeared from 62% of the area they occupied in 1990. They have continued to decline since, down to below 120 pairs. At the current rate of loss, the population will halve in 12 years, and virtually disappear within 25. There is a real danger that Curlew will become extinct in the County, unless urgent and effective action is taken to save them.

Shropshire Ornithological Society 2005 (SOS 2005)* has committed to support a long-term County-wide *Save our Curlews* Campaign, by providing funding for three years, promoting an Appeal to SOS and Community Wildlife Group (CWG) members, and the general public, hosting banking facilities, and supporting grant applications and other funding requests. The Campaign will continue to undertake nest finding, protecting nests with electric fencing, and radio-tagging and tracking chicks to find out how they use the landscape, and what happens to them. Understanding the reasons for low levels of chick survival is the key to an effective conservation plan.

Campaign work also involves ten independent CWGs from across the County, over 300 people who are monitoring about three-quarters of the County Curlew population.

In 2021 project work was carried out in the Upper Clun, Clee Hill and Strettons CWG areas. Sixteen nests were found, 12 were fenced, and 21 chicks were radio-tagged and tracked. Only one fledged; all the others were predated. Average survival was only 5.5 days, a small fraction of the 35 days each chick needs to fledge. We obtained similar results in 2018 and 2019.

This ground-breaking work will continue in 2022, but more funds are needed to carry it out. It is also intended to spread this vital conservation work to CWG areas in other parts of the County.

The results are sent to the South of England Curlew Forum, the UK and Ireland Curlew Action Group and the newly-launched Curlew Recovery Partnership, so the work is an integral part of the case to Government for effective Curlew conservation measures. These organisations are calling for further research into the causes of the decline, but our work clearly shows that predation is now the main cause. We must continue to produce the evidence and call for immediate action to stop it.

You can read more about what has been done since 2018 on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/. This describes our detailed results and future plans, along with the overwhelming evidence that predation by foxes and other predators is the main cause of Curlew's continuing decline. It is clear that the annual release of millions of pheasants for shooting, only a third of which are actually shot, results in an over-abundant food supply which maintains the numbers of the Curlew's main predators well above naturally sustainable levels.

Donations to the Appeal are vital, both to help pay for the work, and because they demonstrate to potential funders the commitment of local people to saving Shropshire's Curlews. You can donate by sending a cheque, a bank standing order, an internet banking or a bank transfer payment (see details overleaf). Please note that it is essential that whilst donations should be made out to Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS) they should be clearly marked "Curlew Appeal." If you are a UK taxpayer, you can increase the value of your donation by 25% if you sign and send in the Gift Aid certificate (also overleaf), so please do so.

* SOS 2005 is the not-for-profit limited company created to handle SOS's financial and property affairs.

If, like us, you think that Shropshire will be a much poorer place without Curlews, please support the Appeal

For further information, please contact Leo Smith
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