

Clee Hill



*Community
Wildlife
Group*

*Bird Group
Report
2021*



Bird Group Report 2021

CONTENTS

Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group	1
Curlew, Lapwing and Other Birds Survey	2
Introduction	2
Curlew	3
Survey results	3
Curlew Population Change 2012 – 21	5
Curlew Population Trend.....	7
Curlews in the Area Extension	8
Colour-ringing.....	8
Recording Curlew Nest Sites.....	9
Curlews adjacent to the Clee Hill area.....	9
Lapwing	10
Anecdotal Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew	11
Kestrel	11
Cuckoo	14
Red Kite	15
Other Target Species	16
Decline of Lapwing and Curlew	17
Comparison of CWG Bird Survey Results with the Shropshire Bird Atlas 2008-13	18
Work with Individual Farmers	19
Recommendations	19
Barn Owl Nest Box Scheme	20
Other Nest Boxes	20
Bird Walks	21
Curlew Conservation	21
Other Community Wildlife Groups	21
The SOS Save our Curlews Campaign and Nest Finding and Protection Project	22
Curlews and Pheasant Release	23
Use of CWG Survey Results	24
Acknowledgements	24
References	25
Report	25
Summary 2021	26
Plans for 2022	26
Appendix 1. Map of the Original Survey Area, showing Square Boundaries	28
Appendix 2. Extension to Area (2019), and all Curlew Observations 2021	28
Appendix 3. All Survey Results	30

CLEE HILL COMMUNITY WILDLIFE GROUP

The Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group was launched at a well-attended public meeting at the end of February 2012. It was one of three new Community Wildlife Groups promoted by a European Union LEADER project, delivered by the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership.

The group is centred on the open hill land of Titterstone Clee and Clee Hill Common, extending approximately as far as Knowlegate and Knowbury to the south, Bitterley to the west, Cleedownton and Bromdon to the north, and Catherton Common and Doddington to the east.

There have been several different wildlife survey groups, co-ordinated by the committee and involving well over 100 volunteers. A Bird Survey has been carried out each year since 2012. Further information about the Group and its activities can be found on the relevant pages of the Community Wildlife Groups collective website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

CURLEW, LAPWING AND OTHER BIRDS SURVEY

Introduction

A bird survey has been carried out in the Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group (CHCWG) area shown in Appendix 1 since 2012. It is intended to repeat the survey annually, to monitor long-term population trends for key species, as well as establish the current population and distribution.

The aim is to locate the territories of breeding pairs of Lapwing and Curlew, and record behaviour, to estimate the population. No attempt is made to locate nests. Although the survey concentrates on the two main target species, and their habitats, surveyors are asked to also record on their maps any of 22 other target species seen, if they were confident that they could do so.

The area has been divided up into 26 tetrads (2x2 kilometre squares, each made up of four of the one-kilometre squares shown on Ordnance Survey maps). These tetrads, and their reference code, are shown on the map in Appendix 1 (The prefix SO (defining the 100 km square on the OS National Grid) has been omitted, as this is common to all the squares in the area).

The survey consists of three visits to each of these tetrads, once during each of three specified two-week periods, around 1st April, 1st May and mid-June. with visits concentrating on habitats where the main target species might be found, and lasting around three hours each. Surveyors were provided with simple survey instructions, a large-scale map of their tetrad(s), and a casual records map covering the whole area, as necessary, to record their observations. The surveys are conducted from Public Rights of Way, unless individual surveyors obtain landowners permission to leave them. A practical fieldwork training meeting was held for those that wanted one.

In 2020, coverage was limited due to Government restrictions to limit the spread of coronavirus. However, particular efforts were made to continue to record Curlews, as “the Curlew situation is critical, with a 77% decline between 1990 and 2010, and a further decline since [in Shropshire]. There are probably only 120 pairs left in the whole of the County now, and we haven’t got long to save them from local extinction. We can’t afford a total loss of data on their population and distribution in 2020”. Surveyors were requested to concentrate on Lapwing, Curlew and Kestrel, and any potential Red Kite breeding sites. Coverage of Curlew was probably better than usual, with people exercising from home, but coverage of Lapwing was less good than usual.

Usually, a Bird Group meeting is held in March, to present the results of the previous year’s survey, and explain to new participants how to carry out the survey. However, it was not possible to hold a meeting in 2021, as Covid19 restrictions were still in place. Therefore, squares were allocated to participants from previous years, or volunteers who responded to early publicity, and new participants were briefed by email. A practical fieldwork training meeting was held for those that want one, but this was limited to five new participants because of the Covid19 “Rule of Six” restriction.

Participation in 2021 was similar to what was achieved in earlier years, and 25 members spent over 200 hours on the survey. Recording of the Other Target Species resumed. Only two of the survey squares that are usually surveyed received no coverage.

In addition, four tetrads to the west were added to the survey area in 2019, as they were known to also hold breeding Curlews. These tetrads (reference code 58A, F, G and K) are shown in the map in Appendix 3. These four squares were surveyed again in 2020 and 2021.

Curlew



Curlew is the “most pressing bird conservation priority in the UK” (Brown *et al*, *British Birds* 2015), because the UK has an estimated 28% of the European, and 19-27% of the world population and is on the national *Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern 4* (Eaton *et al*, *British Birds* 2015), because of a decline of 62% in the UK between 1969 and 2014. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) has found a 48% decline in the UK and a 31% decline in England over the 23-year period 1995-2018.

In Shropshire, it declined from about 700 breeding pairs in 1990 to 160 in 2010 (a loss

of 77%), and it disappeared from 62% of the Atlas survey squares (tetrads) between 1985-90 and 2008-13. The decline has continued, and there were probably only 120 pairs left in the whole of the County in 2019. This is almost 30% of the total in southern England (*Saving England's lowland Eurasian Curlews* Colwell *et al* *British Birds* 2020). At the current rate of decline, the County population will halve in about 13 years, and become virtually extinct in 25. Curlew is on the *Red List of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*, recently published by Shropshire Ornithological Society.

Survey results

The location of all Curlews found during the surveys, or reported on Casual Record maps or by email, is shown on the map below.

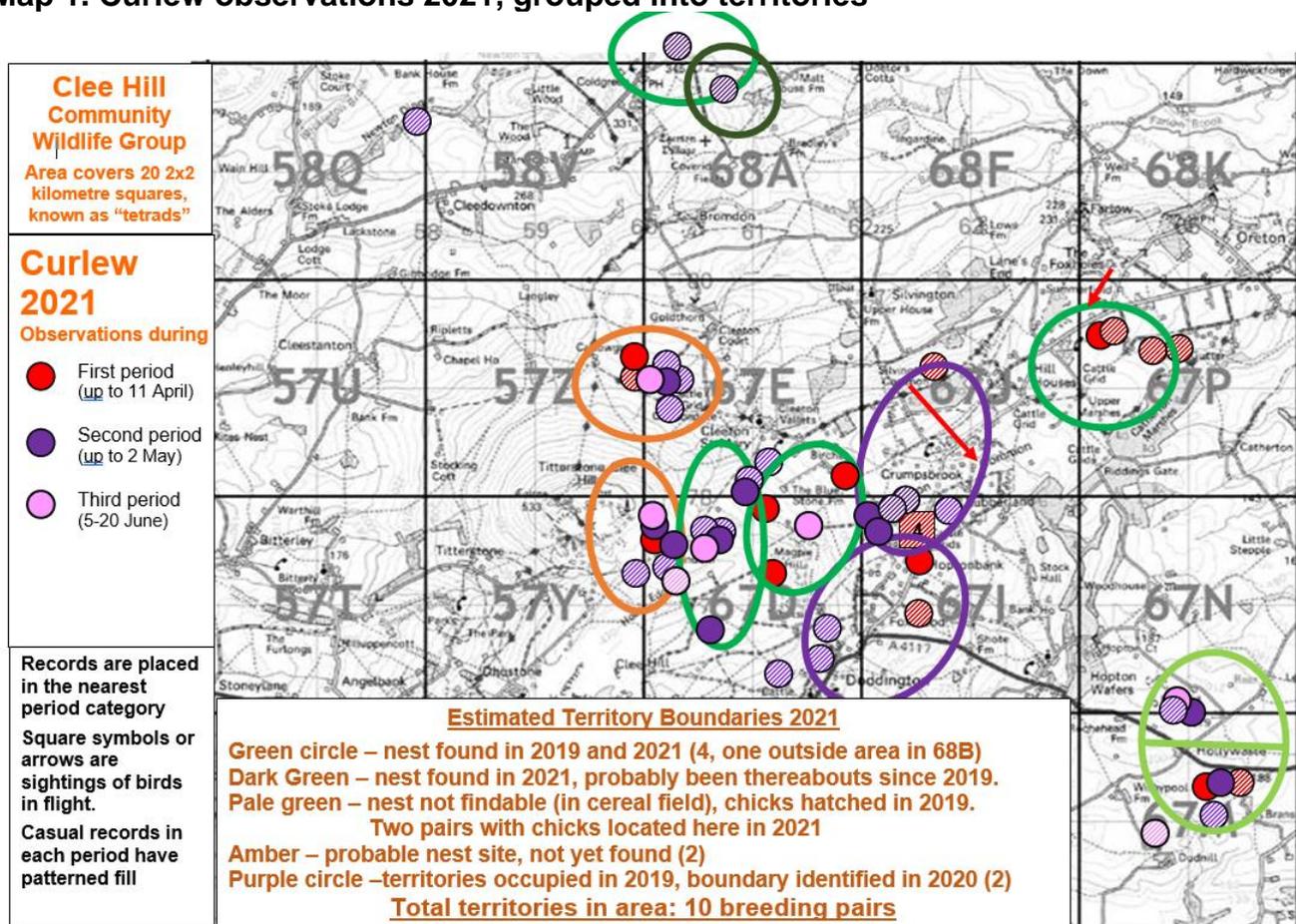
The methodology requires observations of a pair together, or a territorial display, or a single bird on two of the three surveys, to confirm a territory. However, Curlews often have large territories, and may be seen a kilometre or more from their nest site. Curlews seen up until early April (including during the first survey) may be passing through on their way to breeding sites elsewhere. Nesting does not usually occur until late April or early May. Therefore, interpretation of the observations is sometimes difficult, unless singing birds are seen or heard concurrently. If that does not happen, the methodology requires the analysis to produce the lowest population estimate consistent with the records.

In addition, the Curlew records in 2021 from the four tetrads to the west that were added to the survey area in 2019 are shown in the map in Appendix 3.

The locations of several pairs were established more accurately than usual in 2020, partly from casual records sent by people working from, or exercising near, home, and partly by square surveyors getting to know their squares better, and following up earlier sightings. These observations clarified one of the boundaries drawn on the 2019 territory map and allowed the grouping of other observations into another territory (this didn't affect the 2019 population estimate, but located the territory more accurately).

It will be seen that all last year's territories were re-occupied, and the notional territory boundaries have not been adjusted, but two pairs were found near Hollywaste, where there were two Curlew territories in the earlier years of the survey, but only one pair between 2016 and 2020, and another pair was located in 68A, near the long-standing territory in 68B, just outside the area. Observations of the site in 68B suggest this pair may have been in 68A since 2019, but the square has not been well-surveyed in recent years.

Map 1. Curlew observations 2021, grouped into territories



Comparison of the 2021 distribution with that in previous years is described in the next section of the report.

The results from the first two survey periods were passed on to the nest finders working on the SOS Save our Curlews campaign project (see p.21). Only one of these nests produced hatched young, but they did not survive long.

Efforts were made to establish the outcome of the other nests. Both pairs near Hollywaste produced chicks, but the pairs disappeared well before there was time for the young to have fledged. Another pair in 67D produced chicks, but they too did not survive for very long. No evidence was found that the other two pairs, in 67D and 67E, produced any chicks.

Curlews with chicks are usually very active and noisy while safeguarding them, but while there are several observations from the final survey period on the map above, none were of behaviour that suggested the presence of young.

Therefore, it is believed that no young Curlews fledged in the Clee Hill area in 2021.

Breeding success in the area is undoubtedly very poor, and the only known fledged young, in 2016 and again in 2017 were protected from mammalian predation by being inside a rabbit (and hence fox and badger) proof fence at a tree nursery, but this pair failed in 2018, and nested outside the tree nursery fence in 2019 and 2020, on Catherton Marshes. However, the Curlew Conservation Project (see below) reported that at least one, probably two, chicks from the same brood in a territory on Random Hill fledged in 2018, and a brood of three from the same territory all fledged in 2019. Apart from these 6-7 fledged young, there is no evidence that any other young have fledged in the survey area since 2012. This fledging rate of less than one per year is nowhere near enough to sustain the population.

From the above observations and analysis, it is estimated that the Curlew population in the core area of twenty tetrads is 10 breeding pairs, with another pair again located in the adjacent tetrad 68B. This is two more than the estimate of 8 in 2020.

Curlew Population Change 2012 – 21

In general, Curlews are site faithful, and return to the same nesting area, often the same field, for as long as the pair are alive. One year old birds spend their first summer on their wintering grounds, and return to their natal area to breed when they are two. New pairs have to establish a territory, but are likely to be faithful to it subsequently.

They are long-lived, often living to 20 years old or more, but the population is falling nationally and locally because not enough young birds fledge and reach breeding age to replace the older ones dying off.

As well as the pairs breeding in the area, up to three, possibly four, pairs have nested just outside it, but one or both of the birds in each of these pairs have sometimes been recorded on our surveys.

In the light of this knowledge, the distribution maps included in all the Group's reports in the ten years from the launch in 2012, have been reviewed and compared. Interpretation has been helped by the observations of several members of the Group who live near where some pairs, and interactions between pairs, have been seen frequently over the years.

The results are as follows:-

57T – occasional records of a single bird recorded in 2015, and in each of the three earlier years, in 57T, with no evidence of breeding, suggests this is part of an additional territory of a pair believed to have nested outside the area, to the west (probably in 57N), but the absence of records since suggest it is no longer there, although 57T was not actually surveyed in the four years 2018-21.

57U – found in three years up until 2014. The square was not surveyed in 2015, and a pair was found on the first survey in 2016 but not seen again, and no evidence of breeding was found. A calling bird was heard twice in 2017, but the square was not surveyed in 2018-21. The status of this territory is uncertain, but, in view of the 2017 records it has been counted as still present.

58Q – present in the northern part of the square every year up until 2015, but not in 2016 or 2017. One was heard twice in the square by local residents in 2018, and seen three times by them in 2019, but if there was a nest in this square, it would have almost certainly have been heard much more frequently. It is therefore shown on the territories map as “lost in 2016”. The sporadic records since then are probably due to foraging birds from the north. No Curlews were observed in this square in 2020 or 2021.

57Y – two pairs nested regularly for many years until 2014, when the fields they used were grazed. None have been recorded in the square since, apart from in the early survey period, when birds are returning to, and passing through, the area.

57Z – a pair present every year, but it probably breeds on the farm grassland in 67E.

58V and 68A – a pair nest just outside the area, to the north of 68A at a known site in 68B. They have been there many years, including the whole of the period 2012-21. Records in these two squares in previous years, but not in 2017-20, were probably due to the pair in 68B. Curlews had not been seen in these two squares on surveys after April, and the sporadic records over the years are likely to represent the territory boundary between the pair in 68B, and the pairs to the south. However, a nest was found by the farmer in 68A in 2021. With the advantage of hindsight, it is possible that this pair has been present since 2019.

67D, 67E, 67I and 67J – these four squares have been the regular hotspot. In the early years it was not possible to determine the exact number of pairs, and the cluster of records was variously interpreted as 3-5 or 4-5 pairs. However, in 2015, concurrent observations proved five pairs. The pair on Magpie Hill, whose nest with four eggs was found in 2012, were not there in 2016, but were present again from 2017. However, in 2017 there was a pair on Random Hill, on the border of 67D and 57Y, which defended a nest site against Buzzard and Crow, suggesting chicks were present. Conversely, the pair at Cleetongate, present every year up until 2016, was not found in 2017 or subsequently, leaving four pairs again. There were four again, perhaps with a fifth, in the area in 2018, but observations in 2020, and re-interpretation of the 2019 records, suggests two pairs were present in 67I and J in both those years. The 2018 report noted possible additional pairs in those two areas.

67M and 67N – there were two pairs near the Hollywaste crossroads in the early years, and nests of both were found in 2013. Records from 2014 and 2015 indicate 1 – 2 pairs there, but there has apparently been only one in 2016 and each subsequent year. Records from Little Stepple (67N) in 2015, and from further south between there and Hollywaste in 2016, 2017 and 2018, may have been foraging from a territory to the east, or may have been foraging from the territory near Hollywaste. There were no similar records in 2019. In 2020, a small group of 7 Curlews were seen in fields to the east of 67N on 6 June. While this will have been a post-breeding flock, the local farmer reported that he has seen Curlews in the area most years, so this may be the origin of records from 67N in previous years. Two broods of chicks were observed at the same time at different sites around Hollywaste in 2021, indicating that there was a second pair there again.

67P – the pair in the north-west of the square, near Cramer Gutter, were present every year up until 2018, and they fledged young in 2014 (2) and 2016 (1). The pair to the south of them in this square were first present in 2015, and were also there in 2016, when the northern pair produced one fledged young, while the nest of the new pair was found predated (proof that there were two pairs). The southern pair was again present in 2017, but not 2018, when two pairs interacted at the site, then one flew off towards Cramer Gutter, and the other towards Hollywaste. The arrival of the new pair in 2015 resulted in many more observations in 67P, and 68F and 68K that year, and more than in any previous year. There was only one pair again in 2019, and their nest was found on Catherton Marshes, but they were probably the pair that nested in the tree nursery in previous years, as they took their chicks there after hatching. The tree nursery site was not usual habitat, and became steadily less suitable over the years as the trees became established and then grew taller. As Curlews are site faithful, it is likely that the trees were planted on a field where the Curlews had nested regularly for many years, but finally became too tall in 2019. Again, there was only one pair in the square in 2020, which nested on the common close to the nursery, but the nest was located inside the tree nursery in 2021.

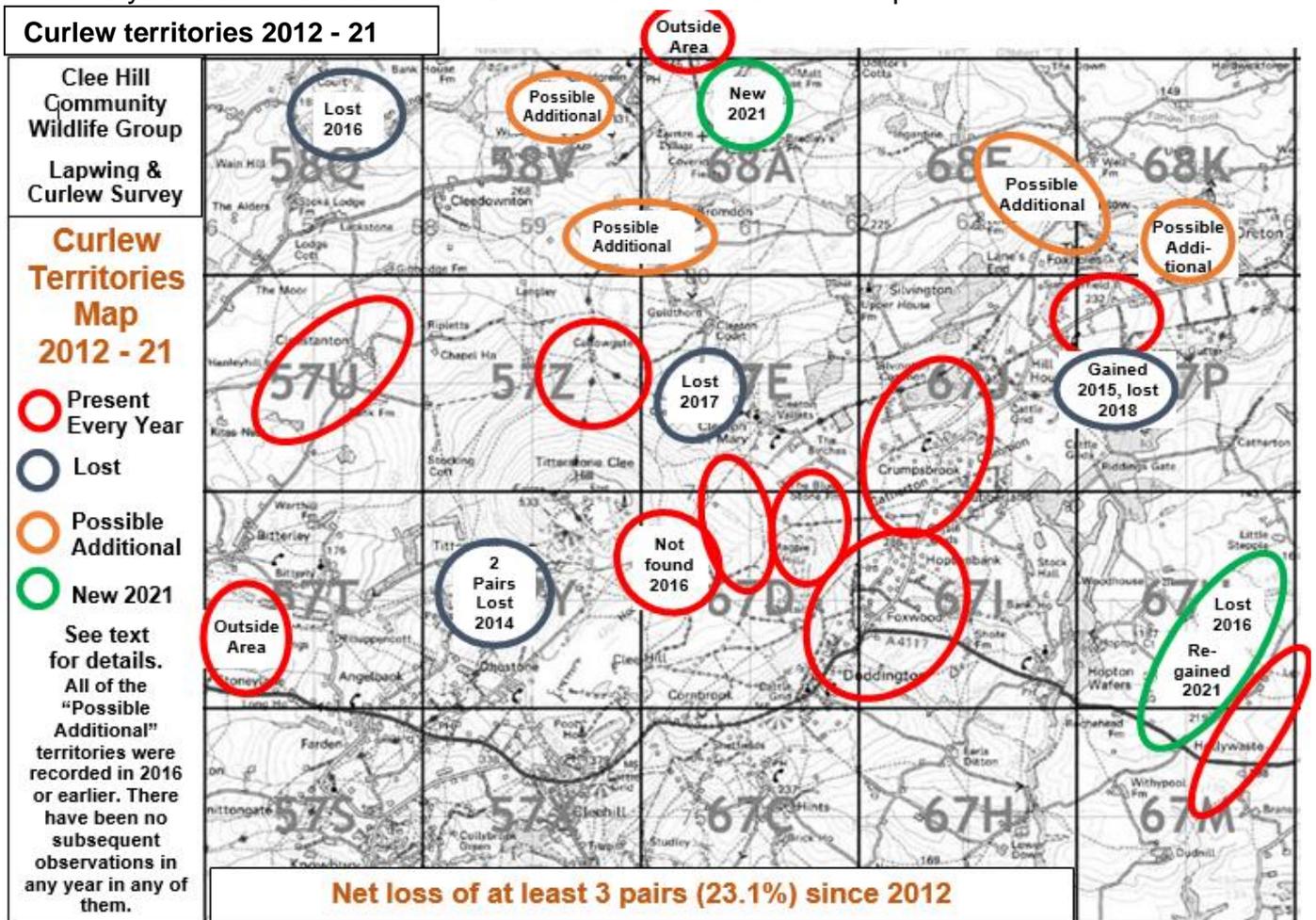
68F – sporadic records over the years, particularly in 2015, were likely to reflect the pair near Cramer Gutter using feeding areas further north, displaced by their new neighbour to the south, which would also encourage the pair further north still, from outside the area near Stottesdon, to come to the southern edge of their territory to defend it. The territory of the new neighbour was not occupied in 2018, and there was only one record from 68F or 68K, and there were none in 2019 or 2020.

68K – there were several records in the north of the square in 2012, attributed to “a pair [breeding close to] Stottesdon (in 68L)”. There have been no records from the north of this square since. There were no records in the south of the square until 2015, and again in 2017, which are also likely to reflect the pair near Cramer Gutter using feeding areas further north, away from their new neighbour to the south (see 68F above). The former pair was reported still present near Stottesdon in 2018 and perhaps in 2019, but absent in 2020 and 2021 (see below).

Based on this analysis, it will be seen that five pairs were lost between 2012 and 2018, and the one gained in 2015 was lost in 2018. Apparently the pair at Cleetongate was absent in 2017, but replaced by a pair re-occupying Random Hill. The pair in 57U, whose current status is uncertain, has not been counted as lost. There were no observations (or absence of them) to suggest any changes in 2019 or 2020.

However, there were an estimated 10 pairs in 2020, a gain of two compared with the eight in 2020. Perhaps some of the 6 – 7 fledged young in the last few years, referred to at the top of page 6, have returned to the area to breed.

This analysis is summarised on the Curlew Territories 2012-21 map.

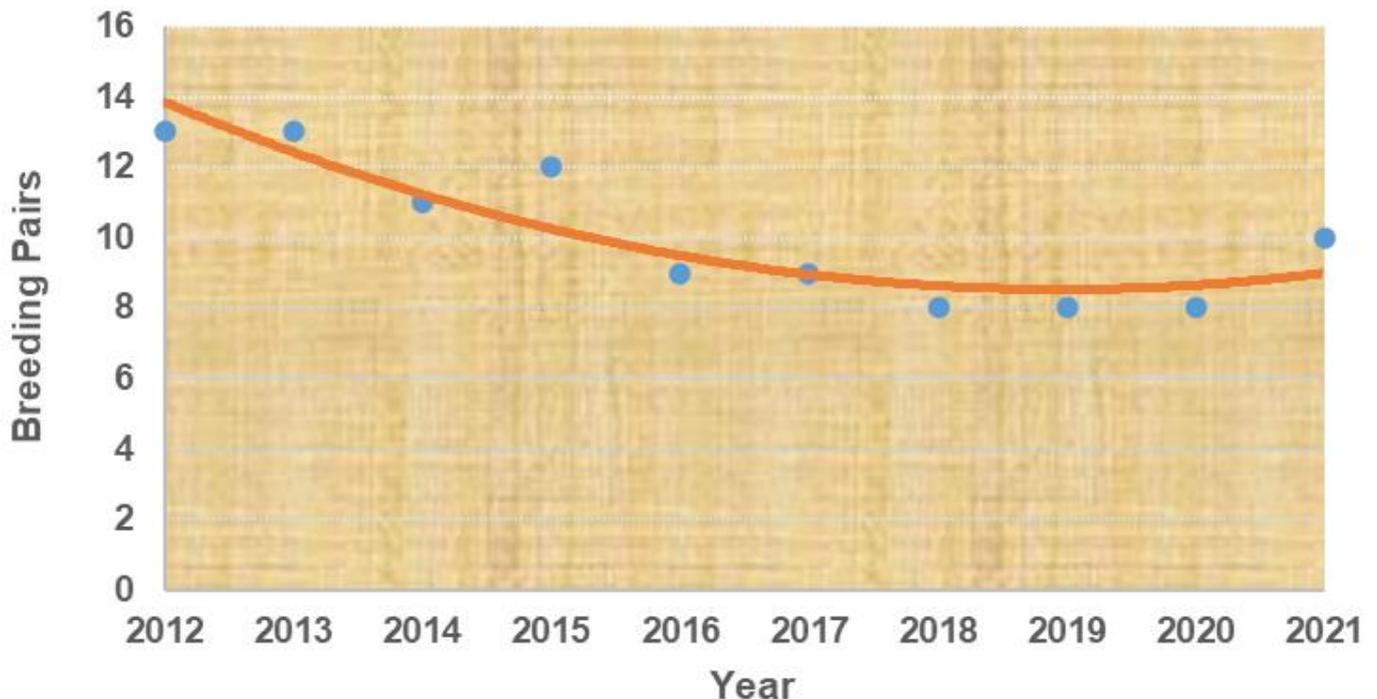


There were no observations to suggest that pairs may have been present in 2018 - 21 in any of the “Possible Additional” territories, and, as indicated above, the records that suggested these “possible additional territories” have all been subsequently attributed to other pairs, including some territories outside the area, which were occupied in the years when the possible additional pairs were noted.

The population for each year in this assessment is within the range published in each Annual Report, except the under-estimate published in 2012, which was revised upwards in the 2013 report in the light of results in that year. The apparent increase between 2012 and 2013 was probably due to improved and increased survey coverage, as more members got to know their squares better. The highest estimate of 12 – 14 was made in 2013, and the current assessment has revised that to 13 pairs.

Curlew Population Trend

The revised annual population in the core area, and the population trend, excluding possible additional pairs, is shown in the chart (Figure 1).



Breeding success has been insufficient to sustain the population for many years, so it is likely that the population is elderly, and it may well disappear quickly if nothing is done to improve breeding success. This process may be starting already, with the apparent loss of three pairs in 2016, and another one in each of 2017 and 2018. However, there has been no apparent further loss since 2018, and an upturn in 2021.

This may be due to the success of the nest finding and protection project, which led to 4-5 young fledging in the two years 2018-19.

It will be seen that, while the net population loss is three pairs, a decline of 23% in only ten years, there was a very welcome upturn of two pairs in 2021.

Curlews in the Area Extension

Four tetrads that are known to contain Curlews were added to the Survey area in 2019, and an estimated six pairs were found. Three of these squares were covered as thoroughly in 2020, and six pairs were found again, but one of the pairs may have moved just outside the area, to the south into square 57E.

In 2021, only four pairs were found. All observations are shown on the map in Appendix 3

Colour-ringing

Well over 150 wild Curlews have been caught and colour-ringed by the Mid-Wales Ringing Group since March 2015 at the Dolydd Hafren Montgomery Wildlife Trust Reserve on the River Severn near Welshpool, on their way back to breeding grounds. Around 20 of them have been found breeding in the area to the west of the Long Mynd, covered by the Upper Onny, Rea Valley and Camlad Valley Community Wildlife Groups, and one was found in each of the Upper Clun and the Strettons CWG areas in 2021.

A nest on farmland at the top of Magpie Hill was found and fenced in 2018 and 2019 by the "Save our Curlews" project (see pp. 21). The chicks were radio-tagged and tracked, and in



2018 definitely one, probably two, chicks fledged successfully, and in 2019 all of a brood of three successfully fledged. These 4-5 fledged young were all colour-ringed.

All the “headstarted” chicks released by Curlew Country near the Stiperstones since 2017 have also been colour-ringed.

The colour-rings can be seen in the photo of one of the chicks ringed in this area in 2018. There are two unique letters inscribed on each yellow ring.

No colour-ringed birds were seen in 2020, but one was seen in 2021 west of Doddington on 15 May, but it flew off eastwards and disappeared. It is not known if it nested in the area, but it is likely (site unknown).

No colour-ringed birds were seen at any of the five nests found here by the Conservation project. However, being able to see rings requires a good view of the bird on the ground, before the grass gets too long, so in practice many birds have not

been checked.

Recording Curlew Nest Sites

To improve the value of CWG Curlew surveys, nest site habitat data is being collected to feed into the database being developed by the South of England Curlew Forum. Although nests are not searched for, they are found occasionally. More importantly, the field containing the nest can often be identified (by seeing the sitting bird from a distance, or from the behaviour of the adults defending the nest from potential predators), and as far as defining the habitat is concerned, the precise location of the nest within the field is unnecessary.

Observers have been requested to complete a questionnaire for every case where a nest was found, or the field containing the nest was identified beyond reasonable doubt.

Some of the questions try to assess what farming activities take place in the field during the period before any chicks would fledge, up until early August (the full term if a pair nest late, or relay after the first clutch fails).

Curlews adjacent to the Clew Hill area.

Three pairs are believed to have nested close to the survey area, and been recorded within it, as described in the section on “Curlew Population Change” above.

A pair have nested for many years just outside the area, north of 68A, at a known site in 68B near Wheathill. The square was incorporated into the newly- formed Abdon District Community Wildlife Group in 2019. The nest was found and fenced, but the eggs went beyond their full term, and did not hatch. The nest was located nearby in 2020, but when it was visited on 14 May, prior to fencing, it was empty, presumably predated. In 2021, the nest was again found and fenced, but the eggs did not hatch.

A pair nested in Stottesdon, north of square 68K, for many years and is believed to partially account for records of a “possible additional pair” in 68F and K in years when the pair in 67P foraged northwards when it had a near neighbour to its south. However, in 2019 a local resident reported that “in 5 or 6 years of observing them sadly I had less sightings this year than in any previous year”, and in 2020 “Sad to report that despite lockdown and being at home I did not see or hear a single Curlew in Stottesdon this year, I think in the 18 years I have lived here that is the first year I have not seen and heard them.... a sad reflection on their demise”. Again, there were no observations in 2021.

A third pair is believed to have nested in 57N. Curlews were recorded in 57T in 2013-15, attributed to this pair, but not since. However, the square was not surveyed in the four years 2018-21..

There may also be one or more pairs at the farm in 67N, referred to above. This square will be monitored in 2021.

Lapwing

Lapwing was added to the national *Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern* in 2009, and this status was confirmed in 2015 (Eaton *et al*, British Birds 2015), because of a decline in the UK of 63% between 1969 and 2014, and 57% over the previous 25 years. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey has found a 43% decline in the UK and a 30% decline in England over the 23-year period 1995-2018.



In Shropshire, it declined from about 3,000 breeding pairs in 1990 to 800 in 2010 (a loss of 73%), and it disappeared from 46% of the Atlas survey squares (tetrads) between 1985-90 and 2008-13. The decline has continued, certainly in the areas monitored by several Community Wildlife Groups. Lapwing is on the *Red List of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*. The decline is partly obscured by the much larger numbers seen in winter flocks, which comprise birds escaping from the frozen ground in northern Europe.

Lapwings need short vegetation or bare ground to nest on, and those that nest on arable land have to move round to follow the farm crop rotation.

Four pairs were found in a maize field near the Hollywaste crossroads, three (one pair with four small chicks, the other two still sitting) in 67M and one in a horse paddock with one chick in 67N. As adults move chicks to sites where they can feed themselves, it is possible that the latter pair also nested in the field in 67M.

None were reported from any other location.

The population is estimated at four breeding pairs.

In 2020, four reports were received of a single pair of Lapwing seen between the beginning of April and mid-May in adjacent fields near the Hollywaste crossroads. The absence of any later reports suggests the pair nested, but were not successful.

There were at least five breeding pairs of Lapwing at the same location in 2019, compared with 2 – 4 breeding pairs in 2018 and 2017. None at all were found anywhere in the area in

2016 or 2015, while in 2014 there were two, in 2013 there were 1-2, and in 2012 three pairs were found. The pairs seen in 2014 and 2013, and one of the pairs in 2012, were also near Hollywaste. Pairs found in SO57U and SO68K in 2012 have not been relocated since.

Anecdotal Evidence for the Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

Members of the Bird Group who live in the area, and other local residents, say that Lapwings and Curlews are less common now than they used to be. Some members talked to local farmers in the course of their surveys, in 2019 and in previous years, and they too said that Lapwings and Curlew are less common now than they used to be. Lapwings have apparently declined much more than Curlews. Specific examples of such anecdotal evidence were quoted in the reports in previous years. Because of the health risks, no efforts were made to engage with farmers in 2020 or 2021

Kestrel



Kestrel is on the national *Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern 4* (Eaton *et al*, 2015), because of a decline in the UK of 46% between 1969 and 2014, and 33% over the previous 25 years. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey has found a 35% decline in the UK and a 21% decline in England over the 23-year period 1995-2018.

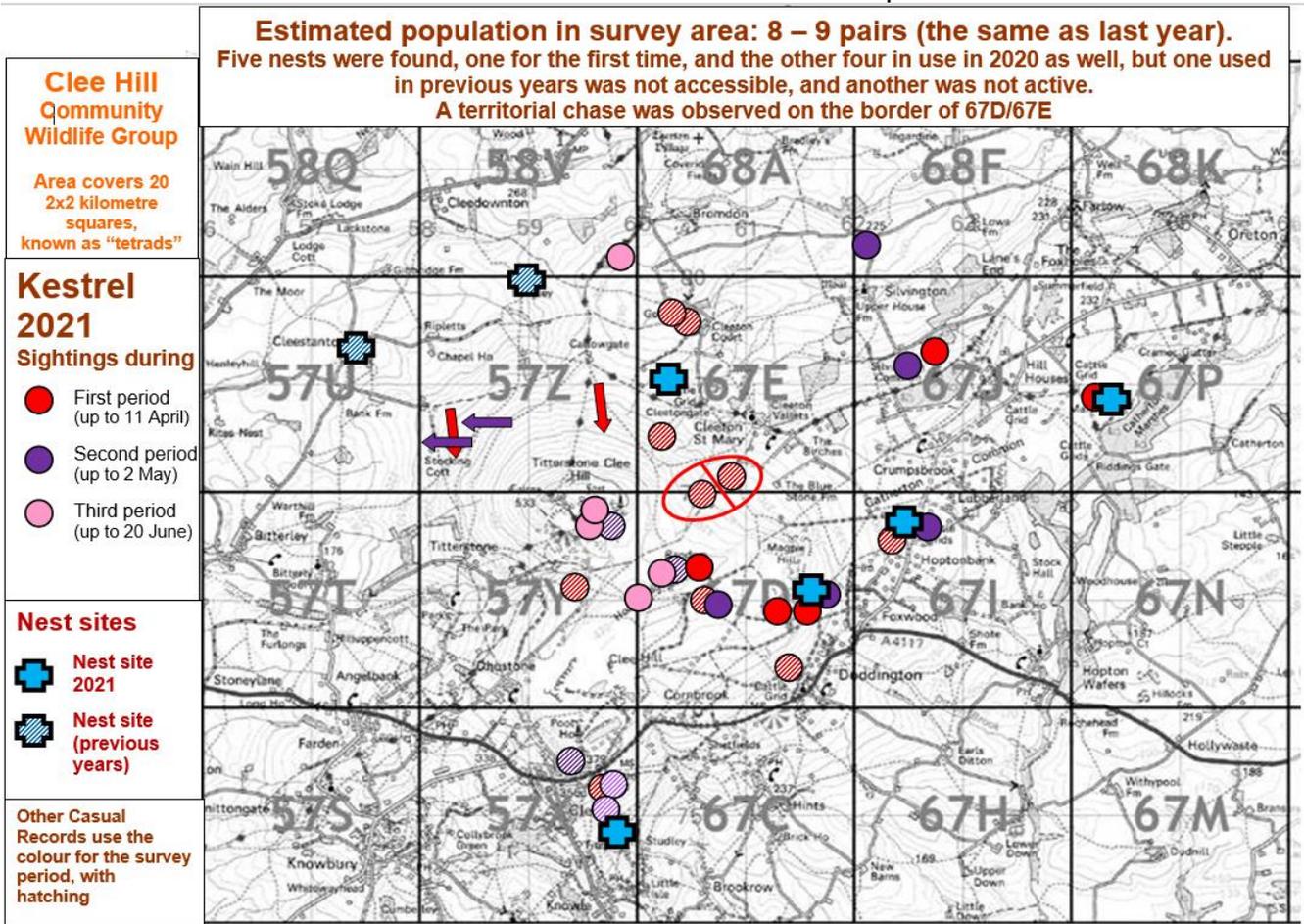
In Shropshire, records of confirmed or probable breeding declined by 46% in the 870 Atlas survey squares (tetrads) between 1985-90 and 2008-13, and the population probably halved in that time. Kestrel is on the *Red List of Breeding Birds of Conservation Concern in Shropshire*.

Kestrels defend a small territory around the nest, but their home range, where they find most of their food, is at least 1 km square, but can be as large as 10 km square. Most hunting is usually carried out within 1.8km of the nest, but the home range is often partly shared with neighbouring pairs.

The local decline appears to have continued in recent years, and the Shropshire Ringing and Raptor Groups have launched a nest box scheme to help improve breeding success, and try and find out the reasons for the decline. To help get a better understanding of the population and distribution, members doing CWG surveys have been asked to make a special effort to record Kestrels.

The population varies from year to year, depending on prey abundance, mainly voles, but Kestrels are much more likely to be observed in good breeding seasons, when they have to spend more time hunting for food for chicks, and travelling to and from the nest. In 2019, the numbers of Kestrels seen were much lower in all the CWG areas than in 2018, suggesting that 2019 was a very poor year for them, probably because of the long period of cold wet windy weather that lasted until their nesting time, followed by a drought. The number of records in 2018 and 2019 was considerably less than in the previous couple of years, but the distribution was similar. The analysis in 2014, when there were more records, suggested perhaps nine pairs, and these still appear to be present, with a record from a new site in 57U in 2020. In general, 2020 appears to have been better than 2019, but 2021 was another poor year.

Observations in 2021 in the Clee Hill area are shown on the map.



Five nests were found:-

- i. A pair near Pot House Farm in SO67I bred in an exposed hole in a tree in 2015, and a nest box was erected there before the start of the 2016 season. The box has been used each year since, and four young fledged from it in 2020 and 2021. The two photos below show the ringer climbing up to the nest box, and the four chicks being ringed



- ii. As in previous years, a pair near Upper Marshes on Catherton Common were seen frequently during the season. In 2020 the nest was located in one of the Group's Barn Owl nest boxes, but in 2021 they moved into one of the Group's Kestrel boxes. Four young fledged (see photos).



- iii. A nest was found above Cleeton Gate in 2019, and the same site was occupied in 2020, but the nest was in an old crows' nest, not in the hole used in 2019. An old crow's nest in a different nearby oak tree was used in 2021. Young have fledged from the nest in all three years, three in 2021.
- iv. The fourth nest was in one of the boxes put up in 2019, in an ash tree on land belonging to members in Whatshill. Eggs were laid, but the nest failed.
- v. A nest was located for the first time, in May in a tall tree south-east of Clee Hill village. The outcome is unknown.

Two other nest sites have been found in previous years:-

- i. The site in SO57Z, known since 2012, was not visited, due to coronavirus restrictions and a blocked footpath, but observations of Kestrels seen on Clee Hill suggest that it was probably occupied again (outcome unknown).
- ii. Another nest was found in 2020 in a hole in a big oak tree, only 8 feet above the ground, near Cleestanton. No nest was found near this site in 2021

In addition, a pair were seen several times over Clee Hill village, another was seen near Doddington, and what might have been a family party was seen near the quarry at the top of Titterstone Clee. These are all likely nest sites, but the analysis is made more difficult by the presence of non-breeding immature birds. Less than half of one-year-olds breed.

The estimate made in 2016, of 8 – 9 breeding pairs, still seems reasonable.

There is another known long-standing nest in a box near Wheathill, in 68B, to the north of 68A, but it was occupied by Tawny Owls in 2021.

Clee Hill has a relatively high density, with the distance between two nests only about 1km., and the County-wide nest box project, referred to above, will be developed in the area. Members are requested to report Kestrel sightings and suitable sites for boxes, please.

Cuckoo

Cuckoo has declined considerably in recent years, and was added to the *Red List of Birds of Conservation Concern* in the UK in 2009. By 2015 the decline had reached 60% in the previous 25 years. The BTO Breeding Bird Survey has found a 71% decline in both England and the English West Midlands region between 1995 and 2018.



In Shropshire, comparison of the 1985-90 and 2008-13 Atlas distribution maps showed it had disappeared from 56% of the tetrads occupied in the earlier period. The population estimate for the later period published in *The Birds of Shropshire* was 90–95 pairs, less than half that estimated in the earlier Atlas.

It is one of the Other Target Species that members have been asked to record each year, but in 2020 there were more Cuckoo records than usual. It was not clear whether there were actually more Cuckoos about, or that people were better able to hear them in the peace and quiet, or were at home rather than at work, because of the coronavirus lockdown. Members were therefore specifically encouraged to submit Cuckoo records.

The characteristic Cuckoo call is made only by the male, and he defends a “song territory” to attract females and deter other males. The female has a different, rarely heard, “bubbling call”. Each male will chase other males out of his home patch, but the cuckoo isn't strongly territorial, and several males and females have been found to share overlapping ranges.

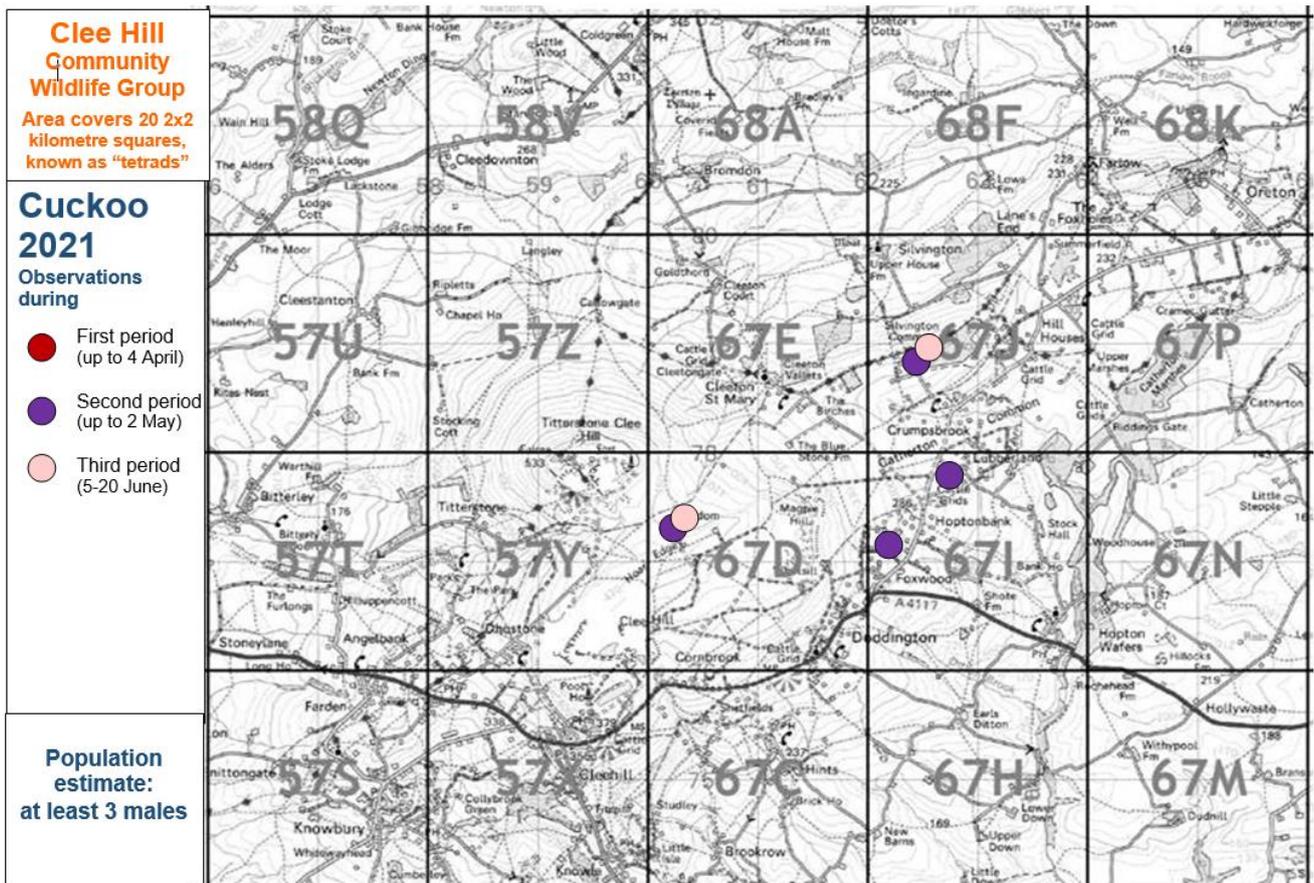
Each female lays between 10 and 25 eggs per year, each in a different nest. Each female usually selects nests of a single host species, most frequently Meadow Pipit, Dunnock or Reed Warbler.

The size of the home range of each female varies considerably, depending on the ease of finding enough nests of the host species (i.e., parts of the home range will not be suitable breeding habitat for the host species, and the home range needs to include feeding areas for the Cuckoo as well). Thus, the females' home range might overlap the song territory of more than one male, and she will mate with each of them (an estimate of “breeding pairs” would therefore be better termed “male territories”).

The records, mostly of males heard but not seen are shown on the map, suggesting the presence of at least three individuals. It is likely that the two records from 671 were of the same individual. Records came from three squares.

There were far fewer records than 2020, when records came from eight squares, and the population was estimated at at least four males. This compares with records from 5 squares in 2019, only 3 in 2018, 6 in 2017, 5 in 2016, 7 in 2015 and 5 in 2014. As each pair ranges far and wide, an estimate of two territorial males seems reasonable for 2019 and previous years,

except there was perhaps only one in 2018. The population has been estimated at this level, or just one pair, each year since 2012, apart from the higher number in 2020.



Red Kite

Red Kites were seen in only four tetrads. Prior to 2020, when the survey was limited by Coronavirus restrictions, the number reported on the Bird Survey had risen steadily since 2012, and in 2019, 13 individuals were reported from eight squares.

It is believed a pair nested (unsuccessfully) in the area in 2012, but no evidence of breeding has been found since. However, nests have been found in previous years just to the west and just to the north of the area, both within two kilometres of the boundary, and in 2020 there was a successful nest which fledged three young only three kilometres to the north.



Given the rapid spread and population increase (over 50 known pairs in Shropshire in 2021 – the first successful breeding for 130 years occurred as recently as 2006), it is likely that more widespread breeding will become a regular occurrence in the near future.

Other Target Species

Apart from the five main Target Species listed above, members were also asked to resume recording 19 Other Target species: Barn Owl, Bullfinch, Dipper, Dunnock, Grey Partridge, Linnet, Meadow Pipit, Red Kite, Reed Bunting, Skylark, Snipe, Spotted Flycatcher, Stonechat, Swift (nest sites only), Tree Sparrow, Wheatear, Whinchat, Yellow Wagtail and Yellowhammer. The detailed results are shown in Appendix 3. A summary is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Other Target Species – Summary

Square (Tetrad)	Maximum Number of Each Species Recorded on Surveys												
	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Dunnock	Wheat-ear	Stone-chat	Linnet	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
57S			1	1	1			1				1	
57T													
57U													
57X													
57Y		3	2		8				4	2			
57Z		1	2		30			1	7	7	7	5	6
58Q													
58V		1	1		5			2				10	
67C													
67D		6	4	2	11	37	3	3	3	5	4		1
67E		2			1	25							1
67H													
67I		3	2		2	5	1			1			
67J		4	1			2	1	2		6	6		
67M	3	2		2	9			2	4			3	
67N	2	2			1			1				3	
67P		2	1			3				2			
68A								1				6	
68F			1	1	2							1	
68K		1											
Total Birds (Max)	5	27	15	6	70	72	5	13	18	23	17	29	8
No.Squares recorded	2	11	9	4	10	5	3	8	4	6	3	7	3

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

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

As expected in a survey of this type, the expertise of members, and the time they had available to undertake the surveys, varied considerably. The survey squares also vary considerably, in accessibility and terrain. The “detectability” of the birds themselves also varies considerably, according to prevailing weather conditions, time of day, stage in the breeding cycle, and normal behaviour of each species. Thus, the survey results will give an indication of the species that are present, and perhaps their habitat preferences, but only a very small proportion will have been recorded.

Only counts of Meadow Pipit on Clee Hill were notable, and only Curlew and Skylark were recorded in more than half of the squares. Several surveyors made little or no attempt to record the Other Target Species.

Eight species were not recorded at all: Barn Owl, Dipper, Grey Partridge, Spotted Flycatcher, Swift (nest sites), Tree Sparrow, Whinchat, and Yellow Wagtail. Two species were recorded in one square only: Snipe (57Z) and Bullfinch (2 in 67E).

Decline of Lapwing and Curlew

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

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

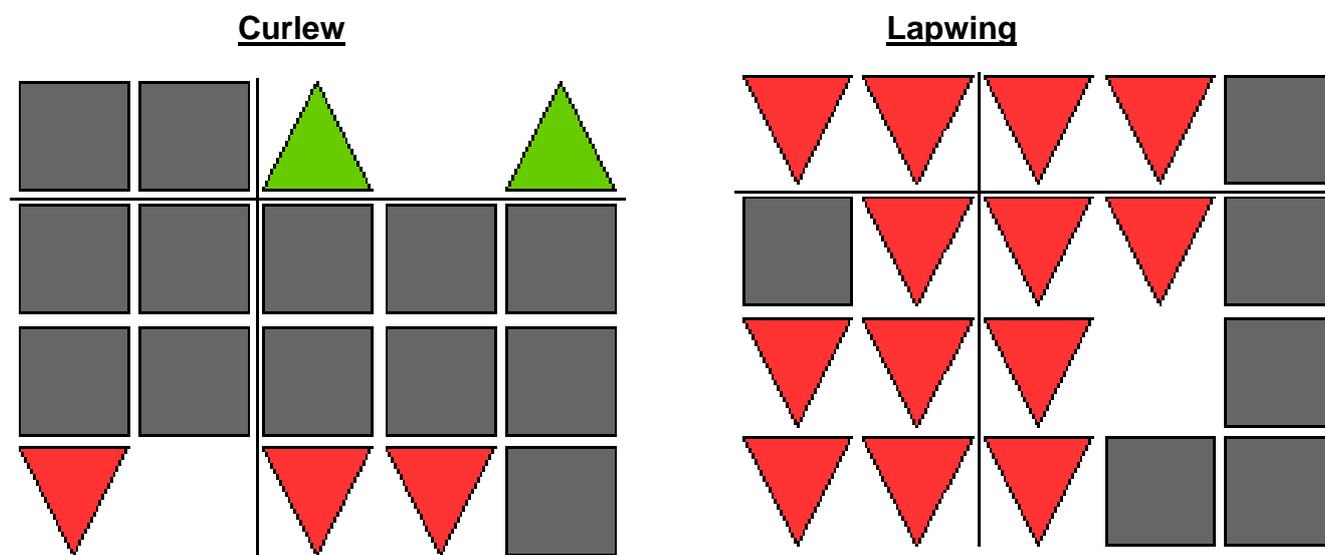
The resulting breeding distribution change maps for the survey area are shown below. The grid lines enclose the 10km squares SO57, SO58, SO67 and SO68 on the Ordnance Survey National Grid, and each symbol represents a tetrad (2x2km square on the OS grid, 25 tetrads in each 10km square). These squares are the same as those used for this survey.

Tetrads where each species was found in both Atlas surveys are shown as grey squares, and tetrads where it was found in the earlier period, but not the more recent period are marked with red downward triangles. It will be seen that the range of both species declined in this area in only 20-25 years, Lapwing substantially so.

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

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

Breeding Distribution Change Maps for the Clee Hill CWG survey area (1985-90 to 2008-13)



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Other evidence for the decline of Lapwing and Curlew can be found on the website of the British Trust for Ornithology www.bto.org

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

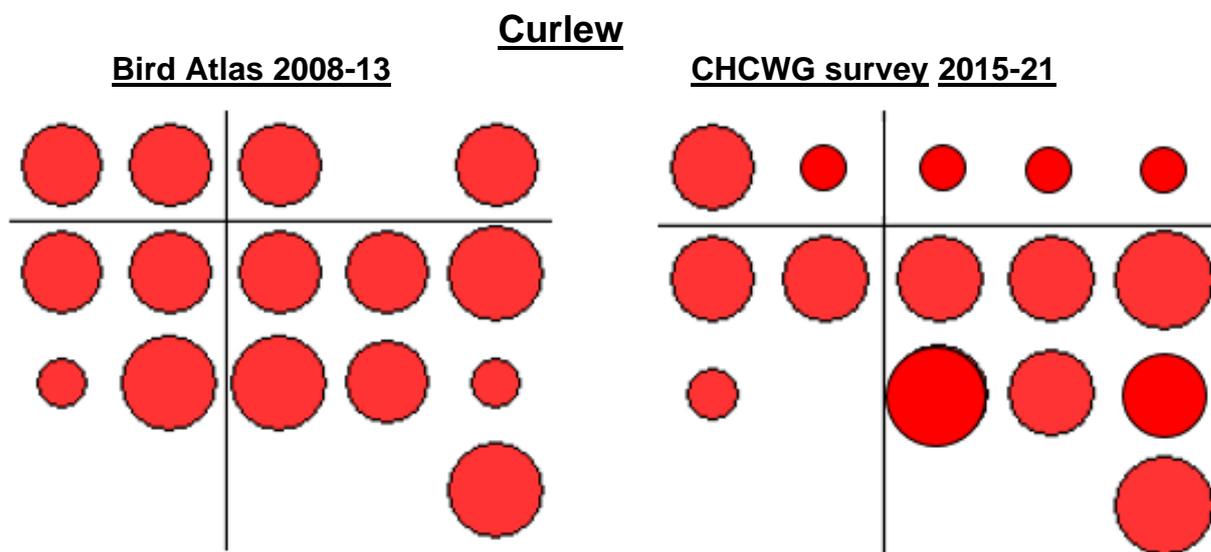
Both species nest on farmland, and the Countryside Stewardship Agri-environment Scheme (part of the system of payments to farmers through the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union) includes provision to reward farmers for sensitive management of habitat on their farms, and providing other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

Comparison of Clee Hill CWG Bird Survey Results with the Shropshire Bird Atlas 2008-13

The next two pairs of maps show, on the left, the results of the Bird Atlas 2008-13 for the 30 tetrads covered by the survey, and, on the right, the results of the survey in the Clee Hill area as shown on the maps on pages 5 and 6. Each dot represents at least one observation during the Atlas period, or during the 2017 survey, in the appropriate tetrad.

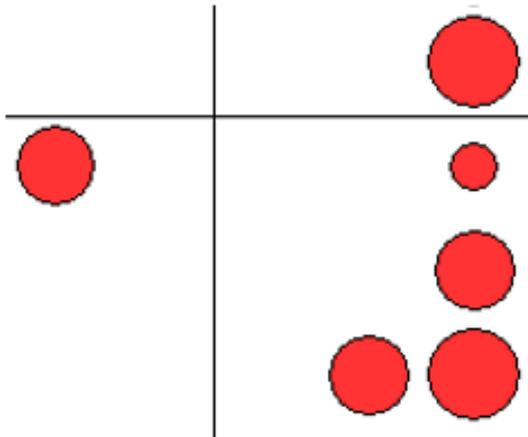
- Large dot = Confirmed Breeding (Bird seen sitting on nest, or chicks seen)
- Middle dot = Probable Breeding (Pair or display seen)
- Small dot = Seen or heard in suitable habitat
- No dot = Not found

It must be stressed that the Atlas map includes survey work over six years, but most tetrads will not have been visited every year, it was only necessary to find confirmed breeding evidence once in the six years, and the surveyors were looking for breeding evidence for all species. On the other hand, the Bird Atlas maps are a record of what was found, and do not include the judgement to eliminate likely passage birds. To allow a direct comparison, only the Clee Hill survey results for the most recent six years, 2015-20, have been included. Most squares have been visited in all six years, at the time when the target species are most likely to be found, so the recent survey is the more intensive.

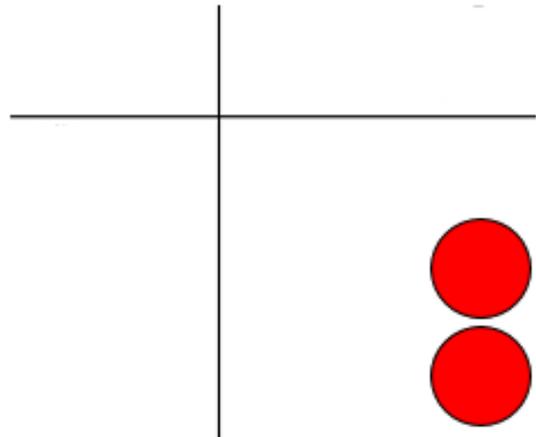


Lapwing

Bird Atlas 2008-13



CHCWG survey 2015-21



The two target species are conspicuous and noisy, so most will not have been overlooked in the recent survey, and these maps suggest strongly that the decline of both species has continued since 2013, as Curlew has disappeared from one square and almost disappeared from four more, and Lapwing has disappeared from all except two.

The breeding distribution change maps above show that both species are now absent from places where they were found 20 – 25 years earlier. The decline of the Curlew population by 38.5% between 2012 and 2020, and the absence of Lapwing altogether in 2015 and 2016, and presence in only 1-2 tetrads since 2017, shows that the decline is continuing. Both species are now absent from tetrads where they were found less than 10 years ago.

Work with Individual Farmers

The vast majority of the Lapwing and Curlew populations in the area nest on private farmland. The active support of farmers is therefore essential if the declines are to be reversed. As our knowledge builds up, efforts will be made to work with individual farmers to safeguard their habitats. This will be particularly important for finding and protecting Curlew nests, through the Save our Curlews project (see below).

Recommendations

Natural England is recommended to encourage farmers with breeding Lapwing or Curlew on or near their land, to join the appropriate agri-environment scheme, utilising the appropriate options to maintain and enhance the habitat for these priority species

Barn Owl Nest Box Scheme

The Bird Group initiated a Barn Owl nest box scheme in the area in 2013. Barn Owl was on the *Amber List of Birds of Conservation Concern 3 (2009)*, because of a long-term population decline caused by loss of foraging habitat and nest sites. Conservation action (nest boxes and field margins through agri-environment schemes) led to Barn Owl being moved to the Green List in 2015, but there is no evidence that any recovery has occurred in this area. Provision of nest boxes will help reverse this decline locally. Nest boxes are more likely to be used, and help increase the population, if they are put near to existing Barn Owl territories and foraging areas.



These specially designed nest boxes were provided free of charge to farmers and landowners with suitable habitat in the Cleve Hill area. A poster advertising the scheme was



put up around the area for several years. Several boxes have now been installed, like the one at Mahorall Farm pictured, and it, and an indoor box at the same site, were both used for roosting in 2016 and 2017, but there has been no evidence of breeding. Kestrels bred in this box in 2018.

No new boxes have been installed since 2017, no reports of any box being used by breeding Barn Owls have been received, and there have been very few Barn Owl reports in the last few years. The Barn Owl project has therefore been suspended, until more owls are seen.

There were no reports in 2021.

If you do see a Barn Owl, we'd like to know, please

***To report a Barn Owl sighting in the Cleve Hill area, please contact Chris Bargman
01299 270514 chcwg@shropscwgs.org.uk***

Other Nest Boxes

The Group successfully applied to the Ludlow Rotary Club "Rotary Cares" fund in September 2017 to acquire 26 nest boxes for several other species: Kestrels, Pied Flycatchers and Redstarts, Swifts, Swallows and House Martins. These were offered to people within the area who had suitable locations for the target species, and they were almost all installed before the 2018 season.

Two Kestrel boxes have been installed, one at Whatshill and one on Catherton Common. The former was used in 2020 and 2021, while the later was used for the first time in 2021



(see Kestrel section, p11). One further box is available when a suitable location has been found.

Seven Swallow, seven House Martin and three Swift boxes have been installed at suitable locations where the target species have been seen or have previously nested. Some of the Swallow cups were used again in 2021.

Six boxes have been installed for Redstart and Pied Flycatcher. Feedback to date shows that some of these were used but unfortunately not by target species. One box is waiting to be allocated when a suitable location where the target species have been seen can be identified.



Kestrel nest box on Catherton Common, used in 2021

A volunteer is wanted to collate information each year on the use made of all these nest boxes, please.

Bird Walks

A Bird Walk, which acted as a practical training session for new participants in the bird survey, was held at Cleeton St Mary on 5 April, but it was limited to 5 people as the Covid19 restriction, the “Rule of Six”, was still in force.

It is intended to resume the walk in 2022. The date will be fixed in consultation with new surveyors at the Bird Group meeting on 25 March 2022. Details will be posted on the website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

CURLEW CONSERVATION

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. Strettons Area CWG was launched in 2012, and surveyed Lapwing and Curlew for the first time in 2017. The Three Parishes CWG, covering Weston Rhyn, St. Martin’s and Gobowen (north of Oswestry), also undertook a Bird Survey in 2017. All these groups continued with a Lapwing and Curlew survey in 2018, when they were joined by new CWGs covering Oswestry south (Tanat to Perry) and Severn-Vyrnwy Confluence. A further Group, centred on Abdon (near Brown Clee), also started in 2018, the initiative of a local resident.

All these groups (except Kemp Valley, which has no breeding Curlews) continued with their surveys in 2019. Clee Hill and Abdon extended their areas, to close the gap between them and monitor known additional Curlew territories. Between them, the 10 groups cover around three-quarters of the County’s breeding Curlews. They covered 267 survey squares (tetrads), totalling 1,048 square kilometres. There were 320 participants, who spent a total of more than 2,350 hours on survey work, and 94 - 115 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.

The Curlew distribution map from the County Bird Atlas 2008-13, overlain with the Community Wildlife Group areas, and their 2019 results, can be found on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

The Groups all also survey Lapwing, but they monitor a much smaller proportion of the County population, which is concentrated in north and north-east Shropshire.

In 2020, the survey work was truncated because of the Coronavirus restrictions. However, an effort was made to monitor the Curlew populations, and better coverage was achieved than usual in some areas, because people were working, and exercising, from home. It is believed that only one of the 100 or so pairs monitored produced any fledged young.

Results for 2021 are still being compiled, but again around 100 pairs were monitored. Results will be posted on the website as they become available.

Further information can be found on the joint website for all the Community Wildlife Groups in Shropshire, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

The SOS Save our Curlews Campaign and Nest Finding and Protection Project

The Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS) has been carrying out research with other Community Wildlife Groups to find nests, put an electric fence around them to protect the eggs from predators, and then fix radio-tags to the chicks and track them to see how they use the landscape, and what happens to them. Not enough young birds fledge to replace the older birds dying off. We need to know why.



The project has operated in Clee Hill CWG area in 2018-21, apart from 2020 when it was postponed because of Covid-19.

- In 2018, three nests were found and fenced, 5 hatched chicks were radio-tagged and tracked, and definitely one, probably two, of the chicks from one brood fledged
- In 2019, the Group found 7 – 8 pairs in the area, and another one just to the north. Four nests were found and fenced, and two clutches hatched. Radio tags were fitted to six chicks, and they were tracked. The second pair (at the same site where definitely one, probably two, young fledged in 2018) had three eggs that all hatched, and all the chicks were tagged and tracked. All three young were colour-ringed and fledged, an excellent result.
- In 2021, the Group again initially found 7 – 8 pairs in the area, four nests were found and fenced, including one to the north in 68B, and a nest was found inside the tree nursery fence. The clutch inside the tree nursery fence was predated, the nest in 68B went full term but the eggs did not hatch, a clutch was abandoned, and four chicks hatched from the fourth nest. They were radio-tracked, but all were predated within three days.

The project also operated in the Upper Clun and Strettons CWG areas in 2021. In the three areas, 16 nests were found, 12 were fenced, and 21 chicks from 8 nests hatched, and were radio-tagged. All except one of the chicks were predated, and they lived for an average of only 5.65 days. Chicks usually leave the nest within a couple of days of hatching, and are on the ground for 5-6 weeks before they can fly. They are vulnerable for the whole of this period.

The electric fences work: none of the nests inside them were wholly predated, although a fence was knocked over by sheep in 2019, and two nests were abandoned in 2021.

The chicks leave the nest to feed themselves within two days of hatching, and they are then vulnerable to predators.

You can read more about what has been done on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/. This describes the results in detail, our future plans, and 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.

The project is expensive, and has been funded by Shropshire Ornithological Society (SOS), an Appeal, and several grants. You can find more information about the Appeal, including details of how to make donations and where to send them, on the same website. Hopefully members who can afford to do so will consider contributing to the Appeal.

Curlews and Pheasant Release

The RSPB announced the results of the review of its policy on game bird shooting, which it undertook partly because of the effect of releasing large numbers of Pheasants on the landscape and other wildlife, in November 2020. It is now seeking improved environmental standards, a reduction in the number of gamebirds released and better compliance with existing rules about reporting releases. The RSPB is committed to working with the shooting industry over 18 months to bring about this change. If substantial reform is not forthcoming in this period, then the RSPB will press for tighter regulation of large-scale gamebird releases. For further information see www.rspb.org.uk/gamebirdreview

The number of Pheasants and Red-legged Partridges released in the UK EACH YEAR has increased from 4 million in 1961, the first year for which there are figures, to almost 60 million now. Only 35% are shot, and the remainder don't live very long, so they provide a year-round supply of food for every other predator and scavenger. While the number of Pheasants released since 2004 has increased by one-third, the number shot has not increased since the 1990s.

In Shropshire, 726,000 Pheasants were released in 2018 alone, so predation of Curlews (collateral damage from foxes hunting Pheasants) is very high, and the Curlew population is heading for extinction (down 80% since 1990). Conversely, the feral breeding population of Pheasants increased by 62% between 1997 and 2014 (County BBS results), and it is now the tenth most common breeding species in the County (and far and away the biggest in terms of biomass). They have spread from the release sites to virtually every part of the County now.

BTO has published research showing a disproportionate increase in the Buzzard and Crow population in areas with a high number of released Pheasants (Pringle *et al* 2019).

The massive increase in Pheasant carrion has allowed Buzzard and Raven to spread eastwards across most of England since 1990 and is undoubtedly the food source that has allowed Kites to spread into, and right across, Shropshire in only 15 years.

In 2014 there were an estimated 44,000 pairs of breeding pheasants, all descended from previous releases (Pheasant is an introduced species), compared to 160 pairs of Curlew and 800 pairs of Lapwing.

Again, further information about this can be found on the SOS website www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/

USE OF CWG SURVEY RESULTS

In addition to feeding into the monitoring of the County population by SOS, the reporting of Curlew results to the South of England Curlew Forum, the UK and Ireland Curlew Action Group and the Curlew Recovery Partnership, and helping the Curlew Country fieldworkers, the survey results are made available to Natural England.

They show the importance of particular areas for these species, which will hopefully encourage farmers to manage their land more sensitively, and provide Defra with objective evidence to judge individual farm applications to join agri-environment schemes in future, enabling them to target the use of their limited resources more effectively.

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

Chris Bargman	Ian Ferguson	David & Ginny Seckerson
Bob Braddock	Celia & Ewan Gibb	Margaret Shaw
Beth & Lionel Bridge	Pete Johnson	Peter Simon
Clare Chapman	Ruth Lawton	Brian Smith
Caroline Dahn	Darryll Locke	Heidi Steele
Barbara Daniels	Kate Maxwell	Gareth Thomas
Eric Davies	Graham Phillips	Emma Tipton
Eric Evans	Scott Reid	

Sue Crichton monitored the pair out of the area, in 68B, and Wade Muggleton sent the reports of Curlews near Stottesdon.

Jon Lingard found the two broods of Curlew chicks, and four pairs of Lapwing, two with chicks and two sitting, near Hollywaste. He also found two of the Kestrel nests, and Gerry Thomas of the Shropshire ringing Group ringed the Kestrel chicks.

Thanks also to:-

- Chris Bargman, for co-ordinating the Bird Group work locally, and receiving records; co-ordinating the nest box schemes; and posting information on the web-site
- The various farmers and landowners who provided information
- Caroline Dahn, for landowner liaison
- Chris Bargman and Anton Schooley, for organising the Barn Owl nest box scheme
- John Lightfoot, of the Shropshire Barn Owl Group, for help and advice
- Jonathon Lingard, for additional records and information.
- Jim Reynolds, for including articles about our work in the “Cleobury Clarion”
- Margaret Shaw, for publicity in Clee Hill “Viewpoint”, and on Clee Hill Facebook page
- Gareth Thomas, for monitoring the Curlew in the area Extension.
- Matt Cotterill of Natural England, who provided the original survey maps.
- Ludlow Rotary Club, for a grant for new nest box schemes in 2018.
- Gareth Thomas, for the Curlew photo, and Eric Davies, for the Lapwing photo, on the cover.
- Credits for other photos: Leo Smith (Curlew), Tim Lewis (colour-ringed Curlew chick), Celia Todd (Lapwing), Ginny Seckerson (Kestrel chicks at Pot House), Chris Barman (Kestrel at Catherton Common), Eric Davies (Cuckoo), Mark Hamblin (Red Kite), John Harding (Barn Owl) and Chris Bargman (nest box photos).

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Report

A copy of this report has been supplied to all people who contributed to the surveys, or supplied additional records, and to Natural England and the Clee Hill Commoners Association.

Copies can be downloaded from the Clee Hill part of the Shropshire Community Wildlife Groups website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

Alternatively, copies are available (electronic .pdf versions) from Leo Smith, The Bryn, Castle Hill, All Stretton, Shropshire SY6 6JP. Phone: 01694 720296 email leo@leosmith.org.uk.

Summary 2021

This report summarises the tenth year for the Bird Group. The bird survey returned to its usual format, after being disrupted by coronavirus restrictions in 2020.

We now have a good understanding of the population and distribution of Lapwing and Curlew, and the status of the Other Target Species. Comparison of results over the years suggests a net loss of five pairs (38.5%) of Curlew between 2012 and 2020, but a gain of two pairs in 2021. There is no evidence that any young fledged in 2021. A map showing Curlew territories found during April by the bird survey was passed to the nest-finders working for the SOS Save our Curlews project.

Four more tetrads to the west were added to the survey area in 2019, and six pairs of Curlew were found in them in 2019 and 2020, but only four in 2021.

Four pairs of Lapwing were found.

Four Kestrel nests were found, and chicks in one of them were ringed and colour-ringed

Further survey work in future years will continue to establish population trends in the area.

The Barn Owl nest box scheme has been suspended, but nest boxes for other species have been provided. Two Kestrel boxes have been used.

A training session for new bird surveyors was held on Clee Hill, limited to only five participants because the Covid-19 "rule of 6" was in force. No other Bird Walks were arranged..

Plans for 2022

The Bird Group intends to repeat the Bird Survey in 2022. New participants are needed, so we hope to recruit new members. Anyone interested in birds will be very welcome.

A Bird Group meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Monday, 21st March at the Recreation Rooms, 22A Clee Hill High Street, primarily to plan the bird survey. New members will be very welcome.

An outdoor training meeting will be held in late March or early April for new members who feel that it would be helpful. It will be combined with a Bird Walk for members.

If you are interested in helping with the Bird Survey, please contact Chris Bargman

The nest box schemes will also carry on, and new helpers will be recruited for the Swift project.

Details can also be found and downloaded from the joint website for all the Community Wildlife Groups in the Shropshire Hills, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk,

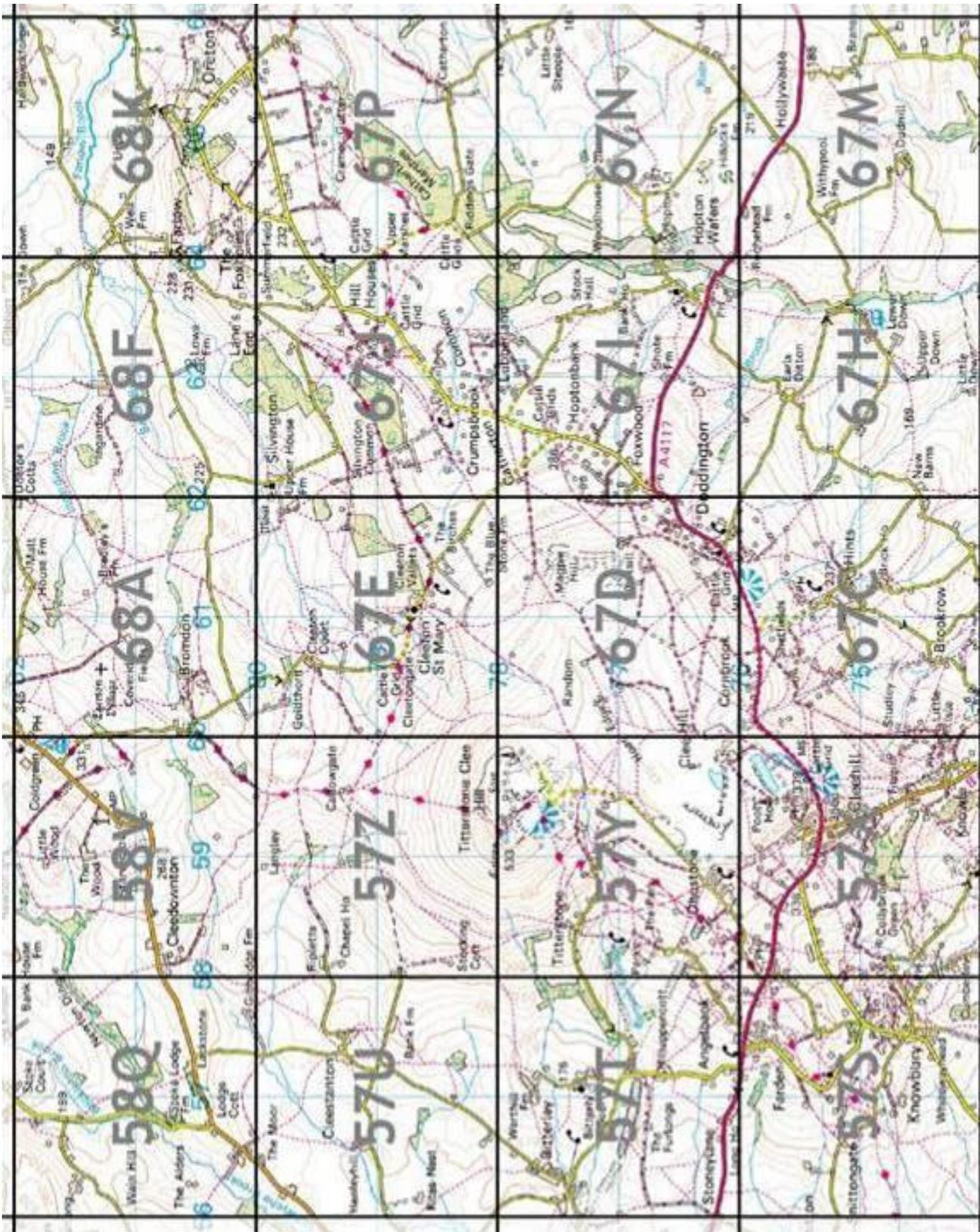
We will continue working with the SOS *Save our Curlews* project.

Details can also be found and downloaded from the joint website for all the Community Wildlife Groups in the Shropshire Hills, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk.

Leo Smith
February 2022

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

The prefix SO (defining the 100 km square on the OS National Grid) has been omitted, as this is common to all the squares in the area.



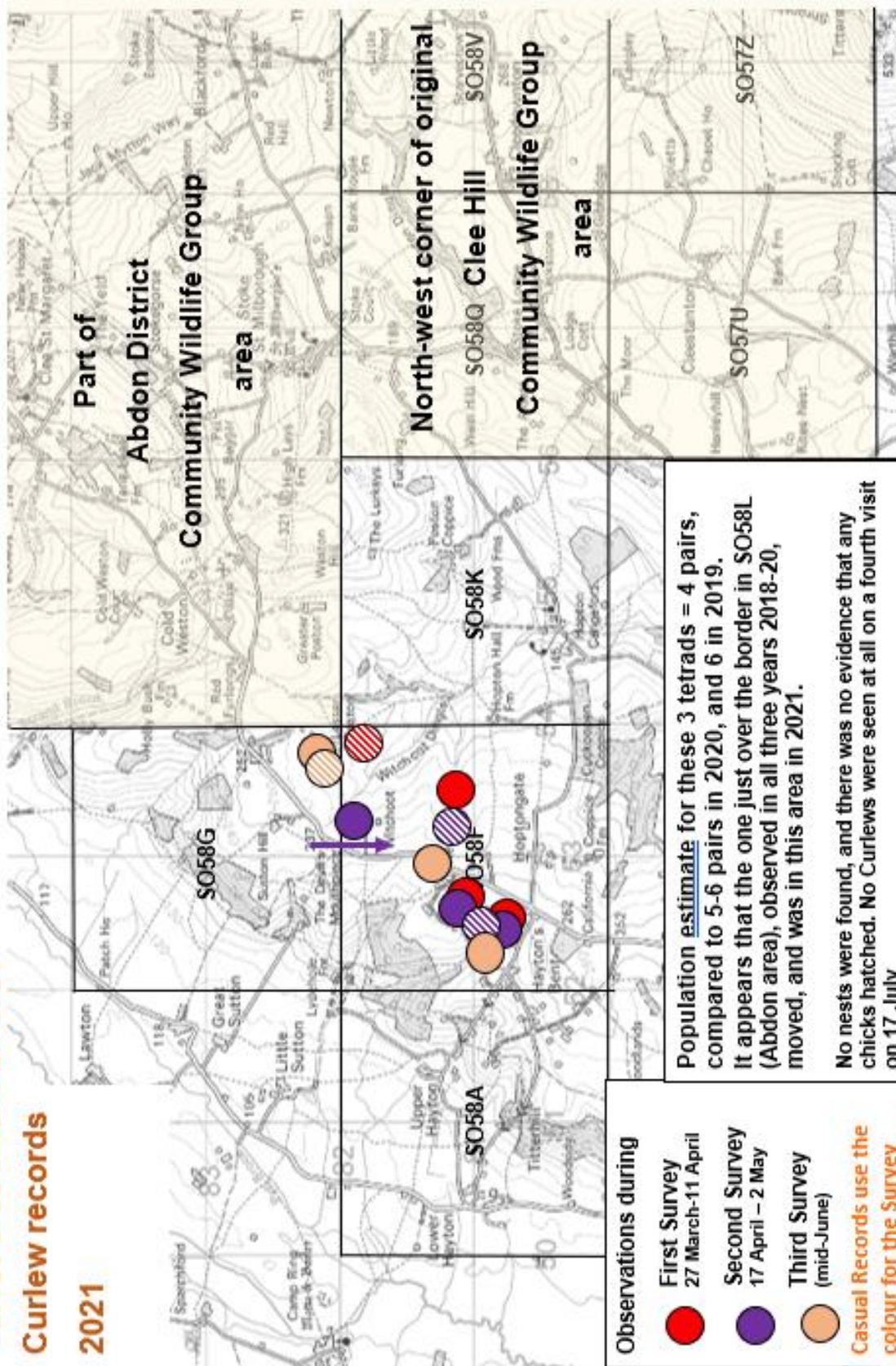
Appendix 2. Extension to Area (2019), and all Curlew Observations 2021

Clee Hill Community Wildlife Group

Survey area extension 2021

Curlew records

2021



Appendix 3. All Survey Results

First Period Survey: 27 March – 11 April (approx)

Square (Tetrad)	Surveyor				Number of Each Species Recorded															
	First Name	Surname	Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Duncock	Wheat-ear	Stone-chat	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting	
57S	Darrell	Locke	2	10			1	1		1			1						1	
57T	Square not surveyed				Square not surveyed															
57U	Square not surveyed				Square not surveyed															
57X	Scott	Reid	3	0	No target species recorded															
57Y	Bob	Braddock	4	30						8										
57Y	Margaret	Shaw	3	30		3														
57Z	Barbara	Daniels	6	10		1	2		1	12	lots		1	2	3	3		2	3	
58Q	Caroline	Dahn																		
58V	Kate	Maxwell	4	45						5									10	
67C	Scott	Reid	3	30	No target species recorded															
67D	Celia & Ewan	Gibb	1	30		2	2	1	1	lots	lots		3		2					
67D	Beth & Lionel	Bridge	3	55		1	4	1		10	13			3	5					1
67D	Peter	Simon																		
67E	Eric	Davies	2	30		2				1	25							2		
67E	Peter	Simon																		
67H	Ruth	Lawton	3	30	No target species recorded															
67I	David & Ginny	Seckerson																		
67I	Clare	Chapman	1	45																
67I	Ruth	Lawton	1	30	No target species recorded															
67J	Ian	Ferguson	4	20		4	1				2				2	1				
67J	Kate	Maxwell	5	0			1	1			2				2					
67J	Chris	Bargman	1	30	No target species recorded															
67M	Emma	Tipton	3	0	3			2		lots		lots								
67N	Emma	Tipton	inc			2				1		1							1	
67N	Peter	Simon	3	30															1	
67P	Chris	Bargman	3	30		2	1				3				2					
68A	Brian Smith & Pete	Johnson*	6	0	No target species recorded															
68F	Brian Smith & Pete	Johnson*	inc		No target species recorded															
68K	Eric	Evans	9	30		1														
TOTALS			78	35	3	18	12	6	2	38	45	0	6	5	16	4	2	15	4	

Second Period Survey: 17 April - 2 May (approx)

Square (Tetrad)	Surveyor				Number of Each Species Recorded															
	First Name	Surname	Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Duncock	Wheat-ear	Stone-chat	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting	
57S	Darrell	Locke																		
57T	Square not surveyed				Square not surveyed															
57U	Square not surveyed				Square not surveyed															
57X	Scott	Reid	3	30	No target species recorded															
57Y	Bob	Braddock																		
57Y	Margaret	Shaw																		
57Y	Kevin	Urmston	5	50						several	several			4	2					
57Z	Barbara	Daniels	4	30		1	1			30				7	7	7		3	5	
58Q	Caroline	Dahn																		
58V	Kate	Maxwell	4	15		1				3		2							6	
67C	Scott	Reid	3	45	No target species recorded															
67D	Celia & Ewan	Gibb	2	30		3	1					1		1	1					
67D	Beth & Lionel	Bridge	2	25		6		2		7	37	3		2	2					1
67D	Peter	Simon	2	0		2														
67E	Eric	Davies	3	5		1					2									1
67E	Peter	Simon	1	0																
67H	Ruth	Lawton	3	30																
67I	David & Ginny	Seckerson	2	0		3	2			2	5	1			1					
67I	Clare	Chapman	?			2	1					1								
67I	Ruth	Lawton	1	30	No target species recorded															
67J	Ian	Ferguson	2	10							2		2		2	6				
67J	Kate	Maxwell	3	45			1				2	1			2					
67J	Chris	Bargman																		
67M	Emma	Tipton	3	15	3	2				9		1	4						3	
67N	Emma	Tipton				1				1									3	
67N	Peter	Simon	1	0	2															
67P	Chris	Bargman																		
68A	Pete	Johnson*	inc										1							6
68F	Pete	Johnson*	5	30			1			1										
68K	Eric	Evans																		
TOTALS			55	30	5	22	7	2	0	53	48	7	6	18	17	13	0	21	7	

Appendix 3. All Survey Results (cont.)

Third Period Survey: 5-20 June																			
Square (Tetrad)	Surveyor				Number of Each Species Recorded														
	First Name	Surname	Hrs	Mins	Lapwing	Curlew	Kestrel	Red Kite	Snipe	Skylark	Meadow Pipit	Cuckoo	Duncock	Wheatear	Stone-chat	Linnet	Bullfinch	Yellow-hammer	Reed Bunting
57S	Darrell	Locke																	
57T	Square not surveyed																		
57U	Square not surveyed																		
57X	Scott	Reid	4	30															
57Y	Bob	Braddock																	
57Y	Margaret	Shaw	3	30		1	2			1									
57Z	Barbara	Daniels	4	40		1				16	lots				5	6		5	6
58Q	Caroline	Dahn																	
58V	Kate	Maxwell	4	45			1			3								1	
67C	Scott	Reid	4	0	No target species recorded														
67D	Celia & Ewan	Gibb	3	30		4	2			lots	lots	1			2	1			
67D	Beth & Lionel	Bridge	2	15			1			11	18	1			1	4			
67D	Peter	Simon																	
67E	Eric	Davies																	
67E	Peter	Simon																	
67H	Square not surveyed																		
67I	David & Ginny	Seckerson																	
67I	Clare	Chapman																	
67J	Ian	Ferguson	2	30									1		6	2			
67J	Kate	Maxwell	3	30							2	1			4	1			
67J	Chris	Bargman																	
67M	Emma	Tipton	3	0	?					5			2					1	
67N	Emma	Tipton																	
67N	Peter	Simon	1	0	2														
67P	Chris	Bargman																	
68A	Pete	Johnson*	2	30														2	
68F	Pete	Johnson*	2	30				1		2								1	
68K	Eric	Evans																	
TOTALS					2	6	6	1	0	38	20	3	3	0	18	14	0	10	6