

Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group

www.ShropsCWGs.co.uk



Annual Report 2022 Summary

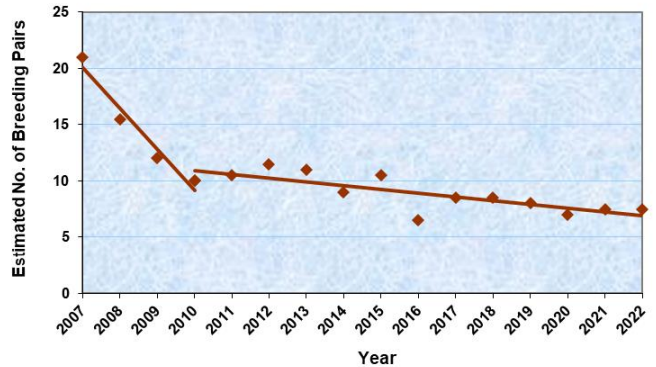
The full report can be found on the website

Birds

We found 7-8 breeding pairs of Curlew. All are on high ground above 350m. in the west. The population has declined steadily since our first survey found 21-22 pairs in 2007.

We are working with the Shropshire Ornithological Society *Save our Curlews* Campaign. In 2018 and 2019, and again in 2021 and 2022, we found nests and protected them with electric fences, then attached radio tags to chicks when they hatched, to see how they used the landscape and what happened to them. In total, 12 nests were found, and 16 chicks from 6 fenced nests were tagged. Three chicks fledged in 2021, but none in any of the other years. All the rest were predated, usually with a few days of hatching.

Estimated Curlew population 2007-2022



Curlew chick colour-ringed on Dowke Hill

This year, 3 - 5 chicks from three unfenced nests were found about one week from fledging, and colour-ringed. At least three, and probably all five, fledged, including the chick in the photo. No fledged young were found in any other year, or 2020, apart from the three in 2021.

Lapwings declined from 6 pairs in 2004 by around a pair a year up until 2010; only two pairs have been found since, both in 2012. No young are known to have fledged since 2008, so Lapwings appear to be extinct as a breeding species. Snipe have disappeared too, with four pairs on Rhos Fiddle in 2009, but the last known breeding

evidence from that site was in 2010.

Kestrels are declining, and only one nest was found.

Eight Red Kite nests were found this year, including three at sites that had been used previously but were unoccupied last year. Five were successful, producing 6 - 7 young. Red Kite is a conservation success story. First breeding in the area was in 2007, and since then a total of 59 nests have been found, 40 were successful, producing 57-58 young.



Kestrel

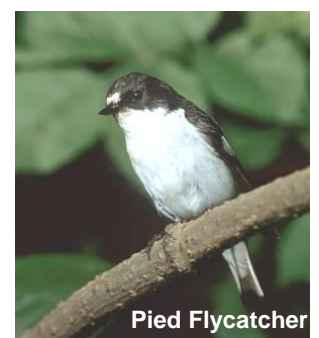


Dipper

Dippers inhabit the fast-flowing rocky streams. Many nest in boxes put up by the Group. Twenty-six potential sites were monitored, 14 active nests were found, and 32 chicks are believed to have fledged.

We also operate a nest box scheme for woodland birds, with Pied Flycatcher and Redstart as the target species. Three members sent in reports of their own boxes. A larger scheme (95 boxes)

is operated by ringers. Altogether, 86 Pied Flycatcher chicks fledged.



Pied Flycatcher

Plants

Seven volunteers, including two new members, variously carried out the surveys in 2022, collecting valuable information on five sites. Good species lists were compiled along with useful information about the sites.

Cwm Frydd

A rich Wildlife Site of unimproved habitat, grading from species-rich grassland through scrub to scattered trees and a small stream within a steep-sided dingle.



Surveying at Cwm Frydd

Black Mountain 1

This Wildlife Site is threatened by its isolation in a sea of improved farmland and its distance from the home farm, meaning that under grazing could reduce its conservation value.



Sphagnum Capillifolium

Black Mountain 2

This more recently adopted Wildlife Site would, in the past, have once been part of Black Mountain 1. There is semi-improved grassland on either side of the rush pasture

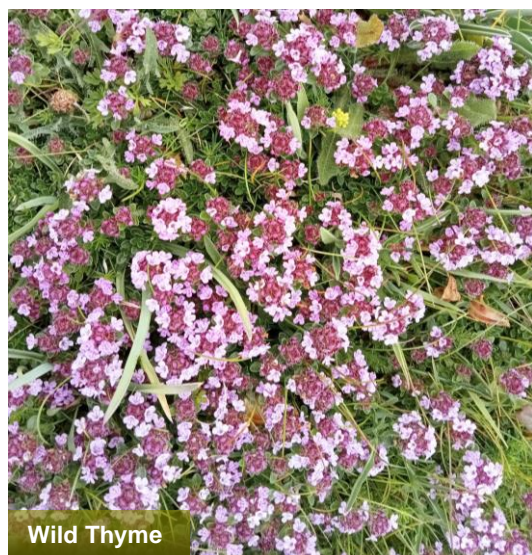
Llanfair Hall Wood

A good-sized stand of woodland in a landscape where there is a fairly strong network of other sessile oak woods.

Gors Bank and Bryn Shop

This large site has been much-reduced in recent years.

Only two fields were surveyed this year, two south-facing banks running down to a rich flush where 300 Northern Marsh Orchid were counted. This species is at its southern-most limit and is rare in Shropshire.



Wild Thyme

Some of the good ecological indicators (known as axiophytes) recorded were: Northern Marsh Orchid, Alternate-leaved Golden Saxifrage, Trailing St John's-wort, Blinks, Mountain Pansy, Marsh Violet, Bog Asphodel, Cross-leaved Heath, Green-ribbed Sedge, White Sedge, Hare's-tail Cotton-grass, Deergrass, Hairy Wood-rush, Wood Melick, Narrow Buckler-fern, Lemon-scented Fern, Red Bog-moss and Papillose Bog-moss. In 2022 a total of 66 different axiophytes were recorded on the five sites.

The Group has been surveying since 2007, and the main focus has been on the Local Wildlife

Sites. Much of the work has concentrated on rush pasture, bogs and unimproved grassland habitats. These wetlands support vulnerable and threatened species like the Curlew and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary butterfly, as well as important plants.

The Group works closely with farmers and other land-owners, who are offered advice on managing their sites.

A key aim of the Clun Forest Farmers Facilitation Fund project, described opposite, is to increase the extent of these rushy pastures.

Marsh Violet, an axiophyte typical of rush pasture, and the food plant for the caterpillar of the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary Butterfly



Butterflies

Surveys of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries started in 2010 and have been conducted annually. This is a UKBAP priority species, which has suffered long term decline across the UK. There are several local sites where it is found, including five good ones and two that are regionally significant. The most important sites are Barretts West (Masons Bank West Wildlife Site), Pant-y-Lidan and Gors Bank.

Unfortunately, 2021 and 2022 were not good surveying years, mostly due to a combination of unfavourable weather conditions and the continuing disruptive effects of the pandemic. Two known sites were surveyed, Barretts West and Rhos Fiddle. The Barretts West population continues to be strong, with good numbers on the wing and some individuals seen beyond the site. No adults were observed at Rhos Fiddle, although signs of caterpillar grazing were observed on Marsh Violet leaves.



Wood White

The Wood White is a nationally 'Endangered' species whose

steady recovery is being successfully managed by Butterfly Conservation volunteers and Forestry England at Bury Ditches and elsewhere in the Marches. It is found in Blakeridge Wood, in the extreme east of our area. The species appears to be spreading and has been recorded

from a number of local woods.

The first record of a new species in Shropshire, the Cinerous Pearl moth, came in May 2020, when one was spotted flying near Crossways. This delicate moth is a relatively large 'micro-moth' which feeds on Yellow Rattle, an important component of traditional hay meadows. Another first, the Cypress Pug moth, was recorded at the same place in August 2021.



Cypress Pug moth

An Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group recording 'activity' was set up on iRecord at the end of 2019. A total of 1055 records were received from 22 observers between January 2021 and September 2022, comprising 27 butterfly species and 232 moth species. iRecord is very easy to use, working on both computer or smartphone, and all records are important, even the most common species. Please add your records.

The Wildlife Group wants to work closely with local farmers.

The vast majority of land in the 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 farmers' active cooperation and support.

In 2018, Land, Life & Livelihoods secured a 3-year "Facilitation Fund" grant from Natural England, through a joint application with the Wildlife Group. This aims to help farmers to work together to find ways to conserve soil, water, wildlife and landscape, and improve farm viability, by going beyond what could be delivered by individual holdings acting in isolation. The area covered by the Clun Forest project comprises the parishes of Mainstone, Newcastle, Bettws-y-Crwyn and Llanfair Waterdine.

Bringing farmers 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.

For example, several "Curlews need Farmers" events have been held, and an Information and Discussion Paper has been prepared to help farmer groups discuss ways of helping to improve Curlew breeding success.

The Upper Clun Community Wildlife Group has been surveying iconic birds, plants and butterflies since 2007.

We will be doing so again in 2023, and we'd like more help, please.

Participants

Nine people helped with Curlew surveys, and another 23 sent in Curlew Records; 8 helped with plant surveys, 1 submitted butterfly and moth records, and there are 11 on the Committee. Thank you, one and all.

Over the years, well over 100 people have contributed, a very high proportion of the local population. Interest and enthusiasm are more important than expertise, so please join in.

Area of Operation

We cover the catchment area of the River Clun west of Clun, including the valleys of the River Unk and the Folly Brook, plus the part of the Bettws y Crwyn parish that is outside the River Clun catchment area. This is around 110 square kilometres.

Aims & Objectives

We

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

Membership

Anyone can join who lives or works in the area, or is interested in its wildlife, and who wants to actively contribute to local knowledge and conservation. Membership is free.

Constitution

We have a Constitution, an elected Committee, and are looking for a bank to hold our account.

Website and Facebook Group

Keep in touch through our website, www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk, and join our Facebook Group (log into Facebook, enter the Group's full name in the search, and click on it when the name comes up: 58 members so far.

Conservation Action

We not only survey species of conservation concern, we work to increase their population and improve their habitats. We work closely with other statutory bodies and community organisations, and have published four advice leaflets on habitat management. There is an extensive chapter on Conservation Action in the full report.

You can find more information about our *Save our Curlews* project to protect nests and track chicks on the SOS website, www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/ There is increasing evidence that the release of large numbers of Pheasants for shooting, 726,000 in Shropshire in 2018 alone, is fuelling a big increase in the numbers of predators that eat Curlew eggs and chicks.

The full Annual Report can be viewed on, or downloaded from, our website
www.ShropsCWGs.org.uk

If you want to go on our mailing list, or you want to help with a survey, or get more information, please ask the Secretary

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Contact Jacky or any other Survey Leader or Committee Member via the Group's email address
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