

Curlew Country South Cumbria

Newsletter Spring 2019



Welcome to this first edition of the Curlew Project Newsletter

The curlew (*Numenius arquata*) is the epitome of the beginning of spring with its haunting calls being one of the most iconic and memorable bird calls; unfortunately, this is now a rare sound of the countryside. Although there are some good populations in a couple of European countries the curlew has been in serious decline almost everywhere. A group called Curlew Country has been set up in Shropshire to try and increase curlew numbers there, and we have set up a satellite group called Curlew Country South Cumbria to try to help birds in the Lyth Valley and Crook areas.

The best places to see curlews in the winter months in Britain are Morecambe Bay, the Solway Firth, the Wash, and the Dee, Severn, Humber and Thames estuaries. The birds then move inland and disperse for their breeding grounds with the birds from Morecambe Bay being recorded as far south as East Anglia and north into Scotland.

Curlew Country South Cumbria has held three meetings this year (2019) The first meeting was held at the beginning of February at the Gilpin Inn and was attended by over 20 land owners, farmers and interested parties. Karen Lloyd showed a presentation and then ways to help protect eggs and chicks were discussed.

The second meeting was held in the same venue on 20th February and most encouragingly the majority of people who attended the first meeting also turned up with others to the second. This meeting used the Curlew Country training cd to outline the behavioural traits of nesting curlews and discussed methods used to identify and mark nests with the hope that farmers and surveyors will be able to find nests and protect them.

The third meeting was held at Sprint Mill, Burneside by kind invitation of Edward and Romola Acland. The curlew training cd was shown and Gerry Cotter, author of "Shire Guide to Curlew" talked about his experience of the birds.

This summer we are going to survey for wader nests and try to get an idea of how many are successful. Presently we have 2 predator proof fences we can put round vulnerable nests.

Notes about Curlew

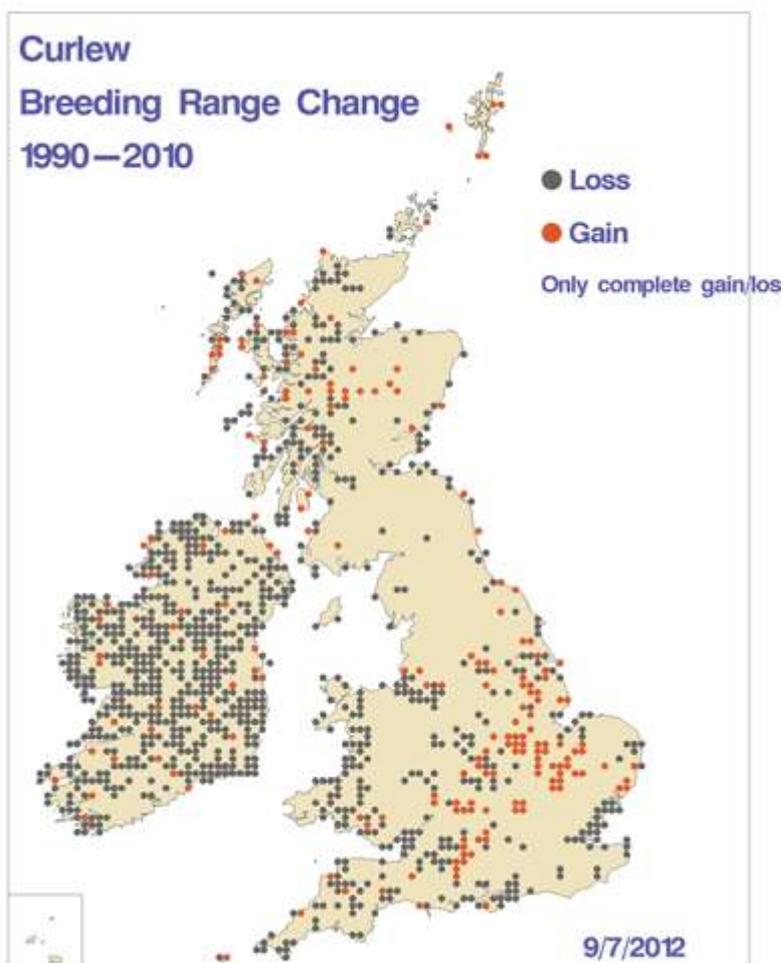


Curlew eggs are usually laid from the middle of April onwards. Finding nests is easiest in silage and hay fields before the grass grows too long. Birds will leave the nest and call if you get too close, if you see birds from a road, the best way is to find somewhere safe to park and sit in a car and wait. If you suspect there is a nest and don't want to monitor it yourself just get in touch and someone from the group will watch. Please do not go into fields without the land-owner's permission and be careful not to disturb the birds for long, especially in colder weather.

Reasons for decline

There are quite a few causes for the curlews decline, from the increase in predator numbers and forestry to the changing of farming methods. Predators include corvids (crows etc), badgers, foxes, weasels, stoats, dogs and even sheep have been caught eating curlew eggs. Methods of controlling predators were discussed at the meetings; reducing corvid numbers, fox control and putting electric, predator proof fences around nests.

Farming methods can destroy nests and young chicks by rolling and mowing over nests. Nests (when found) can be marked with canes to alert tractor drivers of the nest. With older chicks in fields it may be worth starting mowing in the centre of the field and moving outwards so the birds can flee to the field edges. Mowing from the edge and moving inwards traps the birds in the central patch of long grass from where there is no escape.



The map above shows the extent of the loss in the UK.

Gerry Cotter, who wrote the Shire Natural History guide to the curlew has kindly written the Plight of the Curlew for us. Click below



The Plight of the
Curlew1.docx

If you would like more curlew information:

Websites

Curlew Country

<https://curlewcountry.org/2017/07/31/end-2017-breeding-season-project-summary/>

Southern and Lowland Britain Curlew Forum

<http://www.curlewcall.org/>

RSPB

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/conservation-and-sustainability/farming/advice/helping-species/curlew/>

BTO

<https://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u35/downloads/curlew-appeal/curlew-appeal-leaflet.pdf>

Birdguides - reasons for the decline

<https://www.birdguides.com/articles/ornithology/new-study-sheds-light-on-eurasian-curlew-decline/>

Management plan for curlew across Europe

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/conservation/wildbirds/hunting/docs/curlew.pdf>

International Wader Study Group

<https://www.waderstudygroup.org/article/10525/>

Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust

<https://www.gwct.org.uk/advisory/briefings/curlew/>

Birdlife

<https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/curlews-crisis>

Parliamentary Debate 2017

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2017-10-17/debates/1710173700001/LowlandCurlew>

Shooting UK - (slow site lots of pop-ups)

<https://www.shootinguk.co.uk/shooting/conservation/saving-the-curlew-99984>

British Association for Shooting and Conservation

<https://basc.org.uk/conservation/breeding-curlew-need-you/>

Nature in the Dales

<http://www.natureinthedales.org.uk/species/birds/eurasian-curlew>

irecord - site where you can log any wildlife sightings

<https://www.brc.ac.uk/irecord/>

Books

Colwell, Mary (2018) Curlew Moon. Harpercollins

Cotter, Gerry (1990) The Curlew. Shire Natural History

Email to report possible breeding curlews/other waders in the Lyth and crook valleys: tonia.armer@gmail.com

Thanks go to Angela Slater for writing this newsletter.