

Bird Group Lapwing and Curlew Survey, and the *Save our Curlews* campaign

Short Project Report

If you look forward to the return of the haunting, bubbling, song of the Curlew each spring, then please help.

We have been looking for local Curlews since 2012. There were around 13 pairs in 2012, but we found only 7 in the same area in 2019 (a 48% decline in only eight years), so we don't have much time left to save them. We also extended our area to the west, adding 4 more survey squares, where we found 6 more pairs.

Curlews are in danger of disappearing altogether, and we need to know more about them and how best to save them. We therefore co-operated again with the County-wide *Save our Curlews* campaign, run by Shropshire Wildlife Trust and Shropshire Ornithological Society, and funded by a joint appeal. Farmers with Curlews on their land in 2018 were contacted and briefed about the project, which aimed to find Curlew nests and protect them with an electric fence, and fit radio tags to chicks when they hatched, to see where they went and if they survived. The farmers were all very supportive, and 4 nests were found and protected (one just outside the area). It worked well, as eggs hatched in two of the four. One fence was knocked over by sheep, and the fourth went full term, but the eggs didn't hatch. A brood of three all fledged, an excellent result. We learnt a lot more, and want to repeat the project in 2020. The project report has been sent to all members of the Bird Group, and can be found on the Clee Hill part of the Community Wildlife Groups website, www.ShropsCWGs.co.uk

We found up to 10 Lapwings (5 breeding pairs) near Hollywaste, more than the 2-4 pairs found at the same site in each of the last two years. Before that, there hadn't been any for three years.

Kestrels, in decline elsewhere, seem to be holding their own here: 3 nests were found, and there is evidence for another 6 pairs. Red Kites are being seen more frequently, but we are not aware of any nest sites yet.

A full bird survey report for 2019 has been sent to all participants. It can also be found on the website. Twenty-four local people helped with the survey in 2019, but we need more helpers, please. It only takes three half-days to suit you, around 1st April, 1st May and mid-June. Clear guidance is provided, and it's enjoyable and easy to do. Please come to the Bird Group meeting at 7.30pm on Monday 23rd March 2019 at the Recreation Rooms, 22a Clee Hill High Street (next to the village post office and stores). The meeting will plan the survey, and a local outdoor meeting to look for Curlews and other birds on Clee Hill in early April. The bird survey results in 2019 will be presented in more detail, and the Curlew nest protection scheme, working with farmers and landowners, will be discussed.

We held an early morning walk to listen for birdsong at Novers Wood on 12 May. It will be repeated in 2020 if there is sufficient interest. Details will be available on the website.

SWT have now withdrawn from the *Save our Curlews* campaign, but it is being continued by SOS. The nest finding and protection project will only continue in the Clee Hill area if the appeal raises sufficient funds in the next few weeks. Please consider if you feel able to make a donation. If so, visit the SOS website, www.shropshirebirds.com/save-our-curlews/ to download the Appeal leaflet. If you are a UK taxpayer, please sign the Gift Aid declaration, which increases the value of your donation by 25%.