

## Herefordshire Curlew Project 2024 Year Review

### Summary:

This was another very disappointing year for Curlew reproduction in the county. There were seven (7) territories where the female laid eggs, the hatching of eggs occurred at only three (3) locations. Non[e] of the chicks survived to fledging. Only one (1) Curlew chick was seen, it disappeared before it attained flight. It was probable that breeding or attempted breeding occurred at eight (8) more localities however, there is not enough evidence to confirm this.

A total of eleven (11) nests were found with another identified when adults were repeatedly alarm calling. A new Curlew territory was identified.

In order [to] sustain the existing population a pair of Curlew should fledge at least one (1) chick every other year. At the conclusion of this breeding season, Curlew in the past five (5) years have produced twelve (12) fledglings.

Herefordshire Curlew are not anywhere near reaching sustainability.

This year four (4) GPS tracking devices were fitted to four (4) adult Curlew. These devices were recycled from 2023. They indicate the birds are wintering on the South Wales coastline, at locations from Newport and Carmarthen.

### The Detailed Report:

The Curlew *Numenius arquata* in Herefordshire is a seasonal visitor, spending five or six months in the county. They usually return from their wintering grounds in mid to the end of February or early March however the upland breeding birds return a little later. If they are successful with breeding they remain into August, or occasionally later, before leaving. Failed or non breeding birds often depart earlier.

Numenius means “new moon” whilst and arquata means archery bow. [I think this should be included in above paragraph, after first sentence]

There are two distinct and separate areas where nesting Curlew may be found in the county. The lowland areas, are mainly the floodplains of the riverside meadows of the rivers Lugg and Wye. On the Lugg, Curlew territories are to found from Withington to the confluence with the Wye, whilst on the Wye, there are territories from the border with Powys downstream to Holme Lacy. Curlew are also to be found in the upland meadows at Longtown and adjoining parishes in the west of the county. This year there were seven (7) active territories on the lowland areas and, nine (9) on the upland territories. [This does not square with the figures in first paragraph of ‘Summary’ which suggest there were only 15. There may be an explanation but I can’t see it!]

Curlew have historically nested in other areas however, since the nationwide decline of the species they have not been seen or reported in recent years. The group believes that most Curlew territories have been found. With Curlew confined to such small areas, that may not necessarily be so. It is possible, that there may be an undiscovered territory or two out there. A new lowland territory was in fact found this year.

There are four (4) nesting Curlew territories where the land managers have denied the group access to monitor activity. There are two (2) or even three (3) in the parish of Dorstone with another at

Walterstone. It is extremely difficult to be completely certain of their status without access to the land. We are continually talking to the respective land managers trying to gain access to these locations. Progress is slow however, we remain optimistic .

Once again, this was a very disappointing year for Curlew reproduction. There was evidence until the last week of July, that Curlew chicks would survive through to fledging at one site but, that was not to be so. Chicks were never seen however, the behaviour of the adults was consistent with young Curlew being present. It was calculated that the young would almost certainly not have attained flight. The fate of those chicks is unknown. Did they fledge or were they predated? We simply do not know.

There was a reduced amount of monitoring and coverage this year due to ill health, ailments and, holidays taken at key stages during the Curlew breeding season. There must be more consistent coverage in future to obtain a greater understanding of Curlew breeding in Herefordshire. Two (2) nests were protected with an electric fence and two (2) were covered by trail cameras. There are arguments for and against the use of electric fencing. They successfully deter mammalian predators; however, avian species may have learned the presence may indicate there may be a food source nearby. The use of a trail camera at the successful nest did not provide any useful information while, the camera at the predated nest showed a “black flash” thought to be a corvid at the time of the predation. The male Curlew at this nest was wearing a GPS tracking device, he was at the nest around this time. This is not conclusive evidence but, it certainly supports the view that corvids are one of the main predators of Curlew eggs and chicks. [Why is this not conclusive? We may not have been able to identify the “black flashes” to species level but all of the shots containing them (there were several) were triggered during the known period of egg loss]

Two (2) of the three (3) colour ringed Curlew of 2021 returned to their lowland breeding territories, whilst the colour ringed chick of that year also returned to the natal area, albeit for a brief period before being reported a few days later in Gloucestershire. Nothing further is known about its movements or any breeding or attempted breeding activities.

The six (6) birds caught in 2023 were each seen at some point during the year. These had GPS tracking devices fitted but, the harnesses failed and, the devices became detached.

This year Tony Cross and Chris Wells caught, four (4) adult birds (three (3) males and a female) away from the nest using a stuffed decoy, tape-lure and “whoosh net”. The Curlew were caught at upland territories in Craswall, Longtown and Urishay, with one caught on the floodplain at Winforton, near to a known territory.

The GPS tracker devices used were those which were purchased in 2023 with a generous donation from the Peter Gardner Legacy fund held by Herefordshire Ornithological Club and donations received by Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. We are grateful to both organisations for their support. These devices were recovered after the harnesses failed last year.

The GPS tracking devices are attached to the back of each bird with a “Rappolle Tipton” leg loop harness (made from 2mm silastic tubing), worn like a rucksack. After the disappointment of 2023, a heavier grade of harness was sourced. Special permission from the British Trust for Ornithology was obtained to fit tracking devices to Curlew. In addition, each Curlew was fitted with colour rings, an Orange ring on the right tibia and an individually inscribed Yellow ring on the left tibia. An obligatory

metal ring was fitted to the right tarsus. The colour ringing scheme is a project aiming to study the breeding areas, winter destinations and survival rates of Curlews breeding in Shropshire, Mid Wales and Herefordshire.

A total of thirteen (13) nests were either found or known to have existed. Including relayed nests after a previous nest failure. It was probable that breeding or attempted breeding occurred at eight (8) more localities.

There are three (3) known causes of nest failure this year, these being four (4) instances of predation, there were two (2) cases of interference by grazing sheep, before the nest could be protected with electric fencing and, two (2) nests were abandoned by the adults before incubation was complete.

The most likely predators are Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* at one (1) site or Red Fox *Vulpes vulpes* but, firm evidence was not available to confirm the suspicions. [If this is Castleton, see previous note. If not where and what was the Red Fox evidence?]

Confirmed breeding pairs are determined when there is evidence any of the following:-

- Used nest or eggshells found
- Downy young seen
- Adults entering or leaving nest-site in circumstances indicating occupied nest or adults seen incubating – sitting is often followed by lowering of the head (disappearing in tall vegetation) followed by periodic raising and looking around
- Nest containing eggs
- Nest with young seen or heard
- Incubation change-over seen - when approaching the nest curlews appear to 'move with purpose' without actively feeding, although not necessarily faster or slower than normal
- Agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults, indicating the presence of a nest or young nearby, observed on three or more occasions
- Evidence of GPS tagged birds being static on several occasions in a particular area of the nest site

There are twenty nine (29) Curlew territories in the county of which thirteen (13) [were known to be] active nesting sites [during 2024]. [The remainder are either inactive (probably lost) or inactive (never proven). The status of each is indicated in the 'Site Reports' below]

The landowners / land managers can manage without the Curlew Group however, the group cannot function fully without the cooperation of them. This group acknowledges their help, without their assistance, much of this information could not have been obtained. It is obvious they are pleased to have Curlew on their properties, they continue to support the work of this group even though Curlew may not be nesting on their land. We are frequently asked how can they get Curlew to nest on their fields. If only we knew.

Also, the group acknowledges all the Curlew watchers who made a considerable contribution to this body of work. Long may it continue.

#### **Site Reports:**

Allensmore:                      Status: Active.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

The fields at this site are in "crop rotation" with rye grass, potato, pea and wheat planted in different fields each year. Potatoes and peas are defiantly [definitely] not suitable for nesting.

The first Curlew arrived on 18th March. Weekend visits continued with random sightings.

On 10th and 11th April, a pair were probably exploring the the [delete] area for a nest site.

On 13<sup>th</sup> April, the site male with a damaged leg was defending against an unidentified colour ringed male. The male and female were together the following day. Surprisingly, Curlew were not seen again until 4th June. This raises the question did the pair have a nest here or, did they try to nest elsewhere?

There were further sightings that month suggesting nesting but, this was not confirmed. If, nesting was attempted it was in the rye grass.

Castleton: Status: Active.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

The first report of Curlew was on 24<sup>th</sup> March with seventeen (17) birds present, this being in [space inserted] line with last year. These may have been part of a larger herd of Curlew that frequents the flood plains of the river Wye between Glasbury and Boughrood at this time of the year. The numbers gradually reduced during the month. On 13<sup>th</sup> April, a single pair of Curlew were identified as being "on territory".

On 9<sup>th</sup> May there was a nest with three eggs in a field with grazing sheep. This was the first recorded of a Curlew nest at this site. On 12<sup>th</sup> May, this nest was not fenced as the eggs had gone. There was evidence of sheep laying close by, the eggs may have eaten by one of the sheep, not an uncommon occurrence.

On 14<sup>th</sup> May, a male Curlew was caught to the east of this site; after release it flew back to the site, a GPS tracking device and colour rings were fitted. It was presumed, wrongly as it turned out, this was the male from the destroyed nest.

On 21<sup>st</sup> May, there was a nest with two eggs in long mowing grass. Three hundred and eighty seven (387) metres west of the first nest.

On 24<sup>th</sup> May an electric fence was installed around a full clutch of eggs as was a trail camera. On 20<sup>th</sup> June one of the eggs was found to be missing, after which the nest was abandoned. Images from the camera showed a black flash, possibly a corvid was responsible for the egg removal.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June, a non ringed pair of Curlew were observed defending against Crows, unmistakable evidence that young were present. This was the first indication of two (2) pairs of Curlew present in this large area of meadows.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July, the colour ringed Curlew left the site, to winter at the confluence of the rivers Lledi and Loughor, near Llanelli a distance of ninety six (96.3) kilometres.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July was the last sighting of the alarm calling male, indicating young were still present. Chicks were never seen or heard afterwards; the fate of this pair is unknown.

Celtic Vale:

This site is still on our list of potential territories, there was one late report of Curlew being heard on an unspecified date by residents. More observations are required to show the status of this site.

Clifford: Probably a lost territory.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

The only report of Curlew was calling across the farm on 16<sup>th</sup> March, eleven (11) days earlier than last year.

Craswall: Status: Active.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

On 15<sup>th</sup> March, the landowner reported Curlew had returned.

On 19<sup>th</sup> April a male was caught, fitted with a GPS tracking device and colour rings. The GPS data showed he was roosting at the Bacton roost site. A distance of 12.56 kilometres from the catching location.

23<sup>rd</sup> April, the male returning from the Bacton roost spent two (2) hours at a Dorstone territory.

On 4<sup>th</sup> May a nest with one egg was located.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May the nest was empty, a second nest with three (3) eggs was found nearby.

On 18<sup>th</sup> May the nest was examined when trampled eggshells were found, after the landowner moved sheep into the field.

On 30<sup>th</sup> May a third nest with three (3) eggs was located, an electric fence was erected later that day. It is believed the nest had been abandoned before the fence was erected, as the eggs [had been?] rotated.

On 1<sup>st</sup> June the male flew to a known territory at Dorstone, he continued to spend time at both sites until the end of the month. Access to this site has been refused.

On the night 5/6<sup>th</sup> June GPS data showed the male roosted at Michaelchurch Escley.

He spent the nights of 11<sup>th</sup> /12<sup>th</sup> June at a known roost at Madley.

On 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> June the male roosted at Castleton which he did until the departure to the wintering grounds.

On 27<sup>th</sup> he departed to the Severn Estuary at Newport, a distance of 56.16 kilometres.

Donnington:

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

Curlew were not heard or seen this year.

Last year, (2023) the GPS tagged male from Rotherwas, and a non ringed female nested here after the failure of the Hereford nest.

Dorstone: Status: Active.

This [The] sites in the [this] parish are in private ownership, there is not any public access.

There are three Curlew territories where landowners will not allow access to monitor the birds.

There are Curlew territories situated in the vicinity of Little Mountain and near Newhouse Wood, [which] held [] pairs that exhibited courtship behaviour and defending against avian predators indicating possible nesting. Without access permission a clear understanding of the success or otherwise cannot be determined.

19<sup>th</sup> April was the only visit to these sites when pairs were displaying courtship behaviour.

There is a third territory in this parish where Curlew a[re] thought to nest, the landowner holds the view that because Curlew return each year they are doing fine and must not be disturbed. He does not know if they nest or, if any young fledge.

Data from the Craswall GPS tagged male showed for most of June he was commuting between both sites. It is not thought he had a nest here however, as unlikely that may be, it cannot be totally discounted.

Eau Withington : Status: Active.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

The colour ringed male from this site was observed with others on 1<sup>st</sup> March at Lower Lugg meadow. Incidentally, this male was first seen here last year albeit seventeen (17) days later.

On 14<sup>th</sup> April a pair of Curlew were observed here, including the 2021 colour ringed male. Curlew were observed defending against avian predators however, a nest was not found.

On 31<sup>st</sup> May, the pair were observed in a field of cut grass on the west side of the river Lugg, where their presence was an indication any nesting activity had failed. Curlew were not seen here again.

Fownhope:        Probably a lost territory.

This site is in private ownership, there is a single footpath allowing limited access.

Curlew were not heard or seen this year.

Hampton Meadow: Probably a lost territory.

This site which includes two adjoining meadows, Greater Million and Little Million, is in the ownership of the Wildlife Trust, there is restricted public access.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> July there was a single Curlew seen feeding in the distance.

Holme Lacy :     Probably a lost territory.

Curlew were not heard or seen here this year.

Letton Lakes:                Status: Active

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

This is a historical Curlew site, which this year held a small number of birds.

On 20<sup>th</sup> April, five calling Curlew seen in flight.

On 26<sup>th</sup> April a pair were seen suggesting there may have been a nest or young but, they were disturbed by a Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*) They were not seen afterwards.

Llanveynoe:

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

This [has been an] alternate nesting sight [site] for the Rowlestone pair. Although the Rowlestone [pair] failed, the pair were not seen here [this year]. There were a handful of sightings of single non ringed birds flying across the valley to feed.

Longtown (1):                Status: Active.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

This was formerly identified as Trewern however, this is 0.9 kilometres from the old generic site name.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March the 2023 the colour ringed female was observed near the catching field.

On 26<sup>th</sup> April, a male Curlew was caught in a field near to site where the female was caught the previous year. He was fitted with colour rings and a GPS tracking device. This the only site where both birds are identifiable by colour rings.

He was very mobile making many flights to adjoining parishes. The GPS data showed he favoured a number of meadows non [none] of which were suitable for nesting. The grass length did not provide any cover. The female may have laid eggs however, nests nor eggs were never found.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> June, the male flew to the Severn Estuary, south west of RSPB Newport Wetlands Centre, a distance of 48.31 kilometres.

Longtown (2)                Status: Active.

The birds on this territory are probably the birds that gave rise to the Trewern territory. It is 0.77 kilometres north of the other nest in this parish. There were birds in the vicinity from mid March however, nests sites were never identified or found.

On 19th May two Curlew were copulating in a field close to this site. The male was identified as ringed at Rowlestone in 2023. This raises the possibility that he had been displaced at Rowlestone by the colour ringed male Curlew ringed at Walterstone.

Lower Lugg Meadow: Status: Active.

This site is in multiple ownership, there is not any public access between 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> July.

This site close to Hereford city usually holds small herds of Curlew returning from breeding grounds in late February before dispersing to their nesting territories.

18<sup>th</sup> March, the first record of five (5) Curlew here for the year, unusually late, rising to a maximum of fifteen (15) birds on floodwater.

On 20th March, there was an adult colour ringed Curlew present. It was ringed as a chick at this site on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021. This being the first Curlew to be colour ringed in the county. This was the first sighting since it was ringed. On 23rd and 24th March it was at Cobney Meadows, Norton, Tewksbury, Gloucestershire.

On 12<sup>th</sup> May two Curlew were copulating, providing convincing evidence that breeding was being attempted however, a nesting area nor nest was never found.

On 5<sup>th</sup> June, the 2022 colour ringed female was on her Severn Estuary wintering territory near Lydney. If the [they] made a nest, it was either predated or failed.

On 29<sup>th</sup> June a single Curlew “bubbly” call” was heard but, the bird was not seen. That was the last site record.

Lugwardine: Probably a lost territory.

This a new site. Information was received late in 2022 that Curlew nested here.

There was not any evidence of nesting in 2023, therefore there was limited observations this year and Curlew were not seen.

Madley:

This site is in private ownership, there is public access across one field holding the roost pool.

The fields at this site are in “crop rotation” with rye grass, oil seed rape, potato, pea and wheat planted in different fields each year. Potatoes and peas are defiantly [definitely] not suitable for nesting.

On 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March, seven (7) Curlew were at the main roost, the numbers diminished as the oil seed rape grew taller making it unsuitable for the birds.

The GPS tagged male from Longtown (1) visited the secondary roost on 27<sup>th</sup> May and also 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> June.

Michaelchurch Escley: Status: Active.

This site covers three meadows in separate private ownerships, there is not any public access.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, the colour ringed adult male from this site was at Llangorse Lake, Powys. On

17<sup>th</sup> March, he was observed near Longtown (2)

The first report of returning birds here was on 12<sup>th</sup> April. On 6<sup>th</sup> May, there was a nest with three (3) eggs. On 5<sup>th</sup> June, the eggs had hatched however, young were not heard or seen, adults were alarm calling. They were subsequently feeding in adjacent fields indicating the young were predated.

On 16<sup>th</sup> September, information was received concerning the colour ringed male Curlew from this site, the corpse was found at Ballyteige, Wexford, Ireland. It was probably killed by a strike by a raptor.

This was the first recorded sighting at its wintering ground and, the first record of a Herefordshire Curlew beyond the borders of Wales.

Monkland :

This site wasn't visited as it not considered to be a nesting territory.

Mordiford:        Probably a lost territory.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

Curlew were not present at this site.

Rotherwas:        Status: Active.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access however, there is a riverside footpath.

The first Curlew arrived on 11<sup>th</sup> February with a maximum of five (5) birds.

The site colour ringed female returned on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

On 30<sup>th</sup> April two Curlew were defending against Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus*, indicating the presence of a nest. This was probably predated.

On 10<sup>th</sup> June there was a nest containing a full clutch of eggs, an electric fence was erected, protecting the nest from grazing cattle. On 25<sup>th</sup> June, one of the eggs had hatched, the behaviour of the adults indicated there was a chick some distance from the nest. Two (2) days later a single chick was seen, this being the only sighting. The remaining eggs remained unhatched.

The colour ringed female was confirmed being present on 30<sup>th</sup> June.

On 11<sup>th</sup> July, despite an extensive search neither the adult Curlew nor the chick were heard or seen.

There is a distinct possibility the chick had suffered fatal consequences and, the male had departed to the wintering grounds.

Rowlestone:        Status: Active.

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> March, the male was photographed at Llangorse Lake.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March was the first report of Curlew, by one of the locals [local] contacts, having returned close nearby to the territory. On 6<sup>th</sup> March, the colour ringed male was present a with [with a] non ringed female.

On 10<sup>th</sup> March, they were seen at the Bacton roost.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March, the colour ringed male from this site was near the Longtown (2) nest site, with a non ringed female.

On 7<sup>th</sup> May, a Curlew nest was found with a single egg, the clutch was complete by 12<sup>th</sup> May. On 12<sup>th</sup> the colour ringed male from Walterstone with a non ringed were in a field adjacent to the nest site.

On 19<sup>th</sup> May, the colour ringed male was copulating with a non ringed female near Longtown (2). Later that day the nest appeared to have been abandoned. A visit the following day confirmed the abandonment.

It is not known which female of the two pairs laid the eggs.

St. Margarets:

This site is a group of fields where reports of Curlew are often received are in private ownership, there is not any public access. Evidence provided by the GPS tracker in 2023 suggests this may be an alternative site for the pair from Michaelchurch Escley. The colour ringed male and a non ringed female were observed on several occasions during the second half of April. There was not any evidence of breeding here. There were not any reports of Curlew here this year.

Urishay Common:        Status: Active.



This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

A male Curlew was seen in flight on 24<sup>th</sup> March

On 26<sup>th</sup> April, a female was caught, fitted with colour rings and a GPS tracking device.

Data recovered from the tracking device provided the following information:

28<sup>th</sup> April it spends time near the communications tower 3.7km away at Dorstone.

On the nights of 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> at a roost south of the river Wye between Glasbury and Hay on Wye 12.45 km from the catch site.

7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> May it spent nights at Llangorse Lake a distance of 18.01 km

On 10<sup>th</sup> there was a nest with single egg. Four (4) days later, the nest was empty.

19<sup>th</sup> there was a second nest with three cold eggs, each had small hole. What caused this is unknown.

On the night 19<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> May it spent 5+1/2 hrs at Llangorse Lake returning to Craswall.

27<sup>th</sup> May, there was a nest with two eggs at Craswall (in a different field to the nests of the resident pair) 4.1 km

from the catching site.

13<sup>th</sup> June at the river Wye between Glasbury and Hay on Wye.

14<sup>th</sup> June the nest was empty. The cause of the predation is unknown.

16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> June present at Castleton.

27<sup>th</sup> present slopes of Hay Bluff.

29<sup>th</sup> arrived on river Towy, Ferryside, St Ishmael, Carmarthenshire. 98.44 km

7<sup>th</sup> August moved east to Kidwelly Quay return to Ferryside

#### Vagar Hill:

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access.

There was limited surveying of this site which did not produce any positive evidence of breeding although birds were present.

There was evidence gathered from two GPS tracking devices, of breeding Curlew visiting here after their nests had failed and, before another nest was made and eggs laid. This activity may have caused the landowner and watchers to think Curlew nested here. More observations are needed next year to try and solve this.

#### Walterstone:

This site is in private ownership, there is not any public access. Access has been refused.

It has been thought that there was a breeding territory here although, a territory has never been identified.

On 16<sup>th</sup> May a pair of Curlew with a colour ringed male (ringed at Longtown 2 last year) were [seen to fly] from the direction of the suspected Walterstone site and feed close to the Rowlestone territory. This is another site where more observations are required to resolve this conundrum.

#### Other Sites:

Reports were received of [received of] Curlew seen or heard at the following locations however, evidence of any territorial activity was not found. It is thought that these observations may relate to birds from nearby territories, Cobhall Common, Richard's Castle and Withington.

#### Other Activities:

The assistance of Caroline Hanks, Herefordshire Meadows, was sought to raise the awareness of the diminishing species. Advice was provided to contact the following conservation bodies.

Herefordshire Rural Hub - Wyescales Landscape Recovery Project

Wye Valley National Landscapes - formerly the AONB and,  
the Wye and Usk Foundation.  
We will be continuing with strengthening the relationships.

At the request of the Gwent Curlew Group a nest with four eggs was found in difficult habitat. Assistance was provided to the Worcestershire Curlew Group to confirm birds on two territories north of Bewdley.

### **Conclusions:**

The foregoing indicates that the situation for breeding Curlew in Herefordshire remains precarious. The absence of fledged young is a great concern but, the overall trend for the number of active sites in the county is in decline. It may be that 2023 and this year were exceptional but, it is worrying to see that even the “traditional” site at Lower Lugg Meadow (once a flagship site) and others are becoming less attractive to breeding Curlew.

There are several possible reasons for this, including deterioration of habitat, changes in agrotechnical practices, weather conditions, the loss of breeding adults during winter, disruption by man or predators and, insufficient recruitment of young adults to the breeding stock.

The reason for nest and egg loss is easier to explain, undoubtedly the main cause of this is predation. Carrion Crows *Corvus corone* being the main culprits.

They have been a highly probable suspect, albeit circumstantial, on many predated nests.

Mammalian predators cannot be ruled out however, it is our intention to continue with the installation of camera traps (aka trail cams) on as many nests as possible in 2025 in order to gain evidence [of] the suspects.

The identification of a predator presents another problem. How to deter them. Predation by foxes can be restricted with the use of electric fencing but, corvid control is a different matter. Their control really needs to be on a large scale. In this county it is neither practical nor sustainable. There may be some possibilities at a local level however, we intend to investigate if this is achievable.

After such another poor season, it is hard to escape the hypothesis that the Project is merely monitoring the extinction of Curlew as a breeding species in Herefordshire. The group intend to continue our work in 2025, continuing the GPS tagging and colour ringing programme which has yielded some interesting information.

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