



### **TREND IN THE PEAK DISTRICT :**

Large declines on in-bye land, for example a decrease from 421 pairs to 179 pairs on the North Staffordshire Moors between 1985 and 1996; stable moorland population.

### **ESTIMATED POPULATION IN THE PEAK DISTRICT :**

Probably in excess of 1000 pairs (455 pairs on moorland in 1990).

### **NATIONAL BAP STATUS:**

Species of Conservation Concern

### **ASSOCIATED PEAK DISTRICT ACTION PLANS:**

**Habitats:** Heather Moorland, Blanket Bog, Rush Pasture, Hay Meadow, Rough Grazing, Unimproved Pasture, Limestone Heath, River Corridor Habitats.

**Species:** Lapwing, Twite.

## INTRODUCTION

The return of the curlew heralds the start of the spring in the Peak District. They breed in most open habitats throughout the Peak District and adults are able to feed on a range of invertebrates, in both tall and short vegetation. Widely distributed across all moorland areas, both 'white' moor and heather moor, population densities of 53 pairs on 59 km<sup>2</sup> of moorland are typical. Lower densities are found on blanket bog. Curlew are found on all types of upland pasture, however no population estimate is available for the White Peak. In the South West Peak, numbers on farmland have declined by over 50 %, although 179 pairs were still present on the North Staffordshire Moors area in 1996.

Curlew do not seem to have disappeared from any particular area of the Peak District. However on in-bye pastures breeding densities are significantly lower than in the past. Assuming a breeding population of 1000 pairs, this represents 2 - 3% of the British breeding population.

ADVERSE FACTORS	Historic	Current
<b>Land Management – Stocking and Cropping</b>		
Continued agricultural intensification of in-bye and rush pasture, including high stocking rates, leading to nest trampling in the breeding season.	✓	✓✓
Conversion from hay to silage resulting in an increasing number of nests being destroyed by machinery operations.	✓	✓✓
Reduction in soil moisture content (and consequent decline in availability of invertebrates) due to soil compaction through heavy grazing pressure.		✓✓
Replacement of cattle with sheep (creating more uniform swards, with fewer secure nest sites) on many upland hill farms, as the price of beef and milk continues to decline.		✓
Overgrazing of moorland, though this problem now affects fewer sites since the introduction of Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) schemes.	✓✓	✓
<b>Land Management – Drainage</b>		
Field drainage leading to reduction in soil moisture content in moorland fringe and river corridor areas.	✓✓	✓
Increased efficiency of stream/river drainage on river valleys leading to a reduction in river corridor wetland habitats.	✓✓	✓
<b>Others</b>		
Increased rates of egg and chick predation as predator numbers such as crows increase.		✓✓
Recent run of wet springs in the 1990s, leading to reduced chick survival.		✓
Tree planting proposals have threatened a number of important curlew breeding areas where the importance of these sites has not been recognized.	✓	✓

*An impact* ✓      *Significant impact* ✓✓

## CURRENT ACTION

### Designated Sites

- The Dark Peak, Leek Moors, Eastern Peak District Moors and Goyt Valley SSSIs are all recognized as being important for their assemblages of upland breeding birds including curlew.
- Curlew are considered as being a species of interest within the South Pennines Moors SPA (incorporating all of the above SSSIs) although they are not a qualifying species in terms of the designation. Implementation of the EU Birds Directive in the SPA should impart increased protection for the curlew's Peak District habitat.
- Owners of SSSI land on the Leek Moors are re-negotiating management agreements with EN to benefit curlew.

### Sites Owned and Managed by Conservation Organisations

- Tenants on NT farms are re-creating upland hay meadows in the Edale Valley and restoring dwarf shrub moorland with the aim of benefiting moorland fringe birds including curlew.

### Sites Within Conservation Agreements

- Landowners have brought several key curlew nesting areas under ESA management, for example Hazel Barrow, Moscar House and Midhopstones.

### Research and Survey

- A joint MAFF/NWW/RSPB project is looking at re-wetting compacted land by mechanical slotting at Padfield in the North Peak.

### Awareness Raising

- The RSPB has produced a curlew management sheet for landowners and conservation organisations and has provided PDNPA advisory staff with training about the habitat requirements of curlew.

## ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

### National Targets

There is no national action plan for curlew in the UK. The RSPB, however, has published an internal Species Action Plan for curlew. Its objectives are:

- To maintain the UK breeding population of curlew at or above current levels.
- In the long term, to halt and reverse regional declines in breeding population numbers and range.

### A Vision for the Peak District

The curlew's haunting, melancholy call and distinctive outline are an integral part of the Peak District moorland, moorland fringe, White Peak plateau and river corridor landscapes. Working together with farmers and other land managers we hope to secure the future of this 'herald of the spring' by both safeguarding existing breeding sites and by increasing the area of suitable breeding and feeding habitat.

## OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

### Objective 1

**Maintain the existing breeding population and range, as estimated by the 1999 Moorland Survey and the proposed 2001 In-Bye Survey.**

#### Target

Bring 50 % of key curlew breeding sites into favourable management by 2005 and 100% by 2010.

### Objective 2

**Achieve a measurable and sustained increase in both the numbers and range of breeding curlew by 2010.**

#### Target

Increase breeding numbers on 50 % of targeted sites, and increase the number of new breeding sites by 10% by 2010.

### Main Factors Likely to Affect Achievement of Targets

#### *Land Management*

Implementation of the Rural Development Regulation and reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

Effectiveness of agri-environment and conservation scheme prescriptions.

High land prices – forcing intensive management following purchase of land.

#### *Resources and Financial Incentives*

Availability of funding for survey, awareness raising programme and negotiation of conservation agreements.

Availability of funding for agri-environment and conservation scheme agreements.  
 Adequacy of financial incentives for agri-environment and conservation agreements.

*Planning and Regulation*

Planning policy.

*Conflicts with Other Priorities*

Conflicts between the habitat requirements of curlew and other ecological conservation priorities eg. when considering woodland creation proposals in moorland fringe areas.

Potential conflicts with archaeology.

*Others*

Lack of a strategy for safeguarding sites of particular wildlife importance where this cannot be achieved through the normal channels of negotiation.

Threats to curlew in its wintering habitat.

Predation of chicks and eggs.

## ACTIONS

Key to the achievement of the proposed targets are the actions relating to:

- survey and compilation of a comprehensive list of curlew breeding sites coupled with negotiations to secure appropriate land management (Actions CW1 – 4 and 23 - 27);
- awareness-raising and training measures (CW14 - 20);
- ensuring agri-environment and conservation schemes provide adequate financial incentive and appropriate management prescriptions to safeguard curlew habitat (CW22);
- a continuation of the re-wetting/slotting trials and their expansion if appropriate (CW11), and
- appropriate predator control measures (CW 10 and 20).

ACTIONS	TIMESCALE	LEAD AGENCY & Partners
<b>DATA COLLATION AND SURVEY</b>		
<b>Data Collation</b>		
CW1 Collate existing information on curlew. (Objectives 1 and 2)	November 2001	<b>RSPB/BBAPG/LAs</b> LRCs/Voluntary Sector
CW2 Compile an 'inventory' of curlew breeding and feeding sites (including 'Wildlife Site' status), and initiate a system for regular up-dating. (Objective 1)	November 2001	<b>RSPB/BBAPG</b>
<b>Survey</b>		
CW3 Identify priority sites for survey. (Objective 1)	November 2001	<b>RSPB/Bird Study</b> Groups
CW4 Carry out a co-ordinated survey of all breeding curlew sites within the entire BAP area. (Objective 1)	April 2002	<b>RSPB/Bird Study</b> Groups
CW5 Repeat the 2000 Moorland Breeding Bird Survey in 2010. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Summer 2010	<b>RSPB/EN</b>

## EVALUATING THE IMPORTANCE AND CONDITION OF SITES

**Evaluating Importance and Identifying Key Sites**

CW6 Agree methodology for the evaluation of Wildlife Site status. (Objectives 1 and 2)

April 2002 **BBAPG**

**Defining Favourable Condition**

CW7 Agree definitions of favourable condition for the range of curlew breeding sites in the Peak District. (Objectives 1 and 2)

April 2002 **BBAPG**

CW8	Agree guidelines for the appropriate management needed to achieve favourable condition and enhancement of curlew breeding sites. (Objectives 1 and 2).	April 2002	<b>BBAPG</b>
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## RESOURCES

CW9	Seek resources to carry out surveys, awareness raising and negotiation of agreements in collaboration with other bird and grassland action plans. (Objectives 1 and 2)	Autumn 2001	<b>RSPB/EN/PDNPA</b>
CW10	Seek funding to employ a full time gamekeeper on the Leek Moors. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002	<b>RSPB/EN/PDNPA</b>

## RESEARCH

CW11	Continue the re-wetting/slotting machine research project at Padfield and expand if results are positive. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002 - 2004	<b>RSPB/MAFF/NWW</b>
CW12	Ensure that the results of research into the effects of Ivermectin on invertebrate communities associated with animal dung are implemented at a local level. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	<b>WEG</b>

## MONITORING

CW13	Repeat co-ordinated curlew breeding surveys in 2005 and 2010. Ensure that the information is used to update the curlew 'inventory'. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 - 2010	<b>RSPB/Bird Study Groups</b>
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## AWARENESS RAISING

CW14	Share information on the wildlife importance and management needs of key conservation and restoration sites with landowners/managers, including feedback from surveys. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	<b>RSPB/EN/PDNPA/NT WTs/FWAG/MAFF</b>
CW15	Include information on curlew work in the Lapwing Recovery Project leaflet and posters. (Objectives 1 and 2)	January 2002	<b>BBAPG</b>
CW16	Arrange bi-annual training days for all farm conservation advisers to update on curlew habitat requirements and promote key management prescriptions. (Objectives 1 and 2)	February 2001-2010	<b>RSPB/EN/PDNPA MAFF/FWAG</b>
CW17	Produce a slide pack and talk, and use to promote curlew conservation to farmer/landowner clubs, group branches and organisations eg. NFU branch talk circuits. (Objectives 1 and 2)	January 2002-2005	<b>BBAPG</b>
CW18	Promote moorland management for curlew including small scale re-wetting and heather burning. (Objective 1 and 2)	2002 - 2010	<b>RSPB/PDNPA/EN/NT MAFF</b>
CW19	Organise a series of annual farm demonstration days to promote successful curlew management agreements. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002 - 2005	<b>RSPB/PDNPA/EN NFU MAFF</b>
CW20	Run a series of training days for landowners, promoting legal and effective predator control. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002-2005	<b>RSPB/PDNPA/EN NFU/ MAFF</b>

## CONSERVATION ACTION AND INCENTIVES

### Designation

CW21	Consider curlew key sites in any programme of acquisition/lease/management of nature reserves including NNRs and LNRs. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	EN/LAs (joint leads) PDNPA/WTs/RSPB/NT
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### Grant Schemes

CW22	Consider recommending a review of all agri-environment and conservation schemes to ensure that: *Management prescriptions include specific benefits to curlew and include flexible site-specific measures *Payments consider inclusion of financial measures to encourage a shift from sheep to cattle (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002 - 2010	MAFF/EN/PDNPA WEG/BBAPG
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### Negotiation and Review of Agreements

CW23	Review management of all curlew breeding sites within SSSIs. Where necessary agree revised management regimes with owners/managers, through appropriate mechanisms, to ensure maintenance/ restoration of favourable condition and site extension. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 - 2005	EN/RSPB
CW24	Negotiate appropriate agreements with landowners and managers of all key curlew sites outside SSSIs and existing agreements in order to achieve favourable condition of the site. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002 – 2005	RSPB/PDNPA/MAFF FWAG
CW25	Review management of curlew breeding sites in existing agreements, outside SSSIs. Where necessary agree revised management regimes with owners/managers to ensure that favourable condition is being achieved. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2002 – 2005	RSPB/PDNPA/MAFF
CW26	Negotiate appropriate agreements on sites adjacent to curlew breeding areas or on sites with potentially suitable habitat, to facilitate favourable management. (Objective 2)	2003 – 2005	RSPB/PDNPA/MAFF FWAG
CW27	Review whole holding agreements which include unprotected curlew breeding sites. Consider the opportunities for amending the agreement to incorporate their safeguard, enhancement and extension. (Objective 1 and 2)	2002-2005	RSPB/PDNPA/MAFF

### Direct Action

CW28	Consider the opportunities for increased safeguard of wader migratory sites. (Objective 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	RSPB/PDNPA/EN WTs/NT/Bird Study Groups
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### Land Acquisition

CW29	Consider negotiating purchase/lease of priority curlew feeding sites where this would be the most effective way of achieving conservation and when a negotiated conservation solution has not succeeded. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/WTs/RSPB NT
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## REGULATION

### Planning

CW30	Ensure all planning applications and General Development Orders are adequately assessed in relation to their impact on curlew breeding and		
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	feeding sites; that loss or damage is avoided; and that opportunities for the enhancement and creation of key habitats are considered in relevant planning decisions. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	PDNPA/EN/LAs/WTs
<b>Pollution Control &amp; Waste Management</b>			
CW31	Review procedures and consultation processes in relation to the spreading of paper pulp. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001	EA/LAs/PDNPA/EN WTs
CW32	Ensure good practice is followed in disposing of sheep dip, avoiding curlew breeding sites. Implement by continuing with an awareness raising strategy amongst land managers; continuing the programme of licensing; extending consultation procedures for disposal applications to the whole of the Peak District and, where necessary, by enforcement action. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001	EA/LAs/PDNPA
<b>Other Regulatory Mechanisms</b>			
CW33	Ensure that all woodland planting proposals avoid the adverse effects of planting on curlew breeding and feeding sites. (Objectives 1 and 2)	2001 onwards	FC/LAs/EN/PDNPA MAFF
CW34	Ensure that bracken control does not take place in the vicinity of curlew breeding sites. (Objective 1)	2001 onwards	EA/EN/PDNPA/MAFF

## RESOURCES

It is envisaged that many of the actions proposed will be carried out by the relevant organisations using current resources. These include:

- continuing investment by landowners and managers in managing their land sympathetically for wildlife;
- EN's programme of review of SSSI management and designation and its grant and management agreement schemes;
- MAFF's Environmentally Sensitive Area and Countryside Stewardship schemes;
- the RSPB's surveys and advisory work;
- volunteer surveys;
- the PDNPA's advisory and grants service for landowners/managers, and its rolling programme of special conservation projects;
- FWAG and the WT's advisory services;
- continuing management of curlew habitat in the ownership of conservation organisations (EN, NT, WT's), public bodies (LAs, PDNPA), and WCs.

### **Additional resources are likely to be required:**

- for survey work (2001) and negotiations (2002 - 2005);
- to provide adequate financial incentives for the conservation and restoration management of curlew habitat (2001 onwards);
- for a programme of awareness raising (2001 onwards);
- to aid in the production of the proposed registers (2001 onwards).

The RSPB, PDNPA and EN are currently seeking resources for a Ground-nesting Bird Habitat Project (to run from 2001 - 2004) which would specifically target curlew conservation and the safeguarding and restoration of curlew breeding and feeding habitats. The PDNPA and EN are currently seeking resources for a continuation of the Pastures Project, to run during 2001/2002, aimed at surveying and securing high quality sites within appropriate agreements. This may also have implications for curlew conservation.