



# British Birds

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Breeding European Stonechats in Cumbria

The Eurasian Curlew – a UK conservation priority

Slender-billed Curlews in the Middle East

## New Forest Curlew Survey 2016

The valley mires and wet heathlands of the New Forest support a regionally important Curlew population, thought to number 100-130 pairs based upon recent surveys

However, there are concerns that the current population level is actually much lower, and that predators and recreational disturbance are leading to reduced productivity

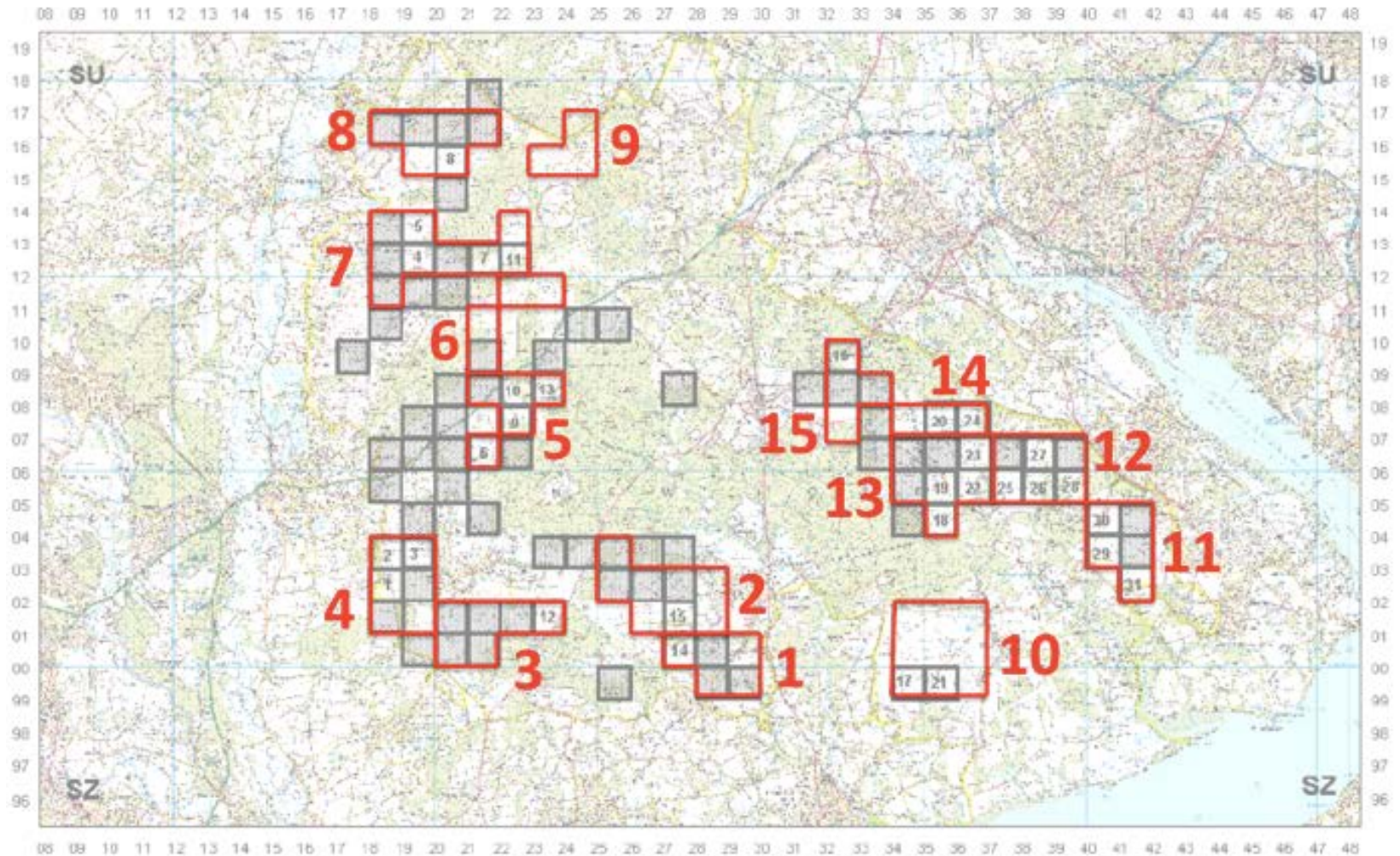
# New Forest Curlew Survey 2016: Introduction

- Four main objectives:
  - 1. To search for and map Curlew territories and nests in known breeding habitats in the New Forest*
  - 1. To monitor discovered nests as frequently as possible through the breeding season to assess productivity and, where possible, cause of any breeding failure*
  - 1. To record pressures on nesting birds, e.g. predators, recreational disturbance, to assess potential impacts on productivity.*
  - 1. To ring adults and pulli (with colour rings) to investigate site fidelity and movements during the incubation and inter-breeding periods*
- Data on other ground-nesting waders (Lapwing, Snipe, Redshank) will also be collected during the survey
- Results will be provided to NF managers to support recreational management strategy and other conservation measures
- Co-ordinators / stakeholders include WNF, HOS, FC, NF-NPA, NE, BTO, RSPB



## New Forest Curlew Survey 2016: Methods

Experienced volunteer surveyors were each allocated one of 15 survey areas covering up to 10 km<sup>2</sup> (and totalling 86 km<sup>2</sup>), which are known 'hotspots' for breeding Curlews based on previous surveys and recent casual records provided to HOS



## **New Forest Curlew Survey 2016: Territory mapping**

- A total of 40 territories were located from mid-March onwards, which is just one-third of the 2014 HLS survey total of 117 territories (130 in 1994 and 100 in 2004)
- Resurvey of all 31 core squares covered in the 1994 and 2004 surveys also supports a significant reduction from 44 (1994) to 33 (1996) and now 10
- Data are internally consistent, so even accounting for a few missed pairs, it is thought unlikely that the current NF Curlew population exceeds 50 pairs

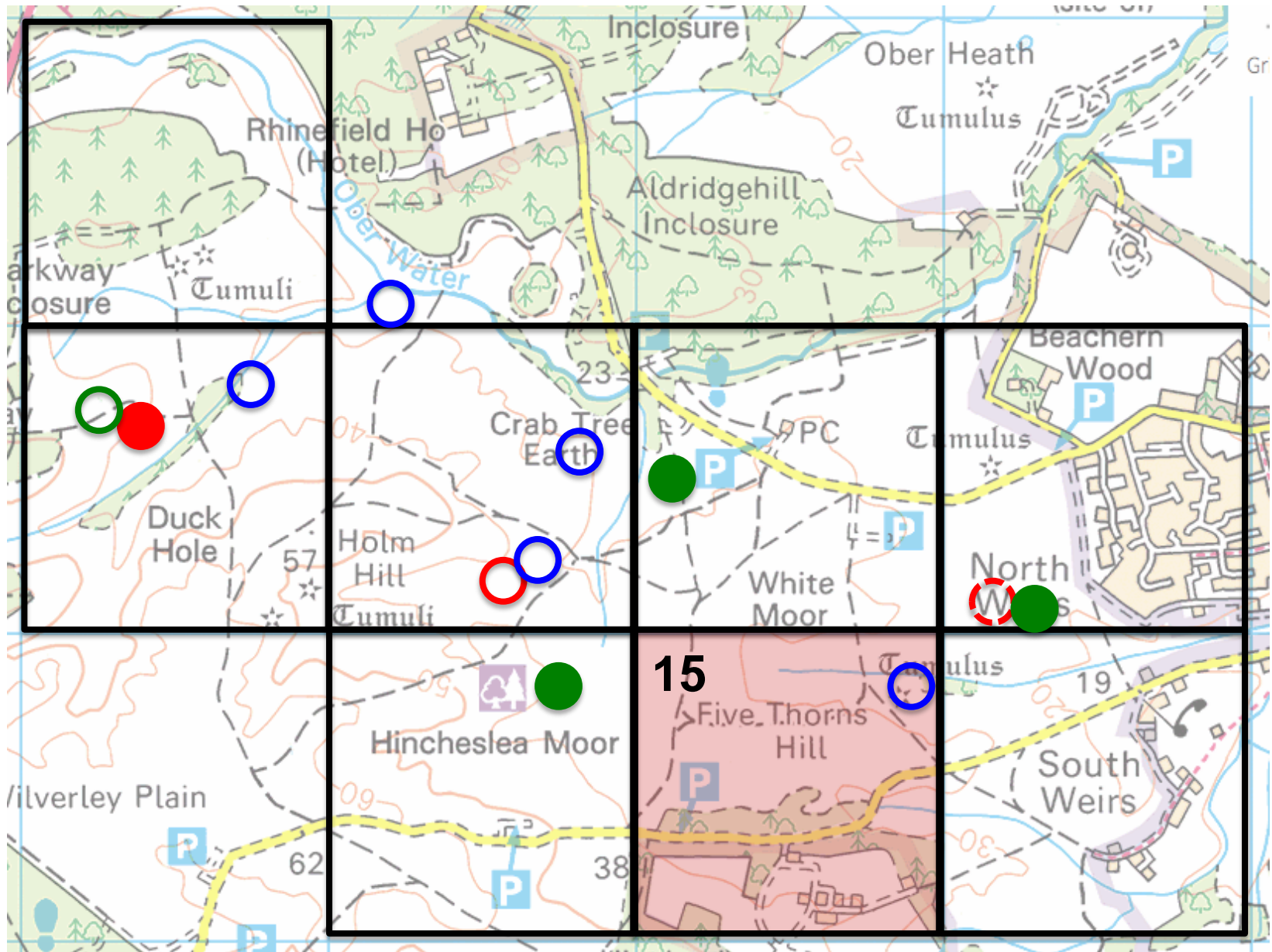
### **Photos: Andy Page (FC)**





## Area 2 (Holm Hill/South Weirs) 8 km<sup>2</sup>

3 Curlew territories (1 nest); 4 Lapwing territories, 5 Snipe territories





## New Forest Curlew Survey 2016: Nest finding

- A total of 19 nests were found from 24 April onwards, equating to about half the mapped territories; several nests clearly failed at the egg stage
- Observations of birds with chicks were made at just four sites, and a further four nests were located where hatching was thought to have occurred



Photo: Andy Page (FC)





Photo: Simon Currie



Photo: Russell Wynn



Photo: Tara Dempsey



## New Forest Curlew Survey 2016: Pressures

- Observers were also asked to record pressures, preferably during one-hour effort-corrected counts
- A wide range of pressures were recorded, with those disturbing incubating Curlews including avian predators (Buzzards, Peregrines, Carrion Crows) and recreational disturbance (mostly dog-walkers and runners/walkers off the path)





## New Forest Curlew Survey 2016: Ringing

- The ringing team attempted to capture adult Curlews at two communal roosts early in the season, but were unsuccessful despite some near misses; ringing of pulli was postponed to 2017 to ensure licenses and permissions could be secured
- Colour-ring observations included an adult Curlew at a site in the north of the NF in April that had been ringed at Weston Shore, Southampton Water on 29 Oct 2011





# New Forest Curlew Survey: Plans for 2017 and beyond

- Repeat territory mapping to further define current NF population size and trend
- Quantify productivity and nest failure through visual observation and temp loggers
- Colour-ringing and GPS tracking to assess site fidelity, dispersal and wintering
- Engagement with NPA and FC to reduce recreational pressures, e.g. signage
- Introduction of citizen science to increase public engagement and 'ownership'





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Photo: Marcus Ward