

Whaup's Up? – The Status and Future of Curlew in Scotland

Thursday 27th September 2018, Battleby Conference Centre

Biographies of Speakers and Session Chairs

Session One: Setting the Scene

Chair: **Davy McCracken**

Davy McCracken is Head of Scottish Rural College's Hill & Mountain Research Centre, based at Kirkton & Auchtertyre farms, near Crianlarich in the Scottish Highlands. He is an ecologist who has worked on European High Nature Value farming systems for nearly 30 years. An entomologist by training, much of Davy's early career focussed on understanding the impacts of farming practices on insects of importance in the diet of farmland birds such as the Red-billed Chough and waders. He sits on a range of biodiversity-oriented NGO and Scottish Government committees and working groups, and is currently co-chair of the new Working for Waders initiative.

Alan Lauder: Welcome, introduction and setting the scene

Alan is an independent ornithologist and nature conservationist based in Wicklow, Ireland. Alan has played an instrumental role in the early development of efforts for Curlew conservation in Ireland during time leading BirdWatch Ireland. He continues to champion wetland bird conservation including direct involvement in project development and site management in important Curlew areas and particularly as chair of the Irish government's *Curlew Task Force*. Alan's career spans 30 years in conservation mainly in Scotland and Ireland with roles in SNH, BTO, RSPB and BirdWatch Ireland, all with active involvement in wetland and upland conservation. He has particular experience in managing large-scale nature reserves and species recovery projects and has advised on site management in several European countries. His personal interests include birding and bird ringing, many outdoor activities and a busy family.

Lewis Macdonald: The importance of Curlew to Scotland

Lewis Macdonald has represented the North East as a Scottish Labour MSP for 19 years. He served as a Deputy Minister in the Scottish Executive from 2001 to 2007, when his responsibilities included transport, planning, enterprise, energy, lifelong learning, environment, rural development, health and community care. Since 2007, Lewis has held a number of Front Bench responsibilities including: infrastructure and capital investment, justice, business, energy and tourism, public services and wealth creation, as well as Scottish Labour's Chief Whip. He is currently the Scottish Labour Energy Spokesperson. Lewis is Convenor of the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee. He is also a member of several Cross-Party Groups (CPGs) including International Development (Convenor), Oil & Gas (Co-convenor), Tourism and Rail. Lewis was born and brought up in Stornoway before moving to Inch in rural Aberdeenshire at the age of 10. Before becoming an MSP, Lewis gained a PhD in African Studies from Aberdeen University, where he later taught. He is married to Sandra, who works in the oil industry and they have two grown-up daughters. Lewis is a member of the trade union Unite, the Scottish Co-op, Grampian Regional Equality Council, and Dons Supporters Together. Besides football, his leisure interests range from hill-walking to history.

Chris Wernham: The National Picture - Status and trends for Curlew in Scotland

Chris is an Associate Director of the BTO and has been head of BTO operations in Scotland since 2002. She is also responsible for providing strategic guidance to the BTO Country operations in Wales and Northern Ireland. She has had a passion for birds for as long as she can remember, and has been an active wildlife watcher and recorder since about the age of 8. Following training in seabird ecology, with a PhD on Puffins on the Isle of May, she has spent most of her career in a variety of roles for the BTO, including population modelling, ringing projects, editing the *Migration Atlas for Britain and Ireland* and, more recently, projects on Scottish raptors, waders and wildlife conflict resolution (most recently playing an active role on the Facilitation Team of the Working for Waders initiative). Desk-bound for much of the time these days, in her spare time Chris fits in surveys and biological recording as often as she can. She has a particular passion for the wildlife of the uplands.

Alastair MacGugan: Working for Waders – Curlew in the context of waders in Scotland

Alastair has been advising on wildlife management across the public and private sector for over 30 years. In his current role, as Wildlife Management Manager with Scottish Natural Heritage, he leads on developing strategic and practical approaches to a range of wildlife including deer, geese, feral pigs and beavers. He also takes a lead on exploring how to apply Adaptive Management and conflict management principles. Alastair is Co-chair of Working for Waders, a collaborative initiative helping to reverse the declines in waders. Previously Alastair led on conservation and training for British Association for Shooting and Conservation in Scotland, delivering advice and training on the manipulation of habitats and species for conservation and economic gain.

David Douglas / Irena Tomankova: RSPB Trial Management Project in Scotland

I have worked at the RSPB Centre for Conservation Science since 2009. I was initially working on a study assessing responses of breeding Golden Plover to a wind farm development in Sutherland. I have since changed roles and now work as a Principal Conservation Scientist leading RSPB's upland research programme. This focusses on undertaking the research needed to inform the conservation of biodiversity and the wider environment in the UK's uplands.

Irena is a Conservation Scientist at the RSPB, leading the delivery of science within the Curlew Trial Management project. She gained a PhD from Queen's University Belfast on the causes of diving ducks' population declines on Lough Neagh, the largest freshwater lake in the British Isles. Over the last few years she has worked on a number of research projects ranging from Whinchats to Pine Martens.

Bob Swann: Scottish Winter Curlew – population trends

Since graduating at Aberdeen University in 1974 I have lived in the Highlands. As a keen ringer, I joined the Highland Ringing Group and have been Secretary for more years than I care to remember. I have also helped organise the WeBS counts in the Moray Firth since the mid-1980s. In both these roles I have an interest in the Curlew population that winters on the Moray Firth. We have built up long-term data sets on numbers, and through the ringing programme have looked at the origins of our wintering population, movements and age/sex structure. I will present some of the findings from these long-term studies, carried out by our team of volunteers, at the workshop.

Session Two: Curlew conservation

Chair: **Sarah Sanders**

I manage the Curlew recovery programme at the RSPB which involves co-ordinating and supporting colleagues from across the organisation to improve the conservation prospects for this species throughout the UK. I have been with the RSPB since 2003, working previously in the international directorate, initially managing the UK Overseas Territories Programme and then heading the team providing support to BirdLife partners in Africa and Asia. I am interested in working with a range of people and partners from the UK and around the world to make a difference for nature. This includes acting to ensure that Curlew and other wildlife continue to thrive across our countryside.

Davy McCracken: Do Agri/Env Schemes work for Curlew?

Brendan Callaghan: Forestry and Curlew in Scotland

Brendan Callaghan is Head of Delivery and Regions for Forestry Commission Scotland, with responsibility for the forestry grants and regulation of forestry across Scotland. He is also responsible for the management of the Forestry Grant Scheme and delivery of the Scottish Government's target for 10,000 ha woodland creation per year. Brendan is a professional member of the Institute of Chartered foresters and has worked for the Forestry Commission since 1993. He has held a number of senior positions in both Scotland and England and, before taking up his current role, he was Area Director for Forest Services in South West England. Previous roles have included Conservator in North East England and Operations Manager with Forest Enterprise in Galloway Forest district. Brendan is married with four children and lives in the Scottish Borders. He co-owns a forest in the Tweed Valley and enjoys spending time doing hands-on forestry management.

Martin Kennedy: A Farmer's Perspective

Martin Kennedy, Vice President of the National Farmers Union of Scotland, is a tenant farmer in Highland Perthshire, married to Jane with three girls: Jillian 23, Katrina 21 and Yvonne 18. The farm is at 800 feet above sea level and rises to 2,500 feet. We have 600 breeding ewes and 60 cows. The ewes are split between continentals, pure-bred Cheviots and pure-bred Blackfaces. The cows are split between Limousin / Belgian crosses with Highland cows on the hill. We have been involved in environmental schemes since the first Breadalbane Environmentally Sensitive Area.

Dave Parish: Does Predator Control Work for Curlew?

Dave started work for the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) far too long ago on the Langholm Project, before studying Lapwing breeding ecology at Durham University for his PhD. He returned to the Trust shortly after and has now been working for GWCT for 21 years. Most of this time has been focused on lowland agri-ecology, with projects on Grey Partridge, songbirds and invertebrates forming the mainstay. Dave now heads lowland research in Scotland and at the GWCT Scottish Demonstration Farm, Auchnerran, which has offered the opportunity to return to his interest in wader ecology as the farm has thriving populations of many species, including Curlew.

James Pearce-Higgins: From agriculture to windfarms - Identifying problems and testing solutions

James has worked for the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) since March 2010, where he is responsible for the strategic leadership of the science, and manages a department of 50 staff that covers both monitoring and research. He also leads the BTO's climate change research, which is split into documenting impacts, projecting the future and informing adaptation. Prior to this, he worked for the RSPB in Scotland for 11 years, where he was responsible for a wide-range of upland research projects. He has published over 110 peer-reviewed scientific papers, a book on Birds and Climate Change and multiple other book chapters, reports and conference proceedings. He is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Cambridge and Honorary Reader at the University of East Anglia, committee member of IUCN Climate Change Specialist Group Fellow, Vice-chair of the Energy Task Force of the Convention on Migratory Species and member of board of trustees of A Rocha UK.

Session Three: Research and Conservation – Case Studies

Chair: **Alan Lauder**

Alan Leitch: Curlew in Orkney, a Curlew hotspot

Alan Leitch is the Reserves Manager for the RSPB on Orkney. His career started as an assistant warden on Bardsey Island, North Wales and Fair Isle, Shetland. Alan joined the RSPB research department in 1994, working on Bittern research initially before moving to reserves as a warden, holding posts in Grampian, Argyll and Tayside before moving to Orkney in 2007 with his wife Lal and three children. He became the Orkney Reserves Manager in 2013 and is responsible for overseeing site staff, habitat management, monitoring and reporting against the management plan objectives of 13 reserves from the small wetland site of Mill Dam (27ha) on Shapinsay to a large upland site on Hoy (3,926ha). As a member of the Orkney Ringing Group he has established local projects on Twite, Black Guillemot, Greylag Geese and in recent years, of course, Curlew.

Patrick Laurie: Curlew in Galloway, a sad tale

Patrick Laurie is a journalist and writer from Dalbeattie. Brought up with a strong farming background in southwest Scotland, Patrick established a new herd of pedigree Galloway cattle in 2015 and he now works to blend agriculture with the conservation of iconic species like Black Grouse and Curlew. Patrick also works for the Heather Trust, and he has travelled across the UK to assist with projects designed to sustain and promote the value of moorland habitats for conservation, agriculture and peatland.

Geoff Hilton: Summary of previous Workshops: Lessons from Ireland, England and Wales

Geoff is the Head of Conservation Science at the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust. He developed a passion for wetland wildlife in general, and Curlews in particular, during a childhood growing up in the Severn Vale. His career with wetland birds started at WWT Slimbridge in the early 1990s, which was followed by a PhD in Glasgow. He then worked for 10 years in the International Research team at RSPB, including a two-year stint living in Portugal. During that time his research was focused particularly on island conservation and the problems caused by invasive species. However, he maintained a sideline investigating the global disappearance of the Slender-billed Curlew. Returning to WWT Slimbridge in 2009, he established the Research Unit, which has grown to 12 staff, researching the problems faced by Bewick's Swans, Cranes and Madagascar Pochard, among others. Amid the growing concern about Curlew declines, Geoff leads a new WWT initiative to support Curlew conservation, and has joined the Curlew Forum and the UK & Ireland Curlew Action Group. Since 2012, WWT has pioneered the use of

headstarting to support conservation of threatened waders, first with Spoon-billed Sandpipers in Russia, then with Black-tailed Godwits in the UK. When not working, Geoff operates a taxi service for sport-obsessed teenage offspring, and maintains an ageing VW camper and springer spaniel.

Steve Redpath: Conflict and cooperation

Steve wanted to study birds from the age of five - an ambition he was fortunate enough to achieve. He grew up in Wales, then went to Leeds University to study ecology. He has subsequently spent most of his life in Scotland, working in the uplands studying the relationship between Red Grouse and Hen Harrier and the effect of grazing on upland systems. He now holds a chair in Conservation Science at the University of Aberdeen and his research primarily focuses on conflicts in conservation. He works with colleagues across the world to understand these complex and controversial issues and seek effective solutions.

Workshops

Chairs: **Alan Lauder** and **Phil Sheldrake**

Phil Sheldrake is the RSPB Conservation Officer for Wiltshire & Gloucestershire. Twenty years ago, a love of wildlife eventually brought about a career change, Phil swapped the classroom for the great outdoors, and started wardening on reserves in Wales with the Society. After moving to Wiltshire to undertake a self-build project, he managed the Wessex Stone Curlew Recovery Project through a milestone period when the population again numbered over 100 pairs. He now leads the Wiltshire Chalk Country Landscape programme whilst developing and managing other project work across the two counties and leading on site conservation casework! Outside of work is about getting away from it all in his old VW campervan, finding wild places at home & abroad to see wildlife, or staying at home DIY-ing having completed another self-build three years ago.

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