

# RSPB Curlew Trial Management Project

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# The Eurasian Curlew – the most pressing bird conservation priority in the UK?

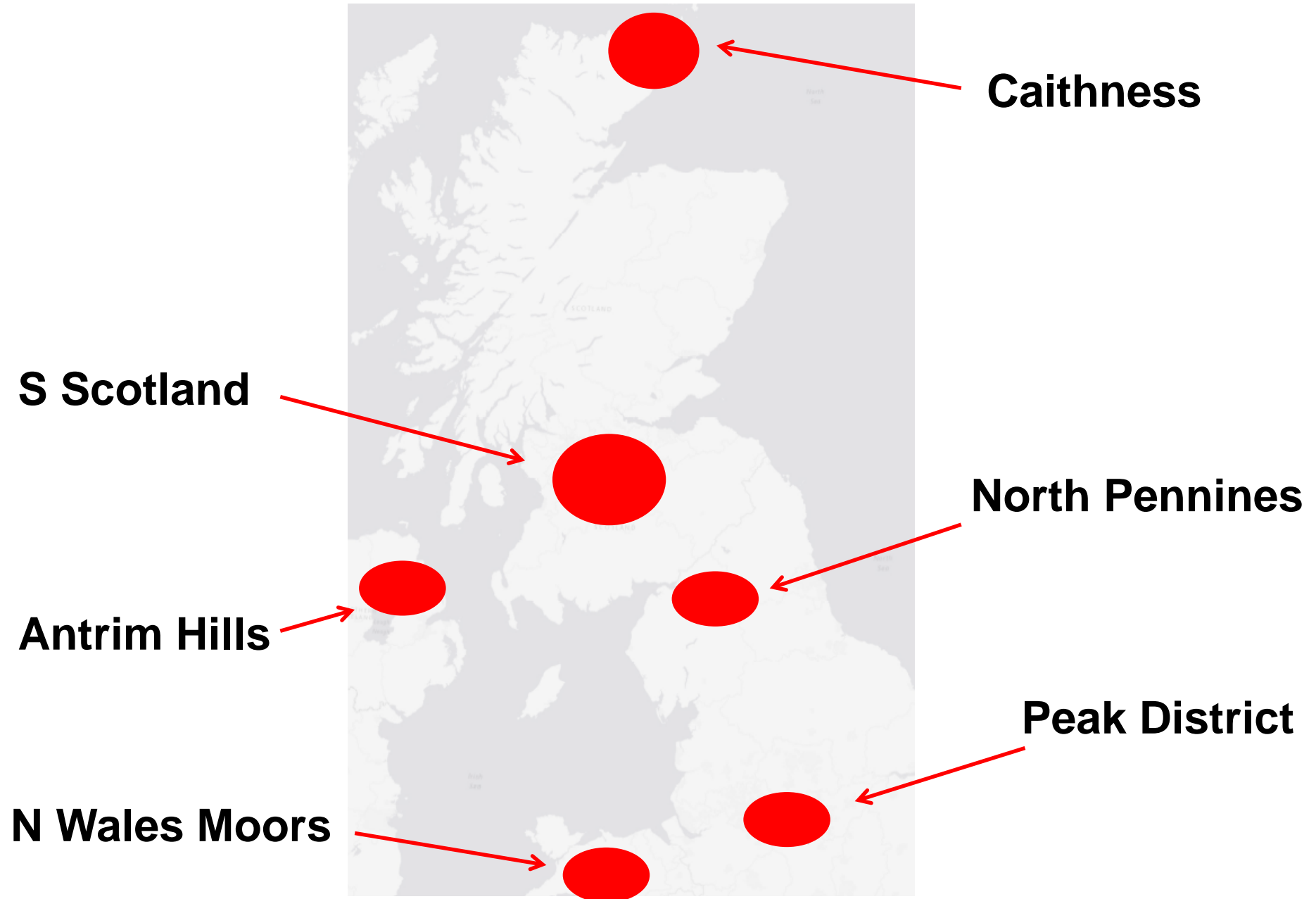
Daniel Brown, Jeremy Wilson, David Douglas,  
Patrick Thompson, Simon Foster, Neil McCulloch,  
James Phillips, David Stroud, Sian Whitehead,  
Nicola Crockford and Rob Sheldon

**Abstract** Based on its adverse global conservation status, and the global importance but rapid decline of the UK's breeding population, the Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* should now be considered the UK's highest conservation priority bird species. A co-ordinated UK recovery programme is urgently required to help ensure that this species does not suffer the same fate as that of some other *Numenius* species.

# Trial Management Project

- Five years, six sites
- Monitoring:
  - Curlew abundance & productivity
  - Predator abundance
  - Habitat structure & composition





South Scotland



Caithness, N Scotland



Peaks, Derbyshire



North Pennines, Cumbria



North Wales Moors



Co. Antrim, N Ireland

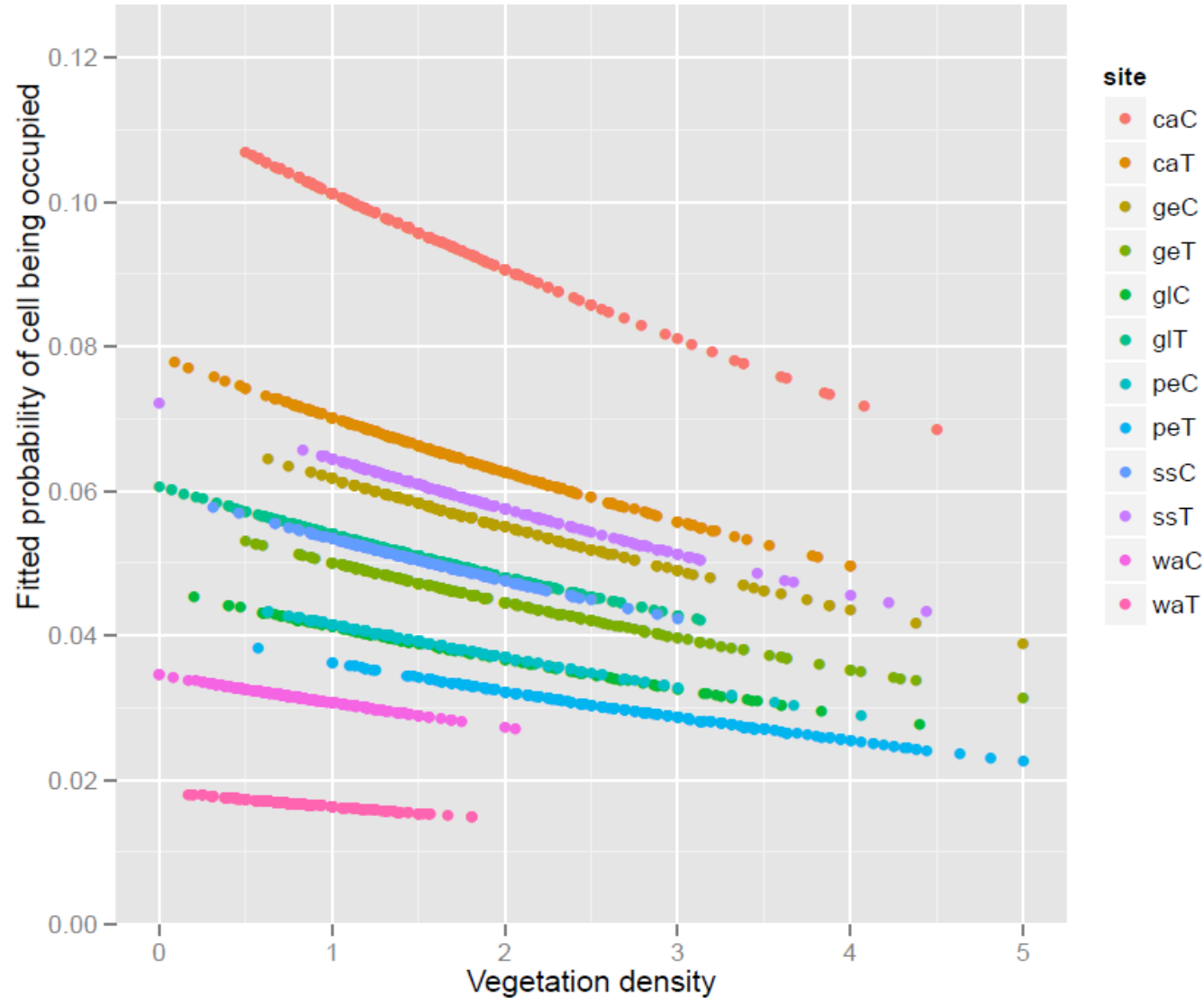


# Trial Management Project

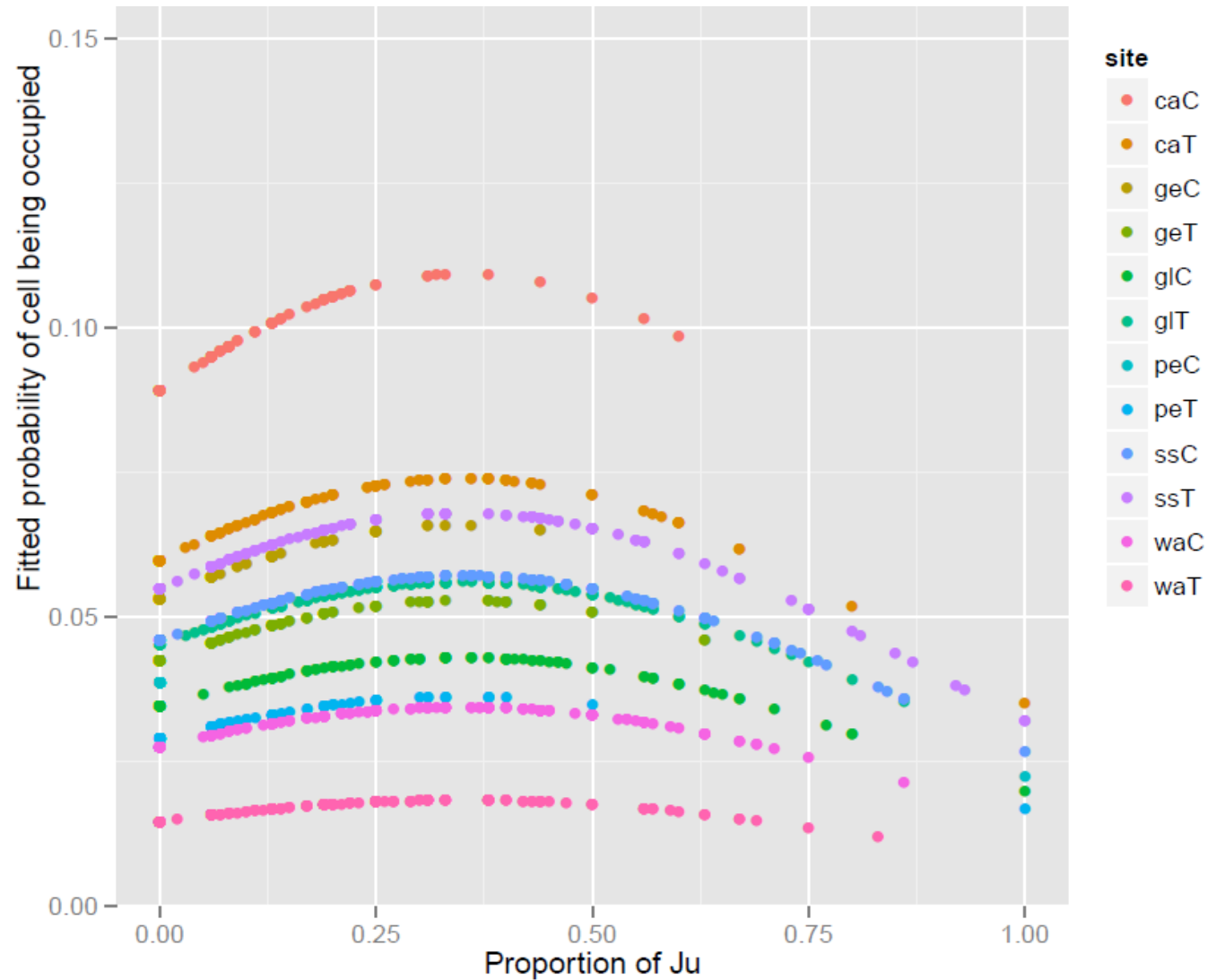
- Five years, six sites
- Management at trial sites:
  - Predator control
    - Foxes, carrion and hooded crows
  - Habitat management
    - Methods: rush cutting, vegetation thinning



# Curlew prefer lower vegetation density



# Curlew prefer moderate rush cover



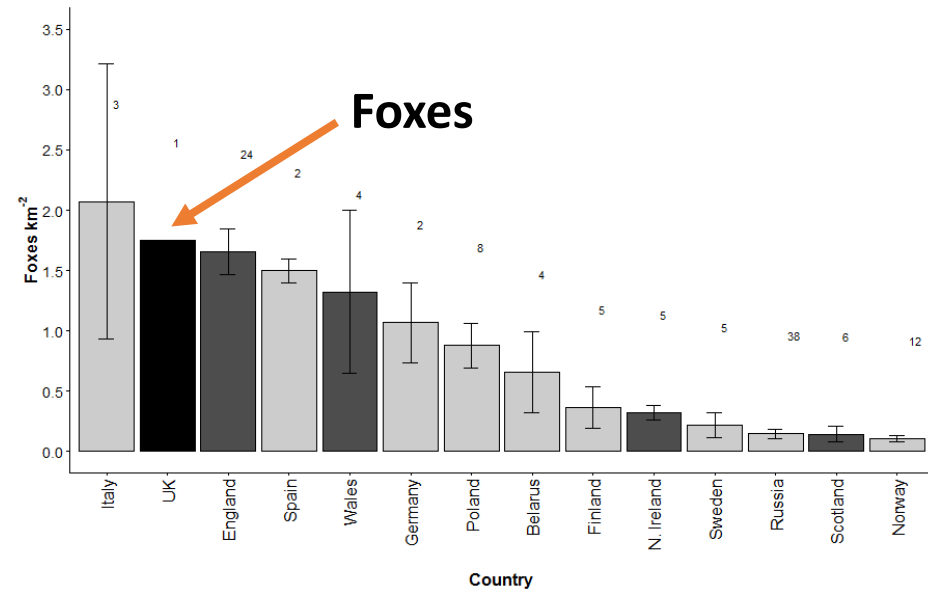
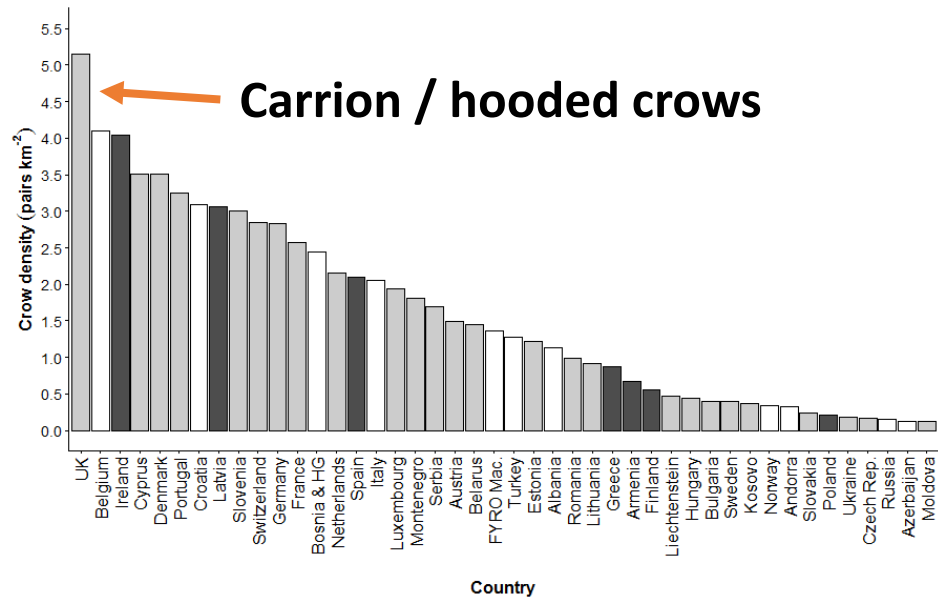


# Where we are now

- Habitat management and predator control underway at all 6 trial sites
- Baseline monitoring and 3 seasons of monitoring responses completed

Wider issues for curlew recovery

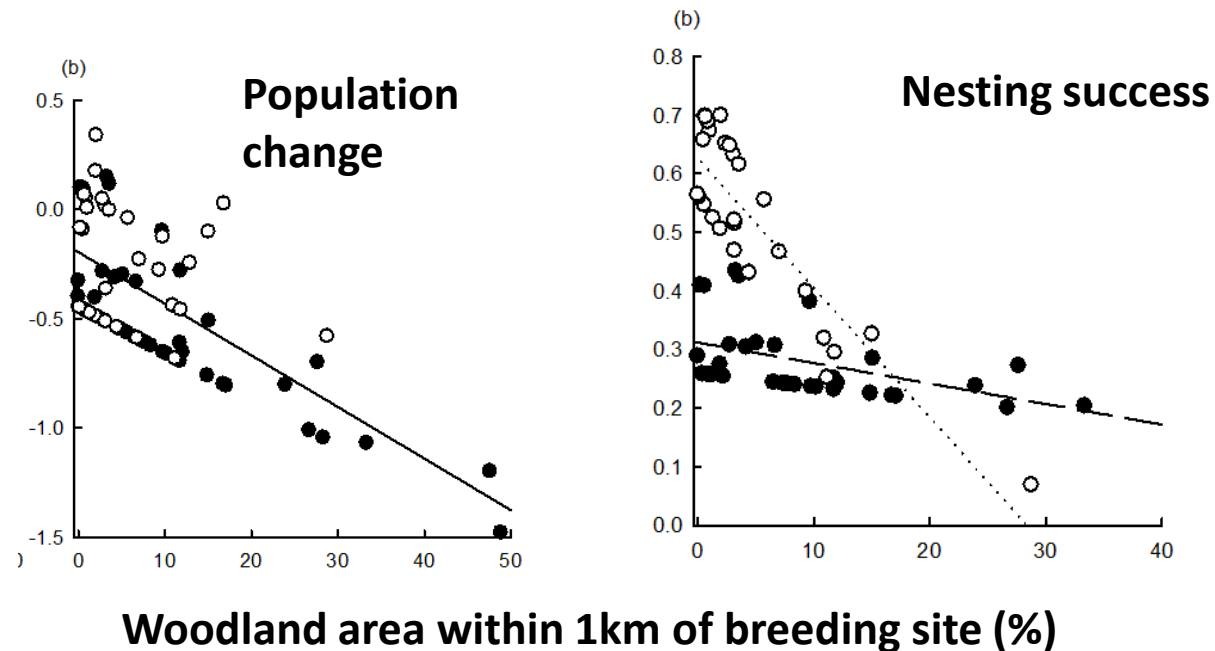
# Addressing the root causes of high predation



# Addressing the root causes of high predation



## Forestry – a source of predators (Douglas et al 2014)



# Addressing the root causes of high predation

## Non-native gamebird releases

- Minimum 35 million pheasants released annually (PACEC 2004) (plus red-legged partridge)
- High biomass introduced into the countryside
- Impact on predator abundances?



# Addressing the root causes of high predation

## Farming practices – animal husbandry

- Eg. Spring 2018 – high livestock mortality
- What role in supporting predator abundance?



# Addressing the root causes of high predation



[www.alamy.com](https://www.alamy.com) - DHDEWJ

# Curlew recovery – how much is enough?

- What population targets should we set?
- Can we apply '**FAVOURABLE CONSERVATION STATUS**' approaches to curlew in Scotland/The UK?
- RSPB exploring this collaboratively for **population size/trends** and **range**

