

Media Release: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019

## Local groups working to protect rare species on Lugg Meadow

With a haunting call and unmistakable long, curved bill, the curlew is an iconic wetland bird. In the past, curlew bred in significant numbers on Lugg Meadow but have drastically declined in recent decades. Last spring, just three pairs attempted to breed on Lower Lugg Meadow, though none successfully raised a brood.



*Curlew, credit Jon Hawkins/Surrey Hill Photography*

Each spring, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust and Herefordshire Ornithological Club encourage people to keep dogs on leads on the Upper Lugg Meadow while the Lower Lugg Meadow is closed to the public under the CRow Act from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> July each year to ensure the birds are not disturbed. This year we are taking further action, installing temporary electric fencing around the areas where the birds nest. The fencing will protect the nest from predators such as foxes but preventing disturbance from any people that stray on to the site is equally important: if walkers or dogs disturb a bird while it is sitting on eggs, it will often fly up, leaving the nest vulnerable to predators like crows. Curlew no longer nest upon the Upper Lugg as there is too much disturbance from dogs, which is why we are asking people to keep their dogs on a lead during the breeding season.

Curlew declined by 46% across the UK from 1994 to 2010 and the species was added to the UK red list in December 2015. The exact number of breeding pairs of curlew in Herefordshire is unknown but is certainly declining. The Birds of Herefordshire report in 2017 states that there were 77 records from 33 sites. Though not confirmed, it is thought that curlew bred at just seven of these sites so ensuring Lugg Meadow continues to support a breeding population is vital. Curlew are faithful to their breeding grounds so once all breeding pairs are lost from a site it is unlikely they will return in future years.

Pete Johnson, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust's Reserve Officer for Lugg Meadow commented: "to have curlew so close to Hereford City is really special and we want to do all we can to bolster this population. It's magical to hear them across the meadow and would be great if they bred successfully here this year."

Anyone wishing to be involved with caring for Lugg Meadows and its wildlife should get in touch with Herefordshire Wildlife Trust who support a volunteer group which carries out habitat management and monitoring of the curlew at the site. [enquiries@herefordshirewt.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@herefordshirewt.co.uk) / 01432 356872.



*Lugg Meadows, credit Herefordshire Wildlife Trust*

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**Editors notes**

**Herefordshire Wildlife Trust** (HWT) is part of the federation of 47 Wildlife Trusts based across the British Isles. Formerly known as Herefordshire Nature Trust, it is the largest member-based nature conservation organisation in the county, with nearly 5000 members, 300 volunteers and 55 nature reserves across Herefordshire. The Trust has over 50 years' experience of managing sites valuable to wildlife and people, and runs a variety of partnership initiatives from environmental education programmes to conservation projects celebrating Herefordshire's landscapes and wildlife. For more information visit [www.herefordshirewt.org](http://www.herefordshirewt.org)