



# Wild New Forest



[www.wildnewforest.co.uk](http://www.wildnewforest.co.uk)

We **INFORM** by co-ordinating and contributing to surveys for species of high conservation concern and promptly delivering robust data to management bodies to support targeted conservation action

We **INVOLVE** volunteers in survey work, support responsible recreation, and increase awareness of wildlife and conservation through an exciting programme of guided tours, workshops and camps

We **INSPIRE** by sharing our experiences and delivering a multimedia natural history portfolio via online portals, public talks, media appearances and high-quality educational products

## INFORM



- *Wildlife survey and monitoring*
- *Conservation programmes*
- *Advice to management bodies*
- *Scientific publications/reports*

## INVOLVE



- *Wildlife volunteering/training*
- *Annual youth wildlife camp*
- *Guided wildlife walks and cycles*
- *Photo and ID workshops*

## INSPIRE



- *Website, blog and social media*
- *Public talks and displays*
- *TV and media appearances*
- *Educational products*



# **New Forest Curlew Project (2016-20)**



***Prof Russell Wynn***  
*Wild New Forest*

***Andy Page***  
*Forestry England*



Breeding European Stonechats in Cumbria

The Eurasian Curlew – a UK conservation priority

Slender-billed Curlews in the Middle East

## 1. What's the problem?

- The Eurasian Curlew is now one of the highest conservation priority bird species in the UK, due to **rapid recent decline** and the importance of the UK population in a global context
- The bogs, 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

## 2. What are we doing about it?



### ***Early March to late April***

- Birds arrive on and establish territory
- Visual volunteer-based surveys undertaken in 15 core areas (covering ~100 km<sup>2</sup>) to establish current population level



### ***Late April to late May***

- Birds incubating eggs on nest
- Visual nest inspection, and temperature loggers deployed in 24 nests (19 recovered), to assess failure rates and pressures



### ***Late May to early July***

- Chicks hatch and develop to fledging
- Visual monitoring of chicks to assess fledging success and pressures (TBC in 2020, in collaboration with parallel GPS tracking project)

### 3. What have we found so far?



#### ***Early March to late April***

- In each year from 2016-18, a total of ~40 territories was mapped = rapid recent decline
- Observed pressures mostly related to recreational disturbance away from paths



#### ***Late April to late May***

- Nests were found in ~50% of territories, and ~50% of monitored nests failed at egg stage
- Most nest failures attributable to predation, presumed to be mostly foxes and maybe badgers

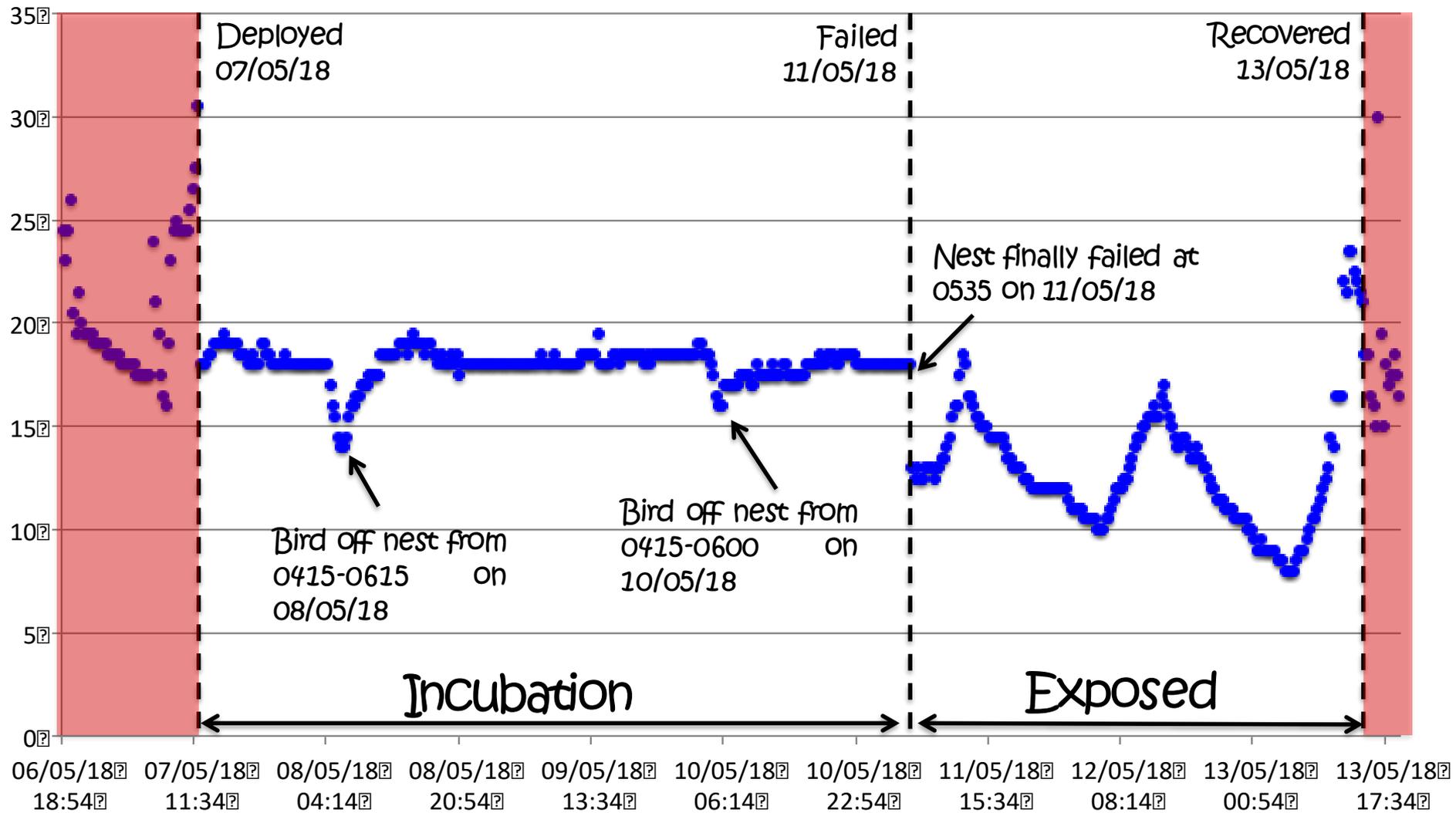


#### ***Late May to early July***

- Few observations of chicks, and very few fledglings (<5 per year)
- Most chicks presumed to be predated, but recreational disturbance an additional pressure

# Example of nest temperature logger data

Holmhill Bog (nest) BE5433



Nest with three eggs predated, based on logger data and visual observation of empty nest

## 4. How are the data being used?



- Forestry England and the New Forest National Park Authority have introduced new signage and seasonal rangers to reduce recreational disturbance
- Forestry England are restricting access to particularly sensitive areas, e.g. closure of Yew Tree Heath Car park, and investigating potential mitigation measures for generalist predators
- Data are contributing to regional and national Curlew monitoring programmes, e.g. lowland England Curlew forum

## 5. How are we engaging the public?

- News release in 2018 featured in local and regional media, e.g. BBC News online, highlighting rapid decline and potential impact of recreational disturbance
- Project featured on BBC1 'Countryfile' in spring 2018 (~5M viewers) and briefly on BBC4 'New Forest A Year in the Wild Wood'
- Public encouraged to submit Curlew sightings to Wild New Forest to assist with territory mapping



The image shows a screenshot of a BBC News article. The page header includes the BBC logo, a sign-in button, and navigation links for News, Sport, Weather, iPlayer, TV, and Radio. Below the header, there are category links: Home, UK, World, Business, Politics, Tech, Science, Health, Education, and Entertainment. The article title is "Curlew numbers 'fall by two thirds' in New Forest National Park". The date is "4 April 2017" and the location is "Hampshire & Isle of Wight". There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Email, and a general share icon. A photograph of a curlew is shown, with the credit "ANDY HAY" in the bottom right corner. Below the photo, a caption reads: "Forty breeding pairs of curlews were counted across the New Forest National Park in 2016". The main text of the article begins: "Curlew numbers in one of the birds' strongholds in southern England have experienced a 'shocking decline', conservationists have said. Figures released by Wild New Forest (WNF) show a two-thirds decline in breeding pairs in the national park over the past 12 years. In 2004, about 100 breeding pairs were identified, compared with 40 recorded by volunteers in 2016."



## 6. Who is involved?

- The project is co-ordinated by Wild New Forest and Forestry England, with support from the New Forest National Park Authority
- The New Forest Association generously sponsored the nest temperature loggers
- We are grateful to Hampshire Ornithological Society and a network of local volunteers and photographers for supporting survey and monitoring activities



## 7. What's next?



- Further monitoring of the New Forest Curlew population in 2020, including a focus on the chick-rearing stage to assess fledging success, pressures, and effectiveness of mitigation measures
- Continued engagement and co-operation with local stakeholders, e.g. the New Forest National Park Authority, and regional and national initiatives, e.g. the lowland England Curlew forum
- Attendance at a 'Curlew Recovery Summit' at Highgrove House in Feb 2020 that follows on from a UK 'Curlew Summit' held at 10 Downing Street in 2019 (see next slides)

In July 2019, Russell Wynn attended a Curlew Summit at 10 Downing Street, hosted by Lord John Randall and chaired by Mary Colwell, and presented on public and volunteer engagement in the New Forest Curlew Project



In Feb 2020, Russell Wynn will be attending a further Curlew Summit at Highgrove House, hosted by HRH Prince Charles, and chaired by Teresa Dent



**HIGHGROVE  
CURLEW AND OTHER  
PRIORITY SPECIES  
RECOVERY SUMMIT**

FRIDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2020

VENUE: THE ORCHARD ROOM  
HIGHGROVE HOUSE, TETBURY, GL8 8TN



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- Wild New Forest and Forestry England, supported by the New Forest Association and other local partners, are contributing to UK conservation initiatives for breeding Curlews
- Visual surveys in 2016-18 consistently counted a New Forest breeding population of about 40 territories, which represents a decline of up to two-thirds in the last 25 years
- The New Forest holds up to 10% of the remaining lowland England population and is the furthest southeast; local extinction would therefore lead to significant range contraction
- Through March and April, birds arrive and establish territory on the forest bogs, mires and wet heaths, at which time recreational disturbance appears to be a significant pressure
- Nesting begins in late April, and visual nest inspection and nest temperature logger data indicate a failure rate of about 50% at egg stage, mostly due to mammal predation
- Chicks appear from late May, but few appear to make it to fledging, with predation and recreational disturbance noted as potential pressures
- Public outreach has included a feature on BBC1 Countryfile and news releases that have featured in local and regional media, e.g. BBC News online
- Further fieldwork in 2020 will again monitor the population level, but will focus on the chick-rearing period to assess pressures and outcomes of mitigation measures