

# Curlew Action



## February newsletter 2024

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## World Curlew Day: Sunday 21st April



*First Curlew nest in Denmark for 2024. Found and photographed by Curlew volunteer Ynske Ypma*

Spring is upon us! The Curlews are gathering on the breeding grounds, and we wait with nervous anticipation for the eggs to be laid, and the chicks to start hatching out. In fact, as this newsletter was finished off, we heard from Gerrit Gerrtisen in Denmark of an early first nest already containing eggs!

And it also means that World Curlew Day is fast approaching us! Created by Mary in 2017, the day is a celebration of this beautiful bird. 21st April was chosen for a couple of reasons. It was the day that Mary set off from the west coast of Ireland when she began her 500-mile walk for her book *Curlew Moon* in 2016, and it is the average laying day for the first Curlew egg in the UK.

21st April is also the feast day for St Beuno, the patron saint of Curlews!

# World Curlew Day competition

Curlew Action's 2024 World Curlew Day art and poetry competition is right around the corner! This year, we've added a new category: Curlew bake-off! Send us photos of your Curlew-inspired cakes and biscuits to enter.

The judges will be announced on social media soon. Winners of each category will be announced on social media on World Curlew Day, and shared in our next newsletter.



Diane Jameson



Suzy Ager



Sarah Ling



Lachlan



Emily Pritchard

The categories for this year's competition are:

- Under 16 art
- Under 16 poetry
- Over 16 art
- Over 16 poetry
- Curlew bake-off (cakes & biscuits, any age group)

Help us to celebrate World Curlew Day and raise awareness of these beautiful birds. Send the photos and details of your entry, including which category you are submitting to, to [ellen@curlewaction.org](mailto:ellen@curlewaction.org) by 18.00 on Sunday 16th April.

All U16 entries will receive a digital certificate, and the winners of each category will receive a pair of Curlew socks by HebTroCo and a Curlew Action pin badge.

# World Curlew Day webinar and live events

Prior to World Curlew Day, we will be hosting a webinar on Wednesday 15th April (18.30-20.00) where we will be learning about the different curlew species around the globe. [Tickets are available via Eventbrite](#). There are more details about our recent and upcoming webinars later in the newsletter.



This year we are celebrating World Curlew Day with our patron David Gray in two live events in Yorkshire and Northumberland!

On Saturday, we have a two-part event in Farndale. During the day, we will be going on a guided walk to see displaying Curlews on the North York Moors National Park! Please note that due to the small group size for this walk, tickets for this event have sold out.

In the evening, we'll be at in the famous The Band Room "The greatest small venue on earth." Mary Colwell and David Gray will discuss his love of Curlews and nature, and how they affect his music - which he will perform live.

Then on Sunday, we have a second evening event with Mary and David at the Alnwick Playhouse. Hosted by the Duke of Northumberland, enjoy an evening of conservation and live music.

We are thrilled to say that all three events are now sold out! We will be selling Curlew Action merchandise - including our new cards (more details on next page) - at both of the evening events.

## World Curlew Day: sponsored walk



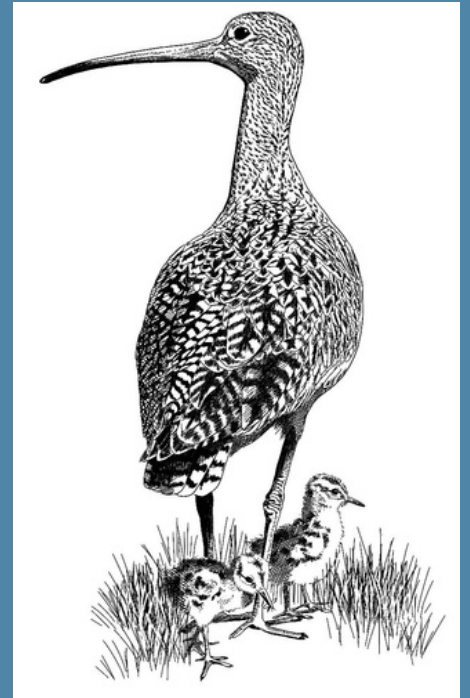
In late April, part of the Curlew Action team will be heading north to Scotland to join over 14,000 people raising money for 869 Scottish charities in the Glasgow Kiltwalk. We will be taking on 'The Mighty Stride', a 23-mile walk starting at Glasgow Green and finishing in Balloch, Loch Lomond.

You can sponsor the Curlew Action Kiltwalk team [via our JustGiving site](#).

## World Curlew Day: new notecards

Later this month, we will be launching new Curlew notecards! The sharp-eyed among you may recognise them - they are by the artist Jessica Holm and appeared in Mary's Curlew Moon book.

They will be available to buy via the [Curlew Action shop website](#), and at upcoming events including the Global Birdfair.



# Big Green Hike

Fancy strapping on those walking boots and hiking for Curlews? The Big Green Hike takes place on 6-7th April, and is a chance to fundraise for an environmental charity that you care about.



It's easy to take part - and you can choose your own hike length and location!

Sign up to take part on the [Big Green Hike website](#). If you would like to fundraise for Curlew Action, you'll need to select 'Other' in the charity selection, and then you'll be able to select us when setting up your event on JustGiving. Don't forget to let us know if you're taking part!

## Congratulations Mike!



Mike speaking at the European Curlew Fieldworker Workshop. (Photo by Richard Bunce)

The inaugural MedBirds Awards celebrated experts for their “lifetime contributions to the conservation of Mediterranean marine and coastal birds and celebrating the building of collaborative networks across our Sea 🌊”

Curlew Action Trustee Mike Smart was recognised “for his unwavering dedication to Mediterranean waterbirds since the RAMSAR Conference, and for fostering connections among past, present, and future ornithologists, particularly in North Africa 🌍”



Mike tagging young Curlews



Mike on the Curlew Action stall at the North West Birdwatching Festival. (Photo by Lindsey Holland))

# European Curlew Fieldworker Workshop

All photos by Richard Bunce/Curlew Action, words by Mike Smart



The sharp decline in the Eurasian Curlew population right across northwest Europe has led to a great expansion in research projects and meetings about this iconic species. But the “European Curlew Fieldworkers Workshop” organised by Curlew Action held from 9 to 11 February in Kings Lynn was something special: not a scientific symposium, not a theoretical session for policy makers, but a get-together of people actually working in the field on Curlew conservation.

The weekend brought together over a hundred practical Curlew conservationists – not just from England either, but from Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, and further afield Finland, Poland, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium and France. The main aim was to give fieldworkers a chance to exchange views and experiences, with lots of personal interaction.



With Curlew Action’s Russ Wynn as a knowledgeable and witty Master of Ceremonies, the sessions included both short talks and workshop sessions. Speakers included scientists reporting back on data provided by fieldworkers, and creative artists such as Mark Anthony (ATM Street Art) and stained glass artist Rachel Taylor (also a scientist for the BTO).



The workshops covered a variety of issues, but all aimed to give participants an opportunity to express their own views and to ask questions:

- Monitoring
- Habitat management
- Working with a declining species
- Predator management
- Working with volunteers and landowners



The meeting took place in the historic Red Barn, just outside Kings Lynn, with a Saturday evening entertainment in which Mary Colwell interviewed David Gray (patron and strong supporter of Curlew Action), who performed some of his songs.

A 05.30 start on Sunday morning allowed us all see the high tide roost of nearly 100,000 waders at RSPB Snettisham Nature Reserve on The Wash. A spectacular start to the day.

An unforgettable weekend! We are planning to make as much as possible of the proceedings available through its website. And maybe another workshop in a couple of years' time!

We also ran a raffle with the chance to win a range a wonderful prizes that had been donated for the weekend. Thank you to the companies, publishers, authors and David Gray for your kind prize donations:



- [Opticron Discovery WA ED 8x32 binoculars](#)
- Jim Northover Curlew print
- Signed White Ladder Live album, by David Gray
- Signed Skellig album, by David Gray
- The Meaning of Geese, by Nick Acheson, published by Chelsea Green
- Beak, Tooth and Claw, by Mary Colwell, published by William Collins
- Native, by Patrick Laurie, published by Birlinn General
- Across a Walking Land, by Roger Morgan-Grenville, published by Icon Books
- HebCoTro Curlew socks





## Webinars

The recording of our January webinar, on Curlews and energy production, is [available to watch on our YouTube channel](#).



*A Eurasian Curlew feeding at Tophill Low Nature Reserve, in Yorkshire. (Photo by Barry Carter)*

On Wednesday 17th April, ahead of [World Curlew Day](#), we will be celebrating different curlew species around the world. [Book your free ticket on Eventbrite](#).

Looking forward to the rest of the 2024 webinar schedule, please put these dates in your diary:

- 15th May: Curlews & extinction
- 12th June: Curlews & development
- 11th September: Curlews & social science
- 16th October: 2024 UK breeding season
- 13th November: 2024 Europe breeding season

Eventbrite pages will be created shortly for these webinars, and will be shared in future newsletters and online. All our webinars will be recorded and uploaded to [our YouTube channel](#).

On Wednesday 13th March, we will be discussing the diets of Curlews – what do we know about what they eat, and what do we still need to find out?

We are delighted to welcome entomologist and author [Professor Dave Goulson](#) to the panel. He will give an overview of the decline of insects and the impact this is having on many species. [Book your free ticket on Eventbrite](#).



*A Long-billed Curlew on Morro Strand State Beach in California. (Photo by [Ingrid V Taylor via Flickr](#), CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.)*

## Scientific papers update

Our [website page collating scientific papers and reports on all curlew species](#) recently hit a significant milestone of 150 items listed! This page aims to bring together scientific literature (and associated press releases, news stories and blog posts) on curlews for anyone who may wish to read more on these birds.

# The Cry of the Curlew

Last year, Curlew Action took part in Yorkshire-based project “The Cry of the Curlew” which is currently being exhibited at the [Dales Countryside Museum](#). “The Cry of the Curlew” is an education and arts project. It was created as a way to raise awareness of the endangered status of Curlew and help encourage both the local community and the wider area to engage in the much needed conservation of this iconic species.

The project involved working with farmers in our community and, together with Curlew Action, going into local schools to give children an understanding of the problems. The children's creative responses using painting, poetry, textiles and posters are now being shared with a wider audience through a touring exhibition.

This film with the farmers is part of the exhibition giving them the opportunity to share their experiences and concerns for this much loved wader. The children and the farmers together give a powerful message to visitors to the exhibition - “will the next generation hear the Cry of the Curlew?” - Sarah Smith, project lead.



Photos by Sarah Smith



The film can be [watched on YouTube](#). A huge thank you to Sarah for organising the project, Sue Harrison for leading the textiles work, students and teachers from local schools, the museum team, and local experts, landowners and volunteers for driving this wonderful project. The exhibition will be available to view until the 11th of April.

# A visit to Poland/Belgium/IWSG

Following the success of last year's Curlew Action trips to [Finland](#) and [The Netherlands](#), and our inaugural European Curlew Fieldworker Workshop in Norfolk, we have been invited to visit two more European countries this summer to discuss and learn about Curlew conservation there – Belgium and Poland.



*Mike and Mary from Curlew Action, and Rebecca Pringle from Natural England on our visit to The Netherlands.*

In addition, we are planning to attend the [International Wader Study Group \(IWSG\) Annual Conference](#) again. Last year, it was held on the island of Sylt in Germany, and Mary brought the room to tears with her talk on ecological grief. You can read more about [her visit to the conference on our blog](#). For this year, the IWSG Annual Conference will be held in September in Montpellier, France. We are planning to send both Mary and Mike to give talks.

Any donations to help us with these trips would be much appreciated, and can be made [via our website](#).

## Fieldworker's notes

Mike Smart is Curlew Action's in-house Curlew expert, and is heavily involved in Curlew conservation in his home area of Gloucestershire. To keep us all up to date, Mike produces a circular of his Curlew observations which we have summarised below:

The flooding continues: there have so far been five big floods in the Severn and Avon Vales since October 2023, and the time between peaks has been so short that the floodwater has hardly had time to recede before the arrival of the next flood.



In the picture to the left, taken from the west, the course of the Avon is invisible: usually even the highest floods leave the top of the floodbank showing through the water and waterbirds concentrate on the emerging green area; but here there was practically no riverbank left.

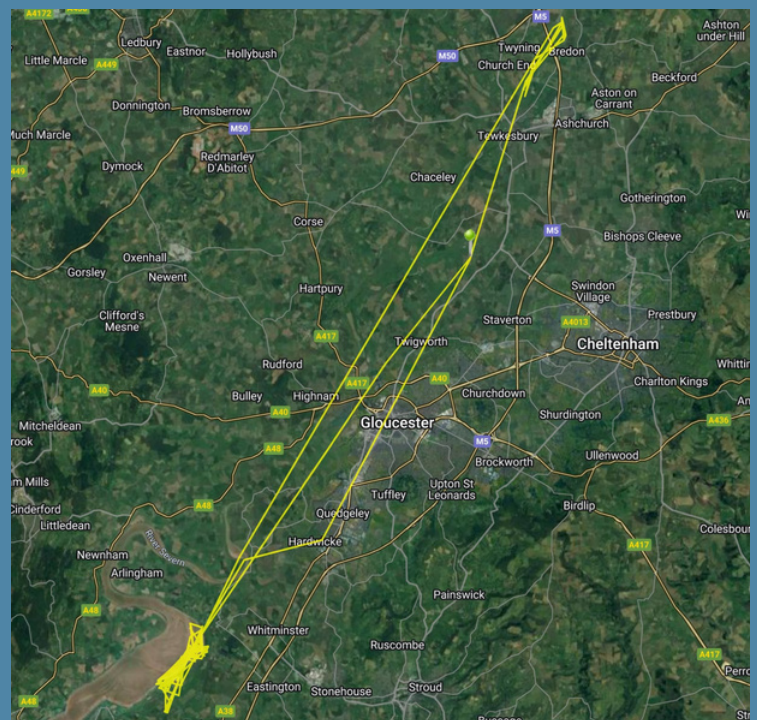
Curlews returned a little earlier this year, the first being seen on 3 February. The six tagged birds had all returned to sites along the Avon by 19 February, despite the flooding. Without the tags, it would have been impossible to tell where they were – a clear illustration of the increased information provided by the tags.

Observations from previous years suggest that the flooding doesn't cramp the Curlews' style; they simply sit quietly around the edge of the floodwater, as near to their nesting fields as they can get, patiently waiting for the floodwaters to recede. On the day when the above picture was taken, as many as 16 Curlews were crammed onto the tiny patches of green still emerging from the water.

But, but, but! One of the satellite-tagged birds (number 03, a female, mate of male 02 which had been the first back) was nevertheless clearly perturbed by the conditions, as shown in the satellite map below.

The yellow squiggles around the estuary near Slimbridge show this female's local movements in winter 2023/24. The yellow line on the left shows her exodus to the Avon on 13 February; the yellow line on the right shows her return from the Avon to the estuary on 16 February; it must have been the flooding that caused her to rejoin winter quarters.

But not for long: the line in the middle shows her heading back to the northeast on the morning of 17 February. An even more graphic illustration of the worth of the tags, without which this to-ing and fro-ing would have remained unknown!



Returning Curlews have not returned only to the Avon: at one site along the Severn (under deep flood) there was a single Curlew on 18 February, but four in a flock at the water's edge on 25 February. At another Severnside site, less constantly occupied in recent years, a single Curlew was seen on two consecutive days in late February.

The team will obviously be keeping a close look-out for satellite-tagged, colour-ringed and unmarked Curlews in the coming weeks. In 2023 wet conditions delayed the onset of nesting and caused some Curlews to nest on slightly higher ground – flood-banks or on low masses of vegetation. What does spring 2024 hold?

Best wishes from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust Severn and Avon Vales team, Kane, Dan and Mike.