



# Curlew Action

## Newsletter June 2021



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## Curlew catch-up

- Curlew Action had a brilliant World Curlew Day, with curlew fans taking part in activities such as walking, biking, making curlew art and writing poetry. In all, you managed to raise well over £26,000!
- Some of our wonderful curlew ambassadors have been spreading the word far and wide about the plight of the curlew, including Jayne Ashe who was interviewed in the Lancashire Post, and Sarah Ledbury in the Macclesfield Express. This exposure is exactly what curlews need if we're going to get more people interested in saving them.
- Click here to read our [ambassador blog](#)!
- New podcast, Mary Colwell speaks to Donald Worster and Ursula Heise about the 1954 book 'Last of the Curlews'



### Sarah swoops in to save bird species under threat

ALICE SCAPENS  
NATURE lover is helping to help threatened bird species



take off in and around Macclesfield.  
Sarah Ledbury, 46, who lives in Ratten, has become an ambassador for Curlew Action, a newly formed charity that aims to stop the decline in numbers.  
The bird likes moorland and can be found on the edge of Macclesfield Forest and Great Valley near Lymm and Broomfield.  
Over the past 20 years half the British population of European curlews - nearly 120,000 birds - has been lost and Sarah says she has become very apparent in the Macclesfield area. So to be able to see an ambassador she will raise awareness of the issue, monitor populations and get involved in field work to protect the birds and their habitat.  
Sarah, who works as a

the past few weeks and have noticed a decline this year and last especially.  
"I used to see and see quite a lot of them, it shows the habitat is changing."  
Curlews typically need boggy ground with high grass and cover from predators.  
The recent wet weather aside, a trend for dryer conditions and more land used for farming is seeing habitat lost.  
An increase use of the land for dog walking - with dogs often off the lead - has also been a problem.  
Now there are an estimated 100,000 dog walkers in England which is a considerable fall.

Lancashire  
**Post**



### Music fans get back in

AS lockdown continues to ease a popular series featuring instrumental music parades The



## Meet the Curlew Ambassador

It's World Curlew Day this week. A local volunteer tells Fiona Finch why she has stepped up to help Curlew Action.



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# A guide to protecting curlews in your local area

It is the height of the breeding season, and our curlews need all the help they can get to breed successfully!

1. Avoid nests, rather than seeking them out (even if you might want to see them!) - curlews need peace and quiet and are easily disturbed, and approaching a nest can also attract predators
2. Keep dogs on leads in areas which might contain nests (open areas away from trees, with good ground level vegetation cover, such as moorland, heathland and farmland)
3. Inform and support farmers and landowners who have breeding curlews on their land
4. Join any curlew groups already present in your area, and find out if they need any help
5. Raise awareness whenever you can, by celebrating curlews and encouraging people to feel proud to have them in their local area. You could even put a sign on your gate!



## Ambassadors abroad

Successful protection of any species requires communication and cooperation across different landscapes. A large number of the curlews we see in the UK breed in countries like Sweden, Russia and Finland. Rebuilding a stable curlew population therefore requires international cooperation. If France lifts their suspension of the shooting of curlews, put in place in 2019, then curlews across Europe could suffer. In light of this need for international cooperation, Curlew Action is looking to expand our network and are recruiting volunteer ambassadors abroad. If you are from outside the UK and would like to support our mission, please email [ellen@curlewaction.org](mailto:ellen@curlewaction.org)

## Curlew Shop

We've got lot's of new curlew items available on our website shop! Click [here](#) to visit our store.

*Pin Badges*

*Curlew Art*

*Greeting Cards*





# Fieldworker's Notes

- Mike Smart, our in-house fieldwork expert from the Severn and Avon Vales, updates us on what the breeding season has been like so far in his area
- (NOTE: Mike is a very experienced fieldworker - we kindly request that you do not try to conduct similar work in your area without proper training - see our guide above for instructions on protecting curlews in your area)
- *The season got off to a good start, with birds returning to nest in hay meadows from their coastal wintering areas in February and March. This was followed by an unusually cold April, probably delaying the start of the breeding season by a couple of weeks, and an unseasonably wet May, flooding out many nests for curlews, lapwings, oystercatchers and avocets.*
- *In order to make sure we can recognise and keep track of adult curlews in the field, we use a 'whoosh net' to harmlessly catch them, and leg rings to mark them individually.*
- *As well as the traditional method of finding nests, by following birds with a telescope from afar, we have been trialling the use of heat-seeking drones. Results have been promising but inconclusive, largely due to the delayed season and excess grass growth in May.*
- *We have succeeded in finding only three nests, all of which have been predated (even though two had electric fences placed around them), most likely by avian predators such as crows and gulls. Because of the difficulty of finding nests, the season's success may have to be judged by the behaviour of the adults, who are visibly more anxious when they have chicks in the area.*
- *Early June can be difficult: although farmers are sympathetic to the need to conserve curlew chicks, they still need to cut silage around this time, meaning chicks are often killed as their instinct is to lie flat on the ground rather than run away from the mower.*



Photo credit: Mike Smart

## World Curlew Day Snaps



Our 31 mile walk with David Gray!