

Curlew Action



October newsletter 2023

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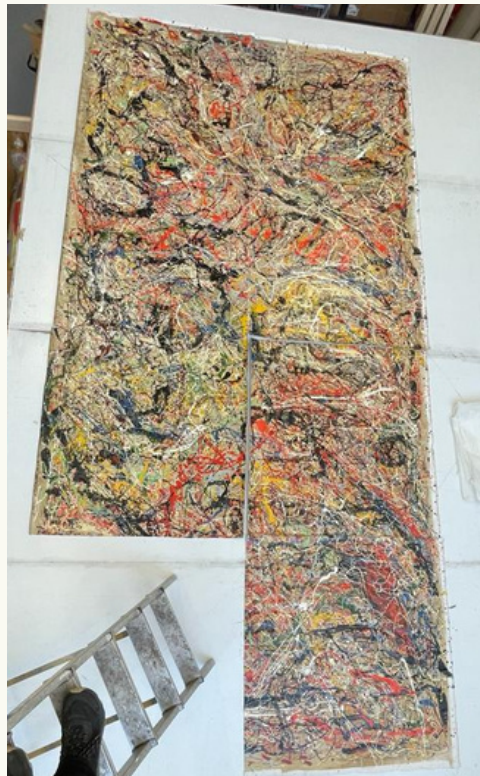
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David Gray original artwork

During the video for his song [Enter Lightly](#), David Gray created a large painting – but whatever happened to it? That was the question recently raised by a David Gray fan, who wanted to buy it and donate to Curlew Action.

It had actually been cut into pieces for storage and had to be reassembled by an expert team and then transported over to Ireland. You can watch David's two videos on the process on [X](#) and on [Instagram](#) – but there was a problem – one piece was missing!

Is that the end of the story? Not quite... the final missing piece has been found and named Enter Lightly No 7. Through the generosity of the original buyer, Glenn, it is now [being auctioned on eBay](#) to further help Curlew Action. Would you like to bid for it yourself? Or please, spread the word!



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WEBSITE: curlewaction.org

Webinars

This autumn we've had two very interesting and well-attended webinars. In September, Curlews on the Move looked at Curlew migration, and in October we looked at issues around Curlews on the Coast. Like all our previous webinars, they were recorded and are [available to watch online](#). The feedback we get from these webinars is very heartening. Please support us to keep doing them.



Our final webinar of the year will take a look back at the breeding season:

Average productivity rates of Eurasian Curlew fall well below the numbers needed to maintain the population. Areas of intense management increases fledging rates in some parts of the UK and 2023 has seen a series of [headstarting](#) projects working to boost populations. In this webinar, we will hear from a panel of speakers from across the UK who will discuss the 2023 breeding season - successes and challenges, and lessons learned. [Book your free ticket here](#).

We are putting together our schedule for 2024 - and welcome suggestions for topics. Please e-mail admin@curlewaction.org

We were delighted when we recently heard from the artist Sean Harris, who said “please know how important Curlew Action’s online events have been in informing all of this”. His exhibition [‘The Conference of the Birds: Curlew and Great Auk’](#) is available to view at the Senedd until 19th December.

Events: Recap

For the first time, we attended the Spurn Migration Festival in Yorkshire and the North West Birdwatching Festival at WWT Martin Mere in Lancashire. At the latter, Mary and Curlew Action Trustee Mike Smart each gave a talk on Curlews, which were very popular.





Aerial view of Sylt. (Photo by [Ralf Roletschek](#) via [Wikimedia](#), by [CC BY-SA 2.0 DEED](#))

In late September and early October, wading bird scientists came together to attend the International Wader Study Group's annual conference which this year was held in the Wadden Sea island of Sylt, N Germany (pictured above). Mary gave a talk on the emerging issue of ecological grief, the emotional attrition on working with declining species (which she has also written about for a recent issue of *British Wildlife*). The emotional response highlights just how much we need to talk about this. One attendee, Guillaume Dillenseger, wrote: "the most powerful and touching talk I have witnessed during a conference."

She also challenged the attendees to use more poetry in their communication - a challenge which was taken up by wader scientist Camilo Carneiro, albeit with the help of ChatGPT, to transform a scientific paper abstract into a poem. You can read this poem in the [BOU blog post about the paper](#). We look forward to seeing if any other scientists will take up this challenge too!

Read [Mary's full blog post about the conference](#).

We enjoyed a wonderful evening at Hay Castle in late October, an event organised by Bannau Brycheiniog National Park to celebrate the Curlew and the new [Curlew LIFE / Cri'r Gylfinir](#) project in the park. After talks about the status of Curlews in Wales and readings from local writer James Roberts, Mary Colwell was interviewed by the wildlife biologist, explorer and presenter Lizzie Daly about Mary's love for Curlews and why she set up Curlew Action.



Events: Coming up



On 23rd November, Mary will be giving a speech on curlew conservation across the UK at the Working Together For Waders conference in County Fermanagh. The author Patrick Laurie and Curlew Recovery Partnership Director Ryan Burrell will also be there. The event is now sold out.

European Fieldworker Meeting

Planning continues for our February 2024 event to bring together fieldworkers from across Europe. These two days will cover a variety of key topics in Curlew conservation, and will take place at the Red Barn near Kings Lynn in Norfolk.

We have been working hard to raise funds, and are accepting donations to Curlew Action to support this workshop. Tickets will be available to book soon, if you are interested in attending, please email us at: admin@curlewaction.org.



Scientific resources

One of the recent projects for the Curlew Action website has been to create a page which collates scientific papers and reports on all nine species of curlews.

We hope this page will continue to grow, and prove to be helpful resource for anyone – both scientists and non-scientists – who wish to read more on Curlew species around the world.

In order to improve accessibility to scientific resources, we have noted where papers are Open Access (do not require a fee to read or download), and provided links to associated blog posts, news stories and press releases.

Natural History Education

In September, Mary wrote a blog post with an update on the Natural History GCSE. It has been a tumultuous time in politics with changes in the Department for Education. It is now confirmed that teaching won't start until 2026 as there are still steps to go through before it becomes a reality.

We look forward to working with the new schools minister Damian Hinds to move the process along more quickly and get everything ready for a successful and well-resourced launch.

[Read Mary's recent update on the blog.](#)

Following on from the Natural History GCSE, we are working on a 'nature pathway' so that the GCSE becomes one stepping stone in a longer and broader path through education and the workplace.



In October, Mary and Robin Walker MP (the Chair of the Environmental Select Committee, and the schools minister who said yes to the GCSE) hosted a roundtable of industry and policy leaders to discuss the establishment of the 'nature pathway'.

The event featured a keynote speech from Sir Partha Dasgupta, Professor of Economics at the University of Cambridge, as well as speeches from young naturalist Kabir Kaul, ecologist Professor Chris Baines, secondary school teacher and writer Michael Warren and an update from the Department for Education. There will be a blog post on the Curlew Action website about the event very soon.

Whimbrel internship



Interested in studying Whimbrel migration? The Office français de la biodiversité is recruiting for an internship.

[Message Charlotte Francesiz](#) on X (formerly Twitter) for more information.

Christmas cards



Our Christmas cards are in stock! We have two packs available, both designed by Jessica Holm:

- Pack of 5 with two designs: [Christmas Curlews and Barn Owls cards](#) (150x 150mm)
- Pack of 5 of the [Winter Curlews Christmas cards](#) (A5 size)

Podcasts and interviews



Mary has recently appeared on two outdoors podcasts – the Ashdown Forest podcast and Explore Being Outdoors with Claire Bright – to discuss the importance of Natural History and the Natural History GCSE, and conserving Curlews in the UK.



[Both episodes have been added to our podcasts website page.](#)



On Monday 13 November, Mary was interviewed by birder, author and conservationist David Lindo (aka The Urban Birder) for his 'In Conservation With...' series.

If you missed the live interview, don't worry! It is now available to catch up with on [his YouTube Channel](#) – as are all his previous interviews, featuring a range of conservationists including professional cartoonist and writer Rosemary Mosco, nature writer Dr Amy-Jane Beer, and musician Sam Lee.

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 weather in July was, as you will remember, very morose, with few extended periods of sunny weather suitable for haymaking. This meant that – most unusually – much hay in the vales was not cut until well into August, which may have allowed Curlew parents extra time to bring off their young. 34 pairs of Curlews were holding territories early in the season; not all attempted to nest, but a large number of them did: we found 24 nests, some of them repeat attempts by one pair.

Of the nests where eggs hatched, there were nine fledged birds by the end of July. This compares with ten last year, when weather conditions were rather more favourable. But still a very low figure, and not enough to maintain overall population numbers. One of the successful parents was a male that had been released as a “head-started” juvenile (a bird raised from eggs in an aviary) at Slimbridge in July 2019.

Of the nine young that fledged, eight were from along the Avon, only one from along the Severn. Most of the fledged young were raised in out-of-the way areas, with few or no footpaths and minimal disturbance. It may be that this lack of disturbance is more important than the botany of the grasslands where the Curlews breed. In recent years, the Flourishing Floodplains project and the Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society “Curlew Meadows” project have been looking more closely at the vegetation of Curlew nesting fields. The results of these studies, as yet incomplete, may throw more light on which fields are most favourable for nesting Curlews.

Curlews are now on the coast, where they will stay until they begin their return to the breeding areas next February or March. In the coming months the main focus of our observations will be the Severn estuary, where we shall be recording numbers and looking out for colour rings. In the meantime, the satellite tagged Curlews can be [followed on the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust's website](#). If you've seen a colour-marked Curlew, you can also submit your sightings:

Seen a colour-marked curlew?

We're always keen to receive sightings of colour-marked curlew. Please send any observations complete with ring information, date and location to curlew@wwt.org.uk – all sightings will be acknowledged with a full life history of each bird.

Once again, we would like to express our very grateful thanks to all the farmers and landowners who have enthusiastically engaged with us during the breeding season. As we have said before, without the current agricultural practice of late hay cuts, Curlews and other ground-nesting birds could not survive in the Vales.”