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Curlew



M Lane (rspb-images.com)

A large brown wader with long legs and a down-curved bill. The bubbling song and haunting cry are characteristic of many uplands and wet pastures.

CALENDAR

Breeding season:

April to late July.

Nest:

On the ground, frequently within tussocks of rushes or sedges.

Winter:

Curlews leave the breeding sites and form flocks, many migrating to the coast. Birds from Britain and Scandinavia spend the winter in Ireland, particularly in the south and east.

HABITAT

In spring and summer curlews nest on unimproved, rough pastures, particularly in upland areas, as well as on bogs, wet heath and moorland. They are also found on the wet grasslands and callows of lowland areas, and on drumlins. In winter, they congregate on estuaries, rocky shores and coastal pastures.

DIET

During the breeding season, the adults feed on earthworms, leatherjackets, beetles and spiders, and the caterpillars of moths and butterflies. Chicks feed on a variety of insects and flies. In winter, they will also eat ragworms, lugworms, shrimps, small crabs and shellfish.

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE CURLEWS?

- Allow some areas of rushes and sedges to persist, aiming for not more than about 30% cover. These provide nesting and feeding areas for adults and chicks. Cutting in August should be carried out in preference to spraying for controlling the amount of rush/sedge growth and a patchwork of different heights should be established.
- Avoid drainage or improvement of pasture but, where possible, block drains to create damp soil conditions suitable for nesting and feeding.
- Cattle grazing creates a mosaic of sward heights, important for providing suitable nesting and feeding conditions for adults and chicks. Livestock should be excluded or reduced in number during the peak nesting season (early April to late June), to avoid trampling of nests.
- Retain unimproved hay meadows. These provide better chick rearing areas compared with improved silage fields. Try to delay cutting until after 15 July to avoid killing chicks.
- Avoid rolling meadows during the breeding season as this will destroy nests and kill chicks.

You can get further information on this and other ways of managing your farm for wildlife from:



The RSPB,
Northern Ireland HQ,
Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 7QT.
Tel: 028 9049 1547

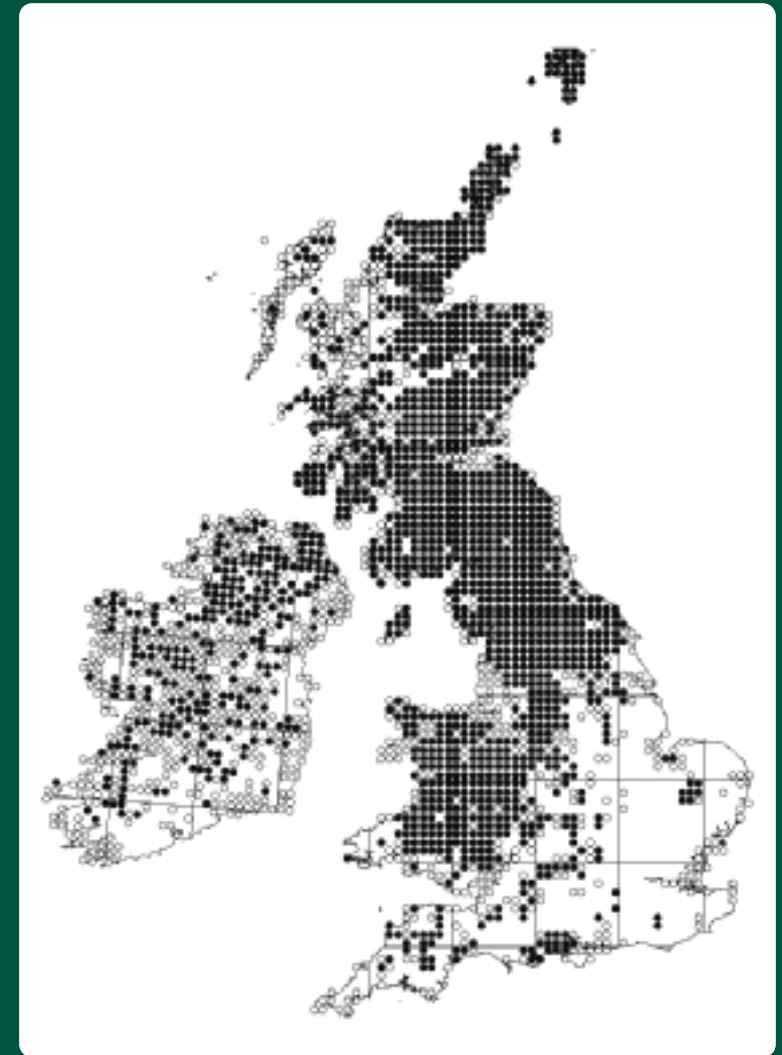


DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Upper Newtownards Road,
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Curlew distribution

Data provided by *The New Atlas of Breeding Birds in Britain and Ireland 1988–1991*. British Trust for Ornithology, Scottish Ornithologists' Club and Irish Wildbird Conservancy (now known as Birdwatch Ireland).



Filled dot = breeding

Open dot = present during the breeding season