

# Peatlands

*International*

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Welcome to Rotterdam! Annual Convention, Jubilee Symposium & Global Peatland and Peat Industry Summit  
Call for Papers: "Peatlands for People Revisited" in British Columbia, Canada  
In Memoriam: Peat Artist Papu Kirsti Marjatta Pirtola 1949 - 2017  
Wetlands contribute to biodiversity after peat extraction  
The 24th Peatland Ecology Research Group Symposium  
UK Peatland Strategy - Workshop and Launch  
Taking Action for Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)  
The Indonesian Peat Prize



# Taking Action for Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)

**T**he bubbling breeding call of the Curlew was once a common sound across Ireland's countryside. The iconic call of this beautiful bird has unfortunately become a rarity in Ireland.

While we may see large numbers of Curlew along Irish coasts during the winter season the majority of these birds are overwintering and not breeding.

The Curlew is in crisis! The bird has suffered widespread declines across its European range. Nowhere has this been more severe than in

Ireland, it is estimated that there were 5000 breeding pairs in the 1980's and this number has fallen to less than 150 pairs in the Republic. This is a devastating 97% decline in our native breeding Curlews (O'Donoghue 2017).

## What is driving the decline?

Curlew are long-lived and should be able to maintain stable numbers if each pair raised just



Curlew © D. Camier

one chick every couple of years. Unfortunately, in Ireland their breeding success has plummeted due primarily to loss of suitable habitat to forestry, intensification or abandonment of farmland and commercial peat extraction. It is estimated that 71% of Curlew breed on bogs and 29% breed on rushy pasture and wet grassland.

The birds breeding on bogs are also reliant on grassland for feeding. Secondly, predation by foxes and crows, who often thrive in the modified and fragmented landscapes make it almost impossible for Curlew to rear young chicks.

If no action is taken to help save these iconic birds and Curlews continue to decline at the present rate, it is predicted that breeding Curlew will be extinct in Ireland within 5-10 years!

## Curlew Task Force

A Task Force for Curlew was formed in January 2017. The Task Force consists of a wide range of relevant stakeholder groups and key individuals with experience in Curlew conservation. The Task Force adopts a collaborative approach whereby all members can contribute something towards Curlew conservation, from those who shape policy to those who deliver action on the ground.

The Task Force has been divided into sub-groups to concentrate on particular areas including; Curlew ecological requirements and research; farming and agricultural advisory; Curlew and people; forestry; bogs; predation and nest protection and planning.

These groups discuss action points and make recommendations for the future. The task force also provides guidance where necessary to the Curlew Conservation Programme.

## The Curlew Conservation Programme

The Curlew Conservation programme, run by the National Park & Wildlife Service (NPWS), was set up in 2017. The pilot programme focused on six of the most important areas in Ireland for breeding



Curlew nest on Lodge Bog, Co. Kildare © K. Geraghty

Curlew, including the Stack's Mountains in Kerry, Lough Ree, North Roscommon and Leitrim, North Monaghan, Donegal and Lough Corrib. There is also a research element to the Curlew Conservation Programme in the form of a Ph.D. being undertaken at the School of Agriculture in UCD, in collaboration with BirdWatch Ireland.

In each of the key areas local teams are surveying for Curlew, engaging in nest protection efforts and liaising with landowners. The programme places the landowner and the birds at the centre of all considerations, with the key goal of giving the Curlew the best chance of rearing chicks.

The 2017 Curlew Conservation Programme report is available at [www.npws.ie](http://www.npws.ie) (O'Donoghue 2017)

## IPCC taking action for Curlew in Kildare

Lodge Bog, Co. Kildare is owned and managed by Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) and Curlew have been recorded on the site since 2005.

Thanks to funding from the international conservation group - Seacology in California ([www.seacology.com](http://www.seacology.com)).



Volunteers monitoring Curlew on Lodge Bog © C. O'Connell



Curlew from grazing horses and the timing of farming grassland management works on agricultural lands where Curlew were feeding.

### 2. Enhancing Habitat

Habitat enhancement works included inserting 22 dams to block drains and raise water levels to restore raised bog habitat, a preferred breeding habitat of the Curlew.

### 3. Raising Awareness

The plight of breeding Curlew was described and discussed with ten educational groups visiting Lodge Bog.

seacology.org), IPCC with the help of volunteers, undertook a project on Lodge Bog in 2017 to:

### 1. Monitoring Curlew on Lodge Bog

Monitoring confirmed that two pairs of Curlew attempted to breed on Lodge Bog and the main threat that was observed was from Hooded Crow (*Corvus cornix*). These birds predate Curlew eggs. Other threats were disturbance of ground nesting

## Curlew Conservation Action Programme 2018

The experience gained from IPCC's work with Curlew to date coupled with help from technical experts and ornithologists have allowed us to build



Curlew landing on Lodge Bog, Co. Kildare © A. McCluskey



a Curlew Plan of Action for 2018 which aims to ensure the birds breed successfully and fledge their chicks.

IPCC will continue to monitor and record the distribution and behaviour of Curlew on Lodge Bog from April to July 2018.

Local volunteers will undertake predator control measures on and around Lodge Bog trapping crows using Ladder and Larson Traps and controlling foxes using Lamping.

IPCC will speak to local farmers about delaying hay cutting to allow chicks to find shelter and food before they fledge and provide compensation if necessary.

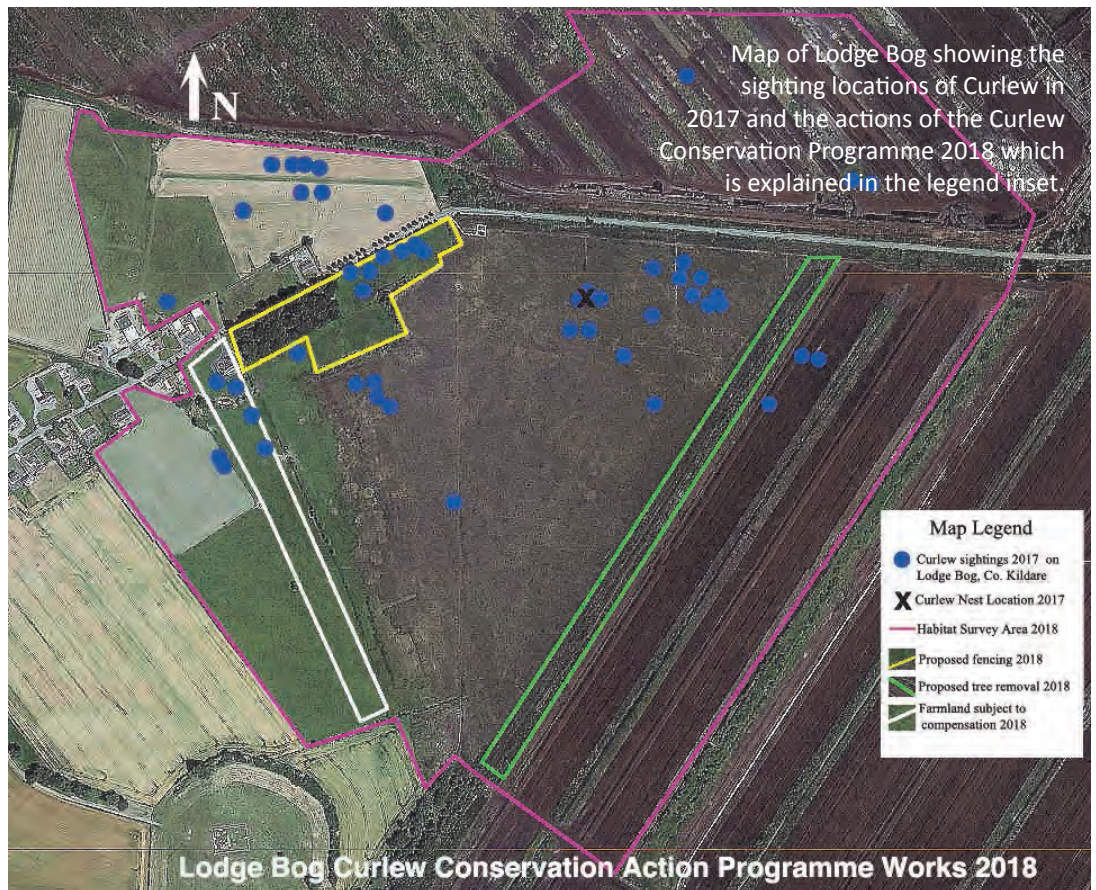
IPCC will survey and map the habitats on the bog and in the surrounding farmland and cutaway bog being used by Curlew. A fence will be erected to prevent livestock entering the site prior to the arrival of the birds.

## World Curlew Day

The first ever World Curlew Day will take place on April 21st 2018. The day will celebrate Curlews and build awareness and appreciation among the general public. IPCC will host the 'Cry of the Curlew' event (see [www.ipcc.ie](http://www.ipcc.ie)).

## Conclusion

The work that is being undertaken nationally to protect breeding Curlew highlights the need for peatland conservation measures that protect the



habitat of the birds. It also highlights the need to restore wetland habitats for other wading birds including Lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*).

## References

O'Donoghue B. G (2017) The Curlew Conservation Programme Annual Report 2017. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Killarney, Ireland.

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