

HOW CAN I ENCOURAGE CURLEW?

NESTING HABITAT

MOORLAND

- Manage moorland to retain a variety of habitats, including rough grassland, heathland, peatland wet flushes, patches of bracken etc.
- Burning should be avoided on deep peat.
- Rotational cutting and burning of dwarf shrub heath can help provide a more diverse structure including shorter vegetation preferred for nesting.

MEADOWS

- The taller vegetation of fields shut up for hay or silage is attractive to nesting curlew. They favour unimproved meadows where vegetation is less dense, though more agriculturally improved fields may be used. Curlews generally begin nesting between mid-April to mid-May, so are attracted to meadows that have some vegetation cover at this time. Curlews need around a month to incubate their eggs, with chicks fledging around 5-6 weeks after hatching. Chicks can be drawn away to cover by their parents relatively soon after hatching.
- If cutting cannot be delayed until chicks have hatched, leave as large an area as possible uncut around the nest, but this may attract the attention of predators. Where chicks have hatched, consider leaving any damp areas uncut as chicks are most likely to be using these. Leaving an uncut margin at the field edge will help maintain some cover. Mowing from the centre outwards may help move chicks to field margins.

PASTURE

- Livestock grazing at appropriate levels is essential to providing the curlew's requirement for a mosaic of tall and short vegetation. Cattle are often preferred, but grazing management has the biggest influence on vegetation structure. If possible avoid grazing or

graze lightly when the birds are nesting as this is when the birds are most vulnerable to disturbance from stock (e.g. trampling).

- Rushy pasture may be favoured for nesting, but waders avoid very dense stands of rush. Carry out management where rushes become dense over more than half the field.

MECHANICAL OPERATIONS

- Grassland management practices such as harrowing, rolling and weed topping have the potential to be destructive during the breeding season, so need to be avoided or carried out with extreme care.

TREE COVER

- Curlews like an open aspect so avoid planting trees close to areas used by nesting curlews.

FEEDING HABITAT

MOORLAND

- Restoring wet ground by blocking drainage grips will improve feeding habitat for curlew.

MEADOWS AND PASTURE

- Areas of wet ground, even if small, are important insect-rich feeding areas for chicks. Consider creating shallow pools and re-profiling ditches
- Enclosed farmland is important for foraging curlew. The application of farmyard manure, liming and maintaining good soil structure can boost the availability of worms and other soil life on farmland, in turn benefiting feeding curlew.
- Traditionally managed grasslands are important feeding sites for Curlews. The greater diversity of grasses, herbs and flowering plants provide more insect food for chicks and adults to feed on.

KEY POINTS

- **Extensively graze breeding areas to provide taller vegetation**
- **Timing of cutting and other machinery operations is critical and should not be carried out during the breeding season**
- **Provide damp ground or small, shallow pools as feeding areas for chicks**
- **In some areas predator control may be required to helping curlew populations**

Contact Conservation Management Advice at:

Post: The RSPB, UK Headquarters, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds SG19 2DL

Tel: 01767 693308

E-mail: conservation-advice@rspb.org.uk



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