



Curlew in the Republic of Ireland

Barry O'Donoghue and Seán Kelly

National Parks & Wildlife Service

Papenburg, Germany

Wednesday 17 August 2022



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

The Situation for Curlew in Ireland

Wintering and Breeding in Ireland

Western extremity of global range

Red-listed as a breeding species

Ireland's only species on the IUCN red list

Republic of Ireland 105-119 pairs (others likely undiscovered but certainly <150 pairs)

Decline of 98% since late 1980s in Republic of Ireland, associated with landscape and land use change

34% decline between Bird Atlas (2007-2011) and commencement of national conservation efforts (2017)

24% decline since then, predominant losses in areas outside core conservation areas

Imminent risk of extinction as breeding species in Ireland – already too late?

Progress on actions listed under
International Single Species Action Plan for the
Conservation of the Eurasian Curlew

Objective 1 – Ensure sufficient and adequate habitats

- National surveys 2017 and 2021: Identification of where breeding territories are
- Establishment of Curlew Task Force January 2017
 - what do Curlew need
 - how can that be delivered
- Promoting positive management: National AECM, Curlew Conservation Programme, EIP, local efforts, reviewing impact of measures and wider policies
- Developed novel results-based agri measures to improve understanding among farmers, cost-efficiency of funds, and better outputs for Curlew and others (e.g. see rbaps.eu)
- Use of data to inform decision making (EIA, Forestry, etc.)
- Research on habitat use and habitat quality

Objective 2 – Increase productivity

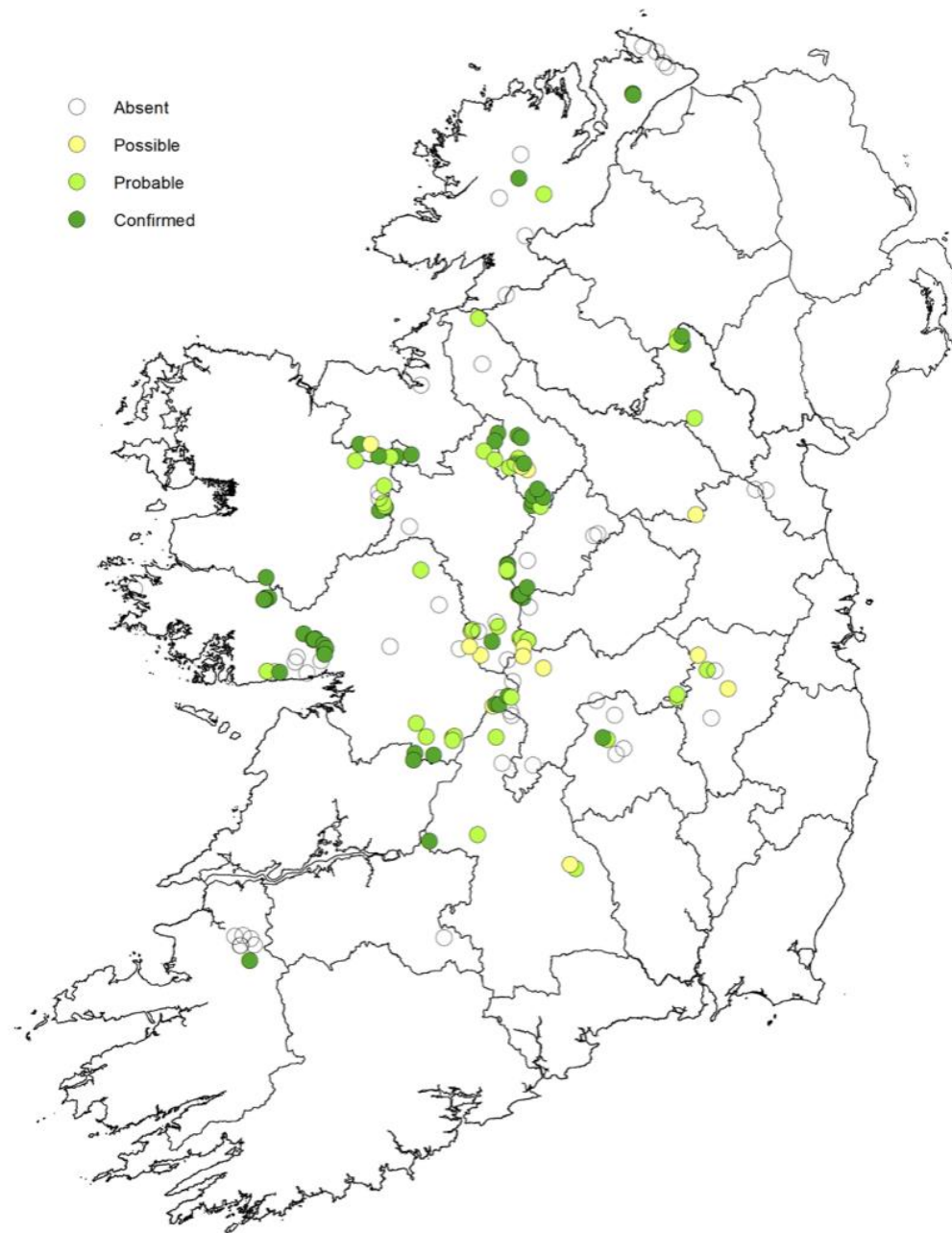
- Curlew Conservation Programme and Irish Breeding Curlew EIP
- Supporting local projects (CCP)
- Community/landowner engagement
- Habitat management
- Predation Risk Management
- Head starting

Objective 3 – Increase survival rates

- Cook et al. (2021) high survival rates for CU. All evidence suggests this is not an issue from the Irish perspective.
- No evidence that birds migrate to continental Europe or indeed leave Ireland, but based on limited ringing data and some tagging data.
- 2012: Curlew removed from shooting list
- Establishment of Curlew Task Force with all stakeholders managing and influencing the management of Curlew habitat and other relevant parties
- But...

Objective 4 – Fill key knowledge gaps

- National Surveys completed 2017 and 2021
- Ongoing surveys and engagement regionally
- Learning by doing
- Further insights on inter alia: breeding locations (and landowners), habitat selection, habitat/landscape structure, site fidelity, phenology, behaviour, predation, threats and pressures, future prospects for land-use, requirements of landowners, thoughts and reflections of local landowners
- GPS tracking: investigating e.g. basic ecology, habitat preferences, territory sizes, etc. to inform management and policy
- Colour ringing: need to learn more about survival, dispersal, fidelity and site use of juveniles and adults.
- Head Starting: all-Ireland assessment underway, likely to scale up in coming 2 years to improve productivity and buy time for improvements in landscape condition.
- Curlew genomics: as we move towards scenarios where HS is required, we need to know more about genetic structure, not just in Ireland but across Europe and rest of the range. **request for samples for study*



Curlew Conservation Programme (2017-2022)

1. Stack's Mountains
2. Lough Ree
3. East Mayo and North Roscommon
4. North Roscommon and Mid Leitrim
5. North Monaghan
6. Donegal
7. Lough Corrib (N) and Lough Mask
8. Sliabh Aughties
9. Laois/Kildare



Curlew Conservation Programme



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Department of
Agriculture,
Food and the Marine
An Roinn
Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara



Curlew Action Teams – Sum of Parts

Curlew Advisory Officer

Lead Role

Surveys

Ecological Advice

Engaging with landowners and

NPWS

Reporting

Curlew Champion

Link between community and project
Surveys

Engaging with landowners and NPWS



Curlew Action Team Assistant

Assisting fellow CAT members

Nest Protection Officer

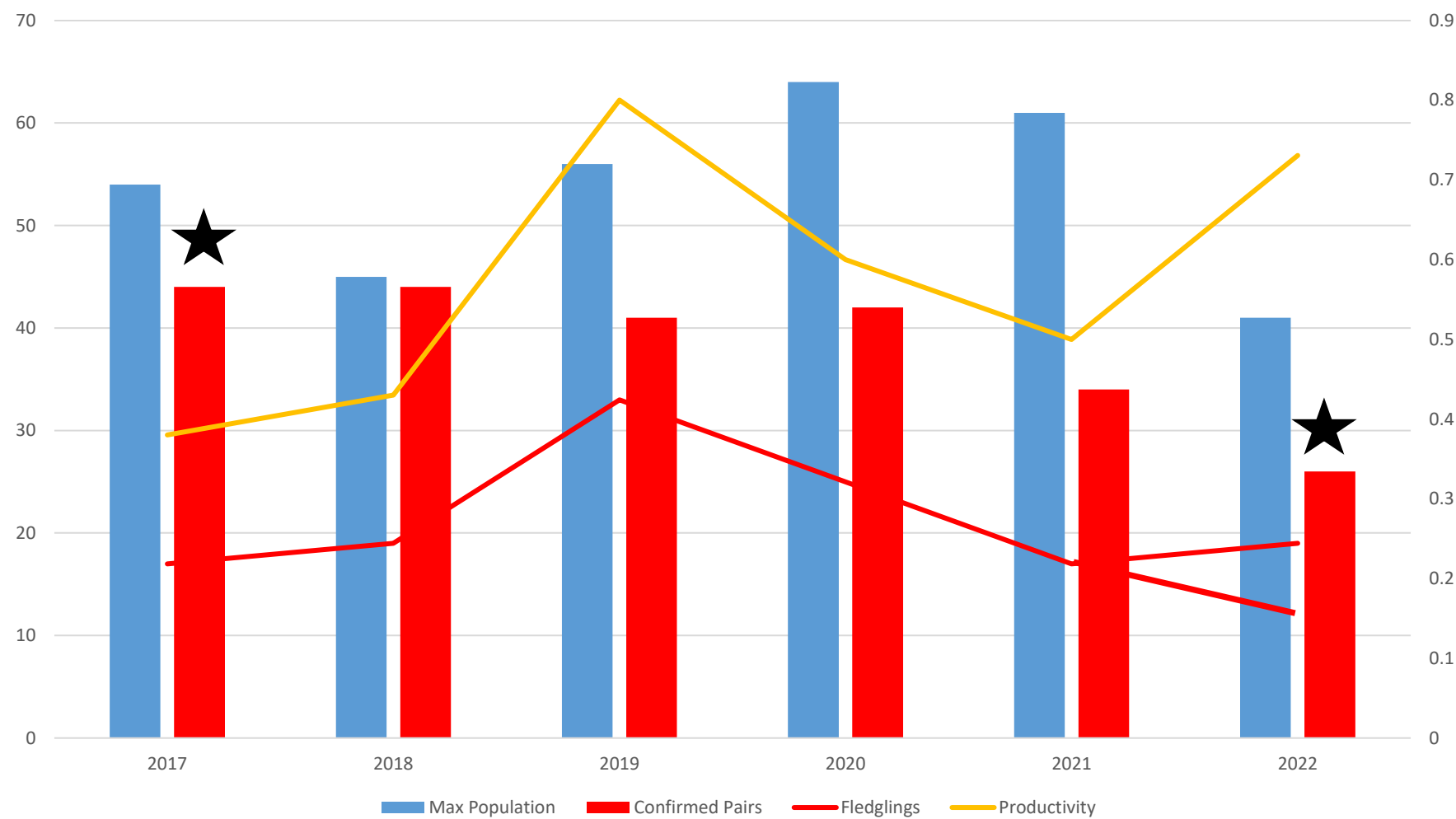
Surveys

Nest Protection

Legal and Humane Predator Control



Breeding statistics*



*2022 data is provisional

Reflections on the past five years

- Told it was an impossible task (...tbd)
- Can't not try our hardest
- Knowledge and insights in 2022 vastly superior to 2017
- International collaborations
- Investments – financial but moreover time invested in people
- Increased resources
- Loss of habitat has continued to occur during this period, pressures continue to mount, competing land use policies and other variables
- Factors beyond control of a single programme/scheme exerting significant influence, population continues to decline (albeit less so in areas with conservation effort)
- Looking at an ageing population?
- Momentum and support unlike many other nature conservation stories in Ireland

The next five years

- Currently reflecting on progress and lessons learned
- Overlapping period of planning...Prioritised Action Framework, negotiation of Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan (CSP)
- CSP – ‘ACRES’ the new national Agri-Environmental Climate Measure
- ACRES Cooperation Projects: 8 zones with management teams operating on results-based, locally-led basis, with facility of ‘Non-Productive Investments’. This captures the majority of Curlew distribution and pairs (€750m 2023-2027)
- Outside these zones – ACRES General – breeding wader priority entry
- New EIP to find birds and supplement ACRES General (€13m)
- Additional National (NPWS) Funding of €17m

...Also the next five years

- Money isn't the single answer to life's problems
- Land Use Strategy crucial
- Ramping up of afforestation programme
- Declining farming population, changing face of 'marginal lands' (and connections with nature)
- Ramping up of renewable energies
- Climate change continuing
- Increased human population and use of 'quiet areas'
- Peatland rehabilitation or repurposing
- Time lag (10 years? More?)



Many thanks for listening!

Thanks to all involved in
Curlew conservation in
Ireland, especially the
fieldworkers and
landowners and local
communities

Barry.O'Donoghue@housing.gov.ie
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