

Curlew Fact Sheet

- Curlews are mostly brown and grey coloured so they can **camouflage** well (blend into the background).
- **Male** (boy) and **female** (girl) curlews look very similar but females are slightly bigger and often have slightly longer beaks.
- Curlews have long downward curving beaks. These beaks are very sensitive. If we close our eyes we can sometimes tell what we are touching by feeling through our fingers. A curlew doesn't have fingers but it can use the tip of its beak to feel and work out if it is touching a tasty, juicy worm.... even if the worm is hidden underground.
- '**Wader**' is a name given to a bird which has long legs which help to keep its body dry when they walk through shallow water. Often they have long beaks too. Curlews are waders as they use their long legs to wade through muddy, wet ground and shallow water.
- In the spring, curlews often move to **upland habitat** where they breed and raise their young during the summer.
- In the uplands, curlews will use their long beak to catch earthworms, spiders and other insects.
- In the autumn, curlews move to lowland habitats - often to coastal areas - where they spend the winter. These coastal areas are usually more sheltered from the harsh weather that the uplands can face in the winter.
- At the coast, curlews will use their long beak to catch worms, molluscs (mussels and snails) and crabs.
- Curlews make a whistling like 'Cur-lee' call which is very recognisable. They use sound as a way of communicating so males and females can find each other and raise young. They also use sound for warning calls if a **predator** is nearby.

- If a predator is nearby, the parents will move away from the nest and fly in circles (making a lot of noise) above a bare patch of ground, to trick the predator into thinking that is where the nest is.
- Nesting on the ground makes chicks and eggs very vulnerable to predation. Being **camouflaged** helps curlews hide from **predators** (such as foxes, stoats, weasels, ravens and crows).
- They make a nest on the ground using dried grass and lay 3 or 4 eggs between March and May.
- Both the male and female curlew will help to look after the chicks for about 6 weeks until they are **fledged** - old enough to fly and look after themselves.
- Long ago, people used to eat curlews. Curlew Pies were famous in Cornwall before the Second World War. Now we know curlews are a very special bird that we need to protect and not eat!
- Curlews were once very common but populations have decreased and they are now in much need of our help. We can help curlews by protecting and looking after their habitats.
- It is important to keep dogs on the lead when walking in the uplands, especially during spring and summer, to protect eggs and chicks of curlews and other birds that may have nests on the ground.