

Gwent Wildlife Trust

Lottery for Wildlife

Update for 2017



The Living Valleys Lapwing Project

Thanks to everyone who has participated in this years Lottery for Wildlife.

The **Heads of the Valleys Lapwing Project**, has been working in partnership with Torfaen County Borough Council to help create lapwing habitats near Blaenavon at Garn Lakes Local Nature Reserve.

In the past, this area has supported healthy populations of lapwings, attracted to the marshy ground and largely open areas found in the post-industrial uplands. Lapwings are faithful to their breeding grounds and will try to return to within 10km of previous breeding areas. Sadly, populations of these birds with their characteristic 'pee-wit' call have plummeted locally. Development of existing and historic breeding areas has drastically reduced the availability of suitable and safe habitats and some sites have only one or two breeding pairs returning – not enough to keep them safe from predators.

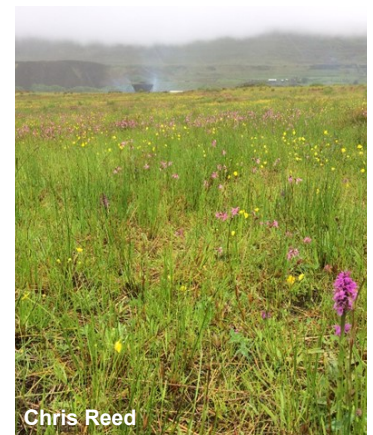
Lapwings breed in farmlands and wetlands. They are medium sized waders with broad, rounded, black and white wings. They have a dark green back, black breast, white face and underparts plus a characteristic long upsweeping crest at the back of the head. They are ground feeders and their diet consists predominantly of invertebrates such as earthworms, beetles, flies and spiders but also small frogs and some plant material. Lapwings can often be seen wheeling through winter skies in large, black and white flocks. As spring approaches, these flocks get smaller. Some birds head back to their continental breeding grounds and others disperse to breed in the UK. Males put on dramatic aerial displays, tumbling through the air, accompanied by their piercing 'peewit' call, which gives them their other, common name.



Andy Karran



Chris Reed



Chris Reed

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The Living Valleys Lapwing project aims to protect, restore and enhance habitats for lapwings in the Heads of the Valleys area of the Gwent valleys. This is made possible through practical habitat management such as scrub clearance and grassland management. In addition to this, this projects aims to monitor the sites we have worked on and to survey the Living Valleys for other suitable sites for restoration and management.



Andy Karran

Where has your money been spent?

2017 has been a busy year for our Lapwing project in the Living Valleys. Continued development pressure and fragmentation of the landscape has made this project even more vital in order not to lose this species from Gwent.



Chris Reed

The vast majority of our work has been focussed at Garn Lakes Local Nature Reserve near Blaenavon. The reserve is owned by Torfaen County Borough Council and we have been working in partnership with them to help manage an area that once saw a population of 'peewits'. A known Lapwing population is nearby and our hope is to try and persuade more Lapwings back to the nature reserve.

A considerable amount of practical work has been undertaken. Using our tractor and flail collector we have cut a large area of scrub and dense rush. We have also spent a lot of time clearing willow regrowth. Lapwings require short

sward, clear of scrub and absent of dense patches of rush – lapwings are fond of ploughed fields and wet grassland and this is what we are trying to replicate.

Volunteers have been heavily involved in our work and we have devoted many volunteer work task days to the project. Volunteers have assisted with removing scrub, raking cut material and cutting areas of rush. Our volunteers worked extremely hard, especially as the practical management takes place in the winter months, which in Blaenavon can be harsh.

During the summer months we surveyed the area at Garn Lakes (we had a small flock of Lapwings staying on the area we managed briefly before moving on) and it proved to be magnificent for wildflowers, with hundreds of orchids and ragged robin populating the wet grassland we had restored.

However, our work has only started and with any area that requires to be short and absent of scrub, it needs to be managed on an annual basis. It has been a successful first year and hopefully this can be the launch pad for a long term successful project and the establishment of a healthy Lapwing population in the Heads of the Valleys area.

So thank you so much for your continued support of this project and indeed all the work we do at Gwent Wildlife Trust.

Without your support none of it would be possible.



Chris Reed