



Independent report on surveys in winter 2022/23 for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at Campdown, Hampshire

Authors: Prof Russell B Wynn and Marcus Ward (Directors, Wild New Forest)

Client: Alex Laney (Land and Planning Manager, Dandara Southern Ltd)

Date submitted: 31 March 2023 (final version)

Executive Summary

Bird surveys were conducted at Campdown throughout winter 2022/23, totalling 51 hours of survey effort; these surveys built upon work conducted in the previous two winters and were primarily aiming to assess whether the site is currently utilised by Curlew and Brent Geese.

There was only a single record of either species within the proposed development site, relating to two feeding Curlews. A single Snipe was the only other wetland bird species recorded utilising habitat on site.

Curlew were sporadically recorded feeding on grazed grassland immediately to the south of the proposed development site, peaking at 42 on 09 Dec 2022, but with only one other double-figure count. Three flocks of Brent Geese were observed prospecting the southern part of the site on 09 Dec 2022, with four birds landing south of the proposed development site for just a few seconds. Small numbers of Lapwing (<10) were also seen using land to the south of the site.

These observations are broadly consistent with those obtained during the previous two winters. Most records of the species listed above involved birds seen arriving from and/or departing to the south, providing further evidence for interchange with the Langstone Harbour component of the Special Protection Area.

Wild New Forest

1. Introduction

The client has commissioned independent surveys to support identification of mitigation sites for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species, to offset a proposed development of 653 houses and associated infrastructure at Campdown. This development is expected to impact the integrity of the Chichester and Langstone Harbour Special Protection Area (SPA) through removal of Functionally Linked Land. Historical records and previous surveys in 2016-17 indicated that over 100 Curlews have used the site for feeding and roosting in the past, consistent with data provided by local observers; this potentially makes it an important terrestrial site for the species in the SPA catchment. This report outlines the survey results from Campdown in winter 2022/23 and builds upon those obtained in the previous two winters (Wynn and Ward, 2021, 2022); together these survey data will inform discussions about the contemporary status of Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at the proposed development site.



Fig. 2.1: Map taken from the Solent Wader and Brent Goose Strategy (SWBGS, 2020) showing the Campdown site and the mapping units applied; note that H02B and the southern sector of H02A are not part of the proposed development site.



2. Survey site

The proposed development site at Campdown mostly comprises open grassland on undulating terrain, with one flatter area that is consistently wetter in winter and therefore sporadically suitable for wintering waterbirds - the wetter area corresponds to the central sector of H125 and the northern sector of H02A on the site map (Fig. 2.1).

Historical bird data for the site were provided in a previous report (Wynn and Ward, 2021). Since 2018, a lack of grazing across the proposed development site has led to a transition to rank grassland, and consequently the habitat across most of the site is currently unsuitable for the target species.

In contrast, the southern sector of H02A and H02B, on land immediately south of the proposed development site (Fig. 2.1), comprises open grassland with a short sward that is currently subject to livestock grazing and is therefore in suitable condition for the target species.

3. Survey methodology

Survey work at Campdown was conducted from November 2022 to February 2023 (Table 3.1). Surveys were completed roughly every two weeks throughout this four-month period (eight surveys in total) amounting to 51 hours of survey effort. As the intention was to build upon results obtained in the previous two winters, the primary focus was on identifying fine-scale habitat use of the target species over spring high-tide periods.

Date	Day	Survey time (hrs)	HT time	Height	Phase
09/11/2022	Wednesday	0745-1415 (6.5)	1142	4.9	Spring
25/11/2022	Friday	0800-1400 (6 hrs)	1151	4.9	Spring
09/12/2022	Friday	0800-1430 (6.5 hrs)	1154	4.6	Spring
21/12/2022	Wednesday	0800-1400 (6 hrs)	0931	4.6	Spring
11/01/2023	Wednesday	0930-1500 (5.5 hrs)	1348	4.4	Neap
23/01/2023	Monday	0800-1500 (7 hrs)	1210	4.9	Spring
08/02/2023	Wednesday	0830-1530 (7 hrs)	1253	4.5	Neap
20/02/2023	Monday	0830-1500 (6.5 hrs)	1130	4.9	Spring

Table 3.1: Completed survey dates at Campdown in winter 2022/23, together with relevant tidal data.

Surveys commenced shortly after dawn and mostly concluded at least one hour after high tide. Surveys were designed to ensure thorough coverage of the whole site, while minimising disturbance. Weather conditions (e.g. temperature, wind vector and velocity, cloud cover, precipitation) were recorded during both the morning and afternoon periods to assess influence of meteorological parameters, and any incidents of extreme weather.

All sightings of Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland species were recorded, with standard parameters including date, time, location, species, number and behaviour (e.g. feeding, roosting). Any observed pressures were also recorded, such as recreational disturbance and



avian predators, particularly where they directly interacted with and/or influenced the target species.

This methodology has previously been scrutinised and approved by the SWBGS Steering Group, and it has also previously been agreed that the results listed below will be provided to the SWBGS and made available to other stakeholders upon request on an 'open access' basis once cleared by the Client.

4. Survey results

There was only one record of Curlews feeding on the proposed development site, with two birds observed on the northern sector of H02A for at least three hours on 23 Jan 2023 until they were flushed by a dog-walker and departed south to Langstone Harbour. Curlews were also recorded on the two December surveys feeding on land south of the proposed development site, primarily in area H02B (Fig. 2.1), peaking at 42 on 09 Dec 2022. Curlew records are summarised below in Table 4.1.

Date	Number	HT time	Height	Phase	Notes
09/11/2022	0	1142	4.9	Spring	
25/11/2022	0	1151	4.9	Spring	
09/12/2022	42	1154	4.6	Spring	South of proposed development site
21/12/2022	2	0931	4.6	Spring	South of proposed development site
11/01/2023	0	1348	4.4	Neap	
23/01/2023	2	1210	4.9	Spring	Feeding on northern sector of H02A
08/02/2023	0	1253	4.5	Neap	
20/02/2023	0	1130	4.9	Spring	

Table 4.1: Peak counts for Curlew at Campdown on each survey date.

On 09 Dec 2021, two flocks of 11 and 14 Brent Geese circled the site for several minutes and made several aborted attempts to land in areas H02A and H02B, and about an hour later four Brent Geese very briefly landed in area H02A before departing back south towards Langstone Harbour; these are the first records of Brent Geese at this site in the three winters of dedicated survey.

The only other wetland birds recorded using the site were a Common Snipe flushed from a ditch spanning area H125 on 09 Dec 2021, and small groups of up to nine Lapwings on three dates feeding in H02A and H02B outside of the proposed development site (with 53 also recorded circling over the site on 23 Jan 2023).

Further details of these and other bird species recorded at Campdown are provided in the Survey Forms in the Appendix.

Recreational activities on site were also recorded during the surveys and mostly comprised dog-walkers and college students, typically at daily average rates of <1-2 per hour. In most cases they were seen accessing the northern sectors of the survey site away from areas



where target species may have been present. However, there were occasional observations of people accessing H02A, including a dog-walker on 23 Jan 2023 who flushed two feeding Curlews.

5. Discussion

Curlew have been recorded at Campdown in the last three winters, although the only records on the proposed development site were of up to five birds on three dates in winter 2020/21 and the two birds reported here on 23 Jan 2023.

Most Curlew records refer to birds feeding on grazed grassland that is immediately south of the proposed development site, comprising the southern half of H02A and H02B; this area is subject to regular livestock grazing and is therefore suitable for foraging Curlews. However, there is marked variability in numbers of Curlew using this area between individual survey dates and between winters, for example the cumulative total of Curlew records in winter 21/22 was just eight (based on monthly surveys between October and March), whereas in winter 21/22 it was 168 and in winter 22/23 it was 46 (the latter two totals based on bi-monthly counts between November and February with consistent effort over the two winters). However, the peak counts of Curlew using land south of the proposed development site in the last two winters have been comparable, with 56 in winter 21/22 and 42 in winter 22/23.

Two or three separate flocks of Brent Geese were observed on 09 Dec 2022 circling overhead with one flock briefly landing south of the proposed development site; this is the first record of this species at Campdown in the last three winters of survey work. They have previously been recorded at the site, but their recent occurrence appears to be very sporadic.

As noted in previous winters, the origin of most wetland birds observed at Campdown appears to be the Langstone Harbour sector of the nearby SPA. It is therefore notable that the peak count of Curlew, and locally unusual observations of Brent Goose, Lapwing, and Snipe, all occurred on 09 Dec 2022. It was not an exceptionally high tide (4.6m) and the sightings were not restricted to the high-tide period; we therefore speculate that the cold conditions at the time may have encouraged birds to disperse inland from the SPA (and immediate surrounds) in search of unfrozen grassland feeding sites.

References

Solent Waders and Brent Goose Strategy (2020)

<https://solentwbgs.wordpress.com>

Wynn, R.B and Ward, M. (2021) *Independent report on surveys in winter 2020/21 for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at Campdown, Hampshire*. Commercial in Confidence Report to Hampshire Homes by Wild New Forest, 10 pp.



Wynn, R.B. and Ward, M. (2022) *Independent report on surveys in winter 2021/22 for Eurasian Curlew, Brent Goose, and other wetland bird species at Campdown, Hampshire*. Commercial in Confidence Report to Hampshire Homes by Wild New Forest, 13 pp.



Appendix: Survey Forms

Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 09/11/22

Time: 0745-1415 hrs (6.5 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: WSW4-5, mild, breezy, and sunny, with increasing cloud and a light shower

Tide: High tide at 1142 (4.9m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 0

Peak count of Curlew: 0

Narrative: The southern area of H02A and area H02B are currently heavily grazed with a short sward; the rest of the site is rank grassland which is damp in some areas. No Curlew, Brent Goose or other wetland species were recorded throughout the period of observation.

Notable observations included two Firecrest and two Chiffchaff, up to 50 Redwing feeding across the site, and two wintering Stonechat. In addition, a small number (<10) of Skylark and Meadow Pipit were noted feeding amongst the horses in the southern section of area H02A. The only raptor recorded was a single female Kestrel that was present throughout. Passage migrants included Woodlark, three Redpoll, and small numbers of Linnet, Siskin, and Goldfinch overhead. Up to 0830 hrs, a group of about 300 Woodpigeon gathered in area H02B before moving high west.

Recreational activities: 12 walkers with 14 dogs were noted through the day, the majority in areas H113, H125 and H106 – most appeared to access the site from College Road.



Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 25/11/22

Time: 0800-1400 hrs (6 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: WSW2-3, sunny and mild

Tide: High tide at 1151 (4.9m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: None on site

Peak count of Curlew: None on site

Narrative: No wildfowl or waders were recorded during the day, and it was very generally very quiet for birdlife. Of note, two Firecrest were again recorded amongst a mobile tit flock and small numbers of Redwing were feeding along the hedgerows bordering area H02A. Up to 150 Wood Pigeon were settled on the grazed area on the southern side of area H02A on and off throughout the day.

A small group of contractors were operating across areas H125, H02A and H113 throughout the day, although the area they were operating in would have not caused any disturbance should Curlew have returned to the areas they frequented over the winter of 2021/22.

Recreational activities: A total 13 people with 15 dogs were observed, mainly in areas H02A, H113, H125, and H106.



Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 09/12/22

Time: 0800-1430 hrs (6.5 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: NNE2-3, cold and bright

Tide: High tide at 1154 (4.6m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: 14 circling over site, didn't settle

Peak count of Curlew: 42 on site

Narrative: Upon arrival at 0800, two Curlew were actively feeding in area H02B before relocating to the north slope of the ridge. Over the course of the morning, a further 40 Curlew arrived in groups of up to eight individuals. The flock was occasionally flushed by sparring Buzzards, and at one point a male Sparrowhawk caused them to head south towards the harbour, but they returned within ten minutes. From midday, small groups moved south towards the harbour, leaving just two remaining, which were still feeding on the north side of the ridge, just inside area H02B when I departed the site at 1430.

At 0836, a flock of 11 Brent Geese circled the site for around five minutes, making repeated attempts to settle in areas H02A and H02B, but always aborting at the last minute. At 0847 a flock of 14 Brent Geese again toured the area for a few minutes. At 0932 four Brent Geese attempted to land in area H02A, alighting on the ground for a few seconds, before heading back south towards the harbour. These are my first records of Brent Geese at this site, which has been surveyed for the last three winters.

Other waders on site included a Common Snipe flushed from the vegetated ditch spanning area H125, and eight Lapwing for most of the morning feeding in areas H02A and H02B.

Raptors included three Buzzards, male and female Sparrowhawk, and a Kestrel hunting across the area for most of the day. Other notable bird species included Firecrest, Green Woodpecker, and a small northwards passage of Linnet.

Mammals included two Field/Bank Voles flushed when crossing area H02B and a Grey Squirrel in area H02B.

Recreational activities: Due to the presence of the Curlew I was unable to count all recreational activity in the area, but a minimum of six walkers with seven dogs were observed. Numbers appeared lower than recent visits, probably due to the cold weather.

Of note, a considerable amount of groundwork appears to have taken place since the last visit on 09 December, mainly across areas H125, H02A, and H113.



Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 21/12/22

Time: 0800-1400 hrs (6 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: SW2-3, light rain, mild

Tide: High tide at 0931 (4.6m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: None on site

Peak count of Curlew: One or two intermittently through the day

Narrative: Upon arrival one Curlew (male) was observed feeding in the southern section of area H02A until 1020 when flushed by an adult male Sparrowhawk and left the area south towards the harbour. At 1240, two Curlew (male and female) arrived from the south and alighted on the summit of the slope where they continued to feed until departure from the site at 1400.

Other species of note included a Grey Heron feeding in area H02A throughout the day; raptors included two Buzzard, two Sparrowhawk and a Kestrel. A Firecrest was moving around the site with a mobile flock of Long-tailed Tits, small numbers of Redwing and Meadow Pipit were feeding across the site.

Recreational activities: Just one dog walker with two dogs was observed along with one lone walker crossing the site. Poor weather throughout no doubt limited recreational activity.



Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 11/01/2023

Time: 0930-1500 hrs (5.5 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: WSW4-7, mild, breezy, and bright, then heavy showers and strong gusty winds

Tide: High tide at 1348 (4.4m, neap)

Peak count of Brent Goose: None on site

Peak count of Curlew: None on site

Narrative: No wildfowl or waders were recorded on site throughout the day.

Species of note included two Grey Heron, one of which was observed catching and consuming a Field/Bank Vole in area H113. Raptors included an adult male Sparrowhawk and a male Kestrel. Other species included Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, and a flock of about 50 Meadow Pipits.

Mammals included a Roe Deer, three Grey Squirrels, and two Field/Bank Voles, including the individual caught and consumed by the Grey Heron.

Recreational activities: Overall, nine walkers were observed with eight dogs, mainly across area H113.



Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 23/01/2023

Time: 0800-1500 hrs (7 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: NNE1-3, cold and sunny with scattered high cloud arriving

Tide: High tide at 1210 (4.9m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: None on site

Peak count of Curlew: 2 in area H02A

Narrative: Upon arrival at 0800, two Curlew were feeding in the northern section of area H02A, where they remained until flushed by a dog walker at 1055 and headed south to Langstone Harbour. At 1150 a group of 53 Lapwing arrived from the harbour and circled the site for around five minutes before heading back south, followed by occasional individuals passing over heading north. At 1400 two Lapwing landed in the southern section of H02A where they foraged until heading south at 1420.

Other species of note included a Grey Heron feeding in area H125 and two Ravens heading south, while a small passage of Lesser Black-backed and Common Gull was noted heading northwest. Raptors included a Buzzard and a female Kestrel hunting sporadically for most of the day. Other species on site included a Firecrest, Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, up to 10 Redwing and a flock of at least 70 Meadow Pipit feeding in area H02A.

Mammals included a Fox, two Grey Squirrel, Field/Bank Vole and Rabbit.

Recreational activities: Overall, 12 walkers were observed with 10 dogs, mainly concentrated in areas H113 and H125, although one individual walked around area H02A flushing the two feeding Curlew. In addition, three students cut across the area to access the college.



Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 08/02/23

Time: 0830-1530 hrs (7 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: ESE1-3, cold but sunny all day

Tide: High tide at 1253 (4.5m, neap)

Peak count of Brent Goose: None on site

Peak count of Curlew: None on site

Narrative: No Brent Goose or Curlew were recorded during the survey. The only wetland bird species noted were nine Lapwing that flew in and settled in the southern section of area H02A at 1440. The flock departed the site to the northeast when flushed by a mixed group of gulls at 1455.

Raptors on site included an adult male Sparrowhawk, female Kestrel, and two Buzzard on and off throughout the day. Other notable bird species included courting male and female Green Woodpecker, drumming Great Spotted Woodpecker, Grey Heron apparently hunting Voles, two Stonechat, and a loose feeding flock of about 40 Meadow Pipit. Early morning a small overhead movement of Redwing and Siskin was recorded.

Recreational activities: In total, nine walkers with ten dogs were noted, along with ten students crossing the site to access the college; all activity was in the northern section of the site.



Winter Wetland Bird Survey Form

Site: Campdown

Date: 20/02/2023

Time: 0830-1500 hrs (6.5 hrs)

Observer: Marcus Ward

Weather: W 3-4, overcast

Tide: High tide at 1130 (4.9m, spring)

Peak count of Brent Goose: None on site

Peak count of Curlew: None on site

Narrative: No Brent Geese, Curlew, or other wetland species were recorded during the survey.

Species of note included an immature Red Kite passing to the west, and up to five Mediterranean Gull mixed with a passage of Black-headed Gull moving to the northwest as the tide rose. Other species of note included a feeding flock of about 60 Redwing, 100 Goldfinch, Green and Great Spotted Woodpecker, and two Stonechat. Raptors included two Kestrel, one of which was observed catching a Bank/Field Vole, two Buzzard, and a Sparrowhawk,

Recreational activities: Overall, 15 walkers were observed with 18 dogs; all observations from areas H113 and H125. In addition, five presumed students cut across the area to access the college.