

Movements of the female curlew in 2009

17 April 2009: Still wintering

It was a real relief that the first signal came in on 13th April, when the curlew was 7 kilometres to the west in grass or cereal fields at Wester Lovat, at the head of the Beaully Firth at high tide. On 17th April she was back at Bunchrew at 8.13 and 8.15pm. A signal at 8.29pm was 3.66 kilometres to the NNE on the Black Isle - had she started migrating at dusk or was it a low quality signal?



Movements in the Beaully Firth

22 April 2009: Crossed North Sea and Norway

The next signal came in at 22.41GMT on 21st April which showed that she was migrating over Norway during the night. The position was near Kongsmoen, 120 miles NNE of Trondheim. She migrated over Norway that night as at 0226GMT on 22nd April she was 24 miles west of Umea. She had migrated at night, and had apparently covered 222 miles between the two signals at a speed of 60mph (tail wind?) or possibly the B class signals were not accurate.



30 April 2009: Stopping over on Swedish coast

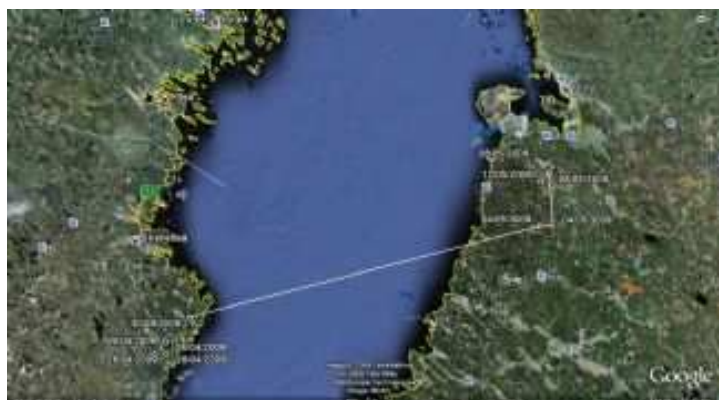
After arriving in the Umea area on 22nd April, she was further north on 26th April, in coastal farmlands 40 miles north of Umea, and on 30th April she was a little further north in Vasterbotten. Her stop-over on the Swedish coastal farmlands was between 9 and 12 days.



Locations on Swedish east coast

08 May 2009: Arrives at breeding grounds

The curlew arrived in Finland on 4th May and then moved further north to a district of farms and woodlands near Ruukki, about 42 kilometres SSW of Oulu, in NW Finland. The migration journey from Scotland was 1895 kilometres.



Arrival in Finland

14 June 2009: Breeding season

The curlew has been living in an area of farms, woodland and rough grounds near a small river to the east of Ruukki. Most accurate signals were within the range marked on the map, which is 3.4 kilometres east to west, and 2.7 kilometres north to south. She arrived here sometime after 4th, probably 5th May, and would most likely to have migrated with her mate from Scotland. Egg-laying and incubation is about one month, and if the eggs are successfully hatched, female curlews leave the males in charge of the growing young from 10 to 20 days after hatch.



Breeding grounds near Ruukki

23 June 2009

On 18th June, she was 3 kilometres east of Ruukki and at 0216GMT on 23rd June was 3.5 kilometres east of Ruukki, apparently in farm fields. It's just possible that her chicks were getting big enough for her to leave her mate, or she may have failed.

This map shows three controls of curlews ringed in Finland and caught by HRG (square symbols), recoveries of curlews ringed by HRG on Moray Firth (round symbol) and the location of this tagged curlew.



Highland Ringing Group controls and recoveries of curlews in Finland and east Sweden

27 June 2009: Autumn migration

At 0430GMT, the curlew was on a tiny island on the very southern tip of Norway, 8 kilometres SSW of Mandal. Her migration from the breeding grounds was 1192 kilometres (742 miles). It's amazing how quickly summer is over for curlews. Unable to say whether she was in active flight during the night or stopping over on the island.



First stage of autumn migration



Curlew on south coast of Norway

01 July 2009: Arrives back in Scotland

She was near Mintlaw during the early hours of 1st July. She was at three different places (probably grazing fields or cut silage fields) 2 miles east of mintlaw. Her migration across the North Sea, near enough due west, was 563 kilometres (350 miles).



Crossing the North Sea to Aberdeenshire.



Locations near Mintlaw 1st July

05 July 2009: Back in the Beaully Firth

Today she was back on the Beaully Firth at Lentrán, which is just west of where we caught her on 31st March. She is safely back in her wintering quarters, after the final 88 miles from Mintlaw. It's amazing to think that she has only been away for 11 weeks and in that time completed two big migrations and a breeding season. It also makes one think about which is her home - for nearly 80% of her year she lives on the Beaully Firth in Scotland. It's amazing what extra we can learn using satellite transmitters to add to our known information on the lives of Moray Firth waders gathered from ringing studies. Now she should start moulting her plumage while living on the mudflats.

The two migrations covered a total distance of at least 3777 kilometres illustrated on the map below.



27 July 2009: Moulting on the Firth

I went down my local estuary, Findhorn Bay, this evening and there's about 300 curlews there. They are now in noticeable moult and the tideline is already peppered with moulted curlew feathers. I picked up some and photographed them. The same moult will be happening to our female curlew and her clan on the Beaulie Firth. She was at Bunchrew on 9th July, at Bunchrew to Lentrane and on the north side of the Beaulie Firth on 17th and probably on the Black Isle shore on 26th July. It will be interesting to hear if anyone sees and photographs the tagged curlew this autumn and winter.



Moulted wing and tail feathers



July locations

17 August 2009

There have been no signals since 26th July - impossible to know if the battery has failed or the bird is dead. Will be worth checking the curlew roost at Bunchrew to look for her. The last location was the Kessock Bridge - just one thought, I wonder if a female

peregrine had killed her and taken her to the bridge to eat. If so we will not hear from the radio again.

07 October 2009

There have been no further transmissions and so far no sightings of this bird so we presume that it was predated in the Beaully Firth, possibly by a peregrine.