



THE COUNTRYSIDE
RESTORATION TRUST

CREATING A LIVING AND WORKING COUNTRYSIDE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Lapwing delight In Golden Valley

After successfully attracting breeding curlews last year, The Countryside Restoration Trust's (CRT) farm in the Golden Valley in Herefordshire has done even better this year with breeding lapwings.

Like the curlew, the lapwing is one of the most dramatic of the farmland birds. It has great character and beauty with its typical 'peewit' call and bold black and white plumage. However, once widespread across the country, the lapwing population has declined alarmingly in recent years. The huge winter flocks are now a thing of the past.

This is largely due to changes in farming practices: more cereal farms, increased drainage and increased use of agrochemicals. But most damaging of all however, has been the early cutting of grass for silage which destroys the lapwings' eggs and chicks.

Robert and Chrissy Fraser who farm the CRT's Turnastone Court Farm have created a rich habitat for lapwing and curlew. The Frasers have kept one field very wet. The result is a mosaic of bare earth scrapes where there has been standing water and a tussocky grass sward. This suits the lapwing's preference for nesting in short vegetation and is extremely rich in invertebrates – the insects, snails and worms that it needs for food.

The changes to the way the land has been managed have obviously paid off with not only lapwings but curlews in residence on Turnastone Court Farm again.

“We are delighted that, after the success of the breeding curlew last year, we now have breeding lapwing on the farm” says Robert Fraser. **“We often have lapwing feeding over the winter, but until now have rarely seen them in the spring and summer. We noticed a pair had taken up residence on one of our wettest fields in April and were showing obvious signs of breeding: chasing off crows and buzzards and looking generally agitated when we were in the vicinity. Three**

chicks have now been fledged. We hope that this will signal the beginning of a breeding population on the farm, and we will do everything possible to encourage them.”

The CRT’s Vice Chairman, farmer and wildlife photographer Chris Knights says, **“After the success the CRT has had at bringing wildlife back to Lark Rise Farm – its arable farm in Cambridge – it is brilliant news that Chrissy and Robert have started the return of lapwings and curlews on our grass farm. Both species are rapidly declining. What the Frasers have achieved is both exciting and important.”**

Turnastone Court Farm will be host to the National Hedgelaying Championships on 24 October.

Ends

Notes for Editors:

For further information, please contact The Countryside Restoration Trust office on 01223 262999 or email info@livingcountryside.org.uk.

The Countryside Restoration Trust is a farming and conservation charity which aims to protect and restore Britain's countryside with wildlife-friendly and commercially-viable agriculture. The Trust is committed to promoting the importance of a living and working countryside through education, demonstration and community involvement.

The Trust is establishing a network of demonstration farms across Britain which, using sensitive farming methods, will show how to protect wildlife, produce quality, seasonal food and preserve our countryside for future generations.

The Trust is also using living, working farms as educational centres of expertise to inspire farmers, land managers, the general public and politicians.

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

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