

Ballydangan Breeding Curlew Survey 2021



Report by Vincent Flannelly
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An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
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Context:

Ballydangan Bog has been monitored for breeding Curlew since 2012. Surveys show that Ballydangan Bog is a nationally important site for breeding Curlew:

- See survey in 2016 – [link](#)
- See survey in 2017 – [link](#)
- See survey in 2019 – [link](#)

In 2021, survey work was carried out on Ballydangan Bog by Vincent Flannelly¹, the results of which are detailed below.

Overview of Curlew and Red Grouse situation on Ballydangan Bog:

Year	Grouse - Spring	Grouse - Autumn	Curlew pairs	Curlew productivity
2009	No survey	3	0	Not assessed
2010	No survey	1	0	Not assessed
2011	2	3	0	Not assessed
2012	1 (tape-lure survey)	2	2 pairs	Not assessed
2013	0	0	2 pairs	Not assessed
2014	0	1	1 pair	Not assessed
2015	2	1	3 pairs	Not assessed
2016	1-2	2	7 pairs	Not assessed
2017	2 (i.e. 1 pair)	3	3-4 pairs	0
2018	3 hens, 1 cock	1 pair + juv. & 2 cocks*	1/2 – 7 pairs	Juveniles heard/observed
2019	2 calling cocks	2/3	Min. 4 pairs	Likely 1 pair hatched chicks
2020**	1 pair	2/3	No survey	No survey
2021	1 cock (March)	1 cock + 2 juveniles	4-5 pairs	Juveniles heard/observed

* Two surveys were conducted in autumn 2018 and 2019 covering different parts of the project site.

** Covid-19 prevented Curlew survey work on the site.

Methodology:

The methodology used for the breeding Curlew survey on the Ballydangan site broadly followed the recommendations by Brown and Shepherd (1993):

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00063659309477182>.

Visits were conducted in April, May, June and July to estimate the number of breeding pairs onsite as well as breeding productivity.

First visits: Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th April 2021.

The following observations were made:

- Southern side of Ballydangan, 2 (possible) pairs of Curlew showing persistent and vociferous behaviour and remained in the area and flying in tight circles above the observers.
- Also, on the south-eastern side of the site, 1 Curlew (indication of pair) observed calling and displaying.
- On the north side, 2 Curlew (possibly pair) recorded and flying in tight formation.
- On the southern point of Cranberry bog, 2 Curlew (possible a pair) flying in tight circles above observers.

¹ V. Flannelly is experienced in Red Grouse monitoring. He has assisted in breeding Curlew survey work in the past as well as survey work for other waders. In 2021, due to uncertainty on funding, the project did not employ a professional ornithologist to undertake the breeding Curlew survey.

Second visits Saturday 22nd May and Sunday 23rd May 2021:

The following observations were made:

- North side of Ballydangan, Curlew calling persistently whilst the observer was in the area from which the bird rose. The bird flew away from the area and returned within 2 minutes. It continued to call vociferously.
- South-eastern side of the site, one Curlew was observed flying in tight formation and alarm calling while the observer was approximately a distance of 200m from said Curlew.
- On the south side of the site, a Curlew was heard calling. In the distance, 2 Curlew observed feeding.
- On the same day in Cranberry, 1 curlew seen in flight and calling over the bog.

Third visits Saturday 26th June and Sunday 27th June 2021:

- Curlew observed calling and flying onto Cranberry bog.
- On the south side of Ballydangan, 2 female Curlew observed feeding on perimeter of bog.
- On the south-east side of the site, 1 adult Curlew recorded foraging.
- The same day on the north side 1 Curlew observed showing agitated behaviour and flying in tight circles above observers.

Additional surveys (July):

- A productivity survey was also carried out on 11th July 2021. Curlew were recorded but, breeding productivity (in terms of juvenile birds) was not observed at the time of the visit.
- On 24th July, 16 Curlew were observed (including several juvenile birds) on the site and on adjacent farmland. However, it is difficult to interpret whether these originated from Ballydangan Bog, or from other sites, or it is possible that these could be migrants. Some video footage can be seen here:

<https://twitter.com/davidfallon8/status/1419773464446132230?s=20>

Discussion:

- All observations of Curlew over the site visits were marked on enclosed site map (Figure 1), based on observations as well as additional records (see Annex 1).
- In conclusion from the behaviour observed, there was 4 (min.) - 5 pairs of breeding Curlew on Ballydangan Bog.
- Although juvenile birds were seen in late July, however, it remains difficult to associate these birds with Ballydangan Bog.

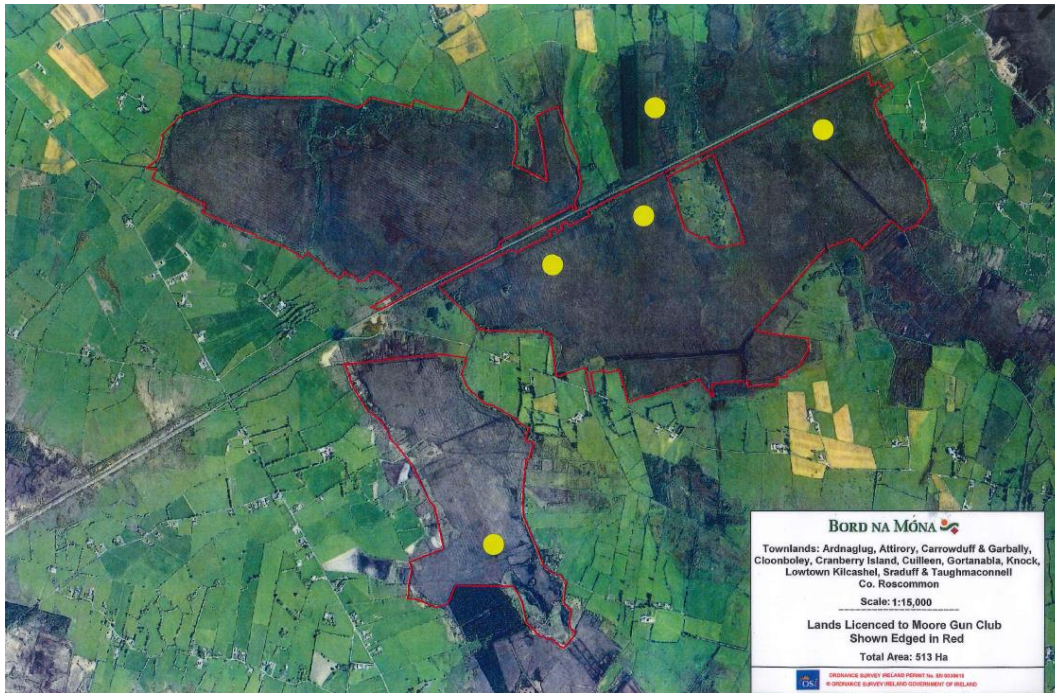


Figure 1. Curlew pair locations indicated in yellow on Ballydangan Bog.

Additional recordings:

- In addition to recording breeding Curlew on the site, some information on other bird species was also collected.
- The site recorded 3 pairs of lapwing successfully. It was estimated that these pairs produced several fledglings.
- A pair of barn owls successfully reared 4 offspring.
- It has been a good breeding season for many hedgerow bird species and also for other ground nesting birds.
- Several leverets were observed on the site.

Annex I – observation notes - Curlew:

BALLYDANGAN 2021		
#	DATE	NO OF Curlew
31	24.06.21	1 Curlew
32	27.06.21	1 Curlew
33	29.06.21	1 Curlew
34	01.05.21	1 Curlew
35	05.05.21	1 Curlew
36	09.05.21	1 Curlew
37	11.05.21	2 Curlew
38	16.05.21	2 Curlew
39	"	1 Curlew
40	"	1 Curlew
41	19.05.21	1 Curlew
42	21.05.21	1 Curlew
43	24.05.21	1 Curlew
44	"	1 Curlew
45	"	1 Curlew
46	31.05.21	1 Curlew
47	"	1 Curlew
48	01.06.21	1 Curlew
49	"	1 Curlew
50	"	1 Curlew
51	04.06.21	1 Curlew
52	07.06.21	1 Curlew
53	"	1 Curlew
54	"	1 Curlew
55	"	1 Curlew
56	14.06.21	1 Curlew
57	15.06.21	1 Curlew
58	"	1 Curlew
59	"	1 Curlew
60	"	1 Curlew