

## We win Curlew Conservation Award!

The North of England Curlew Conservation Awards took place on 18 August 2024 in Masham Town Hall. The event brought together more than 140 farmers, conservationists and land managers including the 17 award finalists to celebrate curlew. The event saw talks, music from the Pennine Hills Curlew Choir, films, photographs as well as the presentation of awards.

### Talks

Speakers included **Amanda Perkins** from the pioneering [‘Curlew Country’ project](#) whose work has reversed the decline towards local extinction in the Shropshire Hills and Powys borders. Their pioneering methods of predator exclusion through nest fencing, and head starting (the artificial rearing of curlew chicks) have been widely imitated throughout the UK.

**Rebecca Dickens**, winner of the 2023 Farmland Curlew Award, who together with partner Ian Bell, runs their own farm in Hallbankgate, Cumbria, and are tenant farmers at [RSPB Geltsdale](#), talked about their actions to enhance habitat and passion for wetland creation.

**Tom Orde-Powlett** who sits on the board of the Curlew Recovery Partnership on upland curlew conservation. Tom is involved in many conservation projects on his family’s 12,000-acre estate at Bolton Castle in Wensleydale, which includes 6,000 acres of moorland. Tom outlined conservation efforts for hen harriers and osprey as well as curlew. In 2024, the estate celebrated a record number of nesting curlew, estimated at 250 pairs.

**Rick Simpson** from Wader Quest, the charity he cofounded with partner Elis. Wader Quest aims to raise awareness about the challenges waders face in the modern world and to raise funds to support wader conservation worldwide, especially those involving locally led community projects.

### Awards

The overall winner of the **2024 Farmland Curlew Award** was **The Grosvenor’s Abbeystead Estate** in the Forest of Bowland. The judges were hugely impressed with the estate’s work to restore peatlands and meadows and close working with graziers and gamekeepers to improve land management. This has led to a marked increase in fledging success, monitored in partnership with the GWCT. The judges highlighted the role of **Rob Foster, Moorland Technician** who has worked to monitor and conserve waders for 15 years and leads on educational work and community engagement.

The **2024 Curlew Project Group Award** recognises partnership working by groups of different stakeholders, including farmers, volunteers, upland managers, ecologists, ornithologists and others, to create connected corridors and patchworks of curlew habitat across the wider landscape, increase understanding of curlew behaviour and trial innovative conservation practices.

With many thriving curlew projects across the North of England this award was very competitive with eight finalists. So, we were especially delighted when this award when to our **Darley Beck Curlew Project!**

Now in our third year, our project on a cluster of lowland farms over about 400ha, has trialled several innovative schemes, from targeted nest field payments to predator exclusion fencing. In 2024, experimenting with bio-acoustic monitoring and trail cameras to build an accurate picture of predator threat, and engaging in creative projects to inspire the next generation of curlew conservationists and farmers. The judges were particularly impressed by the dedication of our 30 strong team of volunteers and the passion of our project manager and founder **Clive White**, who collected the award on our behalf.

The **2024 Upland Curlew Award** which went to the **Bolton Castle Estate** which has been synonymous with curlew conservation for many years. The estate is involved in many actions for curlew, including demonstrating positive land management, hosting curlew festivals and curlew safaris, sitting on the steering group of the Curlew Recovery Partnership. And in 2024 taking part in a research project with the Yorkshire Dales National Park, Natural England and the British Trust for Ornithology to better understand the curlew's behaviour and seasonal migration patterns.

The **2024 Curlew Conservation Volunteer Award** went to **Barny Sykes** from **Curlew Recovery South Lakes** for his leadership and work forging excellent working relationships with farmers, inspiring volunteers and the local community to care about their curlews, and wider advice and support to other curlew projects elsewhere in the Lake District National Park (Melbreak and Matterdale).

The **2024 Young Curlew Conservationist Award** went to **Katie Laidlow** from Dufton Wood Farm in Cumbria, who has worked to improve habitat and management on the family farm leading to increased curlew numbers. Katie is an amazing advocate for curlew conservation, referred to by some as 'curlew girl', she has a regular radio show on BBC radio Cumbria, writes articles and has featured on [Countryfile](#).

### **Films and photographs**

We were delighted that the life of wildlife photographer and our DBCP conservation volunteer, **Barry Carter** was celebrated with a slide show of Barry's photographs accompanied by the music and sounds of Scarborough based composer, **Sarah Dew**.

The animation "[Curlew, Curlew Curlew](#)" made by the children of Nidderdale during an summer holiday workshop was the trailer for the film "**The Lost Songstress**" made by **Alicia Hayden** with support from **Wader Quest**.

[Alicia Hayden](#), originally from North Yorkshire, is a creative conservationist who also sits on the BTO's youth advisory panel. Her film, two years in the making, is a personal reflection on curlew conservation and features footage of curlews shot in the Yorkshire Dales, as well as interviews with experts from across the country.

Alicia also donated a brilliant curlew artwork which was auctioned off at the end of the evening, raising money for a number of charities ([Curlew Action](#), [Wader Quest](#) and [Curlew Country](#)).