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# **Let’s talk about Curlews**

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| **About** | This presentation was developed for World Curlew Day as part of the **LIVE Project’s** environmental education programme, to raise awareness about the natural heritage of the Iveragh Peninsula, in Co. Kerry, Ireland.  It can be used at any time, to help learn more about curlews in Ireland. If you are outside of Ireland, you can adapt it to suit your own area. Contact your local Bird Conservation group for more local knowledge.  These resources were developed by a team of Knowledge Gatherers, working on the LIVE Project, as well as assistance from the Curlew Conservation Programme. |
| **Curlew Educational Pack** | The Curlew Educational Pack consists of:   * PowerPoint Presentation about Curlews in Ireland * PDF of the Presentation * Accompanying Teachers Notes with activities and discussion ideas * PDF of several printable worksheets, suitable for different ages   If you have not already downloaded the full Curlew Educational Pack, they are freely available from the Resources Section on our ~~our~~ website: [www.ecomuseumlive.eu](http://www.ecomuseumlive.eu) |
| **Curriculum Links** | **SESE** - Science, Geography and History - Natural Environment, Awareness and Care, Caring for my Locality, Living Things  **Visual Arts** - Drawing, Paint and colour, Looking and Responding  **SPHE** - Myself and the Wider World, Community, Responsibility  **Physical Education** - Outdoor and adventure activities  **English** - Reading, Writing, Oral language  **Gaeilge** – If using the Gaeilge version of the presentation |
| **Sustainable**  **Development**  **Goals** |  |

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| **Celebrate World Curlew Day!** | For **World Curlew Day, 21st April 2021**, we want to create a buzz online, to help raise awareness about the plight of curlews in Ireland. There are a few ways you can help us celebrate.   * Send us photos of your drawings, poems, stories and more, so we can add you to our short video on participating schools, which we will create for World Curlew Day. You can email them to live@ucc.ie. Please note, if you have photos of the children, there must be parental consent for us to share these images online. * You can post them on your own social media accounts using the hashtags  **#EcomuseumLive #WorldCurlewDay #IrishCurlews o**r tag us **@ecomuseumlive**, so we can find them easily. |
| **Other Resources** | Here is a selection of groups and organisations working tirelessly to support our endangered birds and raise awareness. Why not find out about a local branch near you, and have an expert come and talk to your class?   * Curlew Conservation Programme – [Facebook Page](https://www.facebook.com/Curlew-Conservation-Program-108423084659327/) * [Birdwatch Ireland](https://birdwatchireland.ie/birds/curlew/) * [Irish Wildlife Trust](https://iwt.ie/) * [Tralee Wetland Centre](https://traleebaywetlands.org/) * [National Biodiversity DataCentre](https://www.biodiversityireland.ie/)   **Further Information:**  There are a number of great resources online to learn more about curlews, you can watch videos   * Draw with Don – [Draw a Curew](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMzDrqCq1P4) * [Podcast](https://soundcloud.com/curlewmedia/barry-odonoghue-irish-curlew-crisis?fbclid=IwAR1Yj_fXVxI0iwZv9myRvxDc33osVuSzOX75bg7H6ekA3cSYZuDIUtFVYWI) – Ireland’s Curlew Crisis with Dr Barry O’Donoghue * <https://www.curlewcall.org/> * <https://www.thecurlewtrust.com/> |
| **Teachers Feedback** | The **LIVE Project** is committed to creating a series of educational resources, freely available to all teachers and educators. While our focus is on creating resources relating to the Iveragh Peninsula, in Co. Kerry, and the Llŷn Peninsula in Wales, these resources can be used anywhere, at any time.  In order to make our resources as useful as possible to you, as teachers, we would love to hear any constructive feedback you might have, on this educational pack, and on the development of future resources. **Email us at live@ucc.ie** |

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### **Teachers Presentation Notes**

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| **Slide No:** | **Title** | **Text and Notes** |
| 1 | **Let’s talk about Curlews** | Begin presentation |
| 2 | **Red Status** | The Curlew, one of Ireland's most iconic birds, is also one of our most endangered bird species.  In the 1980's there were about 3,500 - 5,500 pairs of breeding curlew in Ireland. A study carried out between 2012-2017 by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), found that only **148 pairs** remain.  The Curlew Conservation Programme was established in 2017 to save Ireland's last breeding Curlew. |
|  | Extra Notes | Despite legal protection, changes in farming (intensification, silage, early cutting of meadows, afforestation) have encroached on a lot of the Curlew’s traditional breeding habitat and their breeding population here has suffered a dramatic decline estimated at around 95pc in the last 30 years. Changes in farming practices have negatively affected Irish curlew populations; increase in predators they encounter; risks of migration; climate change all affect the Irish breeding curlew. |
| 3 | **World Curlew Day** | **Curlews** have inspired poets, artists, musicians and writers for generations. Their iconic call could be heard in coasts, meadows, mountain slopes and moorlands. Sadly, there are fewer and fewer breeding curlews every year.  **World Curlew Day** falls on the 21st April each year. It’s a special day to help raise awareness about curlews, so we learn more about them, in the hope that we can save these beautiful birds from extinction.  **Let's find out more about Curlews and World Curlew Day!** |
|  | Extra Notes | World Curlew Day is a grass-roots initiative, supported by major environmental organisations, to raise awareness of the plight of curlews and to encourage activities to help them.  April 21 was chosen to be World Curlew Day because of a delightful, traditional Welsh tale that identifies the first curlew conservationist. St Beuno was a 6th century abbot from Wales. Legend has it he was sailing off the coast when he dropped his prayer book in the sea. A curlew flew over and rescued it and took it to the shore to dry. The grateful St Beuno decreed that from then on, the bird be given special protection and that its nest must be difficult to find, which is indeed the case. |
| 4 | Ireland’s Largest Wader | The **Curlew** is Ireland's largest wader. A wader is a long-legged bird that 'wades' in shallow water or muddy ground to look for food. In Munster Irish, we say ***Cuirliún***, but you can also say ***Crotach.*** |
|  | Extra Notes | Scientific Name: Numenius arquata. The genus name  Numenius  refers to the curlew’s bill. Numenius comes from two Greek words, ‘neos’ meaning new and ‘mene’ for moon. This creates ‘of the new moon’, alluding to the crescent-shaped of the bill. The Eurasian curlew’s species names also refer to the shape of its bill, as ‘arquata’ is the Latin word for the archery bow. |
|  | Discussion | Talk about different ways to say Curlew, and the differences between regional variations in the Irish language. *Cuirliún* comes from the word French *courlieu*, just like the English word curlew. This word appears in Micheál Ó Ciarmhaic's "Ríocht na dTonnta". |
| 5 | What does a curlew look like | Curlews are a large, mostly greyish brown (mottled dark and light) bird, with long greyish blue legs, long dark bill and long neck. The underbelly is more of a creamy colour, lightly speckled. |
|  | Extra Notes | Its long legs allow it to walk easily through tall vegetation (meadows) while breeding, and through marshes in the winter. Its long beak is designed for probing deep into soft ground to feed on worms, small molluscs and invertebrates.  These adaptations allow the curlew to access habitat and food that birds with shorter legs and smaller bills cannot.  Some curlews can live up to 25, maybe 30 years in the wild. |
|  | Fun Activity | Get the children to pretend to be curlews! Act out having a long neck and long legs. They can use their arms, pencils or rulers to pretend to have a long beak and try and pick up things. |
| 6 | **How big is a Curlew?** | A curlew can measure up to 60cm tall. That’s the length of 2 normal school rulers. They can weigh between 600g and 950g. That's approximately between 1.5 and 2 pounds of butter! |
|  | Fun Activity | Get the children to measure out a curlew with their rulers. Have a go at finding something in the classroom that weighs the same as a curlew. |
| 7 | **What does a curlew sound like?** | They are most well-known for their distinctive ‘bubbling’ call: **‘kur-leeee – kur-leee – kur-leee’**. Have a listen to some curlew sounds. |
|  | Listen and Discuss | There are some great curlew sound and video libraries online. The Curlew Call website, hope of World Curlew Day, has a collection of sounds and videos you can watch. Have a listen to some curlew sounds, discuss with the class about the curlew call, and ask if anyone recognises it.   * Curlew Sounds - <https://www.curlewcall.org/media-library/sounds/> * Curlew Video’s - <https://www.curlewcall.org/media-library/videos/> |
| 8 | **Where do Curlews like to live?** | Curlews like to lay their eggs in bogs and meadows in the spring and summer. In autumn and winter, they feed in wetland areas such as estuaries, tidal shores and nearby fields or greens. |
|  | Discussion | Talk to your class about bogs and meadows. Have a look on a map to see if there are any bogs and meadows in your area, and wonder would there be any curlews breeding there. |
| 9 | **Why do curlews like to live in bogs and meadows?** | Curlews, like many other wading birds, make their nests on the ground. Hidden in long grass, these nests are well camouflaged, and the chicks can feed and hide in the area when they hatch. |
| 10 | **What do Curlews like to eat?** | Curlews like to eat worms, caterpillars, crabs, shrimps, spiders, insects, and other types of creepy crawlies. |
|  | Extra Notes | Curlews mostly eat at low tide in the winter; like most waders, they tend to roost (sleep communally) at high tide. Have a look at your local tide times, to see when low and high tide is in your area. |
| 11 | **Why do Curlews have a long beak?** | Curlews have a very long beak (also called a bill). This helps them find food in soft ground, wet mud and shallow water.The end of a curlew’s bill is sensitive and acts like tweezers which enables it to feel around in the mud for food. |
|  | Extra Notes | Curlews like to forage for food in estuaries, mountain slopes, moorland, meadow land and coast.  The end of a curlew’s bill is extremely sensitive and can feel even slight movements from prey deep in the mud. The bill then acts like a tweezers to pinch and pull the prey, such as a worm, free from the mud.  Females are larger and have longer bills than males, making them better at foraging for food. Sometimes a male will follow a female, to catch any crumbs they may drop. |
|  | Discussion: | Have a look on local maps for any kind of areas that curlews might like to forage in. |
| 12 | **Curlew Migration** | Curlews are **migratory birds** - they leave their breeding grounds with their young soon after they learn to fly, typically from the end of July.  Birds nesting in Scandinavia and Russia migrate to Western Europe’s milder climates for the winter. Curlews are present year-round in Ireland and Britain and the nearby European coasts. |
|  | Extra Notes: | Curlews migrate to escape the harsh winters of the Northern countries. Before migrating, they will prepare by feeding and storing fats. Climate change might affect migration patterns of birds, as our weather changes, and the arctic countries get warmer in the winter - removing their need to migrate.  Migrating Curlews also like to live on Taiga or boreal forest, in the cold, subarctic region. The subarctic is an area of the Northern Hemisphere that lies just south of the Arctic Circle.  Have a look at a world map and see if you can name the countries that curlews migrate to. The green lines show the route usually taken by curlews that migrate to Ireland. |
| 13 | **Curlew in Ireland** | Most curlews that you see in winter in Ireland have arrived here from colder northern climates to feed during our milder winters.  They stay from September to April. These curlews migrate back to their countries to have their chicks. |
|  | Extra Notes: | The species is on the brink of extinction in Ireland. We get visitors over winter on their annual migration but very few remain to breed in Ireland. |
| 14 | **Irish Breeding Curlews** | Irish breeding curlews are very rare and very important! They stay here to breed and will lay their eggs in mid-April.  Curlews usually lay **4 eggs** in ground nests. They are about the same size as hen eggs. They are usually light green, and speckled brown to help blend in/camouflage into the grasses. |
| 15 | **Curlew chicks** | Once hatched, chicks leave the nest within a day or so and feed themselves. Damp ground and shallow pools are ideal places for chicks to feed. They are usually full of insects and worms in summer months.  Curlews leave their breeding ground with their young, soon after they learn to fly, typically from the end of July. |
| 16 | **Let's have fun with Curlews** | Now that we have learned all about curlews, let's have some fun! |
| 17 | **Can you find the Curlew in this picture?** | *Show the photo to the class and see if they can spot the curlew. Don't move onto the next slide until they have spotted the curlew.* |
| 18 | Activity: | Answer to Slide 15 |
| 19 | **Spot the Difference** | The curlew and whimbrel are both large, brown waders with long, down curved bills. Distinguishing them can be tricky from a distance. Can you spot any differences? |
|  | Discussion: | Talk about the differences between a Curlew and a Whimbrel.   * The curlew is larger in size and has a longer bill. It can also be seen year-round in Ireland, from migrating curlews in winter, to breeding curlews in summer. The curlew has more mottled specked colours on its chest. * The whimbrel is smaller than the curlew, with a shorter bill. It is most distinguished by the dark bands on the head, one around the eye, then a light band, then another dark band on the top of the head. The whimbrel is usually only in Ireland as a stop off on its migration journey, so usually seen in the Spring. The whimbrel usually has a darker band on its chest. |
| 19 | **Curlew Activity Sheets** | Print out the worksheets and use them in the classroom to help the children visually learn what they have seen and heard about curlews in this presentation. |
| 20 | **Share your curlew drawings, poems and more with us!** | You can email them to [live@ucc.ie](mailto:live@ucc.ie), or post online on 21st April, for **World Curlew Day.**  For more information visit [**www.ecomuseumlive.eu**](http://www.ecomuseumlive.eu/) **#WorldCurlewDay #IrishCurlews #EcomuseumLive #Cuirliún** |
|  |  | This presentation was developed for World Curlew Day as part of The LIVE Project's environmental education programme with the assistance of the Curlew Conservation Programme.  The LIVE Project is co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the Ireland Wales Cooperation Programme.  This presentation and its images can be used for educational purposes only, under Creative Commons Licences.  Special thanks to Hubert Servignat of the Curlew Conservation Programme, Ben Porter and Linda Lyne, Knowledge Gatherers with the LIVE Project, and Birdwatch Ireland.  The LIVE Project is developing a range of open-source educational resources focused on the natural heritage, flora and fauna of the Iveragh Peninsula in County Kerry, Ireland. If you have feedback about this presentation, or have other areas of interest, which you would like to see developed, please get in touch, email [live@ucc.ie](mailto:live@ucc.ie), or visit our website www.ecomuseumlive.eu |