'We don't just do choughs ...' (continued)

sympathetic land use, where intensive agriculture has not had the devastating effects on wildlife found elsewhere in the British Isles. It is the same coastal grazing which benefits the chough, that helps these plants to survive against the more competitive coarse grasses.

The National Trust and Natural England have been working with our farm tenants in order to reintroduce grazing to the cliffs, using native breed cattle and ponies. This grazing is not only crucial for the return of the chough to our shores, but has also had a dramatic effect on the diversity of other wildlife. Without grazing, the sward becomes dominated by the more competitive rank grasses and eventually reverts to scrub, with an inevitable loss of the less competitive rare and threatened species.

overhead the evocative call of the chough is a reminder that it's not just the flowers which have benefited.

Chough Project Events and Souvenirs

For an introduction to the wildlife on the Lizard why not visit us at the Cornwall Chough Project Watchpoint - open every day from 1 April early June from 10 am-5 pm (weather permitting). (SW 700114)

Or join us on a guided walk where we will introduce the choughs, their story and the conservation efforts for wildlife on the coastal fringe. (*Wear suitable outdoor clothing and footwear. No dogs please.)

Sun 22 April and Sun 20 May 9 am-11 am Meet at the Watchpoint, Southerly Point. (SW 700114)

Sun 3 and Sun 10 June 9 am-11 am

Meet at Kynance car park. (SW 688132)

Celebrate Cornish wildlife with us at the

Lizard Wildlife Weekend 23 – 24 June (10 am-late)

Children's activities, guided walks, talks, exhibitions, live music - and more.

Stickers Stickers Stickers

We have fun stickers for sale at the Watchpoint: why not show your support by buying some: window sticker £1.50, stick on sticker £1.

T-shirt sales last year raised nearly £1400, thanks to everyone who bought one.

Why not join the team?

-mail: cornishchoughs@rspb.org.uk Last year the birds had their most successful year and a total of 175 volunteers gave 7,484 hours of their time to help! If you live near the choughs, why not get involved with helping to protect their nests or help keep track of them? If you like talking to people you could help us at the Watchpoint or at some of the events we run around Cornwall. We are also looking to raise money to support the project so volunteers to run fundraising activities are appreciated. As Chough Club is expanding, we would like to expand our team of education helpers in west Cornwall.

Chough confidential

The protection of choughs, especially their nests, is still very much our priority so we need to continue to ensure confidentiality around some aspects of the project. Please help us keep Cornwall's choughs safe and post online responsibly - be aware that egg collectors will also be checking websites for information on nest location, so take care when you tweet or post to any website. Thank you.

The Cornwall Chough Project is a partnership between the RSPB, National Trust and Natural England. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076,

Our Project is part financed by the European Agricultural Fund for European Development 2007-2013: Europe investing in rural areas. Delivered through the Local Action for Rural Communities Programme by

the West Cornwall Local Action Group with funding from the EU and Defra.





For more information:

website: www.cornishchoughs.org

twitter: @cornishchoughs









aloresow Kernewek



Issue 2 - March 2012

Welcome to the second edition of 'Paloresow Kernewek'. Read on for the latest news on Cornwall's choughs, and how people far and wide are taking action for them.

'Chatterings' of Choughs

2011 saw the most successful breeding season for Cornish choughs since their historic return in 2001, another step in the right direction for Cornwall's cultural emblem which once populated the cliffs of Kernow in their hundreds.

There are around 20 choughs in Cornwall at the time of writing this. Of the 15 chicks that fledged last year, we know of the whereabouts of four and although this might not seem a good survival rate, it is par for the course for these longlived birds (generally if they make it through their first winter their long term survival is very good; young birds are usually more vulnerable than adults).

Over the winter the birds settled into a regular routine, and fed fairly close to home but instead of feeding in pairs they often joined up to form larger social groups. The largest chattering (a collective name for choughs) seen was seven, a magnificent sight especially as they tumble past you or you see them in a tight group with their heads down searching for food

Spring is here and it looks as if six pairs are preparing their nests, and we are preparing too for another exciting season out on the cliffs. We will let you know what happens in the next issue.

Photo: Julian Hodgson ©

It is thanks to these hardy cattle and ponies that the cliffs today are once again vibrant with wild flowers, whilst



An 'incomer'

Excitingly, over the winter an unringed chough turned up and is still around in West Cornwall. This could be the same unringed bird that turned up at a similar time last year (it then disappeared last February); let's hope it (we think it may be a female) sticks around. If you see an unringed chough in Cornwall outside of the Lizard area, it is highly unlikely to be one of the original Southerly Point pair, which are unringed and do not travel far. We keep a database of all sightings so if you see choughs anywhere we are always pleased to know. Send us your record, with the number of birds seen, where you saw them and when. This is the basic information we need but if you can include a grid reference and any details of ring combinations then please do.

You can e-mail your records to:

cornishchoughs@rspb.org.uk

Choughs on High by David Issit

In November 2011, David, one of the chough project volunteers, went on an amazing triptrekking in Nepal, and unexpectedly bumped into some familiar feathered friends:

"It had been a steady but beautiful day's trekking up the Hinku Valley from Kote to Tangnang. The valley sides steepened as we ascended and the brown foothills were slowly replaced by snow-capped peaks – giants in our eyes but mere midgets compared to the high Himalaya ahead of us. We arrived at our camp - and settled for the ritual of tea and biscuits when suddenly: a flash of black and a shrill cry and I was taken straight back to the cliffs of the Lizard Peninsula - choughs!

No matching red accessories here though, reddish legs yes, but yellow beaks adorned these birds for they were alpine choughs. I had seen them before in the Alps and Atlas mountains of Morocco, but never at this altitude -4,300 metres, and they were here in their dozens. My first thought was that John (friend, neighbour and chough-watch stalwart) would love to see this sight! Two days later and we were above the snow line just off the Mera La at 5,400 metres - surely no more choughs here. But the aerial displays continued despite the thin air.

My time in Nepal had been tremendous and the sight of choughs was a real bonus. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the choughs of Cornwall returned in numbers to match the alpine choughs of the high ranges?"

FACT FILE: Red-billed choughs in the UK are very much a species of the maritime Celtic fringe, but in other parts of Europe they have evolved to live in very different (and certainly less wet) climate and conditions. In Spain for instance you find them nesting colonially in the canyon at Ronda and in the Canaries, on the island of La Palma, where they are found in their thousands (yes, thousands of 'Grajas' on an island the size of the Isle of Wight), they exist on a diet rich in fruits rather than invertebrates!



Over the past few months the Project has been expanding its education work further into West Cornwall. Cat and Charlie (her trusty new puppet kindly donated by volunteer Rvd David Mann) have been touring schools, inspiring children through assemblies, activity sessions, the Big Schools' Birdwatch and through growing the Project's very own wildlife enquiry group, Chough Club, which is now running in three schools, (and we hope three more soon). The response has been overwhelming from children, parents and teachers alike. It would not be possible without the help of our dedicated team of education volunteers Gill Allen, Danielle Ford and Neil Swan.

"We don't just do choughs..."

Yes, we might talk about them all the time and they are at the heart of our conservation work on the Project, but, if you stop to think about it, birds are at the top of the food chain, so to make sure choughs are happy you have to make sure all those links in the food chain are in place and well connected.

"Whilst chough watching, don't forget to look down at what's beneath your feet...prepare to be amazed by the sheer variety of flowering plants growing along the coastal slope." suggests Justin Whitehouse, Head Ranger for the National Trust on the Lizard.

"As well as the Cornish chough, the Lizard Peninsula is well known for its diverse and unusual flora. It's said that you can find more rare plants in half an hour on the Lizard than anywhere else in Britain. Many of the rare and unusual species have equally unusual names such as thyme broomrape (see inset photo), fringed rupturewort, hairy greenweed, long-headed clover and the better known Cornish Heath. Despite being such a small area, the Lizard peninsula is the key site nationally for rarities, many of which would be equally at home around the Mediterranean.

The unique natural history of the Lizard is a result of the mild maritime climate, the unusual geology, dominated by the beautiful Serpentine rocks and the long history of

