

## 1. CURRENT STATUS

### 1.1 Legislation and priority status

International	Birds Directive <sup>a</sup> (Annex I) Berne Convention (Appendix II)
UK and Wales	Wildlife and Countryside Act (Schedule 1) Birds of conservation concern <sup>b</sup> (amber list) SoCC <sup>c</sup> Welsh S74 list <sup>d</sup>
Gwynedd	Snowdonia BAP Llyn AONB Heritage Coast

### 1.2 Status in Wales and beyond

Within the UK the chough<sup>e</sup> has a population of about 342 pairs<sup>f</sup> restricted to the western seaboard - Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. There are also approximately 98 pairs on the Isle of Man. The populations in Scotland and Northern Ireland are showing signs of recovering from recent declines.

Around 180 pairs are found in Wales, along the coast from Glamorgan to Caernarfonshire and inland in Snowdonia and the Cambrian Mountains (Montgomeryshire, Meirionnydd, Ceredigion). Overall the population is relatively stable although there have been local declines mirrored by local increases.

### 1.3 Status in Gwynedd<sup>g</sup>

There were 67 sites occupied by pairs in Gwynedd in 2002 and the population is currently increasing, although it is considered that this increase is partly due to increased survey effort and improved survey methodology. The coastal population extends from the Great Orme on the north coast to the south coast of Llŷn, whilst the inland breeding population is scattered through Snowdonia. A significant proportion of the population breed in quarries (active and disused), associated buildings and disused mine-workings. There has been a decline in the population of inland Meirionnydd. Some areas within the county are of vital importance as feeding and roosting areas for young, non-breeding birds from Anglesey and Ceredigion in addition to those from within Gwynedd.

<sup>a</sup> Council Directive 79/409/EEC of 2 April 1979 on the conservation of wild birds

<sup>b</sup> Population status of birds in the UK - Birds of conservation concern: 2002 - 2007, list available from JNCC website

<sup>c</sup> UK Species of Conservation Concern List

<sup>d</sup> Welsh Assembly Government, *Going Wild in Wales - List of Species and Habitats of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biological Diversity*. Crown Copyright 2003.

<sup>e</sup> *Pyrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

<sup>f</sup> 1998 figures

<sup>g</sup> Within this document the term "Gwynedd" refers to areas outside the Snowdonia National Park area, except where specified otherwise

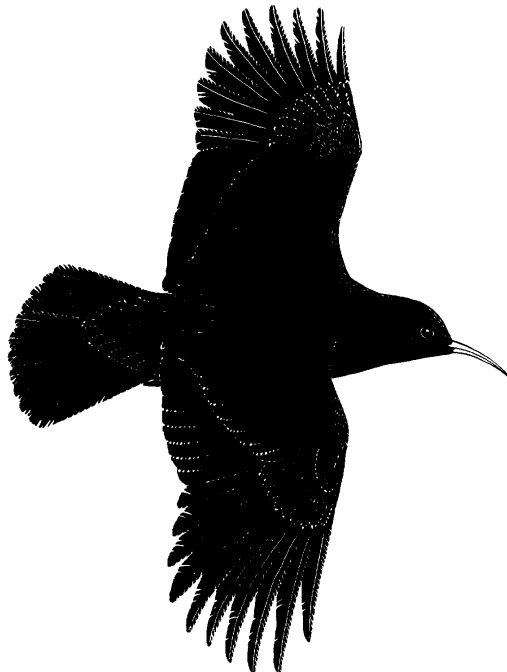
## 2. FACTORS AFFECTING THIS SPECIES IN GWYNEDD<sup>h</sup>

- Extent and quality of foraging habitat. This is affected by changes in sward height and density (through changes in grazing/burning patterns), changes in grazing affecting the supply of dung invertebrates, agricultural improvement, land use change e.g. afforestation, stabilisation of unstable clay cliffs, and bracken encroachment.
- The use of long-lasting anti-parasitic chemicals, such as avermectins (especially boluses), on livestock-grazed coastal fields and on cliffs may prevent the colonisation of dung-degrading insects which are an important food source for choughs.
- Human disturbance, largely recreational including climbing, scrambling and walking but also from bird-watching. Also potential from future or new recreational activities e.g. hang gliding, parascending etc.
- Presence of natural predators e.g. peregrine may be a factor affecting communal roosts and fledging success.
- Climate - drought in summer/extended cold spells in winter and associated hard ground may result in higher mortality, poor weather in late spring may affect fledging success; overwintering survival is thought to be one of the main population limiting factors.
- Availability of suitable nest sites including capping / grilling of mine shafts and destruction of nest sites through quarrying activities.

## 3. ASSOCIATED GWYNEDD SAPS / HAPS

Cloddiau, Lowland Heathland, Upland Heathland, Inland rock quarries, mines and screes, Maritime cliff and slopes, Coastal sand dunes, Strandlines

Ring ouzel, Twite




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<sup>h</sup> See also associated HAPs for more general factors affecting this species' habitats

## 4. CURRENT ACTION IN GWYNEDD

### Site and habitat protection

- Certain chough colonies will fall within sections of the Gwynedd coastline which have been designated as candidate SACs (Seacliffs of Llŷn) and / or SPA (Aberdaron Coast and Bardsey Island; Mynydd Cilan, Trwyn y Wylfa and the St Tudwal Islands - where the chough colonies are the reason for designation).
- Most of Gwynedd's coastline is bordered either by the Pen Llŷn a'r Sarnau marine candidate SAC or by the Menai Strait and Conwy Bay marine candidate SAC.
- Chough colonies in Gwynedd will also often fall within SSSIs (for example Porth Ceiriad, Porth Neigwl ac Nysoedd Sant Tudwal), or within areas identified as potential Wildlife Sites.
- Bardsey Island, which hosts a population of choughs, is an NNR.
- Much of the coast of the Llŷn Peninsula is designated as a Heritage Coast and much of the Peninsula is included within the Llŷn AONB

### 4.2 Management and programmes of action

- A 3 year EU funded chough conservation project ran between 2000 and 2003, which included bracken control, reintroduction of grazing on abandoned coastal slopes, the provision of stubble fields, and the repair of cloddiau.
- Elements of this project are to be continued within the Aren't Welsh Birds Brilliant project, which commenced during 2003, funded by EU Objective 1 funds and by a number of partners and led by RSPB Cymru. One of the two target areas for increasing Welsh chough populations is the South Meirionnydd coast between Fairbourne and Tywyn. There will also be two community liaison officers based within Gwynedd / Snowdonia National Park.
- The chough is one of the species eligible for funding from Countryside Council for Wales Species Challenge Fund.

### 4.3 Survey, research and monitoring

- Several All-Wales chough surveys have been carried out since the mid-1990s.
- A colour ringing project is ongoing, collecting data on dispersal, seasonal movement, adult and juvenile survival, age of first breeding and natal philopatry (Cross and Stratford).
- As part of the projects outlined under 4.2, roosts and nest sites have been surveyed on a regular basis, and data has been recorded and collated on feeding sites.
- RSPB 'Choughs and land-use in north Wales' research project was carried out between 1996 and 1998.

## 5. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. To protect, maintain and increase the current population and range in Gwynedd.
2. To promote a greater understanding of the requirements of the species through encouraging further research into its ecology.
3. To demonstrate through best practice guidance the economic benefits of chough habitat management to landowners, farmers, the tourist industry and the general public.

## 6. PROPOSED ACTIONS

Code	Action	Partner(s) <sup>i</sup>
<b>Policy and legislation</b>		
1	Use planning conditions to ensure developments in sensitive locations are compatible with conservation of chough TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>GC</b> , Relevant partners
2	Ensure that national and international legislation is applied to safeguard existing nest sites, roost sites and important feeding habitats TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, NWP
<b>Species / habitat management and protection</b>		
3	Promote and support grant schemes including Tir Gofal, Llŷn ESA and / or use management agreements where appropriate to secure favourable management and / or restoration of important feeding areas for chough, taking into account the needs of other associated LBAP species and habitats TARGET/TIMESCALE: To be set, Ongoing	<b>CCW</b> , <b>CLA</b> , DEPC, FUW, FWAG Cymru, <b>GC</b> , NFU Cymru, NT, <b>RSPB Cymru</b>
4	Ensure that, where possible, chough habitat requirements are reflected in land management prescriptions under agri-environment schemes TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, DEPC, FWAG Cymru, <b>GC</b> , NT,
5	Seek funding for land management by developing a biodiversity grant scheme, which would include grants for appropriate management and/or restoration of chough habitat TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2005	<b>GC</b> , Relevant partners
6	Limit disturbance caused by recreational access near nest-sites or communal roosts by liaison with British Mountaineering Council TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, <b>GC</b>
7	Safeguard all potential nest-sites and communal roosts from inappropriate development, especially mine capping, grilling or reclamation TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, <b>GC</b>
8	Seek to limit access to any nest-sites in an appropriate manner where egg collecting or public access cause continual failure of the breeding pair TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, <b>GC</b> , NT
9	Maintain pit props or other man-made features where they are a key feature of the nest-site. Ensure maintenance of artificially installed nest sites - nest boxes and other artificially made and strengthened sites TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, <b>GC</b>
10	Keep mine entrances and quarry sites free from scrub or trees TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, <b>GC</b>
11	Ensure that all nest sites in working quarries are identified and that during the breeding season nests are not destroyed nor adults seriously disturbed by quarrying activities TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	<b>RSPB Cymru</b> , CCW, <b>GC</b>

<sup>i</sup> Lead partner for this action is indicated by bold typeface, see section 7.2 for explanation of abbreviations

<b>Advisory</b>		
12	Ensure that all graziers and farm advisory services are aware of the importance of choughs in the area and provide advice on appropriate management options. TARGET/TIMESCALE: To be set, Ongoing	RSPB Cymru, CCW, DEPC, FWAG Cymru, GC, NT
13	Disseminate any information that results from the RSPB's current research on recommended management practice for maintaining or enhancing chough feeding areas to relevant bodies TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	RSPB Cymru, CCW, GC, NT
<b>Survey, research and monitoring</b>		
14	Monitor use of feeding areas where stocking density or management prescriptions are altered TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	RSPB Cymru, CCW, NT
15	Continue to record and collate information on feeding sites TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	RSPB Cymru, CCW
16	Collate data on field trials investigating appropriate land management to benefit feeding chough TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2005	RSPB Cymru, CCW, NT
17	Arrange appropriate surveys of mineshafts, quarries and quarry buildings due for closure or change of use TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	RSPB Cymru, CCW, GC
18	Support the analyses and publication of Cross and Stratford colour-ringing data TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2005	RSPB Cymru, CCW
<b>Communications and publicity</b>		
19	Raise the public profile and general awareness of chough and it's requirements with local farmers, land managers and the general public by attending local agricultural shows and events, through the media, and in producing / distributing advisory / information material for landowners TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	RSPB Cymru, CCW, GC

## 7 PARTNERS & OPPORTUNITIES

### 7.1 Overall Lead Partner for SAP

RSPB Cymru

### 7.2 Key partners

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

Country Land and Business Association (CLA)

Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Welsh Assembly Government) (DEPC)

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Cymru (FWAG Cymru)

Farmers Union of Wales (FUW Cymru)

Gwynedd Council (GC)

National Farmers Union Cymru (NFU Cymru)

National Trust (NT)

North Wales Police (NWP)

### 7.3 Opportunities

Climbers, British Mountaineering Council, Quarry owners, Farming unions, landowners and managers

## 8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## 9. ABBREVIATIONS

AONB: Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, BAP: Biodiversity Action Plan, ESA: Environmentally Sensitive Area, HAP: Habitat Action Plan, JNCC: Joint Nature Conservation Committee, LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan, LNR: Local Nature Reserve, NNR: National Nature Reserve, SAC: Special Area of Conservation, SAP: Species Action Plan, SPA: Special Protection Area, SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest

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