

The return of a cultural icon to Kent: attitudes towards the red-billed chough

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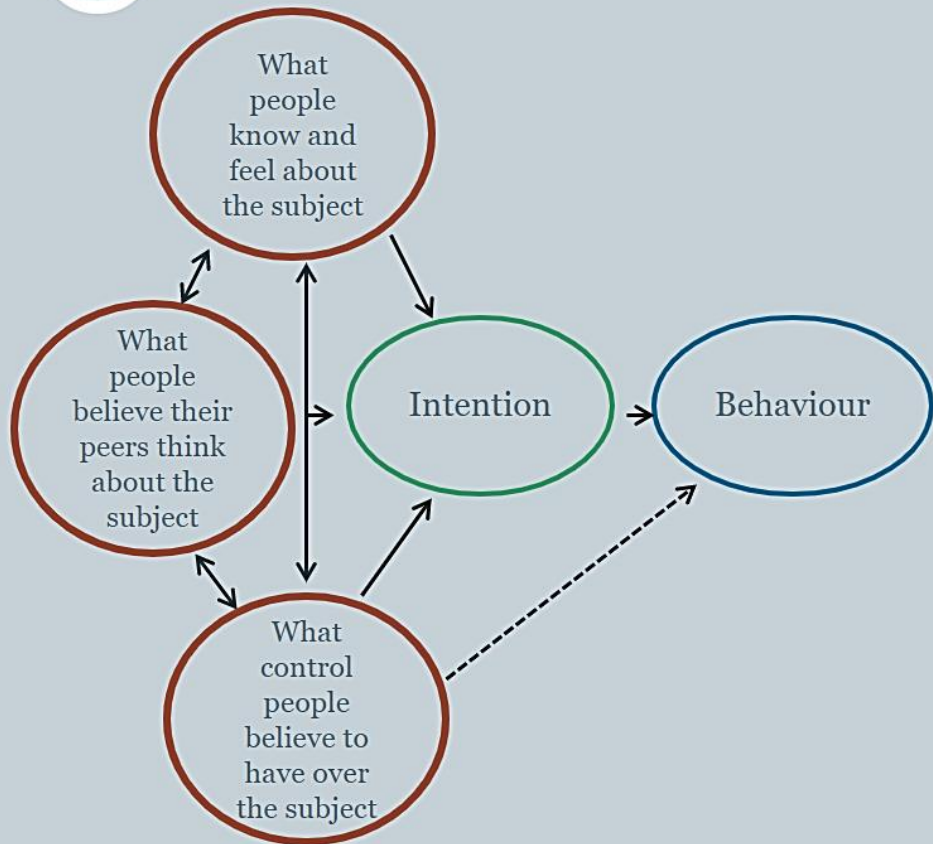


Human-Wildlife Interactions in Reintroductions



Long term success of reintroduction
depends on engagement and support
from local people
(IUCN 2013)

Human Dimensions of the restoration of native species



Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen 1991)

Values:

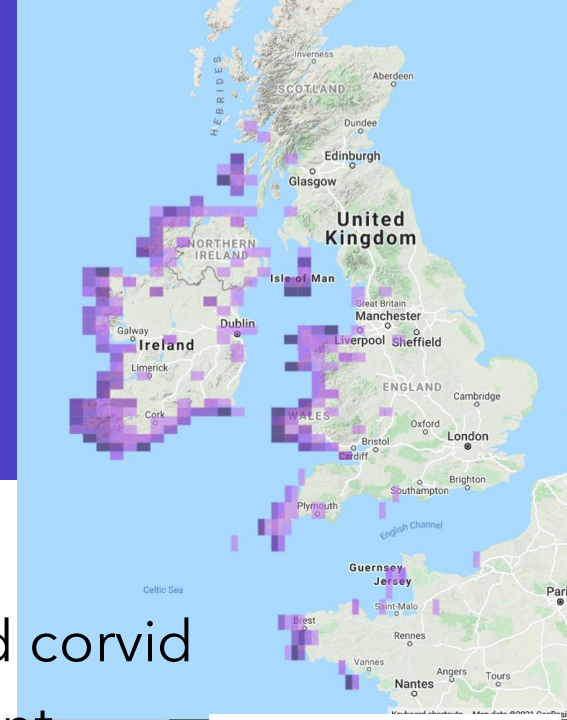
- Do people feel responsible for the loss of species?

Socio-demographic variables

- Gender, age, education, occupations and affiliations (interest groups)
- Place of residence and distance from site

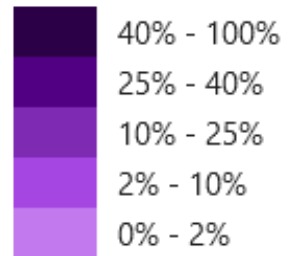


The Red-Billed Chough in Kent



- Britain's most endangered corvid
- Cultural significance to Kent
- Restoration of chalk grasslands
- Populations reintroduced/re-established in Cornwall and Jersey
- larger populations+ connectivity increase resilience against further decline (Swinnerton, K. and Gardner, L. 2021).

FREQUENCY



Methodology



2-phase mixed-methods study:

- Phase 1: focus groups and interviews (qualitative)
- Phase 2: questionnaires (quantitative) Bath, A.J. and Engel, M.T. 2019

Phase 1 informs the design of Phase 2

P1 + P2 findings together allow partners to:

- identify areas for further engagement work;
- establish a baseline for monitoring support of interest groups for the Chough Reintroduction Project

Interest groups and locations



Key interest groups selected:

1. Local people: families, dog walkers, ramblers, hard to reach groups who live in the region
2. Landowners: farmers, National Trust, English Heritage, council, etc
3. Wildlife groups: NGOs and volunteers, bird watchers, other wildlife groups
4. Education groups: from pre-school to adult education, formal and informal education officers and teachers
5. Businesses: tourism, local small business, transport
6. Government and statutory bodies

Selected findings



Engagement with Project and knowledge of the chough and the reintroduction plans, including why the chough should be reintroduced, increases support for the reintroduction.



- Attractive and charismatic
- Local people had limited knowledge
 - Less criticality, more support
 - Concerns relate to lack of knowledge
 - Engagement opportunities
- Members of wildlife and statutory groups:
 - Value given to scientific research
 - Support for the reintroduction relates to assurance that reintroduction guidance and ecological feasibility research have been met.

Barriers regarding the reintroduction and engagement



- threat from existing wildlife and environment
- concerns around the impact of the chough on existing wildlife
 - current red list birds.
- the potential of human threat and farming practices
- Barriers to engagement:
 - Chough will not affect people
 - Too busy
 - People don't like being told

Opportunities regarding the reintroduction and engagement



- a general support for reintroductions
- the benefit of the bird as flagship species and for promoting tourism in the area
- benefits from collaboration across agencies for biodiversity conservation.
- Opportunities for engagement:
 - Knowledge
 - Developing a long-term relationship with interest groups
 - Sense of personal responsibility

Conclusions



- Problems with recruitment
- Overall picture of enthusiasm and support towards the reintroduction of the chough across groups
- Areas of concern and barriers to commitment of support
- Opportunities for engagement
- Building long-term relationships with the different interest groups and local residents in general



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<https://iucn-ctsg-hwi.wixsite.com/workinggroup>



WILDWOOD
KENT

Thank you



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Themes:

Using data-driven inductive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), 5 themes directly related to the chough or its reintroduction emerged:

1. Engagement with Project and knowledge of the chough
2. Need to get people involved/ interested and how do we do this
3. Thoughts on the success of the reintroduction
4. (Anticipated) support (or not) for the chough and its reintroduction
5. Who is responsible for protecting nature and/ or the chough

Phase 1: semi-structured focus groups and one-to-one conversations



- 60-90 minutes, 5-6 volunteers for focus group (18+)
- 12-40 minutes conversations
- Questions focused on people's thoughts, knowledge and beliefs about:
 - The chough and its reintroduction
 - The countryside and local wildlife conservation
 - The partners of the project

Opportunity to listen to interest groups and allow themes to emerge