



You can help farmland birds

Targeting seed mixes for farmland birds

Many farmland birds need seeds to survive. However, over the last 40 years, seed-rich winter habitats have decreased on farmland, causing some bird populations to decline.

You can help farmland birds and other wildlife by planting seed-rich crops and retaining these over the winter.

The Scotland Rural Development Programme offers funding to manage such habitats through Land Managers' Options or Rural Priorities. If you show that you will manage your land for key species in your region, your application to the Rural Priorities scheme will have a better chance of success.

For more information please contact your nearest RSPB office.

East Scotland	01224 624824
North Scotland (inc Western Isles)	01463 715000
South and West Scotland	0141 331 0993
Northern Isles	01856 852022

Volunteer & Farmer Alliance (V&FA)

Why not find out what key species are on your land? RSPB Scotland provides FREE farmland bird surveys to help you. For more information about V&FA, please e-mail volunteer&farmeralliance@rspb.org.uk, visit www.rspb.org.uk/v&fa or contact your nearest RSPB office.

Management to help birds can be simple

Buntings need annually-sown, grain-rich mixes, typically including barley, oats or triticale; other components could be mustard or rape. Tree sparrows and grey partridges also use these mixes. Finches need small, oil-rich seeds such as brassicas; rape could be included. For two-year mixes, kale produces seed in the second year.

Cover crops are best managed in open landscapes with suitable nearby cover, such as a hedge, dyke, overgrown ditch or an isolated group of trees. Planting crops next to dense woodland is not suitable for most of the birds shown below.

Spring-sown cover crops should be established by early May to maximise seed availability later in the year. These crops should be retained until mid/late March to offer seeds throughout the winter months.

Some conventional practices also provide important winter foraging habitats, for example the management of weedy cereal or brassica stubbles and grazed fodder crops such as turnips or kale. The benefits for wildlife can be maximised by retaining these habitats as late as possible in the winter.

Birds you could help:



Tom Marshall (rspb-images.com)

Corn bunting

status – rare and localised, high conservation concern
where – arable and mixed lowland farms in E Scotland and W Isles
preferred seeds – cereal grain, eg wheat, triticale, oats or barley



Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

Linnet

status – fairly common and widespread
where – predominantly in SW and E Scotland
preferred seeds – oil seeds, eg rape, mustard, kale



Chris Gomersall (rspb-images.com)

Grey partridge

status – scarce and localised, high conservation concern
where – predominantly arable and mixed lowland farms in S, E and NE Scotland
preferred seeds – cereal grain as well as oil seeds



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Tree sparrow

status – scarce and localised, high conservation concern
where – arable and mixed lowland farms in E and S Scotland
preferred seeds – cereal grain and oil seeds



Andy Hay (rspb-images.com)

Twite

status – scarce and localised, high conservation concern
where – upland and lowland crofts and farms in N and W Scotland. Some move to coastal and farmland areas in S, E and NE Scotland during the winter
preferred seeds – oil seeds



Tom Marshall (rspb-images.com)

Yellowhammer

status – common but localised, high conservation concern
where – predominantly arable and mixed lowland farms in N, S and E Scotland
preferred seeds – cereal grain