

# Big Farmland Bird Count 2017



Game & Wildlife  
CONSERVATION TRUST





# Tree Sparrow

(*Passer montanus*)

**Habitat:**  
Tree sparrows prefer open farmland with well-spaced mature deciduous trees in hedges, isolated small woods or pollarded willows along slow flowing rivers, streams and ditches. In the winter they will move onto stubbles, naturally regenerated areas and game cover.

**Food:**  
Adults feed on small seeds and insects, whereas chicks are entirely dependent upon insects and spiders for the first two weeks of life.

**Nesting:**  
Tree Sparrows breed between April and early August. Generally they have 2 to 3 broods each season. They nest in colonies in tree holes, willow pollards, farm buildings and nest boxes. Boxes should be placed in groups within the same tree above head height and need a 2.8cm entrance hole.

**Join the GWCT's Big Farmland Bird Count from 3 to 12 February 2017**

For more information  
visit [www.gwct.org.uk/bfbc](http://www.gwct.org.uk/bfbc)

## January

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
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# Skylark

(*Alauda arvensis*)

**Habitat:**

Skylarks can be found on most areas of open farmland, preferring larger arable and grassland fields. The open areas are chosen to allow sightings of potential predators.

**Food:**

Adults feed on a range of seeds and plant shoots including knotgrass, groundsel, fat hen and grasses. Chicks are entirely dependent on insects until fledging, favouring sawfly larvae, beetles, ants, spiders and grasshoppers.

**Nesting:**

Breeding takes place between April and August. Skylarks nest on the ground in short grass or crops, avoiding vegetation over 60 cm high. Due to high predation rates, skylarks need to produce up to three broods a season. Winter-sown crops and silage fields are only suitable for a single brood, making buffer strips and spring crops essential to maintain adult populations.

**Get counting!**  
**The Big Farmland Bird Count runs**  
**from 3 to 12 February 2017**

Submit your count at  
[www.gwct.org.uk/bfbc](http://www.gwct.org.uk/bfbc)

## February

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
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# Yellowhammer

(*Emberiza citrinella*)

**Habitat:**  
The yellowhammer prefers a mixed farming landscape with wellmanaged hedgerows and scrub. In winter they favour winter stubbles, natural regeneration, game cover, livestock farmyards and feeding stations where grain cleanings have been left out for finches, sparrows and buntings.

**Food:**  
Adults feed on a wide range of plant seeds. These include dead nettles, groundsel, sorrel, cereal grains, millet and annual plant weed seeds foraged from stubble fields. They will feed on spill from game hoppers and will also take insects in the breeding season. Chicks are dependent upon insects for the first week of life.

**Nesting:**  
Yellowhammers nest on or close to the ground in short (less than 2 metres), dense hedgerow, field margins with long grass, scrub and woodland edges. They particularly favour dense hedges next to ditches, avoiding woodland. Yellowhammers will breed from early spring through to late August, this makes them suseptable to early hedge trimming during/immediately after harvest.

## March

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Lapwing  
(*Vanellus vanellus*)

**Habitat:**  
Lapwing will live on all types of farmland but prefer mixed farming systems and extensively managed wet grasslands. They prefer wide open landscapes during the breeding season to avoid predators.

**Food:**  
Lapwing are surface-feeding birds that benefit from varied cropping. They prefer a mosaic of spring-sown crops, stubbles, grazed pasture and marshes. These areas provide a year round food source of invertebrates. Parents will take their chicks across large distances to feed on wet grassland. This provides a rich source of earthworms, leatherjackets and beetle larvae.

**Nesting:**  
Breeding season runs through from spring to summer, starting in March and ending in July. They will breed in areas of spring sown crops and short grassland. Nests are usually small scrapes in the ground and are very vulnerable to spring cultivations, grass harrowing and high stocking rates.

# April

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Swallow  
*(Hirundo rustica)*

**Habitat:**  
A familiar summer visitor to mixed farmland with grazed pastures, crops and meadows near water. They begin migration back to Africa between late August and early October.

**Food:**  
They depend entirely on winged insects such as flies, mayflies, and bugs, which are eaten in flight.

**Nesting:**  
Swallows tend to use a small ledge or beam, 2–5 metres off the ground, in a farm building, garage or outhouse. They prefer dark buildings with nooks and crannies out of sight of predators. Their breeding season ranges from mid-May until mid-August. Females can expect two or three broods a season, laying four to five eggs per clutch.

May

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Grey partridge  
*(Perdix perdix)*

**Habitat:**  
Grey Partridge prefer areas of open farmland. They tend to be absent from areas dominated by improved grasslands (fertilized), preferring a mixed farming or arable landscape. They will use field margins, arable crops and grass leys for cover and feeding habitat.

**Food:**  
Their food source includes grass and cereal shoots, seeds, knotgrass, black bindweed, common hemp nettle and chickweed. Chicks require insects for the first two weeks of life; sawfly larvae are particularly favoured. In winter families of birds will form coveys on stubbles and root crops.

**Nesting:**  
They will nest in well hidden hedge bottoms, grass banks, game cover, cereals and nettle beds. Dead tussocky grass left over from previous years is particularly favoured as nesting cover. Eggs will be laid from April onwards.

## June

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# Corn Bunting

(Miliaria calandra)

**Habitat:**  
The corn bunting prefers open lowland farmland and in winter may be found in stubbles, root crops, weedy fields, cattle yards or stockyards.They will also use grassland including buffer strips and grass margins.

**Food:**  
Their food source consists of weed and crop seeds, especially ripening barley – giving rise to their country name of “Barley bird”.They will occasionally feed on insects, which their young are reliant upon.

**Nesting:**  
Corn buntings nest on the ground in spring in cereal fields, set-aside, grass field margins or unimproved grassland.

## July

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# Yellow Wagtail

(*Motacilla flava*)

**Habitat:**  
The yellow wagtail favours marshes, wetlands and lowland meadows and pastures. They will also be found in arable fields and upland hay meadows. Often associated with cattle grazing.

**Food:**  
Yellow wagtails rely on insects such as leatherjackets and beetle larvae.

**Nesting:**  
They arrive in the UK in April to breed, before leaving in September to winter in Africa. Yellow wagtail nests are built in a hollow in the ground, concealed in vegetation and lined with wool or fur. Four to six eggs will hatch each year; on arable land, the breeding season is limited by autumn-sown cereals.

## August

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Moorhen

(*Gallinula chloropus*)

**Habitat:**  
Moorhens can be found around any pond, lake, stream or river and ditches on farmland. They are a familiar bird of many of our wetlands. They spend the majority of their time out of the water compared to their relative the coot and can climb trees. When disturbed, they usually take cover in nearby vegetation but when flying their flight is short and laboured.

**Food:**  
Moorhens are omnivores, eating a variety of snails and insects. Their diet predominantly consists of water plants, seeds, fruit, berries, grasses, insects, snails, worms and small fish.

**Nesting:**  
In the UK they breed in in lowland areas, especially in central and eastern England. They're scarce in northern Scotland and the uplands of Wales and northern England. UK breeding birds are residents and rarely travel far. The moorhen displays typical breeding bird behaviour in the spring. Both male and female build the nest out of twigs in water side vegetation and are very territorial and protective of chicks.

# September

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Redwing  
(*Turdus iliacus*)

**Habitat:**  
As migrants, redwings can be seen across the UK from September through to March/April, but predominantly seen as a winter bird and is the UK’s smallest true thrush. They roam across UK countryside and farmland, feeding in fields and hedgerows. In open countryside it likes hedges and orchards as well as open, grassy fields and will join with flocks of fieldfare.

**Food:**  
Redwing will reside in hedges, orchards and fields and often forage and roost in mixed groups. Their diet predominantly consists of berries, fallen fruit, worms, slugs and sometimes grain.

# October

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Fieldfare  
(*Turdus pilaris*)

**Habitat:**

The fieldfare is a migratory bird which is typically a winter visitor from Scandinavia. They are seen on farmland with large hedges, scrub and woodland laden with berries. In late winter they will feed on grassland and field margins. Mixed farming systems are most suited to the fieldfare as they provide the range of habitats which they require.

**Food:**

Their diet predominantly consists of berries, fallen fruit, worms, slugs and sometimes grain. Winter foraging will include earthworms, wireworm and leatherjackets.

November

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Woodcock  
*(Scolopax rusticola)*

**Habitat:**  
Woodcock reside in any type of woodland with a dense field layer, glades and rides. They prefer a mosaic of habitats including moist ground with small streams and wet patches are ideal for feeding. In winter they will feed on suitable pasture at night.

**Food:**  
Earthworms form their staple diet. They will also take insects, insect larvae and some seeds. Woodcock seem to prefer areas with a high soil pH.

**Nesting:**  
Typically, they will nest on dry ground, usually in bramble, bracken or thickets. They prefer large woods and will rarely consider nesting in areas under 10 ha. They are very sensitive to disturbance and will take chicks to coppiced and open areas within woodland. Females lay four to six eggs in March/April, which are incubated for 21 days.

# December

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# The Big Farmland Bird Count 2017

## What is the BFBC?

The fourth Big Farmland Bird Count is taking place from 3rd – 12th February 2017. All you have to do is spend about 30 minutes recording the species and number of birds seen on one particular area of the farm.

## Why Count?

Farmers, gamekeepers and landowners are crucial in the survival and protection of many farmland bird species. However, several of these birds are in decline and efforts to monitor their numbers varies across the country. This is your chance to find out what you have on your farm and let us know!

The Big Farmland Bird Count (BFBC) is an important initiative offering simple means of recording the effect of any conservation schemes currently being initiated by farmers and gamekeepers on their land. This includes supplementary feeding or growing wild bird seed crops and game cover crops along with targeted legal predator control. As well as providing personal insight on how well their birds are faring.

## What you have to do?

All you have to do is spend about 30 minutes recording the species and number of birds seen on one particular area of the farm. You can choose your own location but somewhere with a good view of around 2 ha of the farm would be ideal. You'll be asked to record the types of habitat and cropping on and adjacent to your count site to help provide us with more detail about your count location.

For more information visit:

[www.gwct.org.uk/bfbc](http://www.gwct.org.uk/bfbc)



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