

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.

Song/call

‘Tuck-tuck-zick-zick’- Their call is discordant and often rapidly repeated, with a halting start and accelerating to a squeaky end. Their song is said to resemble a set of rattling keys.

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Beneficial management

- Management of the species includes ensuring that the farm provides nesting habitat, summer food and winter food. Consider leaving over-winter stubble for key habitat area and feeding opportunities.
- Maintain grass field margins or unimproved grassland to encourage insects for young birds.
- Maintain buffer strips, conservation headlands or other low-input crop options for nesting habitat.
- Cereal grain can be provided, through the winter with seed-rich wild bird cover crops as an extra food source.
- Supplementary feeding should carry on until May.
- Corn Bunting are very late nesters – usually not laying eggs until late May or even June. Therefore, they need safe nesting places that are not managed until late August. There are options specifically to provide this within Stewardship schemes.