

Farmland Birds of the Lincolnshire Wolds

There is a long history of intensive agriculture in the Lincolnshire Wolds, with a high percentage (over 80%) of land currently in arable cultivation. Far from detracting from the scenic value of the area, the working landscape is one of the reasons why a large part of the Lincolnshire Wolds was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1973.



Many traditional birds once common in the Wolds have declined in recent years partly as a result of changes in farming. These losses can be slowed and hopefully reversed through simple measures incorporated into farming practices; some may be required as part of Cross-Compliance or may help to achieve points for an Entry Level Scheme whilst others could be funded via Higher Level Schemes.

The following factsheets highlight management practices that will enhance opportunities for the most important farmland birds in the Lincolnshire Wolds. These are linked directly to Entry Level options, with general guidance for farmland management given overleaf.

Working with farmers is an integral part of the Lincolnshire Wolds Countryside Service role to ensure the landscape, wildlife and communities of the Wolds are protected, enhanced and sustained now and for the future.

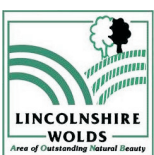
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Management practices that will benefit farmland birds on your holding.

- In order to provide important winter feeding habitat leave spraying and cultivating stubbles as late as possible.
- Pesticides should only be used when the infestation exceeds the economic threshold. Broad-spectrum insecticides should not be used after the middle of March as this will remove a valuable food source.
- Following an integrated farm management system and keeping on top of cleanings and volunteers should reduce the need for intensive pesticide use.
- To provide important feeding and nesting habitat for birds such as grey partridge delay using broad-spectrum herbicides until July.
- Low drift nozzles should be used when applying chemicals to crop edges to minimize impact on buffer strips, hedgerows and watercourses.
- Rotational set-aside provides more seed food over winter than non-rotational.
- During farming operations after mid-March, try to avoid lapwing nests. If a series of operations is required try to complete them all within a week to allow failed pairs to re-nest safely.
- Harvesting cereals by removing two headlands and then from the centre of the field outwards will allow young birds to escape under cover of the standing crop.
- Managing set-aside by first making two diagonal cuts will also allow young birds to escape.
- Margins of up to six metres around improved grassland should be fenced off to prevent grazing, fertilising or cutting. Graze or cut them either annually in September or every two to three years.
- Tree sparrow numbers can be encouraged by providing nest boxes. Several boxes should be placed close together as tree sparrows are colonial nesters.
- Ponds with tall, grassy margins should be maintained to provide habitat for feeding and nesting reed buntings.
- Bramble, scrub and gorse areas should be retained as both nesting cover and as a food source.
- Maintain large thick hedges on the farm and retain any old bushes, trees or farm buildings that may contain nesting holes.
- In order to protect any nesting birds all hedge, ditch and field margin management should be avoided between March and Mid-August.
- Avermectin anthelmintic (ivermectin) treated livestock will reduce the number and variety of insects within grassland, impacting the food source available for farmland birds. Pour-on or injected formulas are preferable to bolus as they have a shorter term impact on the insect community.

