

# South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project Archive

## The South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project

The South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project is an exciting initiative working closely with farmers to stabilise and increase the numbers of farmland birds and rare arable plants.

### Newsletter

 [Download the South West Farmland Bird Initiative \(SWFBI\) newsletter - Winter 2012/13](#)

Aimed at farmers, landowners, land managers and farm advisers across the four project areas, this newsletter contains up to date information about the project.



### About the project

The South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project is part of the [Wessex Water Partners Programme](#) which provides funding to projects which will conserve and enhance biodiversity.

To find out more about the project in action, please click below to see a short film.

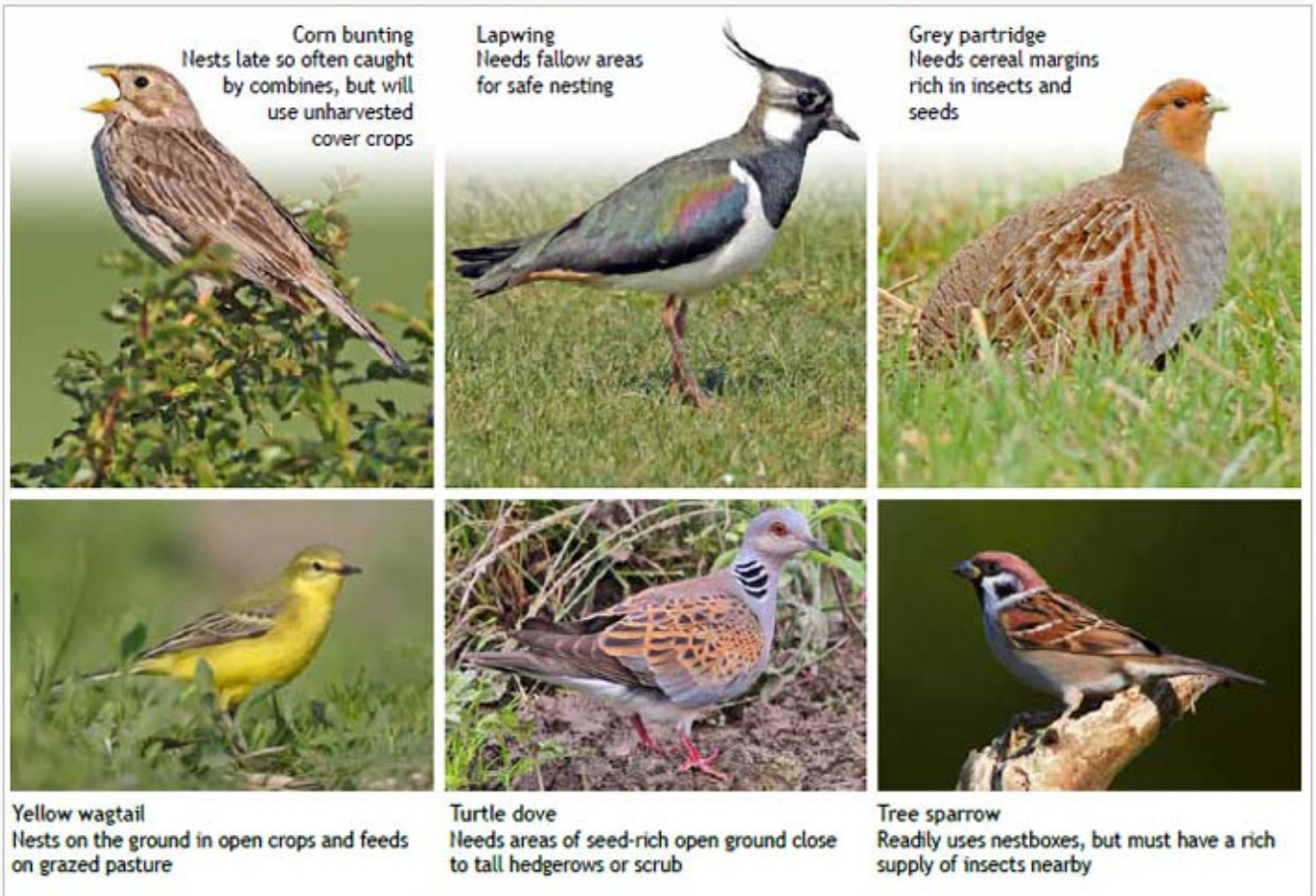


### The bird species

The project concentrates on six bird species, the 'Arable 6', and hotspots for arable plants. The 'Arable 6' are:

- Grey partridge
- Lapwing
- Turtle dove
- Yellow wagtail
- Tree sparrow
- Corn bunting

They are specialists which depend on arable farmland.



## Arable plants

Arable plants include prickly poppy and cornflower. They are annuals, flowering and seeding within one year, meaning yearly soil disturbance or cultivation is essential.



Providing habitat for these birds and plants will also have major benefits for other farmland species like the Skylark, Yellowhammer and Brown hare.

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## Government Grant Schemes



Through the use of Government grant schemes, such as Environmental Stewardship, land managers are encouraged to adopt measures that provide for farmland birds.

In 'hot-spot' areas for rare arable plants, the project promotes measures such as cultivating the edges of cropped fields and leaving them unsown to encourage germination of some of the UK's scarcest plants.

### Why is arable wildlife important?

Farmland birds indicate the natural health or biodiversity on farms, as they are comparatively high up the food chain. Thriving populations indicate that the lower end of the food chain is also in good condition.

Conservation of rare arable plants threatened by extinction is important because they provide seed and insect rich habitat to support the whole food chain.

### Why do we need this Project?

Since the 1970s the UK populations of many of our farmland birds have been in steep decline. In the South West, numbers fell by 45% between 1970 and 1994, and a further 8% between 1994 and 2007.

Populations of arable plants have declined dramatically over the past 60 years, and are now viewed as the rarest group of plants in the UK.

### Why in the AONB?

Wiltshire is a nationally important area for rare arable plants and farmland birds due to a combination of habitat, landscape and sympathetic management by farmers and landowners.

### What do birds need?

Birds need the 'Big 3':

- **Nesting habitat** - The ideal nesting habitat varies between species, but needs to be safe and secure and may be in the middle of a field, field margins, in hedges or trees.
- **Summer food** - A regular supply of insects and other invertebrates are critical food sources for developing chicks throughout summer.
- **Winter food** - An abundant source of seed food is needed throughout the winter months into spring.

### How can the South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project help you?

Within the **target area** (image on the right) the project offers free one-to-one advice on:

- New Stewardship agreements to provide the 'Big 3' for farmland birds and conditions for arable plants.
- Maximising income from agri-environment schemes.
- Management of arable options in existing Stewardship agreements
- Adapting farming methods for better bird and plant habitats, without compromising farm profitability.
- Training days for farmers, agronomists, advisers and agents will be held on the best ways of farming alongside farmland birds and rare arable plants.
- Farm surveys for farmland birds and arable plants will also be available in some cases.



## **South West Farmland Bird Initiative**

The South Wiltshire Farmland Bird Project is part of a wider pioneering partnership, the [South West Farmland Bird Initiative](#). This seeks to deliver positive habitat management for farmland birds across Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset. These areas are all recognised as being nationally important for farmland birds and other wildlife.



[Follow the project on Twitter](#)

**For further information or advice, or to make an appointment, please contact:**

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