Britain’s birds are counting on you - GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count begins

Friday 5 February, 2021

GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count, 5 – 14 February

www.bfbc.org.uk Follow on Twitter **#bfbc**
. Sponsored by the NFU

The 2021 GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count is underway. From this morning (5 February) until Valentine’s Day farmers and land managers across the country will be picking up their binoculars and heading to a corner of their land to spend 30 minutes counting birds. And it is not too late to get involved.

Phil Jarvis, Head of Farming, Training & Partnerships for the GWCT, was doing just that at the GWCT’s demonstration farm, the Allerton Project in Leicestershire, early this morning: “So why am I counting? Well, its really important because we do a lot of conservation work here. We feed the birds during winter and we put in lots of wildflower strips around our fields that help feed them at other times of the year, and so its nice to see what’s going on. It’s a bit of citizen science and its really good for the soul as well,” says Phil, who encourages anyone to get out and count on their land.

The event, organised by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), is a nationwide survey of farmland birds undertaken voluntarily by farmers and land managers. Last year more than 1,500 people took part. Participants are asked to spend just 30 minutes recording the birds they see on their land and submit the results to the GWCT for analysis. The count helps to identify the farmland birds that are flourishing and the ones most in need of support.

Dr Roger Draycott, who organises the count for the GWCT, says: “As well as giving land managers a chance to see the fruits of their conservation labours, the Big Farmland Bird Count is a great way to demonstrate to the public and policy makers what can be achieved on Britain’s farms. We know from decades of our research that simple, practical measures can massively increase farmland bird numbers. And we want land managers to be proud of their efforts.”

The Big Farmland Bird Count also makes an ideal lockdown activity: a great way to get the family involved with spotting birds and learning about species on your own land. Bird identification guides and videos are available at bfbc.org.uk, along with guidance on how to support birds on farmland.

Graham Denny, an arable farmer from Suffolk, explains why he counts: “We know that farming isn’t the only problem that faces the birds. Many of us have tirelessly tried to stop the decline of farmland birds and many of us have bucked that trend long ago. Shoots who regularly feed have also been a mainstay of farmland birds with cover crops and feeding supporting huge flocks of birds. This is your chance to contribute to a national count that proves farming and shooting are as nature friendly as we have ever been and are, in fact, conservation’s greatest hope. All while having great fun and enjoying our countryside’s beautiful bird population.”

The GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count is sponsored by the National Farmers’ Union (NFU) and also has the support of the Farmers’ Union of Wales (FUW) and the Ulster Farmers’ Union (UFU), who all champion the scheme to their members.

NFU President Minette Batters, who farms in Wiltshire, said: “The NFU is extremely pleased to be sponsoring this year’s Big Farmland Bird Count which highlights perfectly how farmers are balancing their roles as food producers alongside work in protecting and maintaining the environment. Over generations farmers have carried out a huge amount of work on farm to encourage wildlife by managing existing habitats and creating new ones specifically to help farmland birds.

“I’ll be getting out on my farm to take part in the count and I would encourage as many farmers as possible to participate over the next 10 days, record how many farmland bird species you spot on the farm and, importantly, submit your results to GWCT. This will be crucial in pulling together a vital national snapshot of the state of nation when it comes to our farmland birds.”

How to get involved:

Taking part in the BFBC is easy. Just pick one day between 5-14 February, download a count sheet from

Media:







Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Environment & Nature :: Farming & Animals :: Government ::

Related Keywords:

Farmers :: Conservation :: Shooting :: GWCT :: Birds :: Nature :: NFU :: Minette Batters ::

Scan Me:

www.bfbc.org.uk
and spend 30 minutes recording the number and species of birds seen on one area of land. Participants are advised to choose somewhere they know they are likely to see some birds, such as an area of wild seed mix, or somewhere they regularly spread bird seed, or a field with a tall hedge and a good field margin. A spot with a good view of around 2 ha of the farm would be ideal. Wellies, binoculars and a flask of something warming are recommended!

Results should be submitted at www.bfbc.org.uk. All participants will receive a report on the national results once they have been collated.

Notes to editors

View videos and updates on the BFBC launch day, 5 February, on Twitter at **#bfbc**

The National Farmers Union is the main sponsor of the Big Farmland Bird Count.

The Big Farmland Bird Count is kindly supported by:

FUW (Farmers' Union of Wales)

CFE Championing the Farmed Environment

NSA National Sheep Association

LEAF Linking Environment and Farming

CLA

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust – providing research-led conservation for a thriving countryside. The GWCT is an independent wildlife conservation charity which has carried out scientific research into Britain's game and wildlife since the 1930s. We advise farmers and landowners on improving wildlife habitats. We employ 22 post-doctoral scientists and 50 other research staff with expertise in areas such as birds, insects, mammals, farming, fish and statistics. We undertake our own research as well as projects funded by contract and grant-aid from Government and private bodies. The Trust is also responsible for several Government Biodiversity Action Plan species and is lead partner for grey partridge and joint lead partner for brown hare and black grouse.

Company Contact:

Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

E. press@gwct.org.uk
W. https://www.gwct.org.uk/

View Online

Additional Assets:
https://www.bfbc.org.uk/

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.gwct.pressat.co.uk