Let’s “shout about all the good work done on farms”, says GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count founder

Tuesday 24 January, 2023

3 – 19 February 2023 bfbc.org.uk. Follow on Twitter #bfbc

Sponsored by the NFU.

2023 is the GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count’s tenth birthday. Ahead of this year’s count, its founder Jim Egan, is encouraging land managers to take part. He said:

“Understand that what you do makes a difference and gives the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) a superb opportunity to shout about all the good work done on farms.”

The GWCT’s Dr Roger Draycott, who now runs the count, agreed:

“In the ten years since the GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count began, the commitment shown by an ever-growing number of farmers and land managers to supporting and monitoring birds and other wildlife is inspiring and should be celebrated.”

The tenth GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count takes place between 3 and 19 February. People are being asked to take just 30 minutes to count the birds they see on their land, then submit their results to the GWCT. Counting allows land managers to measure the impact of the conservation work that so many of them carry out. And the nationwide voluntary effort enables the GWCT to build a picture of the status of the UK’s farmland bird species.

The GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count is, said Roger, an opportunity to “show our appreciation for all those farmers, gamekeepers and other land managers who work so hard to support our wildlife, mostly unrecognised by the wider public.”

Celebrating the good that many farmers do is something that the National Farmers Union fully supports, having sponsored the count for the last five year. **NFU President Minette Batters** said:

“Not only are farmers across the country producing sustainable climate-friendly food, they are also maintaining and protecting the great British countryside, creating habitats for biodiversity to flourish and additional feeding for farmland birds.

"I would encourage all farmers to get involved in the 2023 GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count.”

Why should land managers get involved?

More than one in four of the UK’s bird species is in serious trouble, according to the most recent assessment of the status of the UK’s birds, the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) list (2021).

“We will not halt the alarming declines of species such as curlew and skylarks if we leave it to nature reserves and national parks alone,” commented Roger. “72% of the UK’s countryside is managed by farmers, game keepers and land managers, so it is vital that we are all engaged in the effort to reverse biodiversity decline.”

“A few small changes can make a big difference,” said GWCT Game & Wildlife Advisor Amber Lole.

With responsibility for so much of the UK’s land area, private land managers can make an enormous difference to the future of our wild birds.

“Modern farming methods mean that there is often not enough natural food for wildlife left in the countryside in late winter and early spring, causing what is known as the ‘hungry gap’,” continued Amber. “One of the best things you can do to support farmland birds is to provide extra winter seed food. Supplementary feeding is particularly beneficial for birds of conservation concern like grey partridge, yellowhammer and corn bunting.”

Media:





Related Sectors:

Charities & non-profits :: Environment & Nature :: Farming & Animals :: Leisure & Hobbies ::

Related Keywords:

Birds :: Conservation :: GWCT :: Big Farmland Bird Count :: Farming :: Shooting :: Habitat :: Wildlife :: Nature :: Biodiversity :: Red List :: Endangered ::

Scan Me:

The use of ‘conservation headlands’ – wide field margins where little or no pesticides are used – is also very good for farmland birds. Allowing broad-leaved weeds to flourish boosts insect populations which are a key food-source for birds. Planting and managing hedgerows also provides crucial food, as well as nesting habitat and a safe haven from predators.

GWCT advisors encourage land managers to maintain small wet areas around the farm to help attract wading birds. Leaving an area of uncropped, cultivated land can also provide suitable nesting and foraging areas for birds which prefer to forage on open ground, such as the red-listed lapwing, skylark, stone curlew and turtle dove.

Find more advice on supporting wild birds, and on taking part in the GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count at bfbc.org.uk

Ends

Note to editors:

View our **online launch at 10am on 3 February**, plus videos and updates, on Twitter at @gameandwildlife #bfbc, Facebook: gamewildlifeconservationtrust and Instagram gamewildlifeconservationtrust

Sponsors & supporters

The GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count is sponsored by the National Farmers’ Union (NFU), and supported by:

FUW (Farmers’ Union of Wales)

NFU Scotland

CFE Championing the Farmed Environment

NSAG: Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group

CEAF: Linking Environment and Farming

PeA

Jim Egan founded the GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count while working for the GWCT’s demonstration farm, the Allerton Project. Jim now works as a technical advisor for Kings Crops.

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.

Company Contact:

Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

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

View Online

Additional Assets:

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