



Why Are Farming Birds In Trouble?

There are lots of animals especially birds that are considered 'farmland species' because they thrive there, but as farming styles have changed some of these animals have not been able to survive on modern farms.

In many parts of the UK, the numbers of farmland birds are decreasing because of new modern intensive farming methods.

Due to demand of the crops the farmers grow, the livestock they raise and the demand from us the consumer, the fields have become much bigger, and more chemicals are used. This has intern caused a significant loss of hedgerows leaving birds with fewer places to nest.

However, all is not lost! Many farmers are doing their bit to increase the size of habitats for birds to breed and find enough food to survive.



No hedges

The farming industry in Britain during the Second World War underwent a complete upheaval. It was necessary for the government to control what farmers grew or what livestock they kept to ensure maximum productivity from the land. This often meant making big fields and getting rid of hedges. Hedges are a homes to many birds and other animals.



No borders

Fields used to have larger borders around them that were left alone allowing different flowering plants to grow. This was great for insects that feed on the flower's nectar and the birds which eat the insects. But the invention of new farming technology used to maximise the crops grown and the modern machines used (such as combine harvesters) meant fields could have crops right up to the edge, so borders were squeezed out.



Field margins (just a 1-metre grass strip)

All Farms now have field margins, which can provide and enhance wildlife habitats across arable farms without changing cropping patterns.



Pesticides – also known as agricultural chemicals

Farmers use pesticides to:
protect crops from insect pests, weeds and fungal diseases while they are growing. In the past these chemicals could work their way through the food chain from plants through to insects and did more harm than good.





Beetle banks

A grassy strip across a field can provide new habitats for birds, small mammals and insects. It is a strip planted with grasses and/or perennial plants, within a crop field, that provides habitat for beneficial insects, and birds, that prey on pests as well as wildlife benefits in providing new feeding and breeding habitat.



Wildlife

Existing field boundary structures, including hedges, walls, grass banks and ditches, play a major part in the semi-natural variety of farmland. Grass margins and beetle banks provide nesting areas for the grey partridge and skylark. They also provide homes for insects and feeding areas for owls and other birds of prey. Common flowers can be important sources of pollen and nectar for bees and other insects. Uncropped wildlife strips at arable field edges provide conditions for rare arable weeds to germinate and set seed. The seeds produced will in turn provide forage for a range of bird species.

