

## Taking action

**Farming and wildlife are under serious threat. We are working with farmers for a countryside that supports thriving rural communities and wildlife.**

Because of the goodwill and support of people like you, we are able to:

- Undertake research into how the decline in farmland bird populations can be reversed.
- Test wildlife-friendly farming methods on our farms.

- Seek farming policies that ensure farmers are given recognition and support for managing the countryside.
- Advise farmers on farming methods that help wildlife.
- Manage projects for priority bird species.

For topical farming news and practical advice, sign up to the RSPB's farming e-newsletter at [www.rspb.org.uk/farming](http://www.rspb.org.uk/farming)



a million voices for nature



The RSPB speaks out for birds and wildlife, tackling the problems that threaten our environment. Nature is amazing – help us keep it that way.



The RSPB is part of BirdLife International, the global partnership of bird conservation organisations.

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# Volunteer & Farmer Alliance

Delivering results for UK farms

# A celebration of the Volunteer & Farmer Alliance

## Introducing the V&FA

Since 1999, the Volunteer & Farmer Alliance (V&FA) has been providing farmers with a free survey of the birds on their farms.

These surveys are undertaken by RSPB volunteers and the results are presented on a map. The map shows where birds of conservation concern have been found, and is accompanied by a list of all the bird species seen on the farm.

We also provide farmers with the latest advice on how to help the wildlife on their farms. The survey results can be used to guide the choice of agri-environment options and support an application.

## 10 years of making a real difference

- The RSPB volunteers involved have spent more than **77,000 hours** surveying farms.
- More than 4,250 farms have been surveyed, and we have invested **£2.5 million** to help farmers identify the birds on their farm.
- Key bird populations of major conservation concern have been identified, allowing public money to support their conservation in a cost-effective way.
- Whilst surveying, volunteers have walked the equivalent of **4.5 times around the world**, to help farmers go the extra mile to help farmland birds.
- The concept of the V&FA is spreading around the world too, with schemes modelled on our work supporting farmers in Sweden and Portugal.



## Frequently asked questions

### How can I get involved in V&FA?

Whether you are a farmer looking for a bird survey or a volunteer wanting to help, simply call us on 01767 680551 or e-mail [v&fa@rspb.org.uk](mailto:v&fa@rspb.org.uk) and we will put you in touch with your local V&FA project officer.

### When will the surveys take place?

A volunteer will survey the farm three or four times between April and July, during the morning. This is when birds are most active, giving the volunteer the best chance to see as many of the birds on the farm as possible.

### How much of the farm is surveyed?

We ask our volunteers to undertake a survey of approximately 80 hectares.

### What should I do with the results I get?

It is entirely up to you! Many farmers use the results and advice provided to create and manage habitats on their farm to support the species they have. Managing the right habitats for the birds present can pay dividends.

### How can I promote my wildlife-friendly farming?

If you believe you are doing your best to provide for wildlife on farmland, then you could win £1,000. The RSPB Nature of Farming Award aims to recognise your efforts and celebrate your achievements. For further information call 01767 680551 or e-mail [nature-farming@rspb.org.uk](mailto:nature-farming@rspb.org.uk)



# Farmers and the RSPB: working together

Every year, we work with more than 4,000 farmers and crofters across the UK, supporting their vital role in conservation. Since 1999, the V&FA has been linking farmers with trained volunteers, who carry out farmland bird surveys. We can then provide the farmers involved with a map of the birds present on their farms and advice on how to help these species.

The map below indicates farms that have been surveyed to date.

The results of surveys undertaken in Yorkshire over three years supported **£2.8 million** of agri-environment funding and good conservation management on over 11,000 hectares of farmland.

Since the start of the V&FA and the delivery of the first surveys in 1999, our trained and enthusiastic volunteers have surveyed in excess of **350,000 hectares**, which is an area four times the size of Nottinghamshire!

Results in the Midlands showed that **88% of farms** surveyed had yellowhammers present, 86% had skylarks, 73% had linnets, 39% had lapwings and 32% had grey partridges.



Roger Mathias

"The V&FA survey highlighted that we had reed buntings. It's great to watch them eating the wild bird seed mixture I planted specifically for them, and other birds on the farm, through my Tir Gofal agri-environment scheme."

**Roger Mathias**  
Farmer, Pembrokeshire



Turtle dove

"I jumped at the chance to undertake a farmland bird survey and was delighted to find turtle doves on the farm. It's great to think that my local farmer is benefiting from my surveys, and I have benefited too, learning a great deal about the farmer's perspective of the countryside."

**Nigel Jenkinson**  
Volunteer, Norfolk