

## Winter food

- Bustards will favour farms where oilseed rape is grown annually in open, undisturbed locations.
- Brassica fodder crops provide plant food for bustards. **HLS**
- Kale-based wild bird seed mixes will also provide plant food throughout the year. **ELS HLS**
- Fallow plots left through the winter will contain broadleaved plants for feeding bustards.
- Over-wintered stubbles are best left unmanaged for as long as possible, especially following low input cereal crops. **ELS HLS**



For more information visit  
[www.greatbustard.org/life\\_project](http://www.greatbustard.org/life_project)

## Key points

- Open, undisturbed farmland in Wiltshire provides ideal habitat for great bustards.
- Nesting habitat, summer food and winter food should be provided on the same farm, to cater for the entire lifecycle.
- Boost insect food using low-input options, fallow plots or pollen and nectar mixes.
- Provide safe nest sites and year-round food through wild bird seed mixtures.
- All conservation measures for bustards will benefit a wide range of farmland wildlife.

**For free one-to-one advice on managing your land for great bustards and other farmland birds, or more information on the Great Bustard LIFE+ Project, contact:**

**Andrew Taylor, Great Bustard LIFE+ Project Adviser,  
Great Bustard Project, 1 Down Barn Close,  
Winterbourne Gunner, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6JP  
Tel: 07703 607586 E-mail: [andrew.taylor@rspb.org.uk](mailto:andrew.taylor@rspb.org.uk)  
[www.greatbustard.org/life\\_project](http://www.greatbustard.org/life_project)**



This project has support from the EU Commission, with the contribution of the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community. It is important in establishing the Natura 2000 network of protected sites.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654 020-1-2336-10-11

All images by David Kjaer ([www.davidkjaer.com](http://www.davidkjaer.com) and [rspb-images.com](http://rspb-images.com))

# Bringing back great bustards

How you can help the world's heaviest flying bird return to the UK.



Great bustards became extinct in the UK in 1832 after years of hunting, persecution and habitat destruction, but now they're on their way back.

A trial reintroduction project run by the Great Bustard Group began on Wiltshire's Salisbury Plain in 2004, and there have so far been many encouraging signs.

In 2009 the first great bustard chicks for 177 years hatched in the UK, followed by further healthy chicks in the following years. We hope that a small population is starting to become established, and we're counting on your help to keep their numbers growing.

An EU-funded LIFE+ project will run until 2015, bringing the Great Bustard Group into partnership with the RSPB, University of Bath and Natural England, and enabling a wide range of new work.

## The world's heaviest flying bird

- The great bustard is a globally threatened species.
- They can weigh an incredible 20 kg.
- Fully-grown adult males have a wingspan of around 2.5 metres.
- They grow to over 1 metre tall.
- Males are much larger than females.
- If you see a great bustard, please report it to the project – it is very important that we're able to follow the movements of birds. Released birds carry wing tags, colour coded by year.



## Bustard habitat

Great bustards depend on large areas of extensively managed, open and undisturbed farmland, avoiding hedgerows, trees, power lines, tracks and areas of frequent human activity.

They nest in grass, fallow or cereal crops – wherever they can find cover and an uninterrupted view in at least three directions. Females are very faithful to their nest site. Nests and chicks can be vulnerable to farming operations and predation by foxes.

## Seasonal habits

**March to April** – Males gather at traditional lekking sites and display to females.

**May to July** – Once mated, females nest in grass, fallow or cereal crops. Chicks leave the nest immediately, are fed mainly on insects and start flying at seven weeks old.

**August to September** – After breeding, diet comprises insects, seeds and broadleaved plants.

**October to February** – Birds flock together in the winter, feeding in oilseed rape and areas of plant and seed-rich habitat.



## How can you help?

The guidelines below should help you create the ideal conditions for bustards on your farm. Please contact the project for more free advice.

### Nesting habitat

- Great bustards can nest in grass or nectar flower mixture plots when they offer sufficient cover for the female during the spring. **ELS**
- Fallow plots with dense natural regrowth in March and April can be suitable for nesting. **HLS**
- Autumn-sown wild bird seed mixtures or conservation headlands provide crops favourable for nesting. **HLS**
- Breeding females are vulnerable to disturbance, especially during May. The project can provide assistance if you discover one on your farm.
- Control of predators, especially foxes, around any nest site will increase the likelihood of success.

### Summer food

- A mosaic of habitats that bustards can move between on foot enables them to find insect food close to their nest site.
  - Wild bird seed mixtures, low input cereal crops and conservation headlands boost broadleaved weeds and associated insects. **ELS HLS**
  - Fallow plots with a combination of bare ground and broadleaved weeds are ideal for bustards. **ELS HLS**
  - Nectar flower mixture plots provide food for insects. Lucerne, which is a favoured plant food for bustards, is a useful component. **ELS**
  - Unimproved or semi-improved grasslands, wide, rough grass buffer strips and beetle banks increase insect populations. **ELS**

