

Circulation: All NFU Cymru Boards

Date: February 2019

Ref:

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Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust – Big Farmland Bird Count 8th – 17th February 2019

The sixth annual GWCT Big Farmland Bird Count (BFBC) starts this Friday 8th February and runs until the 17th February.

Sponsored by NFU, it aims to raise awareness of the important role that farmers play in the survival of farmland bird populations. Also providing an opportunity for farmers to demonstrate what their work and effort delivers on the ground.

Birds are considered to provide a good indication of the broad health of the environment because they occupy a wide range of habitats. Unfortunately, the recognised dataset for farmland birds only counts 19 species found on farms, which has shown a long-term decline since 1970. However, in 2018, over 1000 farmers across the UK took part in BFBC and recorded 121 species across over 950,000 acres. This included 25 species from the Red List for Birds of Conservation Concern demonstrating the significant role farmers play in providing food and habitats for farmland birds.

In 2019, we want to encourage many more farmers in Wales to participate. Taking part is simple:

- The Big Farmland Bird Count sheet can be downloaded at the BFBC website [here](http://www.bfbc.org.uk)
- Count your birds! On any day between 8th and 17th February, spend around 30 minutes recording the species and number of birds seen on one particular area of your farm
- Once you've completed your count, submit your results at www.bfbc.org.uk. You can also post your completed count sheets to BFBC, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Burgate Manor, Fordingbridge, Hampshire, SP6 1BR

Top tips for taking part:

- You can choose your own location but somewhere with a good view of around 2 ha of farm would be ideal
- You'll be asked to record the types of habitat and cropping on and adjacent to your count site
- To see the highest number of birds GWCT recommend that the site includes or is close to an area of game or wildlife seed mix or where supplementary feeding takes place
- Ideally, counting should take place at first light as this is when the birds are most active. However, it is more important that you take part, so timings should suit you
- Try to count in clear, dry weather
- Only record the highest number of each bird species you see at the same time. Don't count the total over the half hour as you may get the same birds visiting more than once
- Only count those birds within your survey area/field

Please get involved:

- Showcase the great job you are doing for wildlife encourage your neighbours to get involved
- Promote your work and participation in the survey using twitter and facebook using the hashtags #NiYwFfermioCymru #WeAreWelshFarming #bfbc
- If you're not on social media send your pics to nfu.cymru@nfu.org.uk and we can share them

More info and a spotter's guide is included on pages 46-47 of the February issue of Farming Wales.