

# The value of green belt south of Cambridge to populations of farmland birds (2025)

Report of a 14-year study

John Meed, January 2026



## Introduction

For the last fourteen years I have conducted ecological surveys – focusing in particular on farmland birds – in a square kilometre of green belt south of the Cambridge Biomedical Campus to assess the levels of the biodiversity of an area close to the city.

The area studied is largely arable land, with mature hedgerows, watercourses, ponds, scrub and woodland, including the Nine Wells local nature reserve (LNR – right). It includes a cycle path and footpath, and land management has created several grassy or flower-rich field margins, hedgerows and additional woodland (see Appendix 1). It is widely used by walkers, cyclists and families.



## Why do farmland birds matter?

Farmland birds have suffered major declines in recent decades (1).

- Grey partridge declined by 93% between 1970 and 2024 and corn bunting (right) by 87% while yellow wagtail declined by 74%, yellowhammer by 65%, linnets by 56% and skylark by 52% (2).
- Farmland birds are one of the UK Government's Biodiversity Indicators and 11 of the 19 indicator species are 'red list' birds of 'high conservation concern' (3).
- Grey partridge are now classified as 'vulnerable' to extinction in the UK while corn bunting and yellow wagtail are classified as 'near threatened' (3).



Birds are indicator species because of their place as consumers in the ecosystem, and declines in bird populations indicate wider problems. The *State of Nature 2023* report (4) states that the 'indicator for common breeding birds declined by 14%; within this group, farmland birds have suffered particularly strong declines of on average 58%.'

## Methodology

I monitor the area using a combination of methods. As a British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) surveyor I adopt their Breeding Bird Survey methodology (5), which involves a habitat survey and walking two parallel transects, each of 1 km, on 2–3 occasions early and later in the breeding season; this approach gives a good snapshot of the species present in an area. I did my transect walks on April 8, May 6 and June 3.

In summer I build a more accurate picture of the number of breeding pairs, drawing on my experience as a surveyor for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) Volunteer and Farmer Alliance (6). In these visits I observe breeding signs such as singing males, territorial behaviour, courtship displays, nest building and juvenile birds. In summer I also survey butterflies and dragonflies for the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme.

I also visit the site regularly in the autumn and winter, monitoring passage migrants and winter visitors, and in particular grey partridge populations. In 2025 I made 38 visits.

## Findings

Over the fourteen years I have recorded 108 bird species on the site including 25 red list species and 34 amber list species. See Appendices 2 and 3.

In 2025 I recorded 76 species on the three transect walks and other visits:

- On the first transect walk: 30 species and 338 individuals
- On the second transect walk: 31 species and 205 individuals
- On the third transect walk: 36 species and 269 individuals



The 76 species recorded included 16 of the 19 farmland bird indicator species for the Sustainable Development Strategy, of which 15 bred on site and the 16th bred very nearby (Appendix 4). In total I recorded 17 red list species and 19 amber list species in 2025. This table shows the farmland bird indicator species recorded.

Breeding red list indicator species	Other indicator species
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 62 pairs of skylarks</li> <li>• 8 pairs of grey partridge</li> <li>• 17 pairs of linnets</li> <li>• 10 pairs of corn buntings</li> <li>• 14 pairs of yellowhammers (above)</li> <li>• 10 pairs of greenfinches</li> <li>• 1 pair of yellow wagtails</li> <li>• c6 pairs of starlings</li> </ul>	<p>All the other amber and green-listed indicator species were present, and most bred:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 24 pairs of whitethroats</li> <li>• 2 pairs of reed buntings</li> <li>• 3 pairs of stock dove</li> <li>• Goldfinch, wood pigeons and jackdaws all bred in good numbers, and possibly a pair of kestrels</li> <li>• Rooks nest nearby and visit regularly</li> </ul>

In total 47 species bred in 2025, including red listed house sparrows and probably house martins, as well as several other amber-listed species including song thrush and dunnock. The area continues to attract migrating birds, including this year willow warblers, one of which stayed to sing for over two weeks.

I will discuss in more detail my findings about the populations of two key red list species that do unusually well in the fields around Nine Wells:

- Grey partridge (right)
- Corn bunting.

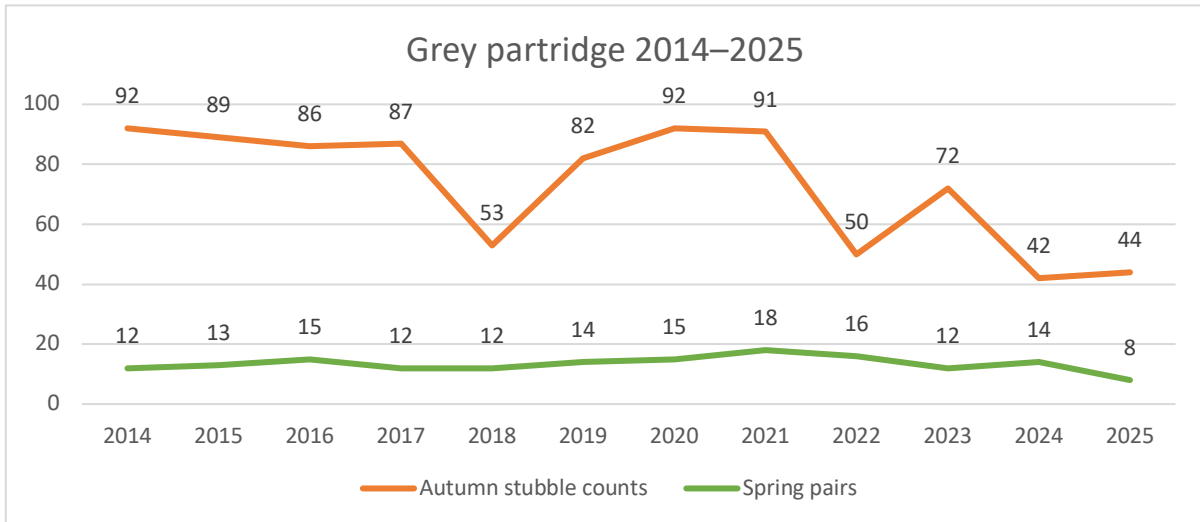


Populations *continue to give cause for concern*, especially yellow wagtail but also grey partridge, and I will discuss possible reasons for this, of which habitat loss is clearly one. I will then go on to examine my findings for other species.

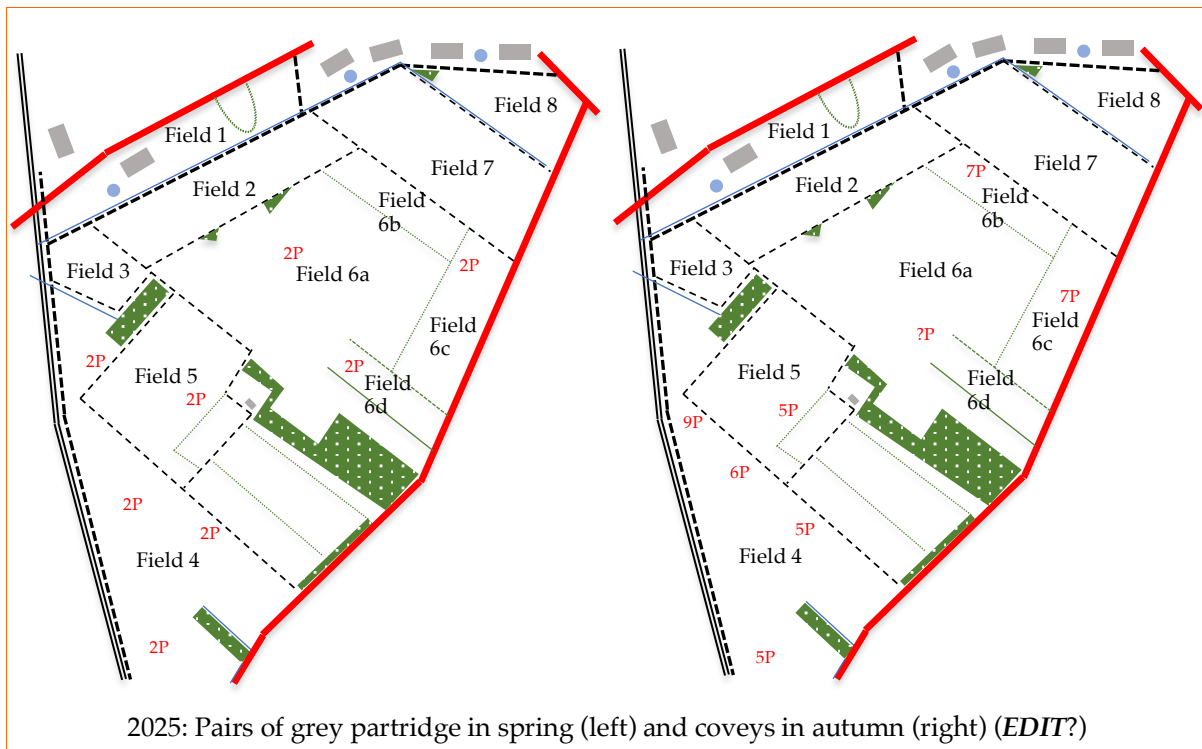
I have written up my observations of the fascinating behaviour of these species, and especially grey partridge and corn bunting, in much greater detail in my book *A haven for farmland birds* (7). For more information see [johnmeed.net/ecology](http://johnmeed.net/ecology).

## Grey partridge 2014–25

**Grey partridge** do remarkably well in the square kilometre I study – typically arable farms support between 0–5 pairs/km<sup>2</sup> in spring and 0–20 birds/km<sup>2</sup> in the autumn. Only with high levels of management aimed at the species do numbers approach those around Nine Wells, as in the Grey Partridge Demonstration Project near Royston (8). However, since 2022 there has been a decline in spring pairs and both autumn numbers and covey sizes.

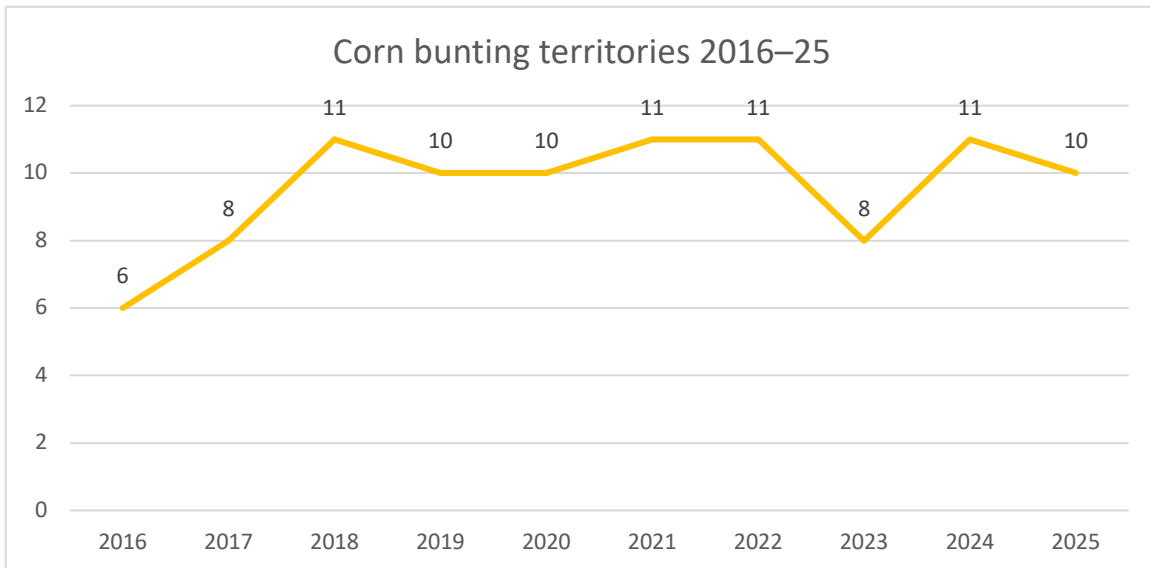


It's likely that several factors have influenced the decline, including perhaps a reduction in invertebrate chick food as a result of extreme summer weather or a change in the predator balance. Perhaps more crucial is the impact of habitat loss; expansion of the Biomedical Campus has now removed Field 1 and no grey partridge pairs have bred in Field 2 since 2022. The species is now confined to a smaller remaining area, principally Fields 4, 5 and 6.



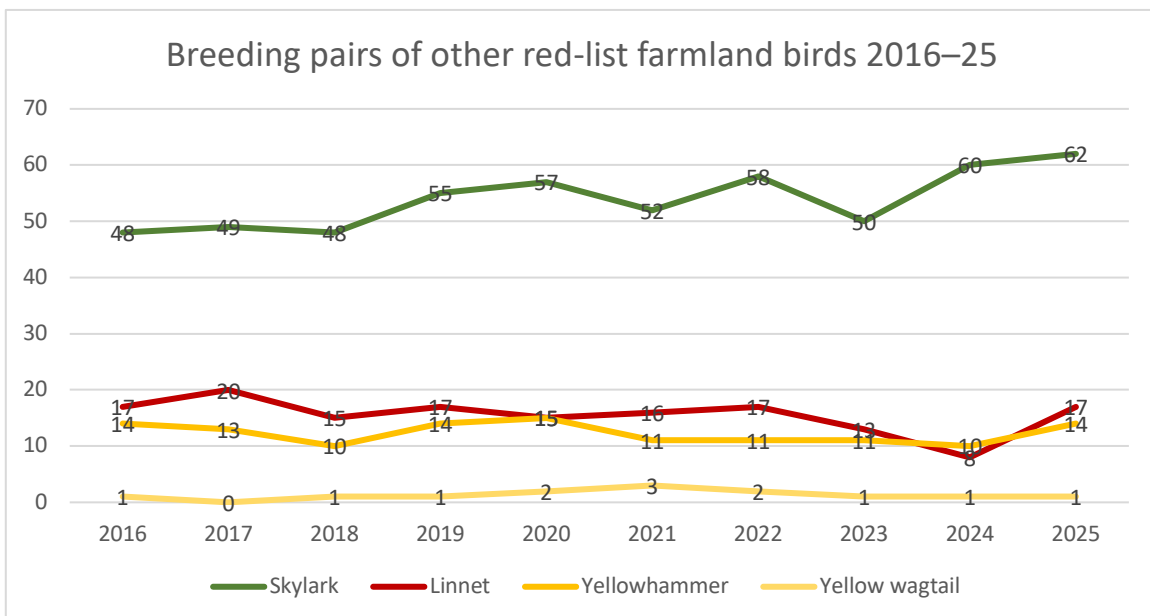
## Corn bunting 2014–25

In 2025 I recorded 10 singing **corn buntings**, one fewer than last year – mainly along the railway line and Granham’s Road. The number recorded in this study is important; there are now only 11,000 corn bunting territories in the UK and despite the fact that East Anglia is now one of their main remaining areas, a recent survey of populations found a very patchy distribution of singing males across Cambridgeshire (9). The species’ recent extinction in Ireland risks being repeated in large parts of Britain if breeding sites are not protected.



## Other red-list farmland indicator species

Four other red-listed species have also been a key focus of my study, and this graph shows their breeding populations over the last 11 years:



- **Skylark** populations (right), with around 62 breeding pairs, had a good year. I base estimates of skylark numbers on singing males observed (greatest on April 1st). This population density is higher than the mean recorded for similar crops in the BTO's skylark survey (10). Autumn and winter counts were high, with up to 120 birds.
- I estimated the **linnet** population (right) at 17 pairs – this was most reassuring as the previous two years had been rather lower. Linnets tend to nest more communally than other species (11) so populations are harder to estimate than species with distinct territories. Autumn and winter flocks were also higher, with 125 birds on September 14.
- **Yellowhammer** populations (right), at around 14 breeding pairs, were similar to last year, and compare well with populations found by Bradbury et al (12). Densities were highest in the hedges along Granhams Road and between Fields 4 and 5, and the ditch along the cycle path. Winter flocks were frequent, with up to 20 birds.
- One pair of **yellow wagtail** (below right) probably bred, in Field 4. This is lower than the 2–3 pairs which bred in earlier years of my study years. This species is now classified as 'near threatened' in the UK, with just 20,000 breeding pairs.
- **Greenfinch** were moved onto the most recent red list, following a decline of 68% in the years 2008-2018, largely as a result of the trichomonas parasite. However, they have recovered well in my study area. In 2012, I recorded a single pair. By 2016 I recorded 4 pairs, and this year at least 10 pairs bred.
- At least 6 pairs of **starlings** bred; flocks of over 250 were present in the winter.
- For the second year running I recorded no **lapwing**. I have never recorded **tree sparrow** and just one juvenile **turtle dove** in 2018.



All the other farmland bird indicator species were present:

- **Whitethroat** (right) with 24 breeding pairs, had an even better year than in 2024. Densities were highest along the hedges around Nine Wells and in the hedges along Granham's Road. The most birds on one occasion was 16, on May 21.
- Two–three pairs of stock dove bred.
- Reed bunting (right) populations (2 pairs) were one down on 2023.
- Kestrels bred on or near the site.
- Rooks breed nearby and visit regularly.



Goldfinch, jackdaws and wood pigeon all bred.

## Other changes in populations

After studying these fields for 14 years, I have observed several changes. As well as the reduced numbers of **yellow wagtail** and lack of **lapwing** observations, several species that used to breed here have not done so recently:

- I recorded a single **chaffinch** once in March. From 6 breeding pairs numbers declined sharply after 2018, probably as a result of a parasite, and none have bred since 2021.
- I have not recorded any **bullfinches** since 2021.
- Two pairs of **mistle thrush** had bred in 2021 and one in 2022 and possibly 2023, but none this year or last, though I did record one brief visit by a single bird.

In addition to the recovery of **greenfinch** on the site and possible breeding of **kestrel** some other species have started breeding in recent years:

- **House sparrows**, of which I only recorded three individuals until 2023, have bred in the last three years in the bushes along the railway line. Autumn flocks of 40 birds were regular, including recently fledged youngsters.
- **Reed warblers**, which I had previously only recorded a couple of times on passage have bred in the bushes along Hobson's Brook since 2021. A second pair bred successfully around the balancing ponds and probably a third.
- A pair of **red kites** have attempted to nest in the woodland on White Hill in the last three years and I observed courtship and display, though I do not know if young fledged.

## Habitat and other species surveys

My habitat surveys show that, in summary:

- The total cropped area (without Field 1) is 88 hectares. The total uncropped area is 12.5 hectares including woodland (4ha), set-aside (4ha), margins (c3ha) and hedges (c1.5ha).
- There are now 5.5km of hedgerows (of which almost half a km has been planted recently); 5km of margins; and 1.5km of streams and ditches.
- There are also 4 new ponds adjoining new development.

It is important that over 10% of the site is uncropped, as this allows a good range of arable weeds to grow, which provide food for the birds in the form of leaves, shoots and seeds. They are host plants for the invertebrates that grey partridge chicks and other young birds depend on in their early days. In addition, weeds are sometimes present in cropped areas.

Furthermore, cultivation techniques have changed over the course of my study. Whereas ten years ago fields were frequently ploughed, this is now rarely the case. Field 4 (owned by St John's College and farmed by the Webster family) has in recent years been left as stubble into the autumn, sometimes with a green manure, and with the next crop drilled directly into the soil with minimum cultivation. Four coveys of 25 grey partridge spent the autumn and early winter of 2025 in the field, along with flocks of skylarks, starlings and finches, and hares.

I continue to record other, non-bird, species:

- **Mammals:** water vole use Hobson's Brook – important as water vole numbers in Britain have fallen disastrously. Up to 20 brown hare, principally in Fields 4 and 6, represent a good population of another declining species (13). I have recorded a total of 20 mammal species over the study.
- **Amphibians and reptiles:** I have also recorded grass snake, common lizard and common frog.
- **Invertebrates:** Butterfly populations recovered from year, with 21 species and better numbers of brown argus, small copper and common blue in particular. I recorded 13 species of dragonfly and damselfly, including a first record of a hairy dragonfly, and 10 species of bees and wasps. The site supports good populations of other invertebrates including moths, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, flies and ants.
- **Flora:** I have recorded over 40 trees and shrubs including the rare black poplar (right), and over 120 species of flowering plants – which now include pyramidal, bee and southern marsh orchids. The area has mature hedgerows with thick growth and good variety and extensive grassy and flower-rich margins.



## Discussion

In *A haven for farmland birds* I argue that 'three key factors contribute to the success of the farmland birds and other wildlife in the fields around Nine Wells':

- 'Firstly, the geology of the site – the combination of the low chalk hill of White Hill with the flatter surrounding fields – provides an important foundation. Above all, this produces the springs that are a vital source of water and essential for the populations of water voles, dragonflies and other aquatic plants and animals.
- 'Secondly, the variety of habitats – copses, hedgerows, ditches, ponds and grassy and flower-rich margins – provide an important complement to the arable fields. They offer food, shelter and nesting habitat for the endangered farmland birds and brown hares, and they also help to explain the richness of the overall flora and fauna across the site.
- 'Thirdly, the management of the land – the restrained use of pesticides, the approaches to cultivation, the attention to spring chick food and winter bird food – all help to create space for nature.'

For grey partridge, the mosaic of habitats helps provide their three key requirements. Grassy, raised hedge bottoms, notably between Fields 4 and 5 and on the slope of Field 6, provide good nesting sites. Food for chicks in the form of invertebrates live in the field margins and on arable weeds. Autumn stubbles provide winter food for the coveys, while the winter bird food crop in Field 6d have helped contribute to survival rates (as well as feeding meadow pipits, larks and finches).

## The growing impact of development

Since I began my study, there has been considerable development, particularly of the Biomedical Campus. Field 1 is now all developed or under development and this has had a significant impact on farmland birds. The following table shows the numbers of pairs of the six red-listed species in Fields 1 and 2 from 2016–2025:

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Grey partridge	6*	1	6	3	–	4	1	–	–	–
Corn bunting	2	1	4	1	1	2	1	–	–	–
Yellowhammer	6	3	3	2	3	2	4	3	2	3
Skylark	8	9	8	7	18	18	10	6	7	3
Linnet	5	4	2	3	2	3	3	3	1	3
Yellow wagtail	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–

\*In 2016 Field 1 was a centre for grey partridge pairing, and on 11/2/2016 I recorded 9 pairs there, and 2 more very close by, though some spread out further across the site later on.

Ground nesting birds have been the most affected, with no grey partridge or corn bunting pairs in either field since 2022, and far fewer skylark. Loss of habitat is responsible for these declines in Field 1, while disturbance and high noise levels may explain the declines in Field 2. Grey partridge in particular have now become concentrated in the other fields and, as we saw earlier, their overall numbers have been lower from 2022 on.

Hedge nesting yellowhammer and linnet (and whitethroat) were less affected – the scrubby hedge along the cycle path between the two fields has grown over recent years – though in practice linnets were concentrated away from the development as well.

Field 2 is scheduled for future development, while Fields 7 and 8 have been recommended for development by the local councils in the next local plan. Such development would result in the loss of farmland birds from these fields which have been a key breeding site for yellow wagtail and corn bunting. It would also further reduce breeding sites for grey partridge and other red list birds.

The first proposals for the next local plan suggested that this habitat loss could be mitigated by habitat improvements in Field 6. In my response to consultation I pointed out that this was totally unrealistic, and underlined that the square kilometre of land on the other side of Granham’s Road – with far less margin and hedgerow habitat – is much less welcoming to the red list species other than skylark. I argued that, as further fields are lost, it will be essential to improve habitat here to accommodate displaced wildlife.

The revised proposals may have taken some of this into account and now propose mitigation in Field 6 *and* in one field across Granham’s Road and two fields across Babraham Road. This is a significant improvement, but it will be essential that the habitat improvements will be appropriate for farmland species.

In addition, the planned guided busway across Fields 3 and 4 will cause disruption during construction and some longer-term impacts.

## Conclusions

The data I have gathered over the last 14 years provide a picture of an area of green belt arable land on the outskirts of the city of Cambridge that supports important breeding populations of threatened farmland birds and other wildlife.

- 1 Over the period of my study the site has supported exceptional populations of grey partridge and corn bunting (species that have declined by around 90% since 1970) and the site is among the best in Cambridgeshire for both species.
- 2 Other red list farmland species also live in the area, notably linnet, yellow wagtail, skylark and yellowhammer. The area also supports populations of water vole and brown hare, as well as other animals, plants and invertebrates.
- 3 Habitat variety and land management contribute to the richness of the area. The combination of arable crops with grassy hedgerow bottoms and margins benefit grey partridge, skylark, corn bunting and yellow wagtail; the ditches benefit yellowhammer and reed bunting, as well as water vole.
- 4 Development and infrastructure work has resulted in disruption and lost farmland habitat. This has led to a concentration of birds in less disturbed areas, and is one likely contributing factor to lower grey partridge populations.
- 5 Proposed further construction would place real pressure on populations. If this were to go ahead, considerable habitat improvement appropriate to the needs of farmland wildlife will be essential in adjoining fields to provide a refuge for displaced wildlife.

**John Meed, January 2026**

John Meed is a researcher, writer and musician who lives in south Cambridge. His book *A haven for farmland birds* provides much more detail about the ecology, behaviour and social lives of the birds he has studied in this area. See: <https://johnmeed.net/ecology/>

All photos John Meed. Cover photo yellowhammer spring 2025

## References

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- 2 Defra, (2025) *Wild bird populations in the UK and England, 1970 to 2024*. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/wild-bird-populations-in-the-uk/wild-bird-populations-in-the-uk-and-england-1970-to-2024#summary>
- 3 Stanbury, A., Eaton, M., Aebischer, N., Balmer, D., Brown, A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D., and Win I. 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds* 114: 723-747.
- 4 Burns, F, Mordue, S, al Fulajj, N, Boersch-Supan, PH, Boswell, J, Boyd, RJ, Bradfer-Lawrence, T, de Ornellas, P, de Palma, A, de Zylva, P, Dennis, EB, Foster, S, Gilbert, G, Halliwell, L, Hawkins, K, Haysom, KA, Holland, MM, Hughes, J, Jackson, AC, Mancini, F, Mathews, F, McQuatters-Gollop, A, Noble, DG, O'Brien, D, Pescott, OL, Purvis, A, Simkin, J, Smith, A, Stanbury, AJ, Villemot, J, Walker, KJ, Walton, P, Webb, TJ, Williams, J, Wilson, R, Gregory, RD, 2023. State of Nature 2023, the State of Nature partnership, Available at: [www.stateofnature.org.uk](http://www.stateofnature.org.uk).
- 5 BTO/JNCC/RSPB (2018) *Breeding Bird Survey Instructions*
- 6 RSPB (2012) *RSPB Volunteer and Farmer Alliance Training Manual*
- 7 Meed, J (2022) *A haven for farmland birds*. See [johnmeed.net/ecology](http://johnmeed.net/ecology)
- 8 Aebischer, N J and Ewald, J A (2012) The grey partridge in the UK: population status, research, policy and prospects. *Animal Biodiversity and Conservation*, 35.2: 353–362. (Other comparisons: the largest UK partridge study, the Sussex Study, recorded under 2 pairs/km<sup>2</sup> with typically 5 birds/km<sup>2</sup> in the autumn. Major changes in management – including game keeping and predator control – on one area of the Sussex Study led to autumn densities of 64 birds/km<sup>2</sup> by 2008 with around 20 breeding pairs/km<sup>2</sup> by 2014. The RSPB's *Hope Farm Annual Review 2019*, describes how on their farm also near Cambridge, there were no grey partridge prior to management. Following management changes the population rose to 3 pairs in 2019.)
- 9 Bedfordshire Bird Club, Cambridgeshire Bird Club and Herts Bird Club (2014) *Three counties breeding corn bunting survey*, [cornbunting.birdsurvey.org.uk](http://cornbunting.birdsurvey.org.uk)
- 10 Browne, S, Vickery, J and Chamberlain, D (2000) Densities and population estimates of breeding skylarks *Alauda arvensis* in Britain in 1997, *Bird Study* 47, 52-56
- 11 Moorcroft, D and Wilson, J (2000) The ecology of linnets *Carduelis cannabina* on lowland farmland, in Aebischer, N J et al, *Ecology and conservation of lowland farmland birds*, British Ornithologists' Union, pp 173–181. The RSPB's Hope Farm density rose from 3 pairs to 19 pairs after management.
- 12 Bradbury, R et al (2000) Habitat associations and breeding success of yellowhammers in lowland farmland, *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 37, 789-805 (The density of breeding yellowhammers varied between 0.5 and 3 pairs per km of hedgerow, and two thirds of hedges surveyed in 1997 held fewer than 2 pairs per km. The RSPB's Hope Farm density rose from 14 pairs to 27 pairs after management).
- 13 Hutchings, M.R. and Harris, S., (1996), *The current status of the brown hare (Lepus europaeus) in Britain* recorded a mean density of 7.12 hares/km<sup>2</sup> on arable land

# Appendix 1: The area covered



Looking towards White Hill



White Hill across the 2025 green manure



Mature hedge and copse



Cycle path and flower-rich margin



Grey partridge in frost on Field 6, winter 2023



Yellowhammer on Field 4/5 hedge, 2020

## Appendix 2: Species recorded (2012–25)

This list shows the 108 bird species recorded over the last 14 years: 25 red list birds, 34 amber list birds, and 49 green list species. The numbers show the number of breeding pairs/territories (except n/c where not counted); (S) denotes summer visitor, (W) winter visitor, (P) passage migrant and *italic* = not recorded in 2024. *OK until Nov 6*

Species		Species		Species		Species	
Barn owl		Garden warbler	1 (S)	Little egret	W	<i>Short-eared owl</i>	W
<i>Barnacle goose</i>	W	Goldcrest	2	<i>Little ringed plover</i>	P	<i>Siskin</i>	W
<i>Black redstart</i>	P	Golden plover	W	Long-tailed tit	c5	Skylark	62
Black-headed gull		Goldfinch	c6	Magpie	c8	Snipe	W
Blackbird	11	Great black-back gull	W	Mallard	3	Song thrush	4
Blackcap	9 (S)	Gt spot woodpecker	2	<i>Marsh harrier</i>		Sparrowhawk	
Blue tit	c12	Great tit	c12	Meadow pipit	W	Starling	c6
<i>Brambling</i>	W	Green woodpecker	2	<i>Merlin</i>	W	Stock dove	3
<i>Bullfinch</i>		Greenfinch	10	Mistle thrush	–	Stonechat	W
Buzzard	1	<i>Green sandpiper</i>	P	Moorhen	3	Swallow	2
Canada goose	W	Grey heron		<i>Mute swan</i>		Swift	S
Carrion crow	c8	Greylag goose		<i>Oystercatcher</i>	W	<i>Tawny owl</i>	?
Chaffinch	W	Grey partridge	8	Peregrine		Teal	W
Chiffchaff	8 (S)	Herring gull	W	Pheasant	3	Tree creeper	1
Coal tit	1	Hobby	P	Pied wagtail	3	<i>Tree pipit</i>	P
Collared dove		House martin	1? (S)	Raven		<i>Turtle dove</i>	P
Common gull	W	House sparrow	2	Red kite	1	<i>Water rail</i>	W
<i>Common tern</i>	S	<i>Jack snipe</i>		Red-legged partridge	n/c	<i>Waxwing</i>	W
<i>Coot</i>		Jackdaw	n/c	<i>Redstart</i>	P	<i>Wheatear</i>	P
Cormorant		Jay	2	Redwing	W	<i>Whimbrel</i>	P
Corn bunting	10	Kestrel	1	Reed bunting	2	<i>Whinchat</i>	P
<i>Crane</i>		Kingfisher	W	Reed warbler	3	Whitethroat	24
<i>Cuckoo</i>	S	<i>Lapwing</i>	-	<i>Ring ouzel</i>	P	Willow warbler	P
Dunnock	18	Lesser black-back gull	W	Robin	29	Wood pigeon	n/c
<i>Egyptian goose</i>		Lesser redpoll	W	Rook		Wren	18
Feral pigeon	n/c	Lesser whitethroat	6	<i>Sand martin</i>	P	Yellow wagtail	1
Fieldfare	W	Linnet	17	Sedge warbler	P	Yellowhammer	14

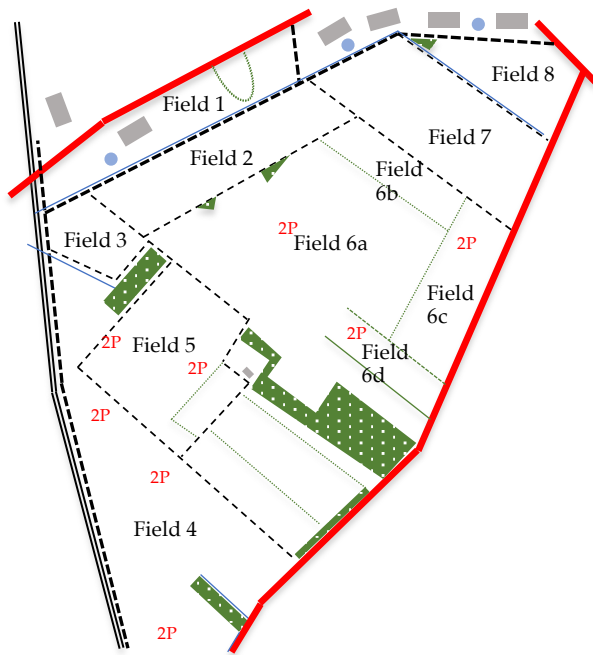
This table shows the 24 butterfly species and 17 dragonfly / damselfly species recorded:

<b>Butterflies</b>			
Brimstone	Green-veined white	Painted lady	Small tortoiseshell
Brown argus	Holly blue	Peacock	Small white
Clouded yellow	Large skipper	Red admiral	Speckled wood
Comma	Large white	<i>Ringlet</i>	
Common blue	Marbled white	Small copper	
<i>Essex skipper</i>	Meadow brown	Small heath	
Gatekeeper	Orange tip	<i>Small skipper</i>	
<b>Dragonflies</b>			Migrant hawkler
Azure damselfly	Broad-bodied chaser	Emperor	Ruddy darter
<i>Banded demoiselle</i>	Brown hawkler	Four-spotted chaser	<i>Small red-eyed damselfly</i>
Black-tailed skimmer	Common blue damselfly	Hairy dragonfly	Southern hawkler
Blue-tailed damselfly	Common darter	Large red damselfly	<i>Willow emerald</i>

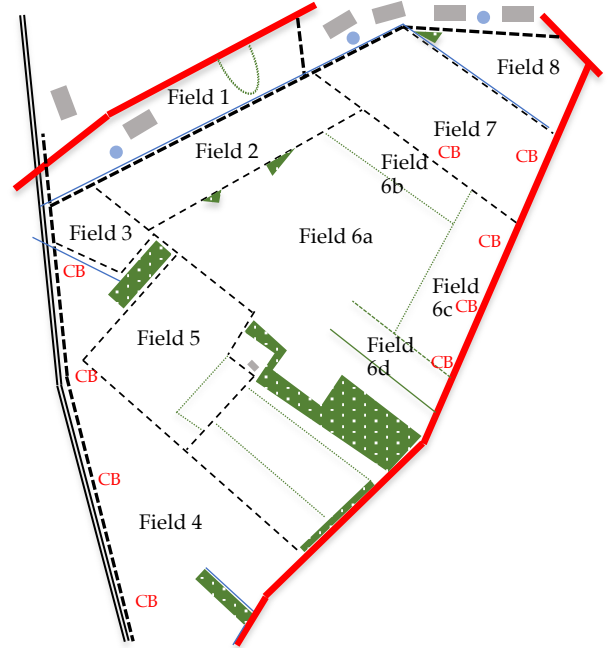
## Appendix 3: Maps showing breeding pairs

These maps show estimated breeding pairs/territories in 2025 of six red-listed farmland bird indicator species breeding in the study area:

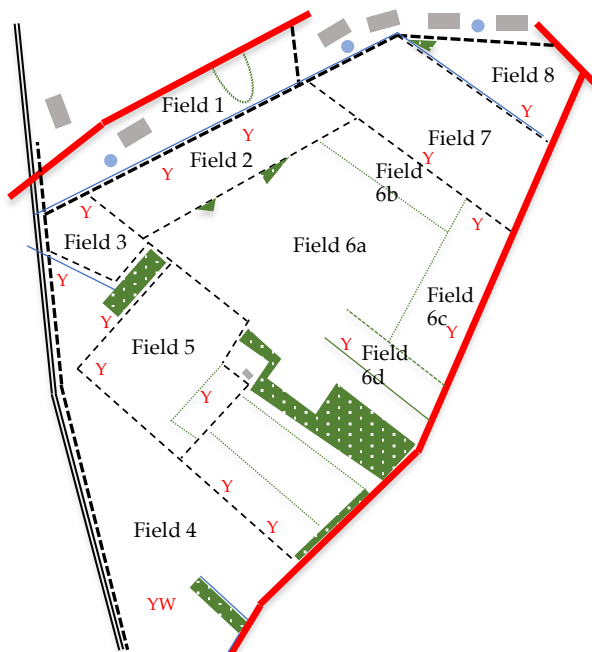
### Grey partridge (P)



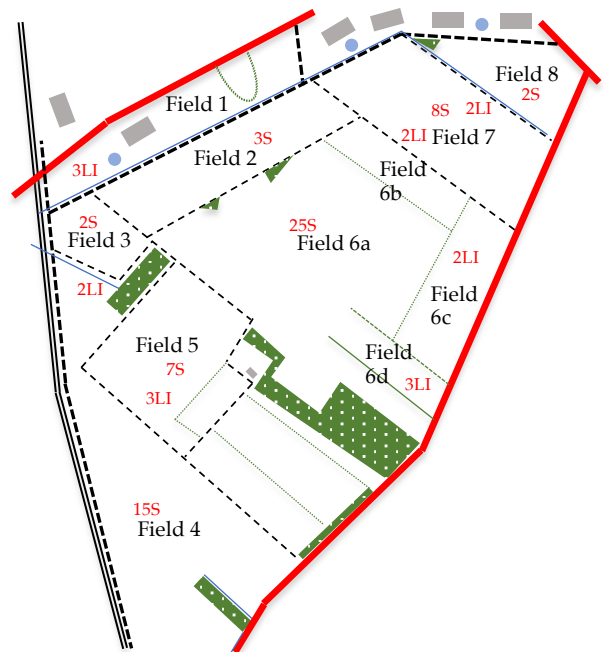
### Corn bunting (CB)



### Yellowhammer (Y), yellow wagtail (YW)



### Linnet (LI) and skylark (S)



## Appendix 4: Farmland bird indicator species

This table shows the 19 species on the UK Farmland Bird Indicator; the second column shows species which I recorded on the site in 2025; the third column shows species which bred on the site; and the final column shows the percentage change in their national populations for the period 1970-2024:

Species	Present?	Breeding?	Per cent change**
Turtle dove	—*	—	-98%
Tree sparrow	—	—	-94%
Grey partridge	☒	☒	-93%
Corn bunting	☒	☒	-87%
Starling	☒	☒	-83%
Yellow wagtail	☒	☒	-74%
Lapwing	—*	—	-70%
Greenfinch	☒	☒	-66%
Yellowhammer	☒	☒	-65%
Linnet	☒	☒	-56%
Skylark	☒	☒	-52%
Kestrel	☒	☒	-49%
Reed bunting	☒	☒	-28%
Whitethroat	☒	☒	-13%
Rook	☒	—	+5%
Woodpigeon	☒	☒	+123%
Jackdaw	☒	☒	+159%
Stock dove	☒	☒	+165%
Goldfinch	☒	☒	+195%

\* A juvenile turtle dove passed through on migration in 2019. Lapwing were present until 2024 and indeed had tried to nest in 2023.

\*\* Source: Defra, (2025) *Wild bird populations in the UK and England, 1970 to 2024*. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/wild-bird-populations-in-the-uk/wild-bird-populations-in-the-uk-and-england-1970-to-2024#summary>